

P E N N S Y L V A N I A A N G U S A S S O C I A T I O N

50 Years Strong

by Janet Mayer



Known as the Keystone State because of its position among the original 13 colonies, Pennsylvania is also recognized as a keystone in the development of the Angus breed. From this state, whose name means Penn's Woods after William Penn, have come breeders and herds that have helped build the foundation and reputation of the American Angus Association.

During 1994 the Pennsylvania Angus Association will celebrate its 50th anniversary. A gala affair, "Black Cold Field Day," will be held Aug. 19-20 at South Branch Farms, York, to celebrate the anniversary. Hosted by the Robert Kinsley Family, the event will feature Angus memorabilia, early Angus breeders, educational speakers, and a commemorative quilt raffle. The quilt squares were made by various farms and assembled by the Pennsylvania Angus Auxiliary.

Although the date to be commemorated this year is the 50th, it is actually 53 years since a group of Pennsylvania men, dedicated to the Angus breed, met in Harrisburg to form a state association. However, it wasn't until Jan. 20, 1944, that by-laws were established and a charter was issued.

Of the group that met that cold day in January 1941, R.C. McElroy, who is 104 years old and enjoying relatively good health at his farm in Erie, is the lone surviving charter member of the Pennsylvania Aberdeen Angus Association.

At the time of the group's first meeting, Angus cattle had already gained prominence as one of the more trouble-free beef breeds in the country. In the state of Pennsylvania, breeders were steadily increasing in number. In fact, the breeders had become so numerous, three groups had already formed Angus associations within the state: Brandywine Angus Club, encompassing the southeast part of the state from Gettysburg to New Jersey; the Northeast Club, the area around Sunbury and Towanda; and the Western Club, which encompassed the western part of the state.

Although information is sketchy on that first meeting, it is known Norman Davidson of Kennett Square served as president. All three clubs sent representatives. From the Northeast Association came representatives whom records fail to identify by name. From the Brandywine Association, the Myrin Family, who established the

1943-1944 Harold Hamilton served as the leader. Taking the helm in 1945 was James L. Tarrance, and in 1946-1947, Samuel L. Smedley Jr. Maurice V. Hitt was president in 1948 and in 1949. Ushering in 1950 was Allen F. SchmalL

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These men and women are serving as officers and directors of the Pennsylvania Angus Association for 1994. Seated from left are: Barbara Weaver, New Holland, id, secretary; Harry Bachman, Annville, president; Dale Rains, Mercer, vice president; and Traci Thomson, Wysox, treasurer. Standing from left are directors: David Wise, Friedens; Sandy Snider, New Enterprise; Tim Livingston, Dover; Cheryl Fairbairn, Coatesville; John McCullough, Mercer; and Brad Bishard, York.

Soleil Herd, attended. Those attending from the Western Club were R.C. McElroy, John Woods and Quincv Tait.

Many of the original group have left a legacy in the breed. Johns Wood's breeding lives on in his daughters' herds of McKean Brothers and Rains Angus. R.C. McElroy's daughter, Elizabeth Geer, still maintains the herd at Ridgemeade Farm. Raymond Tait carries on the tradition of his father, Quincy, at Koolspring.

In the early days of the association, Davidson continued as president, and in

able names as Alimar Farms; Berwyn; Jefferson Farms; Butler Farms; Soleil Farms; Logan Spring Farm; Heckmere Highlands; Eisenhower Farm, owned by the late President Dwight D. Eisenhower; and Leader Farms, owned by Guy Leader, father of former Governor George Leader. The association was active during the decade of the 1950s, with the services of full-time executive secretary and fieldman, Scott French. An association office was maintained in Harrisburg. French was employed as secretary until 1954 when Francis Encisco took

over the position. He was employed for only two years; the position was then eliminated because of a lack of funds.

It was in 1954 that Conrad Grove, Downingtown joined the state association. Grove recalls the membership was about three times as large as the current membership, which numbers about 130. Grove went on to take an active leadership role in his state as well as the American Angus Association. He served on the national board of directors from 1987 to 1992.

After the elimination of the paid secretary's position because of a lack of funds, Gilbert Watts took over as secretary. "I would have to credit Gilbert with holding the association together through a difficult time," Grove says. "Without his dedication, I'm not sure the association would have survived." Watts served as secretary of the association for many years.

