

# Angus in the West

Nearly 75 years of breed progress at the National Western Stock Show illustrated.

Compiled by **Jena McReil**, digital editor

**F**ew landmarks have experienced history's passing quite like the National Western Stock Show (NWSS) in Denver, Colo.

At the base of the Rocky Mountains, the stock show grounds have welcomed visitors for more than 110 years. The first National Western opened Jan. 29, 1906, as street cars and horse-drawn carriages crowded the streets. According to NWSS history, attendance was estimated at 15,000, with stockmen visiting from Omaha, Kansas City, Chicago and some eastern cities.

Three years later, the 1909 show opened the National Amphitheater, known today as Stadium Arena. The red brick building was lined with rows of green seats brought in from Chicago's Comiskey Field, where crowds would gather to watch Babe Ruth-era baseball. The arena would bear witness to the show's most historic milestones through the years.

Down the hill, the Denver stockyards stretched out for more than 100 acres. The Livestock Exchange Building, constructed in 1916, was the center point of activity as thousands of cattle, hogs, sheep and horses were traded within its walls. Beyond the stockyards, several large packing plants stood in rows, ready to collect livestock from the pens.

The grounds have seen much change over the years.

They've experienced the Great Depression, World War II, the farm crisis of the 1980s, and times of cattle market peaks and dives. Through it all, interest remained high, and attendance

continued to grow with each passing generation. The National Western established itself as a meeting place for Western ranching and a venue for marketing livestock nationwide.

The Angus breed has made its own mark on National Western history.

The American Angus Association's first involvement at the Denver show dates back nearly 75 years, to a time when the breed's westward expansion began to fill the region's pens and pastures with black Angus cattle.

Since the 1940s, breed enthusiasts have started their year in Denver — as a way to market quality genetics, set the pace for the upcoming sale season and celebrate the Angus breed's growing influence on the West.

In the pages that follow, take a journey back through historic Angus moments at the National Western.

► The first-prize group of three bulls at the 1941 Denver National Western Stock Show was shown by Stanley Pierce, Creston, Ill.



► George Crenshaw of A.F. Crenshaw & Sons, owners of Angus Valley Farms, Attica, Kan., fitted and exhibited his homegrown Aberdeen-Angus steer Lazy Lad to the grand championship over all breeds in 1942.

## Page from the past ...

**“Breeders from Iowa, Kansas and South Dakota divided the Purples at the 1943 Denver National Stock Show, where the Breed made one of its very top shows as to numbers and quality. Western Herds made [a] splendid showing ...**

**“The cattle were shown in excellent form and made a hit with the visitors who somehow managed to throng the show barns and the arena despite gas rationing, and other travel handicaps. True, many of us had difficulty procuring places on the trains and at least a part of us were compelled to stay over a day or two extra in order to obtain train space for the return. Nevertheless, undaunted in neither spirit [nor] fervor, Doddie fans helped make a most successful season's opening.”**

**— Fred Hahne, The Aberdeen-Angus Journal, February 1943**



► At the 1953 NWSS, the best 10 head of the show were exhibited by J. Garrett Tolan Farms, Pleasant Plains, Ill. Nolan Farms won the award in competition with their 140 head, as shown here.

► **Right:** Television viewers saw an Aberdeen-Angus steer on a noon program in 1954 courtesy of KLZ-TV and the American Aberdeen-Angus Breeders' Association.



► The champion Angus and reserve grand champion steer of the 1956 NWSS was exhibited by Harold Henry of Hamilton, Mo. With Henry, at the halter, is Willard Simms, NWSS general manager.



► Nancy Vander Werff, Sully, Iowa, exhibited the junior champion steer of the 1959 NWSS. Pictured with her are Herman Purdy, left, judge from Pennsylvania State University and Willard Simms, NWSS general manager.

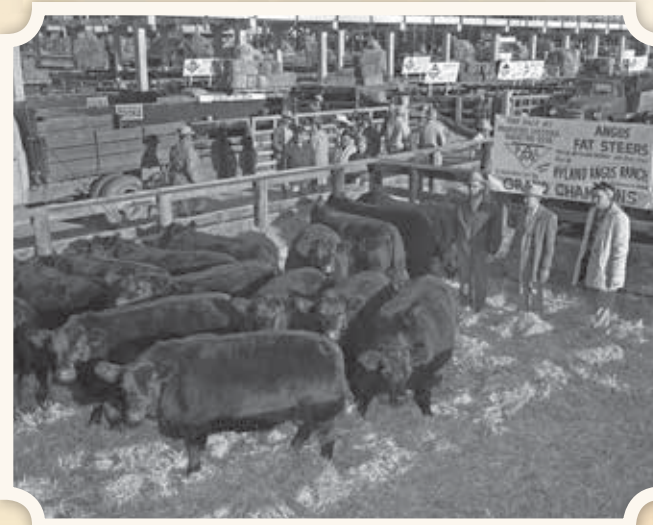
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# National Western

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► Crescent Bar Ranch, Parks, Neb., exhibited this 1960 reserve champion pen of five Angus bulls.



► A set of 1961 grand champions is displayed in the historic Denver stockyards.

