

Historically Speaking

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'Moo-ve' Over Doc

By Julie Spilinek

The previous two issues of *Historically Speaking* featured the changes that have occurred in health care among the human population of Howard County. There is another segment of health care that has been, and still is, a viable part of many people's lives and that is the animal population. If you like good quality beef, pork, mutton, chicken, eggs or cheese and drink milk, a veterinarian has probably been involved in its production as he/she is frequently responsible for the health care of these animals. These veterinarians have been part of the welfare of Howard County's animal population almost as long as the family doctor. Just as the country doctor made house calls, the local vet did as well, although his were most likely "house calls". The health of ones animals was very important to those early citizens as they provided the table fare plus monetary income from the sale of extra milk, cream and eggs.

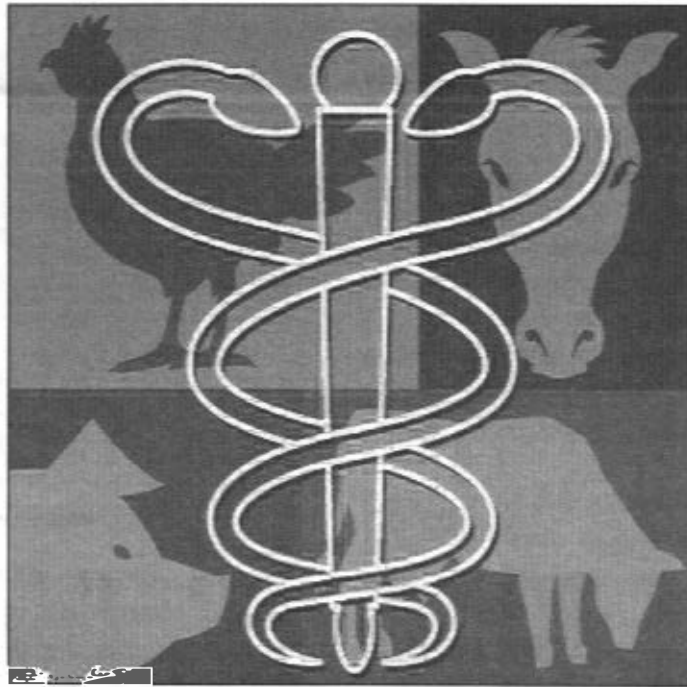
During the first 100 years of Howard County's history, there were numerous farms dotting the landscape. And each of these farms usually had a small herd of cattle, both for beef and milk, a sizable number of hogs and a flock of chickens and several horses. Some may have had a few sheep or goats. Just like their human owners these animals became sick, injured, or required protection

from certain diseases in the form of vaccinations. Many were the times that the vet was called to help deliver a new calf, foal, or a litter of pigs. C-sections were often performed in the most primitive of conditions such as an open field or barn. Until electricity was available, the barn would not have light other than a kerosene lantern or possibly a flashlight. And, of course, at least half of these births occurred during the darkest hours and

sometimes the coldest. And the doctor's wife was almost always the nurse assistant. Carol Rasmussen, whose husband, Lyle, was a vet for many years related this exact scenario when he was called to attend a birth during the night in well below zero temperatures, inside the barn as well as outside. She held a light while Lyle proceeded to work. The only resident home was a young boy who was told to take the newborn calf into the house to keep warm. Carol said they

never learned if he did, or if the calf lived.

One of Howard County's early vets was L. T. Jessen who was born in Dannebrog in 1915 and graduated from the Dannebrog High School in 1932. He received a degree in pharmacy from Creighton University, then attended the University of Nebraska taking microbiology and eventually was accepted in the Colorado State University Veterinary School. He immediately became a member of the U.S. Army Veterinary



