

A B E R D E E N - A N G U S C A T T L E

by

Chas. A. Gilkison.

ABERDEEN - ANGUS CATTLE.

Origin.-

- 1. Supposed.
- 2. Known.

The first breeders and animals.

Early type.

Change of type.

Introduction to America.

Herd books.

Rank in fat stock shows.

- 1. Early Smithfield shows.
- 2. Present Smithfield shows.
- 3. American International.
 - (a) Foot.
 - (b) Block.

Position under various conditions.

- 1. Feed lot.
 - (a) Market.
 - (b) Show purposes.
- 2. With mixed farming.
- 3. Range conditions.
 - (a) Sterility.
 - (b) Prepotency.
 - (c) Hardihood.
 - (d) Fattening qualities.

Present standing and probable future in America.

Aberdeen-Angus Cattle.

Little is known of the early history of any of our domestic animals. They all belong to the class *Mammalia*, order *Ruminantia*, family *Bovidae*, genus *Bos* and all except the zebu or humped cattle to the sub-genus *Taurus*. They are most likely a cross between the genii *Bos Urus* and *Bos Longifrons*, which inhabited the British Isles and northern Europe prior to the dawn of the Christian era. The former was a very fierce animal, nearly as large as an elephant but otherwise much resembling the cattle of later times. The *Bos Longifrons* was smaller than most of our breeds of cattle today, and not as nearly like them in general conformation as the *Urus*. The constantly changing surroundings to which they were subject until well along in the seventeenth century, when we have our first meager description of any cattle, would make quite a change in their appearance.

As far back as there is any account there have been polled cattle in Scotland, but probably they were once horned and originated from some "sport". Of the four breeds of cattle native to the British Isles, only one, the Ayrshire, had any foreign blood introduced. The two polled breeds, Galloway and Aberdeen-Angus, are nearer related to each other than to the others. The Galloways are ranker, and coarser in hair, thicker and stiffer in skin, and slower maturing than the Angus. The differences between them and between the West Highlands was due chiefly to climatic conditions, care and food.

The Aberdeen-Angus cattle are indigenous to the counties of Aberdeen, Forfar (which contains most of the district formerly called Angus) and the surrounding country in the north-east part of Scot-

land. Here they reign supreme to the present day. The time of the formation of the breed is unknown, but was before the latter part of the seventeenth century.

The first great improver of the Angus cattle was Hugh Watson, of Keillor, Forfarshire, born 1789 and died 1865. His family as far back as his great-grandfather had been breeders of these cattle. He began his work at Keillor in 1808 with six of the best and blackest cows and a bull from his father's herd, and purchased in Brechin six more heifers, which were black, brindled and black with brown muzzles and a brownish streak along their backs, and a bull which was all black. They were good individuals, having extra large well set hairy ears and extraordinary coats of hair.

Mr. Watson was a man of surpassing intellect, unlimited perseverance and accurate judgment. He bred from none but the best and did not object to them being closely related. He started and built up several families as the Grannies, Ruths, Jilts, Favorites and Princesses, which were quite popular at that time. He first showed his cattle under the Highland and Agricultural society at Perth in 1829, and then exhibited a steer and heifer at the Smithfield show, where they were much admired, the heifer bringing £50 for beef, a very high price for that time. One of his best animals was Old Grannie. She lived to be thirty-five years old, having twenty-nine calves, five bulls and twenty-four heifers. That her constitution was transmitted to her off-spring is shown by the fact that one of her descendants, Princess of Kinnochtry, was exhibited at the Highland Society Show in 1881 at twenty-one years of age, having had seventeen calves and is mentioned, on reliable authority, as being deep in flesh and perfect in outline.

Lord Panmure was another prominent breeder of this time. He

tried the experiment of crossing the Galloway on the Angus to improve the latter, but it was a decided failure. In 1839 he bred a Buchan heifer, Black Meg, to a Buchan bull, Hector, producing the famous bull Panmure 51, which was sold to Wm. Fullerton as a yearling.

Wm. Fullerton of Ardovie started his herd in 1833 and it was dispersed at his death in 1880. From one of the daughters of Black Meg 776 and her son Panmure 2^d, he produced Queen Mother 348, foundress of the meritous "Queen" tribe. She was sold to Wm. McCombie in 1844 for £12, 10s.

In 1820 the Shorthorns became very popular as a result of the Colling brothers' sale in 1810. The Scotch people found that they could raise a better animal for the market by using a Shorthorn bull on the polled cows, consequently the breeding of pure bred cattle was gradually neglected. Most of the breeders did not realize that in this way they would soon run out of polled cattle, but a few saw the approaching disaster and regardless of loss and the popular opinion kept their herds pure.

