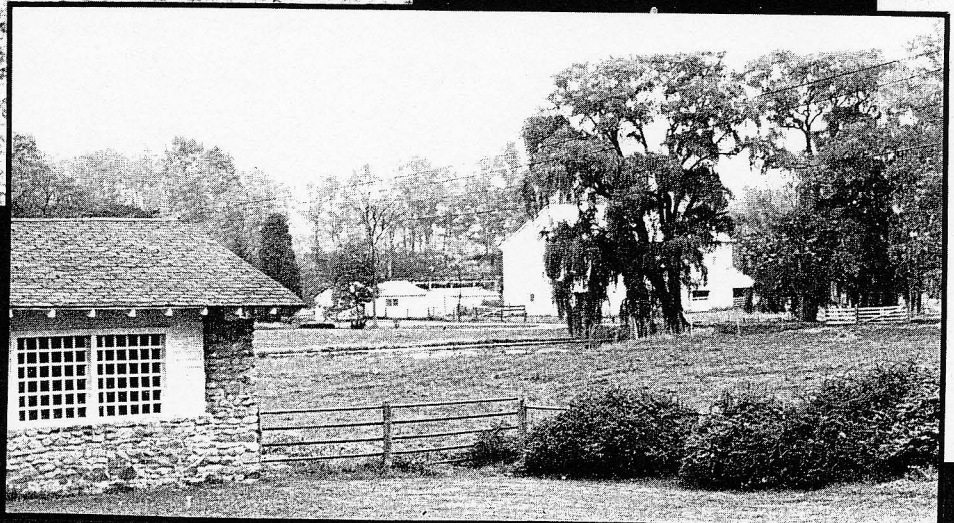




Logan Spring Farm

by Nancy Ann Sayre

Logan Spring Farm takes its name from the 500 gallon-a-minute spring where the Indian Chief Logan once had his lodge and early militia gathered. Gilbert Watts originally operated an extensive vegetable and berry business here; now he and his daughter Betty are partners in the production of Angus cattle and Christmas trees.



Gilbert Watts says he entered the cattle business "sidewise."

While expanding a well established vegetable and berry business, he rented five additional farms in the Bellwood, Pa., area. Since much of the land was not suitable for the produce operation, Watts turned to cattle to utilize hay and grain those acres could yield.

That was nearly 40 years ago and Watts had already celebrated his 50th birthday. Watts Farms exited the produce business a decade ago, but today Gilbert and his wife Mary still live above what was once their vegetable packing house. Their daughter Betty Jacobus and her husband Robert also live on the farm—Gilbert and Betty are partners in a Christmas tree operation as well as Logan Spring Angus.

A solid start

Watts' venture into the cattle business for the first few years involved feeding steers. Logan Spring Angus traces to 1948 and the purchase of 40 commercial Angus heifers. Top quality registered bulls were used from the start and five purebred heifers were added in 1951, forming the base of Watts' purebred operation.

Those registered females were selected from Clyde Bonar's Burlington, W.Va., herd. "A major factor in that choice," reflects Watts, "was their attractive size and condition without creep feeding on a drought-burned pasture—unmistakable evidence of milking and mothering ability in the cows and good-doing ability in the calves. Bred to calve first as 2-year-olds, each produced 14 to 16 calves in her lifetime. There are many descendants in the herd today."

Such an explanation summarizes many of the guiding principles of this time-tested herd: Productivity, fertility, maternal traits, growth and longevity under practical conditions.

For a horticulturist who entered the Angus business "sidewise," Gilbert Watts had a firm grasp on basics from the start. His priorities have remained unchanged and firm.

Setting sights

"The most important thing that we have to do is set our sights right," offers this respected cattleman and gentleman.

His sights were leveled early on becoming a dependable source of bulls and females for repeat customers. Long-range goals in mind, Watts eased into the registered business. He comments now, "I'd rather have a first class commercial herd than a second-rate purebred herd."

Building on the qualities he searched for in his initial selections, Watts has developed a uniform herd of consistent producers, a steady market and solid reputation. No extremes and no high prices, but a system which weathers nature's hardships and the demands of area breeders.

This early believer in performance has always emphasized maternal excellence. Simply put, a female must perform to stay at Logan Spring.