► **Below:** Ankonian Bushman 2 was senior and grand champion bull at the 1969 NWSS for Ankony Angus, Richrose Farm and Schaefer Bros. Farm.



## Page from the past ...

“The biggest and best Angus show to date marked the 55th Annual National Western Stock Show at Denver. Perfect weather completed the picture as warm sunny skies gave a springtime atmosphere to one of the nation’s top shows, held the third week of January in the famed Mile-[High] City. Black sounded the keynote of the interbreed competition as Angus steers swept into the championships and won the coveted purples for Grand Champion Steer of the show and for the Grand Champion carload of steers over all. These same Black steers set an all-time record price for the National Western, the Grand Champion steer selling at a new mark of \$4.10 a pound and the Grand Champion carload of steers setting its own new record at \$56 a hundred.”

— **George Vest, The Aberdeen-Angus Journal, February 1961**

## Champions through the years

To truly grasp the Angus breed’s progress through the years, look no further than the grand champion Angus bulls.



► 1941, Blendmere Woodlawn 546519



► 1951, Elban Bandolier 3d



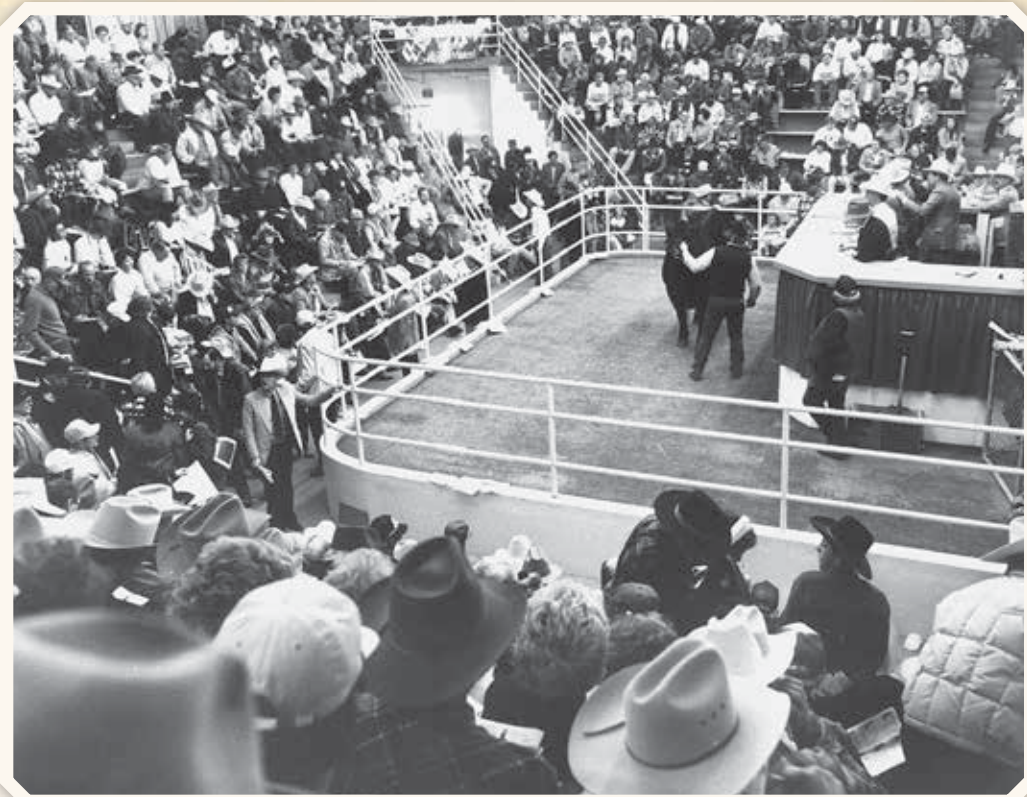
► 1960, Proud Heckettier 70th



► 1973, Ankonian Dynamo



► **Left:** Quoted from a 1980 press release: “The National Junior Angus Ass’n left the National Western Angus Bull Sale \$6,000 richer after Jim Baldrige, North Platte, Neb., won the bid on a heifer donated to the juniors by A.F. Flint & Sons of Rafter F Bar, Bard, N.M. As a special feature of the sale, Leroy Van Dyke, country-and-western recording artist, auctioned the daughter of Menlo Marshall Pride selected from the 1979 Flint calf crop. The beneficiary, the junior association, will become an official organization during the National Junior Angus Heifer Show in Wichita, Kan., next July.”



**Page from the past ...**

“More than 3,000 spectators were on hand in Denver Jan. 14-15 for the 1980 National Angus Show held in conjunction with the 74th National Western Stock Show. Nearly 300 entries turned out for the strong show, and one of the largest crowds in Angus history quickly filled the stands and gathered at ringside as George Ellis of Beartooth Ranch, Columbus, Mont., judged a display of some of the top Angus cattle in the country.”

— *Linda Kiger, Angus Journal, February 1980*

► No matter the year, the Angus breed always draws a crowd. Pictured here is the National Western Angus Bull Sale.



► 1980, Ankonian Sentry



► 1990, LLB Gambler 22W



► 2000, Famous 7001



► 2010, Dameron First Class