

# **BIRTH OF THE MINNESOTA VETERINARY HISTORICAL MUSEUM**

by

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Here is how the Minnesota Veterinary Historical Museum had its beginning. Around 1970, Drs John Arnold and Henry Griffith began collecting items of historical interest from the College of Veterinary Medicine. Many of these items were placed in a hallway display case. However, another individual given permission to use the display case had no interest in them, and discarded the items.

Around 1972, Drs Arnold and Donald Clifford again began to collect items of historical interest and placed them in a display case located in the entryway of the “old” anatomy building. They continued to collect items of historical interest and stored them in the basement of the Veterinary Hospital. A workman assigned to a remodeling project labeled them as “junk” and discarded them.

In August of 1985, Dr. Mackey (then, President of the MVMA), contacted Dr. Arnold (then, Chairman of the MVMA’s Memorial and Historical Committee) to suggest exploration of ideas to preserve the history of veterinary medicine in Minnesota. In September, Dr. Arnold and his committee initiated discussions with the MVMA, the College of Veterinary Medicine, the Veterinary Council, and the Alumni and State Historical Society with the objective of developing a plan to collect, catalogue, preserve, and exhibit veterinary historical memorabilia. From December 1985 to February 1986, several meetings were held. With the help of Counsel, a Table of Organization and Bylaws were developed and adopted.

## **THE MUSEUM OBTAINS TAX EXEMPT STATUS**

The group continued to ask for historic memorabilia. However, in order for donors to consider that appropriate items were tax deductible, it was essential that the historical museum be approved as a non-profit organization. After some difficulty, and because of the persistence of these individuals, in 1987 the Internal Revenue Service registered the Museum as an IRS tax-exempt organization in the state of Minnesota.

## **HOW WERE OPERATING FUNDS IDENTIFIED?**

The next hurdle was to identify funds to develop the Museum. The Minnesota Historical Society administered funds granted by the legislature to aid development of historical museums. Dr. Arnold completed the application form and appeared in person before this granting committee. The first year, their request was denied. However, the next year, they received an \$1800 grant, provided they could match that amount in donations. The Historical society allowed \$5.00 for each hour a volunteer worked on museum related activities. The necessary funds were identified by the volunteer work of Drs. Arnold, Hanlon, Sautter, Mackey, and Bee Hanlon's nephew, Lauren Madden.

In 1994, Dr. Arnold completed a book co-authored with Dr. Kernkamp entitled "One Hundred Years Of Progress-The History of Veterinary Medicine in Minnesota." All proceeds obtained by the sale of this marvelous 260-page book were earmarked for the Museum's operating fund (A few copies of the book are still available).

## **SPACE ISSUES**

Another hurdle that faced the Museum organizers was to identify space to display memorabilia, work on restoration of donated items, and store items of historical interest. Initially, Dr. Vic Perman (then Chairman of the Department of Veterinary Pathobiology), allowed the group to use unfinished space in the basement of the Veterinary Science building. When this space was slated for use by faculty, the committee was asked to move to an office near the Diagnostic Lab. Then they moved to another room in the Diagnostic Lab. As this space was needed for new faculty, they moved again to the abandoned companion animal wards in the old veterinary hospital. Alas, these wards were needed by Research Animal Resources, necessitating them to make yet another move. Even though space in the college was at a premium, the collegiate administration assigned the Minnesota Veterinary Historical Museum a spacious room located on the first floor of the Animal Science/Veterinary Medicine building to use as a display area. They were also given a sizable room for work and storage on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of that building. In addition, they were assigned several hallway display cases located throughout the college. Today, the Museum can boast of vibrant displays and accounts of people, places, and things that comprise the history of veterinary medicine in Minnesota.

## **THE VOLUNTEER SPIRIT**

Drs. Arnold, Hanlon, Mackey, DeBoer and others have donated thousands of hours of volunteer service since the inception of the museum. Dr. Jay Sautter also assisted as his health allowed. They spent their time collecting, cataloging, restoring, and displaying historical items related to veterinary medicine. Especially at the beginning, but throughout their existence, they have worked closely with the College of Veterinary Medicine and the MVMA. They have also established working relationships with historical museums located elsewhere.

For example, in 1988, Dr. Hanlon suggested that the Ramsey County Historical Society be contacted to determine if any space was available at the Gibbs Farm to set up an early veterinary office in addition to displaying some of the Museum's memorabilia. Officers of the Museum with the help of several retirees from the College constructed the exhibit. The public was invited to its dedication ceremony and program. It remained a popular attraction for several years.

Since its location in the Animal Science/Veterinary Medicine building, the Museum has been open to the public from 12 noon until 3 PM on selected days. A core group of individuals, including Drs. Arnold, Hanlon, Mackey, DeBoer, Olson, and Sorensen have volunteered their time each week to explain the historical significance of the exhibits to visitors. They also open the Museum on special occasions, such as orientation of the new freshmen class in the fall, and the college's Open House festivities in the spring.

Dr. Hanlon has faithfully sorted and catalogued historical books donated to the Museum. Duplicate books are donated to the College's Library or made available to individuals in need, especially in other countries. She is currently working on a "Wall of Books" authored by Minnesota veterinarians on any subject.

Dr. Mackey was very fond of collecting news clippings. He subscribed to a news clipping service, and faithfully scanned the news weekly for items likely to become of historical value. He then placed the news clippings in books that he organized by topic (such as news articles about eradication of Brucellosis and hog cholera). This on-going project has proven to be a valuable initiative that numerous individuals have utilized.

## **HEALTH ISSUES**

These dedicated individuals continued working on museum related activities until health issues forced them to discontinue. Dr. Arnold and Dr. Mackey were sidelined by serious impairment of their sight due to progressive macular degeneration. Dr Hanlon has been hampered by cardio-pulmonary issues. Despite these obstacles, they continued to contribute their resources, time and ideas to the museum.

An endowment fund for the museum has been created, the interest from which will be used to pay the salary of a part-time curator. A portion of these funds has also be used to appropriately outfit display windows in the new Ben Pomeroy Continuing Education Center located at the St Paul Campus of the university.

## **THE FUTURE OF THE MUSEUM**

The MVMA, the College of Veterinary Medicine, and all individuals who have been a part of the veterinary profession in the state of Minnesota can be justly proud of the Minnesota Veterinary Historical Museum. I hope you will be inspired by the altruistic efforts of these pioneers to support this treasure with your ideas, your time, and/or your resources.