

It's a Golden Anniversary for Howard County

On March 21, 1988, the Howard County Angus Breeders' Assn. will hold its 50th Annual Spring Sale of registered Angus cattle. Breeders have made a special effort to fulfill the original aim of the association to make the sale a "showcase" for the kind of Angus being produced in their herds.

"Working together is the spirit in historic Howard County," wrote Frank Richards in the *St. Louis Livestock Reporter* in 1947. "Almost a decade earlier the Angus breeders of Howard County, Mo. had formed the first county breed association. At that time there were no other county Angus organizations in Missouri, so the Howard Countians were taking more of a forward step than they knew considering the number of such organizations in existence today."

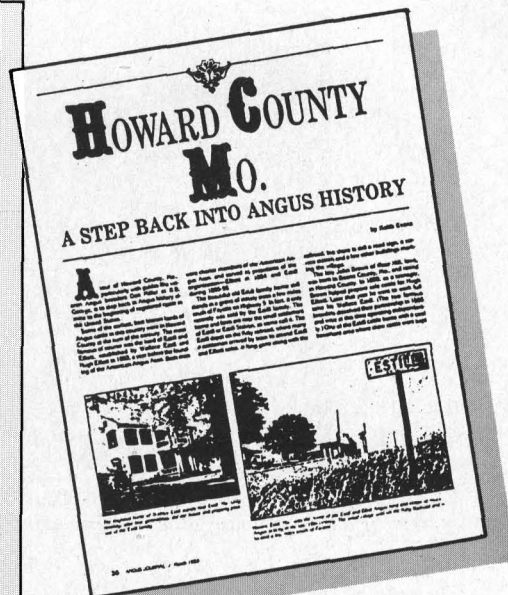
During the 1938 Missouri State Fair, Mr. Richards, then a field man for the *Corn Belt Dailies*, suggested to J.F. Innes, veteran Angus breeder from Fayette, Mo., that the county breeders form an association similar to the one working in Mercer County, Ill. On August 30, 1938, a group of breeders met at the county courthouse in Fayette with William Barton (older brother of John Barton, American Angus Assn. regional manager), the American Angus Assn. representative, to form an association. Officers elected were president, J.F. Innes; vice president, John W. Tippett; secretary-treasurer, L.W. Brockman; and assistant secretary-treasurer, R.B. George. Other charter members were Dan E. Miller, Charles P. Innes, Ortho McCorkle, Ross Hutchison, R.L. McLachlan, L.L. Moore, Herbert Muir, and Wirt Stanley.

The first association sale was held in Fayette, April 18, 1939, in an old elevator building. Catalog advisor was Frank Richards who with L.W. Brockman and R.B. George prepared copy for the catalog.

William Barton and R.H. Hahne accompanied a selection committee for choosing the sale cattle. Fifty-two head—27 bulls and 25 females—were sold for an average price of \$148.50, not a bad price considering that area farmers were emerging from the depressed years of the 1930s when many registered Angus cows were sold for less than \$75.

In the 1960s the association was opened to consignors from neighboring counties who have played an important role in keeping the sale numbers and quality attractive to the many repeat and new buyers. In addition to the 50 annual spring sales, the association has held 42 annual fall sales and four May sales. There are now 52 members of the association.

A number of the herds have been designated as Historic Herds and several were Centennial Herds. Three descendents of the original charter members are consignors to the 50th Anniversary sale. Five active commercial Angus herds in the county are owned by the families of other charter members.



An article prepared by Keith Evans and appearing in the *Angus Journal* of March, 1983, describes in greater detail the events, and more important, the spirit that shaped this notable local Angus association. Keith's research traced the threads of Howard County and Angus cattle being woven together by Estill and Elliott, 1882.

It was the era of pioneering and the Missouri frontier was still fresh in many memories. Breeders of vision, Wallace Estill and Hugh Elliott were both charter members of the American Angus Assn. and served as its president (Elliott, 1894, and Estill, 1895-6). As Keith points out, railroads were a vital link for not only shipping cattle but bringing buyers to the sales. And, while that may have been typical across the country, Estill's basement in the barn to keep the cattle cool in the summer must have been most atypical.

Another president of the American Angus Assn. was part of this era, one who considered Howard County an important cornerstone in his Angus career. John Brown, whose biography was presented by Colin Kennedy in a 1947 *Angus Journal*, recounted working for both Elliott and Estill.

He became a herdsman as a teenager, June 1, 1899, a date he pegged as the beginning of his Angus education. Brown told Kennedy he had to smile when he heard the herdsman of 1947 bemoaning their rugged lot. There were no electric lights, running water, electric clippers, fans and the like when he began his trade. He worked under the tutelage of a fiery-tempered Englishman named Bob Johnson who insisted the cattle be brought in at 4 a.m. for the brushing, breaking to lead, and the other chores attending to their needs. Cattle were not returned to the pasture until nightfall because of the flies in the summer. Wages for the 16-hour day were 50 cents or \$15 a month.



Mrs. Kenneth (Mary Innes) McCutcheon is the official chronicler of Howard County Angus history and the association.

The show circuit was Des Moines, Minneapolis, Milwaukee, Indianapolis, Springfield, and St. Louis. Brown recalled helping at an Elliott sale where the average price was \$200 a head for young cattle sired by Polar Star. At the dispersal sale of Wallace Estill and his father, the average price was \$579.30 a round with many in the offering carrying the breeding of the 10th Laird of Estill, ancestor of the famed Earl Marshall. The year was 1900.

Sales prompted the cooperation so vital and characteristic of the Howard

County group. Banding together sped things along and allowed so much more to be done which individually would not have been possible. Consequently, the links were forged for an unbroken chain of sales that began in 1939. Colonel Roy Johnston sold one post-war Howard County event and introduced a veteran fresh from the conflict, asking the sale managers if it would be all right for the new man to sell some of the heifers. The career of Ray Sims took root in Howard County.

Howard Countians believe their group organized the first junior Angus association in the country through a 4-H cow-and-calf club in 1940. *The Missouri Ruralist* reported in 1941, there were 32 club members, of whom only four had parents who were members of the Howard County Angus Assn. Stalwarts of the association, Dan E. Miller and R.B. George, arranged for financing or co-signed the youngsters' notes. Both George and Miller, charter members of the group, continued active into their eighties.

Other innovations included the "Howard County Angus Assn." show blankets draped over the show entries. Trucking to the show became a kind of rural busman's holiday akin to a barn-raising where labor, expenses, and show winnings were pooled for both the good and camaraderie of the group. Folks even tried to buy a chunk of Howard County land so they could qualify for membership in the much-admired group.

A sale barn was built, Keith records, it burned down; funds were raised for another; a more intensive junior program was initiated which set the pattern for the county's junior fair. George and Miller went on to positions of leadership in the Missouri Angus Assn. and prevailed just as the association does today. Which proves good stock endures and even triumphs.

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