



# HOWARD COUNTY Mo.

## A STEP BACK INTO ANGUS HISTORY

by Keith Evans

**A** tour of Howard County, Mo., particularly with guides like veteran Angus breeders Dan Miller or R.B. George, is to step back in Angus history almost to the beginning of registered cattle in the United States.

Some of the earliest, best known herds of Angus cattle in this country were in Howard County at the turn of the century. The most famous of course was the herd of Estill and Elliott, established by Wallace Estill and Hugh Elliott in 1882, a year before the founding of the American Angus Assn. Both men

were charter members of the American Angus Assn. and served as presidents of the organization—Elliott in 1894 and Estill during 1895-96.

The beautiful old Estill family home still stands in a grove of stately trees a few miles south of Fayette on Highway 5. In fact, it only recently was sold by the Estill family. The home and farm are near the small settlement of Estill or Estill Station, as some call it. The Estill depot on the Katy railroad, where many a cattleman arrived by train to attend Estill and Elliott sales, is long gone along with the

railroad, but there is still a road sign, a service station and a few other buildings marking the village.

The late John Brown of Rose Hill, Iowa, was born in Boone County, Mo., and raised in Howard County. In 1899, as a teenager, Brown helped prepare sale cattle for Hugh Elliott. Later that year he went to work full time for Wallace Estill. (The two famous breeders dissolved their partnership in 1886 and were at this time operating independently.) One of the Estill cattle barns with a cool basement area where show cattle were kept



*The boyhood home of Wallace Estill stands near Estill, Mo. Only recently, after four generations, did the house and property pass out of the Estill family.*



*Historic Estill, Mo., was the home of the Estill and Elliot Angus herd and center of much Angus activity in the late 19th century. The small village was on the Katy Railroad and is located a few miles south of Fayette.*



The two living charter members of the Howard County Angus Assn. are Dan Miller (left) and R.B. George. Both men are still active members of the association and active breeders of Angus cattle.

during hot summer days is also still standing. In Brown's biography he tells of working in this barn, brushing, cleaning, bedding, blanketing and feeding the show cattle.

But the Angus fame of Howard County is not all in the past. The county has remained a stronghold of the Angus breed. A number of today's Howard County herds have animals that trace back to Estill and Elliott stock. Men like the McLachlan Brothers and Bob Johnson, the famous fitter and showman, came to Howard County to work for Estill and Elliott, and some, like the McLachlins, stayed to buy land and founded their own Angus operations. The Innes family, for example, like many of the early Angus breeders in Howard County were natives of Scotland. They started a herd after the turn of the century and the family is still extremely active in Angus cattle production.

Though Estill and Elliott brought Angus cattle to Howard County, the reason the county and surrounding area remains a strong Angus center is the Howard County Angus Assn. Formed on Aug. 30, 1938, the association was the second local Angus association in the United States to have had a continuous auction. (The first was Mercer County, Ill.) The Howard County Assn. sponsored its first sale in 1939 and has not missed a year since then. But, more important, its members have worked together unselfishly to promote Angus cattle, and to encourage other people to enjoy the satisfaction of breeding registered Angus.

The two men mentioned in the opening paragraph of this story, R.B. George and Dan E. Miller, took part in the organizational meeting in Fayette. Though in their eighties today, both are still active members of the Howard County Assn., active Angus breeders

and the last of the association's charter members.

Unlike some state and local Angus associations, the Howard County Angus Assn. from the start was more than just an organization formed to sponsor a sale. They were a cooperative group that worked to do many things small individual cattlemen could not do on their own.

In the early days of the association, for example, the group used uniform show blankets with "Howard County Angus Assn." on them. Members would bring their cattle to Fayette before a show, load them into one or two trucks, and go as a group, sharing expenses and labor. Not only did they pool their cattle but they pooled their show winnings to pay trucking and other expenses. And as Mr. George explained, "We usually had enough money left over at the end of the show season to pay for a big banquet for all the members."