This is where Wm. McCombie of Tillyfour, Aberdeen, became noted, being the leader of the reform movement to popularize his chosen breed of cattle. He was born in 1805 and died in 1880. His father was a cattle dealer and he took to trading cattle early in his teens. He became the tenant of Tillyfour in 1829 and began the formation of an Angus herd which was noted for its milking qualities as well as beef, many cows giving from three to seven gallons of milk dally. The "Queen Mothers" were his favorite strain and had much to do with his fame as a breeder. He made his first appearance in the show yards in 1832 at Alford and probably won more prizes during his life than any other cattle breeder. His greatest

victory was at the Paris International Exhibition in 1878, where he won many class premiums among them being the £100 prize for the best herd of cattle bred by exhibitor outside of France and the £100 prize for the best herd bred by exhibitor anywhere. Here by a vote of twenty-four out of a jury of thirty-one the Angus were declared the best beef animals. There were only sixteen Angus at the exhibition. To him is largely due the popularity which the Angus attained outside of the British Isles.

From the earliest account of the Angus they have been noted for their symmetry of form, though very small, the oxen being considered too small for the ordinary light farm work in 1776, otherwise the type was much the same then as now, being thick, low set, rounded, very fine boned, hair soft and mellow, skin, well covered with flesh for even at that time they showed a great tendency to fatten, the beef being of the finest quality, a strong constitution and a short head with the characteristic, rounded poll. The improvements have been along the lines of increased size, as they now are nearly as heavy as any breed, which is shown more by the scales than by appearance, as they are so blocky and close to the ground that they often appear much smaller than a long legged animal would. The symmetry has been improved upon, until now they are the equal if not the superior of any other breed in this respect. The ribs are better sprung and the rump long and well covered. They are better fleshed and finer in bone. The quality is better, especially as indicated by the skin. There is some difference between the model form of the Angus and Shorthorn. The Angus has a more truly cylindrical body, its joints are more rounded off instead of on the exactly square form as in the Shorthorn. There have been Angus animals with rougher points, but as this is departing from one of the leading char-

acteristics of the breed, it is feared that if allowed to go on, by the law of correlation a change in some other part for the worse would occur. It is better to breed from an off-colored animal than one with scurs, as the latter is foreign to the breed, while the first is but a variation. The color should be black, though a little white on the underline behind the navel is admissible. An animal with scurs or a bull that is red or has a noticeable amount of white on him except where allowed is not eligible to registry in the American Aberdeen-Angus herdbook. The most important points are a good characteristic head, deep and wide chest, good heart girth, a straight broad back, a skin with a good touch and general appearances.

The first importation of the Angus to America consisted of three bulls by Geo. Grant, of Victoria, Kans., in 1873. The first breeding herd was imported by the Ontario Experiment Farm in 1876, while Anderson and Findlay of Illinois imported the second, consisting of five cows and a bull, in 1878. There was quite a bit of prejudice shown against them at first. They were ridiculed because they were black and again because they were not all black and on account of their seeming so small. But a large number of people soon saw that these objections did not amount to anything, and that this breed was better for the feed lot and block than those they had been keeping. In fact, these were the kind of cattle that they had long been looking for. The point that was the most in their favor at that time was their lack of horns. People were just realizing the advantages of hornless cattle. Dehorning by sawing off the horns was looked upon as an inhuman practice and was not commonly used. Their easy fattening, early maturing, quality of meat and market topping qualities were points that became appreciated later on. There are now

more herds in the United States than in the British Isles. One-third of the pure bred Angus cattle in the United States are in Iowa and one-fourth in Illinois.

The polled herd book was started in Scotland in 1848, there being separate sections for the Angus and the Galloways. Edward Ravenscroft was the leader in the work and brought out the first volume in 1862. The collection of material, having been destroyed by fire in 1851, was not commenced again until 1857. While the first volume is not entirely accurate, it is very important. Severe attacks of rinderpest and apathy of the breeders to the work and pure stock in general caused a long delay before the second volume was published in 1872. The work had been copyrighted and four more volumes were published in the next nine years. The sixth volume contained the names of one hundred and ninety breeders and the register of 1163 animals, 855 cows and heifers and 308 bulls, while in 1882 there was in the sixth volume 5,654 cows and 1,930 bulls, a total of 6,984 animals. In 1879 the Polled Cattle Society was formed which soon acquired the copyright of the herdbook and superintended its publication.

The American Aberdeen-Angus Breeders' Association was formed in 1883 and the first volume of the herd book issued in 1886. There have been fourteen volumes issued up to date, recording 76,500 animals, 33,700 bulls and 42,800 cows and heifers. The fifteenth volume will probably be issued in June, 1906, thirteen months after volume 14, with about 12,000 animals entered. The headquarters are in Chicago, Ill., with Judge Goodwin Pres.; C. J. Martin, Vice Pres.; and Thos. McFarland, Secretary and Treasurer. There are about 1,850 members, forty-two being from Kansas. The Angus cattle won out in the early Smithfield shows.