A Message From the President *Jessie Kiser*

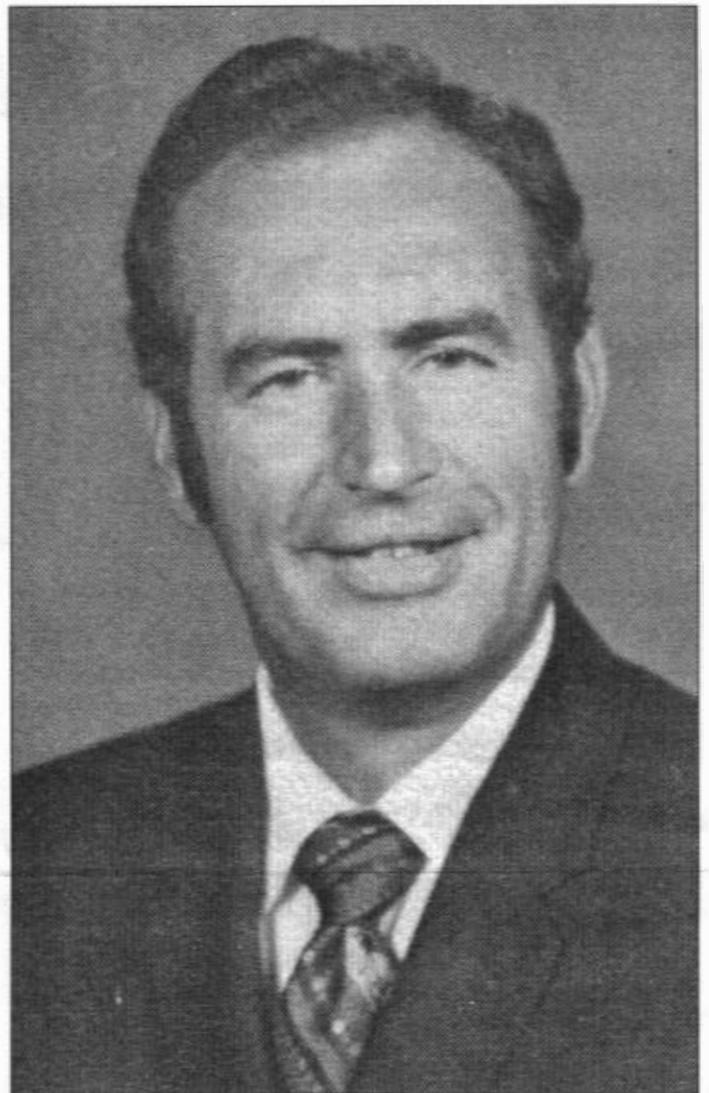
The Howard County Historical Society is so glad that we will have a new building to display the artifacts that have been in storage for a long time. We will be having some fundraisers to help finish paying for the building.

It's Springtime so we will need volunteers to help get the grounds and buildings ready for public viewing and also volunteers to sit when the buildings are open in the summer.

Thanks to all the volunteers who help with the village.

Corps and served until 1948. Following his military service he practiced at Dannebrog from 1948 until 1952. His wife, Marian Carlson Jessen, was also born in Dannebrog and graduated from there. She eventually received a degree in Pharmacy from Creighton University and practiced in Dannebrog until 1950 when their oldest son was born. After leaving Dannebrog Dr. Jessen held several distinguished positions and retired in 1980 after becoming president of Dellen Laboratories. After retirement he served as a consultant and regulatory affairs liaison.

Another well known veterinarian from the past was Dr. James Jerome Lewis who was born in Preston, Kansas, in 1926. He graduated from Preston High School in 1944, after which he served two years in the U.S. Navy. Following his military service he attended Kansas State University and received his DVM degree in 1952. After graduation Dr. Lewis worked for Dr. Coffman of Wisner, Nebraska. He continued there until 1954 when he purchased the practice of Dr. L.T. Jessen of Dannebrog. In November of that same year he moved the practice to St. Paul and worked from a Quonset building located behind their home. His wife, Janis Barstow Lewis, was his bookkeeper and took many of the calls if he



Dr. J. J. Lewis made a significant contribution to his profession and to his community.—Photo from "A Century of Veterinary Medicine in Nebraska" by Leo L. Lemonds, DVM, published in 1982

was busy elsewhere. Besides being very busy with the business and raising three daughters, both Jim and Jan were involved in many community activities. Both of them were members of the United Methodist Church and he also belonged to the Loup Valley Breeders and Feeders, St. Paul Chamber of Commerce, American Legion Post No. 119, was an ambassador to Knights of Ak-Sar-Ben, served on the St. Paul City Council and was mayor from 1970 to 1980. In 1980 he received the NVMA's highest award as "Veterinarian of the Year". Jan, too, was involved in numerous community activities such as Girl



Dr. J. J. Lewis's wife, Janis, was also active in the community and in the AVMA and NVMA Auxiliaries.—Photo from "A Century of Veterinary Medicine in Nebraska" by Leo L. Lemonds, DVM, published in 1982

Scouts, 4-H leader, and the St. Paul Emergency Rescue Unit. She belonged to The AVMA and NVMA Auxiliaries. In 1975-1976 she co-chaired the Howard County Bicentennial Committee. In 1965 Dr. Lyle Rasmussen came to the practice and in 1973 Dr. Andy Martinsen joined making a three man practice. In 1977 a new clinic was built north of St. Paul on Highway 281 and the practice was incorporated.