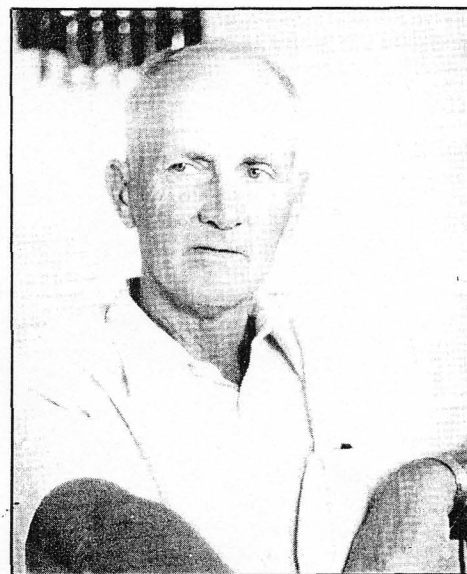
In the early days membership in the Howard County Angus Assn. and participation in its joint activities, was strictly limited to residents or land owners in the county. If at least part of your farm wasn't in the county you weren't eligible for membership—it was as simple as that. For many years one Angus breeder who lived across the county line petitioned unsuccessfully for membership. Some tell that he considered buying a small piece of land in Howard County in order to gain membership in this much admired group.

The reason for starting the association in the first place, according to Dan Miller who for years was county agent in Howard County, was to help the small breeders. In the early 1940s there were some 45 Howard County Angus breeders who were members of the association and many of them had 10 cows

Mrs. Kenneth (Mary Innes) McCutcheon, is the unofficial chronicler of Howard County Angus history and the Howard County Angus Assn.



Garnett Innes, son of the first president of the Howard County Angus Assn. and present secretary of the organization.





or less, said Miller. "One man with 10 cows can't have much of a marketing program," he pointed out, "but when they work together it is amazing what can be done."

Encouragement to form the association was provided by Dick Hahne of the *ANGUS JOURNAL* and by the late Bill Barton, fieldman for the American Angus Assn., and older brother to John Barton, current regional manager for the American Angus Assn. in Missouri. Also instrumental in organizing the group was Frank Richards, who

selected to facilitate rail shipments. The group went to work to raise funds for a modern facility. Area merchants donated several thousand dollars and a livestock raffle produced \$4,000 or so. Enough to build the barn. The barn was used by the association and other groups until it burned on Halloween night in 1968.

Not everyone was sad about the demise of the old sale building. It lacked many features needed in a modern sale facility, and its location along the railroad tracks wasn't

A later president of the American Angus Assn., James Hancock, was a strong supporter of Howard County and Missouri Angus. In 1957 Hancock, working with Ed Stout, fieldman for the Missouri Angus Assn., and Lyle Haring, regional manager for the American Angus Assn., helped organize the HO-CO-MO Junior Angus Breeder and Feeder Club. A unique activity of the club was a contest in "Oral Expression." The organization also sponsored an Angus show, which later unofficially merged into the Howard County Junior Fair. The Howard County Angus Assn. helps to sponsor the event each year by giving trophies to Angus winners.

The Innes family has been instrumental in Howard County Angus activities since at least 1902. First president of the Howard County Angus Assn. was J.F. Innes. His son, Garnett Innes, is secretary of the association today, and Mrs. Kenneth (Mary Innes) McCutcheon is unofficial historian for the group. Her notes and scrapbooks were used extensively in preparation of this article.

But two people who have had much to do with the success of the Howard County Angus Assn. are Dan Miller and R.B. George.

Miller was county agent in Howard County for many years, and a leader in livestock improvement activities. As early as 1937 Miller had encouraged Howard County breeders to consign 20 of the 200 bulls to a sale sponsored by the agricultural extension service. The 20 head averaged \$120. Miller was also, for many years, secretary of the Missouri Angus Assn., and a statewide leader in Angus activities. He was one of the first people in the nation to enroll in the American Angus Assn.'s Angus Herd Improvement Records Program, and the Missouri Beef Cattle Improvement Program.

---

*Some of the earliest, best known herds of Angus cattle in this country were in Howard County at the turn of the century.*

---

at that time was manager of the Kansas City Daily Drivers Telegram. Richards was later secretary of the American Angus Assn. from 1946 through 1963.

The first sale was planned for April 18, 1938, in Fayette. Frank Richards worked with the group to design a sale catalog and William Barton and Dick Hahne helped select the cattle. About eight years later a fall sale was added to the program, and both sales are still sponsored by the association. That first sale on Tuesday, April 18, consisted of 27 bulls and 75 females. The average was \$148 with a cow from Herndale Stock Farm topping at \$300.