"Any heifer has got to calve when she's right around two years old," Watts says. "If she can't do that we can't afford to keep her. Then she better keep on having them on time if she wants to stay here."

"We don't care much about her if she's a 1,600- to 1,700-lb. cow. In fact, we don't

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—Gilbert Watts

like her unless she weighs somewhere between 1,050 and 1,300 lb. by the time she's developed. We've had families of cows (a great many years ago) that weighed 1,500 lb., but they didn't do any better for us than good producing, middle-of-the-road cows."

Creep feeding is not even a question at this farm tucked between two mountain ranges. "We are trying to raise cows that will produce big, growthy calves in these northeastern conditions," Watts explains. "Creep feeding can cover up a cow that won't do that—we want to reveal the best mother cows."

Maternal traits have been nurtured and intensified for several generations through a selection process based on such straightforward philosophies. No outside animals have been introduced into the herd for many years, but A.I. use (for 10 years) has enabled Watts to build on some of the best genetics available.

Contact of Wye was the first A.I. sire selected. More recently, the influence of Bandalier Eston Durness 42B ("Pacesetter"), Jetliner 707 of Conanga and PS Power Play has added to the genetic strength of the herd.

About a dozen cows are bred A.I. each spring and sons of the nationally used sires are then put to work in Watts' pastures—the system adds new blood while building on a sound maternal base.

Practical management, complete records

Logan Spring management centers around the comfort and well being of the herd, yet cattle are not pampered or pushed hard for growth.

"Feeding for good growth, not fastest gains," stresses Watts, "produces better working cattle, both sexes included."

And such a feeding scheme is more economical as well. The program grew from a need to utilize grass and hay on nontillable land, and it still revolves around the efficient use of grazing, various hays, silage and limited grain.

Carefully guided genetics and realistic management provide a consistent product, and Watts makes sure customers know just what they are buying. Long before performance records were popular for their promotional value—in fact, before handy AHIR records were available—Watts was carrying a complete fact sheet as his most important sales tool.

For any Logan Spring animal, Watts can readily offer individual performance figures, a production summary and ancestral data. Prospective customers are encouraged to know about a bull's dam, grandam and even great grandams. Records are hand written and frequently quoted. After all, says Watts, data and knowhow won't help if they stay in the farm office.

Watts sells about 20 bulls in an average year. Most sales are private treaty and the majority of the yearlings go to repeat local customers. Early spring calves (most are born in February) are ready for light service by the next May and suit the area market. Those bulls that do not sell as yearlings are shipped to market.

Eye of the master not ignored

Basics of performance are the key here, but Watts depends on his trained eye along with production figures. As he wrote for the Pennsylvania Farmer last year:

"Now computerized ratios, indices, estimated breeding values and more contribute mightily to herd improvement. They

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help identify individuals to keep or to cull, and for mating.

"These aids serve most reliably when used with understanding and judgement, but not always when used to promote fads or extremes. Not weight, not length, any more than color tell us enough.

"In light of human inclination to become enamored of new ways and new things, I wonder if we may be underestimating 'the eye of the master.' A sharp and discerning eye will evaluate the essential but imponderable and unmeasurable characteristics such as skeletal soundness, vigor, disposition, femininity, masculinity and more.

"A critical eyeballing, after weights and measurements are acceptable, gives us much of the rest we ought to know about our animal. Is it or is it not a well balanced entity?

"In our operation we have come to rely not too heavily on yearling weights and indices, important though they are. After working, and in a sense living intimately, with the youngsters over the winter we get a real feel for each animal as an individual. We also see how they compare with well proven relatives in the herd."

He warns breeders, though, against selection on a purely cosmetic basis:

"Years ago in Virginia, I was loading a bunch of feeder steers. The owner's neighbor across the road came over to help. Often as I passed that way I had admired that neighbor's Herefords. I complimented him sincerely. He replied, 'I have spent most of a lifetime developing the best looking, poorest milking herd of Herefords in the state.'

"Perhaps a few myopic operators are doing the same to Angus. Anyway, that breeder's efforts brought results, cosmetic so to speak. Long continued emphasis on one or two traits can risk impairment

of others, often economically important ones, too."

Customer in mind

Watts had economics in mind from the start, says his daughter Betty, but the purpose at Logan Spring has always been to provide quality.

