

MEMBERSHIP TIPS

by Jerry Cassady, director of member services



In the beginning...

As I write this column for the final month of 2023, I find myself reflecting on the successes of the American Angus Association and the envious position we hold in the beef industry.

But how did all this begin? Angus enthusiasts may be familiar with some level of knowledge of the breeds origin in Scotland, or the journey of George Grant to western Kansas. However, many additional facts relating to the storied foundation of the Angus breed may be of interest to you.

Angus roots

Evidence suggests polled cattle existed in Scotland as early as 600 A.D., and black cattle dating back to 1523. In the 1800s, the blending of two strains of black polled cattle in northeast Scotland created the distinct breed we know today as Angus cattle — doddies (meaning “wanting horns”) in the county of Angus from Hugh Watson, and hummlies in the county of Aberdeen from William McCombie. These two counties, or “shires,” are the birthplace of modern-day Angus cattle.

North America

The first importation of Angus cattle to North America was not to the United States, but to Canada through the Hudson Bay in 1859, 14 years prior to any arriving to the United States. Many of the early records of these cattle were lost or destroyed.

Later, additional imports occurred at the Ontario Experimental Farm in Guelph, Ontario. “The first of the breed born in North America”

is commemorated on a plaque in Guelph recognizing the birth of Eyebright 2nd Jan. 12, 1877, and she was later sold to Kansas State College in Manhattan, Kan. The first public auction of Angus in North America was also hosted at the Experimental Farm in 1881.

George Grant and George Grant

To add to the complexity of our history, we have more than one significant founder who shared a common name. Although not related, both lived during a similar time period and had significant influence on our breed.

Sir George Macpherson-Grant was a Scottish landowner, cattle breeder and politician. He was the baron of the famous Ballindalloch Castle, which has the oldest herd of Angus cattle in Scotland. In 1860 he bought a cow named Erica, which started the well-known bloodline that still lives in our pedigrees today.

In the early 1870s, George Grant, a Scottish silk merchant, was in North America looking for a place to retire. He visited Canada, Virginia and California. As fate would have it, heading back east from California, the train made a stop in Hays, Kan. He was taken by the landscape, which seemed perfect for livestock.

George loaded four Angus bulls on the steamship Alabama and headed back to Kansas from Scotland on a six-week journey to the new land.

This was 150 years ago, as they departed Glasgow April 1, 1873, and arrived in Victoria, Kan., in mid-May.

At the time, Grant was the largest landholder in the United States. Grant crossed the bulls with native longhorn cows, resulting in a large number of black, hornless calves that survived well in the new environment. Grant died five years later of pneumonia, never to truly witness the influence he had on the breed.

Historical tidbits

The original Angus Association was formed in Aberdeen, Scotland, in 1879, and was named The Polled Cattle Society. The founding fathers of our breed intentionally left the origin counties or “shires” of Angus and Aberdeen out of the name, as they did not want to put Angus in front of Aberdeen, nor did they feel comfortable putting Aberdeen in front of Angus. Then in 1907, the name of the Society was changed from The Polled Cattle Society to The Aberdeen-Angus Cattle Society.

The original Scottish herd book was known as the Polled Herd Book and was published by the Polled Cattle Society in 1862. Earlier records existed but were destroyed in a fire in 1851. Early volumes actually include registrations for black Angus, red Angus and Galloway cattle.

Old Jock is registration number 1 in the bull listing, and Old Grannie is registration number 1 in the cows

listing. Old Grannie was calved in 1824 and reported to have produced a total of 29 calves, 11 of which were registered in the Herd Book. She was killed by lightning at 35 years of age.

The oldest animal recorded in the Polled Herd Book is a bull named Colonel, registration number 145, born in 1818. His sire is simply listed as an Aberdeenshire bull. His dam is listed as Old Nackets, registration number 737, no known birthdate.

The American Angus Association was chartered as the American Aberdeen-Angus Breeders' Association in 1883 in the state of Illinois, and has grown to be the largest beef breed registry in the world. The official name was shortened to the American Angus Association when the Association moved its headquarters from Chicago to Saint Joseph, Mo., in 1956.

Charles Gudgell is credited for starting the American Angus


Association, serving as the first secretary. He is also credited for starting the American Hereford Association two years prior.

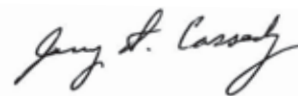
The first registered herd of Angus cattle in the United States was established by James Anderson and George Findlay of Lake Forest, Ill., in 1878.

Volume 1 of the American Aberdeen-Angus Herd-Book contained 5,200 entries, with 2,802 animals owned abroad and 2,398 owned in America. There were only five rules of the Association, including a rule that stated of every 10 bulls eligible for entry by any breeder, one must be castrated or two shall be excluded from the record.

Felix of Boghead was awarded the first registration in the American Angus Herd Book. The earliest birthdate found in the American Angus Association belongs to Old

Grannie, registration number 125. Red Angus entries were allowed until February 1917, when the Board voted to no longer allow red Angus entries, likely implemented to prevent increased frequency of the red gene.

This year we celebrated 150 years of Angus in the United States, and 140 years of the American Angus Association. The compelling history of our breed cannot be properly summarized with the limitations of one simple article. I encourage anyone with increased interest to explore history books dedicated to the Angus breed. 



jcassady@angus.org

Editor's note: For more information regarding the origins of our breed, contact the member services department at 816-383-5100 or email me directly at jcassady@angus.org.

Subscribe

TO RECEIVE THE LATEST ANGUS NEWS IN YOUR INBOX!



Scan to Subscribe
www.anguselist.com

AJ DAILY

The AJ Daily is a daily e-newsletter tailored for Angus breeders. Subscribe today to stay up-to-date on industry news, current events and upcoming sales.



THE EXTRA

Emailed twice per month, the Angus Beef Bulletin EXTRA offers health, nutrition, management, marketing, and industry insights to improve your bottom line.



Scan to Subscribe
www.bit.ly/EXTRASub