During the 50s, two state sales were held, one in the spring at Millarden Farm in Annville, and another in the fall at the Guernsey barn, east of Lancaster. Both were managed by French and Encisco. Grove says many of these state-sponsored sales averaged \$450 to \$550 per animal.

He feels that in the early (lays of the association, the groups from Harrisburg on east had more input than the group in the west. The Brandywine Club had the largest membership, especially from the mid-'50s to 1960. Today it is the smallest. This is due mainly, Grove says, to the fact the club was dissolved in the mid 1960s and that many of the farms in this part of the state have been developed into housing projects. In July 1954, at what the association called its 14th annual meeting, Glenn Menngle, president of Brockway Glass Company and president of the association, presented the group with a glass that bore the names of the first 10 presidents of the association. Two of those glasses still exist. One is in the possession of Grove; the other is being kept by the current secretary, Barbara Weaver.

During the 1950s Herman Purdy came to Pennsylvania State University to supervise the beef cattle herd. Purdy later gained international fame as a livestock



(L to r) April walker, queen; Nancy Livingston, Pennsylvania Angus Auxiliary president; Barbara Weaver, Pennsylvania Angus Association secretary; and Georgiana Riley were instrumental in the construction of PAA's commemorative quilt,

judge and advisor for many cattle herds in Pennsylvania including the Eisenhower herd. After his retirement from the university, Purdy established the Huntingdon Farms herd, now owned by John and Katie Dawes.

On June 3, 1955 the Brandywine Angus Breeder's Association presented an Angus cow-calf pair to then President Eisenhower at Gettysburg. This was the beginning of the Eisenhower Angus herd. Purdy became (attic advisor for the herd and purchases were made from many famous herds, including some in Pennsylvania, such as Heckmere Highlands, Millarden Farms and Nittany Farm. Eisenhower cattle went on to win many national Angus shows. On Aug. 18, 1990 a centennial Angus sale was held at the Eisenhower Farm to commemorate Eisenhower's involvement with the breed and his 100th birthday. Represented at the sale were 28 Aligns breeders from 11 states.

In 1969 Grove bought a hull for Soleil Farms from South Dakota's Erdmann Ranch. This introduced larger framed bulls in the state.

In the 1970s and 1980s, performance winners from the state began to capture national attention. Pennsylvania cattle were well established in the minds of the nations breeders. No list would be complete without mentioning the Pennsylvania State University herd, under the supervision of Erskine Cash, which produced PS Power Play, a bull that has sired more Pathfinder daughters than any other. Also not to be

forgotten are operations such as Genetics Unlimited, GH2 Angus, Indian Creek, Fox Hill, McKean Brothers, Rains Angus, Stonylonesome and Meadow Mid.

In 1983, under the strong leadership and presidency of Fred 1 Frey, The Pennsylvania Breeders' Show was successfully established. It continues to be held each year at Centre Hall.

Throughout its history, the association has promoted youth and junior activities. Believing that promotion and support of young Angus breeders should be a priority of all adult members, Gilbert Watts and Conrad Grove formed a committee to establish the Pennsylvania Junior Angus Association. Through the years the junior program has provided an opportunity for members to go on to be leaders at the state and national level.

Two juniors, Diane Krause and Lori (Cash) Voight, have held the title of Miss American Angus. Lori and her brother Chad have served on the National Junior Angus Association Board, with Chad serving as chairman. Two Pennsylvanians, Lori and Sam Wylie, hold the distinction of being the only members from the state to win the National Junior Angus Showmanship Contest.

Other names in the Pennsylvania Angus Association that should be mentioned are Mick Colvin, former fieldman for the state, who is director of the Certified Angus Beef Program, West Salem, Ohio. Other former fieldmen include Milton Miller, James Coyner, Dick Beck, Chester Hughes and the present regional manager Bill Powell.

President Harry Bachman, who is in his second term of office, believes the association is blessed with an outstanding group of breeders. "As I have traveled across the state to visit herds, attend auctions and be a part of these special Aligns events, the enthusiasm shown never ceases to amaze me.

I know the members will keep up the good work. 'Angus Fever' will be even greater than it was in the first 50 years," he says.