Youth work was an early part of the association's program. In 1940 the group organized what they believe to be the first junior Angus association in the country. It was a 4-H cow-and-calf club. A story in the 1941 Missouri Ruralist reported there were 32 club members, only four of whom had parents who were members of the Howard County Angus Assn. So in effect, 28 new herds had been formed in the county. The youngsters, if they didn't have money, bought their cattle on credit and either Dan Miller or R.B. George co-signed their notes.

The first association sale was held in the elevator building in Fayette and in a tent put up beside it. This arrangement continued until 1947 when R.B. George invited members to have the sale at his farm and put up a tent. A gale force wind kept pulling tent stakes out of the ground and nearly played havoc with the sale. But what veteran members remember most about this event was that auctioneer, Roy Johnston, brought along a young man fresh out of the army. "Roy said the boy wanted to be an auctioneer and he wanted to know if it would be okay to let him sell some of the cattle," R.B. George explained. "We said sure, and the young auctioneer, Ray Sims, sold the heifers. I think it was his first purebred sale."

Immediately after the sale, association members met and 10 people pledged \$100 each to build an all breed sale barn in Fayette. A site near the railroad tracks was

the most desirable, especially since no cattle had been shipped to or from the sale by rail since the first auction there in 1948. The building was insured for \$10,000 and members decided they would put the money to good use. With support of the Howard County Angus Assn., the Howard County Purebred Livestock Breeders Assn. was re-organized, and R.B. George was elected president.

The insurance money was used to construct a large holding barn adjacent to the Howard County Feeder Cattle Assn. sale barn. The facility can be used for shows as well as to house sale cattle.

There have been many changes in the Howard County Angus Assn. since 1938. For one, membership was opened up in 1950. This became necessary because of increase in herd sizes and decline in the number of

---

*The Howard County Angus Assn. from the start was more than just an organization formed to sponsor a sale.*

---

really small Angus herds in the county. There are now about 40 members of the association from Howard and adjoining counties.

Two sales are still sponsored by the group. In 1982 there were 150 head in the spring and 100 in the fall event. Consignments average 80 to 100 head in the fall event and 135 or so in the spring sale. Each year the association sponsors a tour of registered Angus herds and other points of interest in the area. Their annual meeting and banquet has become a traditional social event.

From the beginning there has been strong Angus leadership in Howard County. Wallace Estill and Hugh Elliott were the first. John Brown, who became famous as an Iowa cattle breeder, but whose roots were firmly planted in Howard County, also served as president of the American Angus Assn.

R.B. George worked as assistant secretary-treasurer of the Howard County Angus Assn. from its beginning until 1947 when he was elected secretary-treasurer, a post he served in until 1952. He attended the organizational meeting of the Missouri Angus Assn. and served as vice president in 1942 and president in 1950.

Many local associations have had problems with membership and participation in recent years. But the Howard County Assn. programs are sound, as is their goal of maintaining Howard County as a major Angus center. Given their heritage, their program, determination of their leaders and the bright future for Angus cattle, there is every reason to believe the Howard County Angus Assn. will play as dominant a role in the future as it has in the past.

AJ

# BIOGRAPHICAL EXCERPTS GIVE INSIGHT TO HOWARD COUNTY ANGUS HISTORY

*Editor's note—this excerpt is from a biography of the late John Brown, Rose Hill, Iowa, and written by Colin Kennedy in 1947 for the ANGUS JOURNAL. In this portion of the biography Brown tells how, as a teenager, he worked for both Wallace Estill and Hugh Elliott, pioneer Angus breeders in Howard County, Mo.*

I was born in Boone County, Mo., and raised in Howard County. Back in the 1880s and 1890s Howard County was a pioneer stronghold of the breed. Here in Howard County were the Estill and Elliott herds from which have come the ancestors of many of our top cattle of today. Originally it was the Estill and Elliott herd but the partnership was dissolved in 1886 and two herds were maintained on adjoining farms. I was acquainted with both herds and both farms as my father was a farm manager for Will Estill, brother of Wallace Estill.

It was in 1899 that I decided I wanted to learn the business. Hugh Elliott was preparing for an April sale in Kansas City so I got a job of helping get the cattle ready for that auction. Hugh Elliott sold 60 head of young cattle in the Kansas City sale and nearly 50 of them were sired by Polar Star. The average of these young cattle was \$200, a very good price for the time and a good price for short-aged cattle.

