

# The Time Capsule

Your chance to be a part of Angus history in the U.S.

by *Keith Evans*

**W**hat are you doing June 10, 2073?

If you're free, you might want to stop by the American Angus Association headquarters in Saint Joseph, Mo., to help open the 100-year time capsule that was buried there a century earlier. The occasion, 35 years ago, was part of the yearlong celebration of the 100th anniversary of the arrival of the first Angus cattle into the United States.

I was 39 years old and associate director of public relations for the Association on that beautiful June day. And since I may not make it to my 139th birthday I have asked my grandchildren to represent me in 2073. My oldest will be 81 at the time, and the other three will be in their 70s. So if luck will have it, one of them will peer into the open time capsule when it next sees the light of day. You might want to appoint your own representative, particularly if you were one of the many people in Saint Joseph, Mo., that day.

## Not so humble beginnings

It all started when George Grant, a Scotsman by birth, but a London silk merchant by trade, made a fortune in the late 19th century by cornering the market on black crepe prior to the death of a British royal. He later turned his attention to America and obtained a land grant of some 100,000 acres from the Kansas Pacific railroad.

The railroad moguls wanted Grant to establish a town and a settlement to draw people to central Kansas. Grant himself dreamed of transplanting a landed English gentry to his new Kansas home some 250 miles west of Kansas City. He convinced a group of wealthy English friends and other adventurous gentlemen to become landholders and ranchers in what at that time was called "The Great American Desert."

Grant founded the town of Victoria (named after the British queen) and built some stone buildings in town, as well as a beautiful limestone home and stone barns on his huge ranch outside Victoria. He stocked the ranch with native Longhorn cattle but soon decided to invest in beef bulls



►The time capsule that was buried June 10, 1973, at the foot of this limestone post from the original quarry on George Grant's ranch will be opened June 10, 2073. You might want to appoint a representative to be there.

from England and Scotland to upgrade the herd. In 1873, three Angus bulls arrived by train at Victoria, the first of their kind to set foot on U.S. soil.

Many of Grant's English gentlemen and their families found the hot, dry summers and the cold winters too tough for them and returned to England. Grant never planned

to leave Kansas but, unfortunately, he didn't live to enjoy the success of his cattle experiment. He died at his home in 1878, five years after the bulls arrived at his place.

His Angus cattle flourished, and when the first crossbred steers hit the market in Kansas City they were a sensation. Soon Americans were importing registered

Angus cattle in droves, which led to the establishment of the American Aberdeen-Angus Breeders' Association in 1883. The organization, whose name was shortened in 1956 to the American Angus Association, celebrates its 125th anniversary this year.

### Celebrating the centennial

The idea of a centennial celebration to honor the first Angus imports was generated in 1969, in the fertile brain of Bob Snyder, my predecessor as the Association's director of public relations. Snyder attended a meeting of the world's Angus breed associations in Sydney, Australia, that year. The meeting, the first of its kind, spawned the World Aberdeen-Angus Secretariat that has met every four years ever since. The meetings are spaced four years apart because Snyder volunteered the American Angus Association to host the next meeting in 1973 to coincide with the Angus centennial.

During the next four years, plans were generated for the largest and probably the most expensive Angus event of the time. Every member of the Association staff was involved in the planning and execution of the celebration. Expenses soared way over budget as Snyder's plans evolved into more and more activities. Costs, however, were soon forgotten as the whole Angus world got caught up in the centennial festivities and the World Angus Forum.

The kickoff event was a national festival in Victoria, Kan., in late May. A pageant depicted the arrival of the first Angus to Victoria. Tours of the area included a visit to Grant's home. The limestone villa and some of the stone barns were, and still are, owned by the Baier family. They bought the home and part of the land from George Grant's niece when she and her family decided to move out of the area after Grant's death.

The Baiers were part of the Volga Germans who immigrated from Russia in the 1880s. The hard red winter wheat the Germans brought with them helped change the agricultural character of the area around Victoria.

People came to the Victoria celebration from all over the United States. The president of the Aberdeen-Angus Society from Perth, Scotland, was a guest speaker. The event attracted a large contingent of reporters and writers from the farm and livestock press, as well as farm radio and TV broadcasters. Many of these reporters moved on from Victoria to Saint Joseph for a continuation of the festivities, which climaxed with the burial of the time capsule at 2:30 p.m. June 10, 1973.



► These 8¢ stamps feature a portion of Frank Champion Murphy's original painting of the Angus bulls at George Grant's ranch. Copies of the stamp are not included in the time capsule because the post office wouldn't allow anyone to see a likeness of the stamp until just before it was issued.

### Time capsule

The capsule contains a historical record of the Angus breed and the American Angus Association. Among the many items (some on microfilm) are a history of the Angus breed in the United States that was published in 1934 on the Association's 50th anniversary. There are histories of 256 local, state and regional Angus associations and documents from the Joseph Rea family at Carroll County, Mo. Rea fed out some of Grant's Angus-cross steers and later bought one or two of his original Angus bulls. He was so impressed that he soon became a registered Angus breeder and later president of the Association.

In the hermetically sealed box are samples of most of the promotional items produced for the 1973 celebration — a centennial belt buckle, cuff links, a limited edition (500 copies) of a Centennial Medallion, a circa 1973 Angus bull model plus a copy of the first *Aberdeen-Angus Journal* published in 1918 and much, much more.

The World Angus Forum that took place in September and October in Kansas City and Saint Joseph brought together the largest number of Angus enthusiasts ever assembled to that point. Some of the top Angus breeders, commercial producers and scientists were on the two-day conference program. In addition, special Angus shows, including the fifth National Junior Angus Heifer Show, were conducted in the Kansas City Stockyards and the American Royal arena.

From Kansas City, nearly 500 people took the Centennial Angus Tour. It was unique for such an international event. It made stops only at commercial Angus farms and ranches. Its purpose, in addition

to entertainment, was to show how Angus bulls were used in the Midwest and West to improve the U.S. beef cow herd and the quality of American beef.

### Stamped and sealed

The first tour stop, however, was at the American Angus Association headquarters. The most memorable part of the Saint Joseph visit was the first day of issue of the 8¢ first-class U.S. postage stamp featuring Angus cattle.

A field post office was set up on the Association parking lot. People mailed letters to friends and relatives all over the world, using special first-day-of-issue envelopes. Many stamps were also affixed to and cancelled on the margin of a Frank Murphy framing print.

The print was from Murphy's oil painting titled "The Angus Breed is Launched in the United States of America." The painting depicts those original Angus bulls at George Grant's ranch. A portion of the painting was used by the U.S. Postal Service to produce the stamp. Copies of the stamp are not included in the time capsule. The post office wouldn't allow anyone to even see a likeness of the stamp until just before it was issued.

So on June 10, 1973, the capsule was sealed for its 100-year rest at the foot of a limestone post in front of the Association. The post came from the original limestone quarry on George Grant's ranch. A plaque on the post identifies the location of the capsule and when it should be opened.

Surely there will be a great celebration when the historical box is unearthed in June 2073. I hope one of my grandchildren will be there. I'll be there in spirit.