Though the class was open to both Angus and Galloway, only the Angus were entered. Wm. McCombie won the first prize and a silver medal as the breeder of the best ox of the Scottish breed for every year but one between 1859 and 1867 inclusive at both the Smithfield and Birmingham shows. In 1867 he brought his Champion steer, Black Prince, to Smithfield and won everything in sight, taking first prize in every class in which he was entered and also as the best animal in all classes. He won prizes to the amount of £200 on Black Prince that year at Birmingham and Smithfield and sold him for the Christmas market for £120, reserving the head which he had mounted and hung in his parlor. Queen Victoria was much interested in McCombie's cattle and took her Christmas beef from Black Prince. Pride of Aberdeen, from the Paris prize animals, Charlotte and Hector, was a great prize winner, getting first as yearling, two-year-old and three-year-old in the cow class. As a breed the Angus won their share of the premiums.

In 1872, 1881, 1885 and 1887 the Angus won grand championship over all breeds at Smithfield and since 1891 when a separate class was first provided for the Angus from the Galloway, they have taken the championship eight times. The other years it went to the Devon once, Shorthorn once, Hereford twice and crosses twice. The Angus cattle winning championship since 1891 were 1893 Pride of Highlands (17825); 1894 Benton Pride (19843); 1896 Minx of Glamis (22408); 1898 Ju Ju of Glamis (24826); 1901 Brunhilde of Glamis (29246); 1902 Layia of Glamis (30938); 1904 Effulgent of Danesfield and an Angus in 1905. Some of the best first prize bulls of the Highland Agricultural Society exhibits are Jipsey Baron (13532), Prosper of Delmore (11208), Diaz (14272) and Fairy King of Kirkbridge (11662).
The first great show honors to be won by the Angus in the

Angus in the United States was at the Kansas City fat stock-show of 1882. Here Knight of St. Patrick and four invincible cows from the herd of Gudgel & Simpson, of Independence, Mo. were awarded grand sweepstakes over all other breeds, competing against the best Short-horn and Hereford herds. One of the latter was headed by Dictator. Bruce's Queen of the Angus herd was awarded a special prize for the best female of any breed.

Geary Bros., of London, Ontario, exhibited Black Prince, the first Angus steer shown in America at Kansas City, in 1883. He weighed 2,300 pounds at the time. Black Knight^{1st} was the best breeding bull in his time and his blood is represented in nearly all American herds of any prominence today. He was not shown much. At the International at Chicago in 1905, the champion of car lots in fat cattle was won by a car load of grade Angus. The steer that was named as champion among the Angus was Ruby Zenoleum, shown by S. R. Pierce, Ill. In the slaughter test the Angus were first in the one and two year old classes. The grand champion at the show was a high grade two-year-old Angus, Blackrock, exhibited by Iowa College of Agriculture. He was sold to the butcher for 25¢ per pound.

One of the best steers of this breed was Clear Lake Jute 2d. He was bred and shown as a calf by W. J. Williams, Clear Lake, Minn. He was then sold to the Minnesota Experiment Station for \$600.00 and shown by them as a yearling, being reserve champion. As a two-year-old he was grand champion at the International in 1904 and sold for 36¢ per pound for the Christmas market.

Advance is described as the greatest Angus steer ever bred and was the winner of the championship and silver cup in Chicago in 1900. He sold at auction for Christmas beef for \$1.50 per pound live weight, which is the highest price ever paid for a steer.

Shamrock, a grade Angus, was the champion of the Chicago Live Stock Exposition in 1902. He sold for Christmas beef for 56¢ per pound, or \$1,010.00. The highest price ever paid for an Angus bull was \$9,100.00 for Prince Ito, by B. R. Pierce & Son, and for a cow \$6,300. for Blackcap Judy, a yearling, bred by C. H. Gardner. Both were sold from the herd of M. A. Judy in 1902. The average price for Angus cattle for breeding purposes at all the public sales in the United States between 1892 and 1901 inclusive was \$213.24 for the 3,269 animals sold. During recent years the Angus have won more prizes at the fat stock shows for the number of animals shown than any other breed. There are about 1,000 special premium rewards given in the 14th Vol. of the herd book that were won by Angus cattle at the principal shows of 1904.

For the block the superiority of the Angus over most other breeds lies in the quality of the beef and the high per cent of marketable meat that they will dress. They contain a greater proportion of marbled, compact, fine grained flesh and less soft, inferior fat than is found in most other breeds. Black Prince Imp. was the champion three-year-old steer of all breeds as judged by butchers at Chicago in 1883. He weighed 2,355 pounds, averaging 1.71 pounds daily gain from birth. The angus have topped the Christmas market at Chicago excepting one year for the last fifteen years.