Lyle Rasmussen was born and grew up in Howard County and graduated from St. Paul High School in 1955 and farmed for a short time before attending college. After graduating from college he spent two years in the Air Force. He received

his Vet degree in 1963 from Kansas State University. He married Carol Hollister in 1977 and they have lived in St. Paul since that time. He officially retired from the Vet Clinic in 1999 but continued to keep busy as a relief veterinarian for many others in the area until two years ago.

Dr. Melvin Bahensky was one of the first veterinarians to use a plane to make calls in and around Palmer where his practice was located. By doing this he avoided muddy roads that were common in the spring and snow blocked ones common in the winter. Dr. Bahensky was born July 18, 1912 near Palmer, graduated from rural District 19, and St. Paul High School in 1930. He farmed for five years before enrolling in Ontario Veterinary College receiving his degree in 1939. He purchased his first airplane in 1949, a Super Cub, trading almost every year for the next three years as the planes were used so often. During the first four years approximately 5,000 calls were made. He also used his Cub plane for hunting coyotes, one of his hobbies. In the winter his plane was equipped with skis. His first plane cost \$2,000, including the lessons and he took some of these while his plane was being built. During his 'flying career' he broke several propellers and landing gears but never had any serious accidents. Dr. Bahensky practiced in Greeley, Howard, Nance, Sherman and Valley counties from 1939 to 1969, after which he became a meat inspector with the USDA, retiring from that in 1978 and became an inspector for the Scotia and Fullerton sale barns for several years.

Dr. Bahensky married Irene Dammann in 1937 and became the parents of two children. They, too, were active in their community and various veterinarian groups. He helped organize the Christ Lutheran Church of St. Paul, later holding all offices. He helped incorporate Howard County Grain and Feed Company and Greater Nebraska Corporation, later named First Greatwest Corp.

By the mid 1990's an x-ray machine, automatic x-ray developer, blood chemistry machine, CBC blood analyzer, and gas anesthesia equipment were added to accommodate the companion animal clients. Another new 'innovation' was the addition of female veterinarians. In 1995, Dr. Kris Fogarty-Fairbanks became the first female associ-



When this picture was taken in 1982, veterinarians associated with the St. Paul Veterinary Clinic were Drs. J. J. Lewis, Andy Martinsen and Lyle Rasmussen. — Photo from "A Century of Veterinary Medicine in Nebraska" by Leo L. Lemonds, DVM, published in 1982

ate of Doctors Lyle Rasmussen and Dan Nielsen. Andy Martinsen, who left the St. Paul Vet Clinic, built his own practice south of St. Paul in 1993. He presently has a female practitioner, Tracy Hadenfeldt, who received her degree from Iowa. Also practicing with Andy is Adrian Anderson who graduated from Kansas State.

The following is from the annual report of the State Veterinarian of Nebraska, Dr. J.S. Anderson—1918—reprinted in the book A CENTURY OF VETERINARY MEDICINE IN NEBRASKA entitled Making of a Veterinarian.

The veterinary practitioner in the rural community constitutes the bulwark of the veterinary profession. He is the man who does the real work and his field offers opportunities of the most varied character...The modern veterinary practitioner is the connecting link between the great scientific truths which are discovered in the laboratories and the artful manner in which such truths are applied and made to produce results in the barnyard, feed lot and pasture...Just as there is nothing which is too scientific for him while at school, so there is nothing too practical when out of school. He can feed or milk a cow at the least as good as a good herdsman; can throw and restrain a horse for an operation at least as good as a cowboy, and can clean and groom one at least as good as any swipe...You will find out in due time that a country veterinary practice means a lot of hard,

dirty and disagreeable work; you will be out in all kinds of weather, at any time during the day or night, and over all kinds of roads. In performing an operation you will not have the assistance of trained nurses, sanitary surroundings and an intelligent patient. You will have to throw your patient down, restrain him securely and at the same time always be on your guard, for if given a chance your patient will break your arm or leg or attempt to injure you in any other possible manner and you will sometimes be exhausted before you even begin the operation.

The following was taken from "Our 100th Year" Wolbach History Book, 1887-1987.

Most likely there were veterinarians in or near Wolbach by 1912, but the first evidence of a veterinarian was in 1912 when Dr. G. G. Lemly, a veterinary surgeon of Omaha, decided to open a practice in Wolbach. By 1915 Dr. W. H. Cole opened an office for the practice of veterinary medicine at his residence seven miles northeast of Wolbach. Dr. Cole was in Wolbach on Saturday afternoons for consultation at either the H. C. Hansen drug store or Lehman's Feed Barn. Cole was still in practice in 1917, although it was not known how long he conducted his practice at Wolbach.