This first experience with Aberdeen-Angus cattle was an exciting experience for a teen-aged boy. And while the sale meant the end of my job, it did not mean the end of my search for experience. But as good as was the Walnut Grove herd of cattle the top herd of the day was that of Wallace Estill, of Woodland Farms. It was here I resumed my Aberdeen-Angus education. The date I remember distinctly—June 1, 1899.

I imagine my decision to work for Wallace Estill was based largely on the fact that Mr. Estill had the top show herd of the day. He was a great believer in showing and he was a great promoter of this newer breed of cattle. So the desire to be connected with the top cattle, and the top breeders of the day, was only natural. We all like winners. There was also another factor. In his herdsman, Bob Johnson, Mr.

Estill had the top feeder and fitter of the time. Bob was an Englishman with a somewhat fiery temper. But he knew cattle as few men did and he knew how to get them ready and how to show them. I figured the Estill herd offered a great opportunity to learn the business.

I do have to smile a little when some of the young fellows of today complain of the rugged life of a herdsman. Bob Johnson was an exacting and particular man to work for. All hands had to be at the show barn and get the cattle in from the pasture at 4 a.m. This was before sprays and flies were a big summer problem. Being on the job at 4 a.m. meant that I had to get up at 3 a.m., get my noon day lunch packed and walk the mile to the Estill show barn. The day was filled with brushing and cleaning, feeding and bedding, teaching cattle to lead and to stand, and the hundreds of other details that go into the making of a herdsman. One must remember this was in the days before electric lights, running water, electric clippers and other modern show barn helps.

In spite of our early start this did not mean we were through at 6 in the evening. Bob Johnson, and other herdsmen of his day, were very particular about turning out cattle at night. This was never done before 8 or 8:30 p.m., again because of flies. After this we had to clean the stalls so they would dry out before cattle were brought back to the show barn early in the morning. This meant I was seldom home before 10 at night. What was the pay for this 16-hour day? Well, I got the going wages of that time—50 cents a day or \$15 a month. But the training I was receiving was too valuable to be considered only in dollars and cents.

Our immediate job was getting the show herd in shape for the summer fairs. In those days this meant Des Moines, Minneapolis, Milwaukee, Indianapolis, Springfield and St. Louis. In 1899 the Missouri State Fair was at St. Louis and there was no American Royal or International.

It was a great show herd with which to be connected; one of the greatest ever assembled by Wallace Estill. As it turned out it was the last show herd presented by this great Aberdeen-Angus breeder and breed promoter. At the head of the herd that year was 10th Laird of Estill. In my mind he rates as one of the greatest bulls of the breed both as an individual and as to breeding. Later he proved he

was also a great sire. Also in the herd that year was the great show cow, Lucia Estill. Heading the young bulls was Paragon of Estill, by Heather Lad 2d. The two bulls were never defeated in class that year. 10th Laird of Estill was grand champion at every show and the younger bull was junior champion. Lucia Estill was first in class and grand champion cow at every show except Springfield.

10th Laird of Estill was a bull destined to play an important part in my career as herdsman and breeder in the years ahead—and, more important, to the great benefit of the breed as a whole. For the pedigree of the great Earl Marshall twice contains his name as a grandsire of his sire and as a grandsire of his dam.

At the request of his father, who was in bad health, Wallace Estill announced the dispersion of the Woodland herd for March of 1900 in Chicago. The sale was held in the Dexter Park pavilion where the first of our national shows and sales were held. I recall we used the same ramp as in the national sales to move the cattle from the upstairs stalls. A lot of breed history has been written in that old barn in the Chicago Stockyards! For the Estill dispersion proved to be the greatest sale of the breed in America up to that time.

Col. Fred Woods was the auctioneer and the 72 head brought an average of \$579.30. A record price. The cow selling for \$2,800, a record price for an Aberdeen-Angus female, was Lucia Estill, by Heather Lad 2d. The buyer was William A. McHenry, of Denison, Iowa. Mr. McHenry for a number of years had been a leading competitor of the Estill herd.

Near the end of the second day of selling 10th Laird of Estill was brought in. He had an enlarged testicle which was to his great disadvantage. Many bidders were afraid of him. He eventually sold for \$1,150, a real bargain as it turned out. The buyer, of course, was Mr. McHenry.

The dispersion of the Estill herd did not put me out of a job. Prior to the sale Mr. McHenry hired Bob Johnson as his herdsman and I went along as his assistant. So, from the greatest herd of the 1890s I went to work for a herd which was destined to become the greatest Aberdeen-Angus establishment of its time.

AJ