

Simply Timeless

Woodlawn Farm's steer "Advance" still resonates a sense of greatness and opportunity for the Angus breed and agricultural industry beyond.

by **Katie Allen**, Angus Foundation

He was an animal like no other. At 1,430 pounds (lb.), he was walked a mile and a half from the farm to the rail station in Creston, Ill., to be shipped by boxcar to Chicago for the 1900 International Live Stock Exposition. Back then, members of the Pierce family at Creston-based Woodlawn Farms knew they had a special animal and worked hard to get him to the show, but they couldn't have known then just how much of a historical impact he would make.

This Angus steer trumped all competition at the International that year. He beat every other steer, bull and heifer regardless of breed to win grand champion of show and sell for a record-setting price of \$150 per hundredweight (cwt.). Even today, looking at the 1900 picture of this thick-muscled, deep-bodied and heavy-boned steer is a lot like looking at a current grand champion



► Advance trumped all competition at the International Live Stock Exposition in 1900, beating every other steer, bull and heifer regardless of breed to win grand champion of show.

animal you would see in Louisville, Denver or Kansas City. Advance was his name, a name perfectly fit for an animal that would change the Angus breed and entire beef industry.

The story of Woodlawn Farms

Prior to the arrival of the double-bred Wellington Advance steer at Woodlawn Farms, Blanford Rude (B.R.) Pierce recognized a future in the Angus cattle business when he first saw them at the Illinois State Fair in the 1870s. In 1881, he bought

one bull and three heifers in Canada and began breeding Angus on the farm. The farm would eventually support the Pierce family for 124 years and through four generations.

B.R. Pierce, his son Stanley R. (S.R.), who showed Advance at the International, and S.R.'s son Lewis Blanford (L.B.), were also all involved in the Angus breed beyond the farm, and served in leadership roles on the American Angus Association Board of Directors during the Association's early years. The Pierce family, including L.B.'s children Blanford, Norris and Susan, have



► Advance's legacy was captured in an original oil painting of the steer by N.A. Throop. The original painting, along with the treasured grand champion trophy from the 1900 International, are now located in the Angus Foundation archive at the Association headquarters in Saint Joseph, Mo.



► The original oil painting of Advance was presented by Blanford and Joan Pierce to the Angus Foundation archive at the "Blackontrack!" Angus Foundation event in Louisville, Ky., in 2010. The original artwork was donated in recognition of the achievement of Phase 1 of the Advance Challenge, whereby The Advance Partners purchased 10 numbered, exact replicas of the painting, raising \$25,000 for *Vision of Value: Campaign for Angus*.

'Advance Challenge' Partners

The "Advance Challenge" Partners include:

- ▶ The Goggins Family, Billings, Mont.
- ▶ Lone Oaks Farm, Middleton, Tenn.
- ▶ Belle Point Ranch, Lavaca, Ark.
- ▶ Ron Davidson, Creston, Ill.
- ▶ Curtis and Ann Long, Butler, Mo.
- ▶ Tom Burke, Smithville, Mo.
- ▶ 801 Chophouse, Mo., Iowa and Neb.
- ▶ The Houston Family, Platteville, Colo.

The goal of Phase 2 of the fundraising project is to raise an additional \$25,000 through the sale of 50 numbered, limited-edition giclée prints. If you are interested in ordering an Advance giclée, call the Angus Foundation at 816-383-5100 or go online to www.angusfoundation.org.



▶ In 2005, Woodlawn Farms created a \$25,000 educational endowment to give an annual scholarship to Angus youth each year.

always believed in the importance of service to the breed and felt compelled to give back to something that has been so good to their family's farm, the oldest Angus farm in America.

Now the fourth-generation Pierce family members living at Woodlawn Farms, Blanford and his wife, Joan, make giving back to the Angus breed a priority in so many ways — from Blanford's service on the *Vision of Value: Campaign for Angus Leadership Cabinet*, to the couple's establishment of a \$25,000 youth scholarship endowment through the Angus Foundation, to sharing the history of that prestigious Angus steer with us all.

A place in history

"He was very historical," Blanford says of the steer. "Before the first International Live Stock Show in Chicago, there had not been anything like it. When Advance was selected top beef animal, beating all other steers, bulls and females, he got the attention of the world."

The steer's win captured the press not only for beating out the other competition and selling for a record price, but also for his eye appeal. The reserve champion standing next to Advance was another Pierce-bred steer named Good Times.

Alvin Howard Sanders described the 1900 International Angus feat in depth in his 1928 book, *A History of Aberdeen-Angus Cattle*, where he said, "The Aberdeen-Angus needed but one champion with which to start but actually supplied two."