In 1916 Charles M. Dollarhide received his permit to practice veterinary medicine and he opened a practice in Wolbach. Another, and most likely



The "Flying Vet", Dr. M. E. Bahensky of Palmer, picks up hog cholera serum from Norden Laboratories.—Photo from "A Century of Veterinary Medicine in Nebraska" by Leo L. Lemonds, DVM, published in 1982

the last veterinarian to have a practice at Wolbach, was Dr. F. H. Rogers. It is not known when he started his practice, but he was conducting his business as late as 1953. He and his family lived on the farm at the top of East Hill, which for years after the family moved, was known as the Rogers Place.

The following was taken from "A Century of Veterinary Medicine in Nebraska," by Leo L. Lemonds, DVM.

In Nebraska, the age-old dilemma of need versus lack of funds has historically brought a unique and economical solution from its frugal pioneer stock citizens who brag of the only one-house legislature in the nation and the first successful blend of private enterprise and public power.

The state's answer to an apparent shortage of veterinarians in the 1960s was to establish one of the first veterinary technology programs for the training of veterinary technicians to assist, provide additional services, and relieve the pressure on Nebraska's practicing veterinarians.

While lay help has been utilized by veterinarians since the first doctor needed someone to hold the horse he was treating, it has been only since the 1960s that the United States has formally trained animal health technicians. The Veterinary Technology Department of the University of Nebraska School of Technical Agriculture at Curtis provides an educational opportunity for an optimum number of students to become Veterinary Technicians commensurate with maximum utilization of faculty, facilities and operating budget.

The Veterinary Technology Department at Curtis was first housed in a converted dairy barn, which sits on a hill overlooking the UNSTA Campus. The transformation of the old barn, built in 1936, into modern classrooms and laboratories was part of the "beg, borrow and make-do" policy of the new school until more funds were appropriated. The leaded walls in the barn's x-ray labs were surplus from the University's Lincoln and Omaha campuses, as were some of the x-ray

machines. Facilities also included both small and large animal surgeries, lecture areas, a well-stocked pharmacy, classrooms and offices.

The school goes back to 1911 when Ag Hall was built to house a boarding agriculture high school. This was changed in 1965 to a post-secondary school of approximately 300 students. Because it is vocational/technical in nature, the training consists of approximately half of the time being spent learning and the other half of the time learning to do the actual manipulative skills.

In 1976 the Veterinary Technology Department moved most of its classes from the old dairy barn into the Production Agriculture/Veterinary Technology complex. This added 11,000 square feet of building space to the veterinary technology program.

The following items were compliments of Lyle and Carol Rasmussen, who provided much of the information and material for this issue.

Dr. J. J. Lewis had one of the first two-way radio systems in the county (installed in 1955). His wife, Jan, would use it to communicate with him when he was out on a call and direct him to his next call, saving Dr. Lewis a lot of time and travel.

Jerry Singleton, a graduate of Auburn University in Alabama, joined the St. Paul Clinic in 1971. His wife, Nancy, introduced the clinic staff to gourmet southern cooking--one of which was roast possum. The Singletons left in 1973 to return to warmer climates--this time in Arkansas.

In the 50's and 60's, hardware disease was a fairly common malady of cattle. It was caused by a cow ingesting a chunk of metal, often a nail or a piece of wire. The foreign body would lodge in

the cow's reticulum and puncture the lining and diaphragm and occasionally migrate to the heart, where it caused traumatic pericarditis, which was fatal to the animal. The treatment was to perform surgery and remove the foreign body. Doc Lewis had one such case presented to him by a farmer who was known to be fond of beer. Doc, being a practical joker, decided to have some fun. As he was performing the surgery, he had one of his assistants slip him a church key (aka a beer can opener), which he palmed into the stomach through the incision. He then announced to the father and his son who were watching the procedure that he had found something. He proceeded to remove his hand from the incision and held up the beer can opener. The farmer was astounded, but the best part was when his son announced, "Dad, don't you remember when we were putting up hay and you lost your opener in the hay stack?" It was situations like that that made veterinary medicine humorous and fun.