"We are very particular and very careful about the animals we sell to breeders and young people," she adds. "We really try to live by the motto: If an animal is not one we can see succeeding here, then we don't want to sell it. That imposes its own restrictions—we cannot be altruistic, but we must be honest about our cattle."

Watts have always been staunch supporters of state and area sales, field days and other association events. Although most of their business is private treaty, participation and involvement have served to promote the Logan Spring product. They have always offered some of their best and were specially recognized by the Pennsylvania Angus Assn. for that support in 1973. Gilbert was also named the state's outstanding seed stock producer for the Angus breed's centennial year.

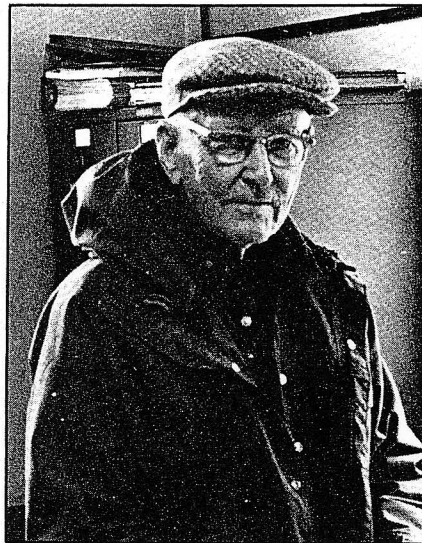
Betty has been involved in management decisions at Logan Spring for the past 15 years. (She and her husband Robert are purchasing the herd, machinery and land over time.) Betty teaches gifted children full time and loves her work, but plans to continue in the Angus business.

"I look forward to keeping the Logan Spring herd going with good-doing, practical cattle," she says. Her comments re-

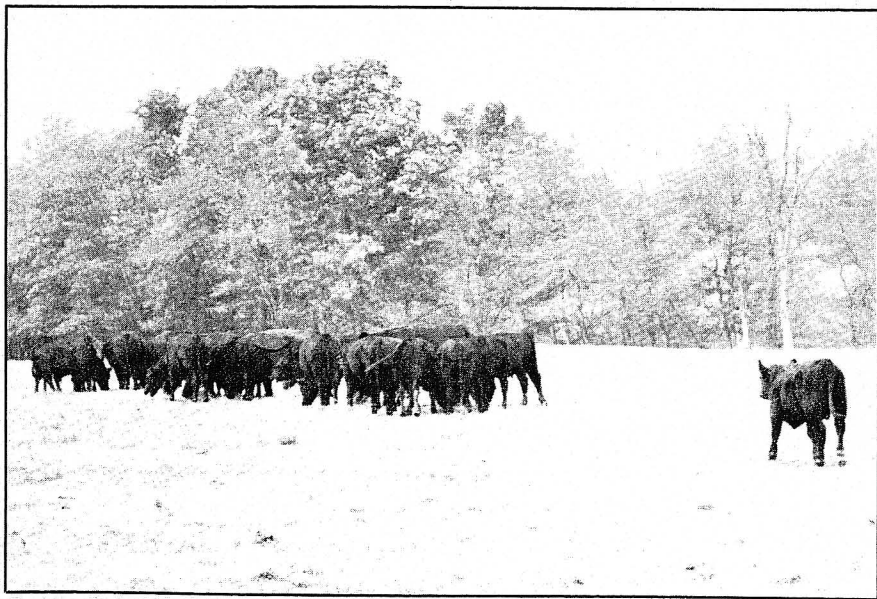
flect many of her father's well tested views.

Gilbert Watts, though, is far from retirement. Once the driving force behind a vegetable and berry business which spanned half a century and included some 150 acres, this ambitious farmer also ran a truck line which shipped the fresh produce to Philadelphia and Baltimore, wrote a regular column for the Pennsylvania Farmer and more. He spent most of his life working 100-hour weeks and, at 87, he only wishes he still could.

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Gilbert Watts is well respected in the Northeast for his quality product and involvement with other breeders. Logan Spring has been a staunch supporter of state Angus events and, as Gilbert's daughter Betty explains, they strive to offer only cattle which would succeed in their program.



Logan Spring females have been selected for strong maternal traits for many generations. Top A.I. sires are sampled in the 60-head herd annually, but no outside animals have entered the operation for years.