



Last Chance Garage

Few would have guessed in 1913 that the horse was beginning its decline as the backbone of personal transportation in the United States. While horses were still the primary source of power on the American farm, the internal-combustion engine would soon bring into question the role of veterinarians in society.



The Clinic

*Neil R. Baumhover **

The photograph that appeared on the cover of the past *Iowa State University Veterinarian* refreshed the memories of many former veterinary students. The clinic area of what was once known as the Veterinary Quadrangle (now Lagomarcino Hall) plays a significant role in the history of Iowa State. Throughout its lifetime, this section of the building has been a place for applied veterinary instruction, studios for sculpture and an office for student journalism.

The construction of the Quadrangle was prompted by the poor conditions found in the veterinary hospital, which stood where the Memorial Union is now. The advancing knowledge of sanitation had deemed the building undesirable, as described by Dr. Charles Stange in his 1929 history of the Division of Veterinary Medicine.

When the use of a table was inadvisable, operations had to be performed out of doors. During the winter months, instructors found

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it difficult keeping students interested as they stood in snow and mud, with papillae erected on the bare arms of those who were assisting.

The spring of 1912 brought new pride to the veterinary division as faculty, staff and students departed the old, unsanitary building and established the new buildings — the Veterinary Quadrangle. Marked improvements included fireproof structures, lecture halls, expensive equipment and a well designed, heated clinic area.

The photograph on the previous two pages was taken a year after the construction crews left, gives a perspective looking south. The tile floor was quite skid-proof, but not easy to clean. The patient stalls and offices (reached from the elevated walkway) were to the right. The treatment rooms were behind a wall just left of the photographer. This wall can be seen on the past cover of the *ISU Veterinarian*, which incidentally, affords a view to the north. Continuing to move east, the outside wall of the treatment rooms was the west side of the courtyard of the Quadrangle. It was on this outside wall where the statue and bas relief of the world-famous “Gentle Doctor” were originally mounted.

By late spring of 1938, the clinic had outgrown the Quadrangle and moved to the Stange Memorial Veterinary Clinic.

With the animals gone, Iowa State Artist-in-Residence Christian Petersen moved his studio from the basement of the home economics building to the newly vacated stall areas. The southern stalls became humble sanctuaries housing the embryonic clay version of the “Gentle Doctor” and its unfinished panels. Immediately, cups of coffee and friendly conversation gave birth to a rapport between Petersen and the veterinarians.

“Christian was absolutely delighted to move back into the company of men,” recalled his wife, Charlotte, in 1983. “He loved talking sports and swapping stories — and the vets became his closest friends on the campus. The students and faculty often dropped in to chat; it was the only classroom that had a coffeepot always going and a radio, too. The students loved it.”

The southwest corner was not the only place where laughter and philosophy could be heard in the Veterinary Quadrangle. Upstairs were the offices of a new student veterinary journal, *The Veterinary Student*, which was later known as the *Iowa State University Veterinarian*. Research rooms of Dr. Frank Ramsey, who was then a student, could also be found on the second floor. Dr. Robert Norton, a 1944 graduate and former editor of *The Veterinary Student*, practiced the art of “shooting the bull” with Dr. Ramsey.

“I was privileged to hear lots of the philosophy of Frank Ramsey as we chatted in our respective locations,” said Dr. Norton, in a recent telephone conversation with the author. “Much of the time, our conversations took place while leaning on the catwalk railing. I remember Ramsey having a kind word, as well as a kick-in-the-pants, for everybody! This was during the era of World War II and there was much to talk about in addition to veterinary medicine.”

Dr. Ramsey the Student would get back to business by walking north and Dr. Norton the Student would get back to business by walking south, into one of the rooms above the Petersen studios.

“*The Veterinary Student* office was about 8-foot-wide by 16-foot-long and ran parallel with the catwalk. When you walked in, you almost ran into this crude bench that sat against the windows,” recalled Dr. Norton. “The door was on the south end of the room and you turned to your right to go farther. On the other end, opposite the windows, were shelves to place manuscripts.”

The room was furnished with wooden chairs and tables that were essentially metal tops with boards to support. The only typewriter in the room was his own.

From medicine to sculpture to journalism, many warm memories have been written in the clinic area of the Veterinary Quadrangle. These warm memories include Dr. Norton’s memories of *The Veterinary Student* office.

“It was cold up there,” he said. “Outside, the hallway was heated *slightly*. But, it was better than being in a snowdrift!” V