Sanders went on to include a review from *The Breeder's Gazette* that said, "Memory does not recall a champion which has met with such little criticism, or has been so universally conceded to be outstanding. With commanding style, the neatest of heads, exquisite finish and a body which leaves little to be desired in its form or covering, Advance measures up to the highest standard set by this breed of beef-producers. This steer does not look his weight of 1,430 pounds — and

in this sentence is comprised the strongest statement of his excellence that we can pen. He is lead-like in weight, and an apple is not rounder."

With the Angus double-win, people began to take note that the breed was beginning to meet the butcher's approval.

"They (Angus) dressed well and tasted good," Blanford says. "They produced a great carcass without waste and became the most efficient beef breed that produced a carcass beyond what any other breed could do."

Advance continues to draw interest today, just as he brought great attention to the Angus breed in the early 1900s. The original oil painting of the steer by N.A. Throop, along with the treasured grand champion trophy from the 1900 International, are now located in the Angus Foundation archive at the Association headquarters in Saint Joseph, Mo.

In a never-ending calling to give back,

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▶ Blanford Pierce (far right) has played an active role on the Leadership Cabinet for the *Vision of Value* campaign.

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Blanford and Joan presented the trophy to the Angus Foundation when Blanford was inducted into the Angus Heritage Foundation in 2007 and likewise donated the oil painting during the Angus Foundation's "Blackontrack! Angus Magic at Churchill Downs" event Nov. 13, 2010, in Louisville, Ky.

The donation of the original oil painting was also the beginning of the "Advance Challenge," which has given even more people the opportunity to take part in the story and history of the great steer.

The challenge

During the Blackontrack! event, 10 Advance partners were recognized for their purchases of exact replicas of the oil painting, raising \$25,000 for the *Vision of Value: Campaign for Angus*, the capital campaign that concluded Dec. 31, 2011. The No. 1 replica was sold at auction at the event and completed Phase 1 of the challenge.

Phase 2 of the fundraising project is to raise an additional \$25,000 through the sale of 50 numbered, limited-edition Advance giclée prints. These prints, which can be ordered through the Angus Foundation, allow those who have an interest or have been touched by the Angus breed to share in the great story of a steer whose value remains timeless.

"In the literal sense, Advance has provided our organization a very unique vehicle to raise additional funds for education, youth and research," says Milford Jenkins, Angus Foundation president. "I want to praise and credit Julie McMahon French, one of our most dedicated and passionate volunteers, for the idea to integrate Advance into our fundraising plans for BlackOnTrack! Angus



► Blanford and Joan Pierce joined friends at "That Old West Magic" Angus Foundation event in Oklahoma City, Okla., in 2008.

Magic at Churchill Downs. This endeavor, once completed, will raise well in excess of \$50,000, but quite possibly even more meaningful and valuable to the Angus Foundation and Angus breed is the powerful image conveyed by this beautiful Angus steer, then as well as today, of the exciting things to come in the future for the Angus breed and our progressive members."

The spirit of giving

Woodlawn Farms, which dispersed in 2005, still holds a distinguished role in the Angus business.

"Blanford and Joan have been role models and leaders for all of us involved in the Angus family to emulate," Jenkins says. "The Pierces were some of the first Angus breeders early in my professional tenure with the Angus Foundation to step

forward and make a major outright cash gift to our organization when they established the Woodlawn Farms Angus Scholarship Endowment Fund with a \$25,000 gift. Asking fellow Angus breeders for help and support for the Angus Foundation's activities and events comes easily to the Pierces, as they believe in our organization's mission and work tirelessly to inform peers of the many opportunities in which they, too, can engage and support the Angus Foundation."

As Blanford walks along the fencelines of the farm and in the barns that were once used to raise and fit Advance, he remembers the great times he had traveling to Denver by rail in a boxcar and showing cattle with his family. He treasures the memories of Angus and the wonderful things the breed has done for his family.

Blanford and Joan Pierce have, by their giving back in numerous ways, shared their success and historical influence in the beef industry with fellow Angus breeders and enthusiasts.

"I feel I relate in a personal way to all of these (Association) members, and I want to give back to something I've been a part of," Blanford says. "We're all a family of Angus breeders."

"None of us — not Steve Jobs or Bill Gates or even Angus breeders have gotten to where they are by resting," Joan adds. "You keep building, keep going forward. You don't sit back, pat yourself on the back and say that's enough. The Angus Foundation is important to all of us."



Editor's Note: Katie Allen is the marketing and public relations assistant for the Angus Foundation.



► Garrett Lampe was the first recipient of the Woodlawn Farms Angus Scholarship in 2006.