

## BUILT ON THE SHOULDERS OF VETERINARY GIANTS THE GAME

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The date was October 19, 1907 when the Kansas City Veterinary College (KCVC) traveled to Manhattan to play football against the Aggies, as the Wildcats were called then.

The private KC college grew from humble beginnings in 1891 to the fourth-largest veterinary college in the world and one of the two largest in the U.S. Historians believe the KCVC was the finest veterinary college on earth at that time. Nonetheless, a shortage of students caused by WWI and the growth of state-supported veterinary colleges forced the KCVC to close in 1918. KCVC records are archived at KSU.

By 1907, the KCVC was in its final home after growing out of three previous locations. This was a proud facility with several classrooms, a spacious library, a four story auditorium, a judging arena and a large gym. It was located near what was then 15th Street and Lydia Avenue.

The KCVC *Quarterly Bulletin* reported the team traveled from its swank downtown facility to play "The Farmers." However, the *Quarterly* concluded "the outcome was realized early." The Aggies won 33 to 0.

The Manhattan team was coached by the legendary Mike Ahearn. Ahearn holds the greatest winning percentage among all KSU coaches. Between 1905 and 1910 he coached 39 wins against 12 losses for a .765 winning percentage.

The *Quarterly* reported, "The game was an ideal one with regard to wrangling and slugging." That statement may have been a bit PC. Julius Willard indicates in his book *History of the Kansas State College of Agriculture and Applied Science* that games were "rough and tumble," and without the gear players had when Willard wrote his book there were numerous injuries on both sides. It's reported that one Aggie player's leg was broken "by players falling across the leg when his foot was held above the ground." One professor was heard to say, "One does not have to sound the depths of infamy to know what infamy is." Later, the Board of Regents resolved, "We endorse to make the game less brutal."

Games were played at City Square located between Vattier and Ninth Streets and Juliette and Bluemont Avenues. Pictures are a courtesy of the KSU Archives. Today, that area houses Bluemont School and a residential area.

Other facts include: Season tickets were one dollar. The first out-of-state game was played in Nebraska against Creighton. In 1907, the College had 2,192 students. Basketball was first played on the Manhattan campus by young women. CVM professor and football official Dan Upson was run over by Mean Joe Green. Ouch!

Last year, Dr. Upson was named to the bovine practitioners Hall of Fame.