The following was taken from "A Century of Veterinary Medicine in Nebraska" from Chapter 16 on Nebraska Veterinary Humor:

Dr. M. D. Bahensky, Palmer, Nebraska

When I was in practice I always used the name "Nellie" when handling a cow. One day I was at a place driving a cow in the barn and kept saying "get in there Nellie!" The owner had a smile on his face and would laugh once in a while and finally I realized that his wife's name was Nellie. The cow was stubborn but we finally got her in. I went on to a neighbor and was handling a cow calling her "Nellie," so I told him the story about his neighbor and he couldn't stop laughing for a while, then he tells me that his wife's name is Nellie, also.

Dues Are Past Due for 2015

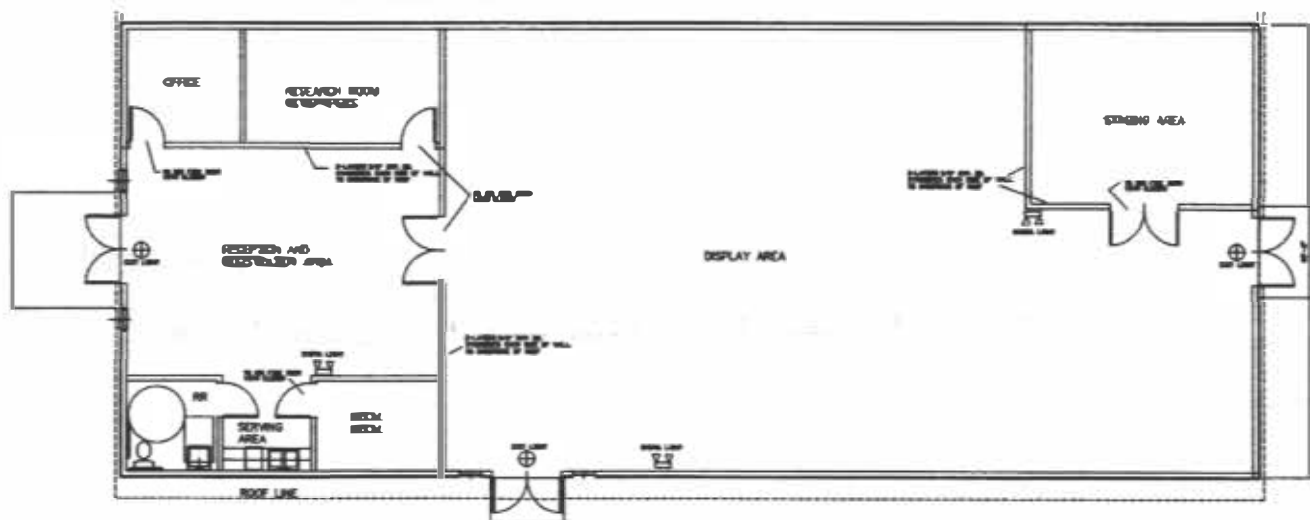
Check your address label, those with a 15 have paid their dues. Thanks.

Dues are \$10.00 a year.

**Send to Howard County Historical Society, P.O. Box 1,
St. Paul, NE 68873.**



The north side of the proposed building at the Howard County Historical Village will be the main entrance. Below are the floor plans, with the north side to the left.



Historical Society Launches Fund Drive for New Building

The Howard County Historical Society is launching a campaign to raise funds to construct a building on the historical society grounds north of the present Agricultural Building. The 40' x 100' building will cost around \$200,000.

A building fund account was established in 2007, when the Society received donations specifically given for an additional building. The new building will be called the Schubert-Nielsen Exhibit Hall in honor of two individuals who left funds to the Howard County Historical Society in their estates. Julia Schubert was a longtime resident of Howard County and Richard Nielsen had ties to the area.

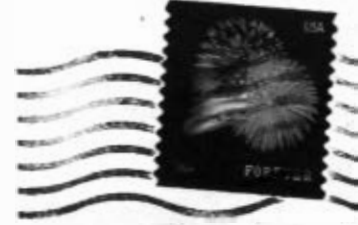
A historical society spokesperson said having a new building will allow the historical society to move the military items and religious memorabilia to a handicap accessible location and allow for the display of numerous other items that are currently misplaced in other buildings or in storage.

Included in the building will be a research room, restroom, meeting room, an office area, as well as a large display area and storage.

The Howard County Historical Society is soliciting donations to complete the project. Donations of \$100 or more will be recognized on a donor board. Donations may be sent to the Howard County Historical Society, P.O. Box 1, St. Paul, NE 68873. Earmark your check "Building Fund."



HOWARD COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P.O. BOX 1
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INSIDE: "Moo-ve Over Doc" contains information on veterinarians that served Howard County. The feature was written by Julie Spilinek.

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