In the feed lot the Angus feels at home for it is his nature to lay on flesh and fat to the best advantage. He puts it on in the most valuable cuts with as little waste of food as possible. So characteristic of him is this that since his recent importation here he has become well known in the cattle markets as "The Market Topper". The quality of the flesh is superior to any of the other beef breeds. There was such a demand in England for "baby" beef about 1882 that

the Angus cattle were fed from birth up to twenty-four to thirty months of age to produce it. They maintain a levelness and quality of flesh longer when fattening than almost any other breed. Range cattle crossed with the Angus give a very uniform lot of cattle as to looks and feeding qualities and a large per cent of them are polled from the first cross.

For feeding for the show ring the Angus are particularly well adapted on account of their tendency to fatten, ability to stand long periods of high feeding and the retention of their symmetry. They are seldom bothered with patchiness.

The Angus are one of the best breeds for the person engaged in mixed farming. They may be sheltered together in small buildings on account of their lack of horns, with little damage to themselves or attendants. They will respond better and more quickly to good care and feed than a coarser breed intended only for range conditions. They are a breed not addicted to slumps and soaring prices for breeding animals. They are preferred by the butcher. They are early maturing, being especially noted for making fine "baby beef".

The Angus have met more opposition on the range than anywhere else in their history. It is usually admitted that they are the equal of any cattle in their native country and the thicker settled parts of this country, but there seems to be no reason left ungiven why they should not be put on the range. The charges oftenest placed against them are in their order, sterility and lack of precocity, hardihood, and fattening qualities. Whether some of these accusations originate from jealousy, ignorance or truth, it would be hard to say. There are many ranches operated only for the money there is in it, that have been heavily stocked with Aberdeen-Angus cattle for a long time. If these charges are true would they not

have been sold off before this? These erroneous ideas are largely due to the fact that the people have become accustomed to, and enamored with, the older breeds and do not always give the Angus an equal chance on the range.

When the XIT Ranch, comprising three million acres in Texas, was started in 1885 a few pure bred and many half-breed Angus bulls were bought. These were looked upon favorably by all of the owners and managers and the number gradually increased until in 1892 there were almost 700 of the bulls. These were found not to be gregarious.

In 1890 the cows resembling Angus were turned into one large pasture, with Angus bulls and those resembling Herefords into another pasture with Hereford bulls. The number of cows and ratio of cows to bulls was the same in each pasture. The calves in the Angus pasture next year were 3,064 against 2,688 in the Hereford pasture. The pastures were the same except the Angus pasture was on a northern slope, while the Hereford pasture was on a southern slope and contained 6,000 more acres. Every year thereafter when the ratio and the number of cows have been the same, the calf crop has been as large from the Angus as the Hereford and several years larger. This would seem to disprove the first theory.

The markings and characteristics were as good in the Angus pasture as in the Hereford. An off color in an Angus is more easily noticed. The results from the Angus pasture were liked so well that after that all off colored cows from the ranch were turned with Angus bulls. The Angus were seemingly as hardy as any of the cattle. A representative bunch from each breed was taken, shipped east and corn fed. The Angus average 1.57 pounds gain per day for time fed. The Herefords 1.39 pounds, while some of them fed for a shorter time averaged 1.52 pounds.

John Kennedy, manager of the Deervale Ranch in Texas, says "I think the Aberdeen-Angus cattle the best for the range of any of the beef breeds. They will be fat when other kinds are in very poor fix."

W. H. Mallory, representing the Nelson Morris Packing Co., and owner of a ranch in Texas says, "In my opinion the Aberdeen-Angus are the most satisfactory for ranch purposes."

Col. Chas. Goodnight, a well known ranchman of Texas, says "I have the Shorthorns and Herefords as good as anybody's and the loss on the Angus is always the least. I do not think that any unprejudiced cattleman or breeder will pretend there is any race of cattle that will put on flesh in proportion to what they eat like the Angus." Many other ranchmen say that they are the equal of the Hereford on the ranch in all respects and better than the Shorthorns, and that they will stand the winters as well. These breeders and many others that could be mentioned who have had practical experience are as good authority as any one. They have other cattle on their ranches and would have nothing to gain, or no object, in giving the Angus cattle praise or attributes beyond what they deserve.

Taken under all conditions the Aberdeen-Angus cattle are permanently established in America. They are not as numerous or well-known in many sections of the country as the Herefords or Shorthorns, due to their being so recently imported. They have a reputation second to none in the markets and an equal standing in the show ring. The business is not over crowded nor are there so many successful breeders for the young man just starting a herd to compete with. As the years go by the Aberdeen-Angus will become as well known and popular in America as they are in their native land.