

## feature story

# Good Cattle. Good People. 150 Years of Influence



**By Catherine A. Brown** ASSOCIATE EDITOR

→ Duncan Lees, former Canadian Hereford Association (CHA) president, sits with granddaughter Jade on his lap, talking to the Hereford Digest on the telephone. He's excited about the arrival of Jade and grandson Matthew's newborn brother that afternoon. The grandkids are the sixth generation of the Lees family involved in Herefords. Their mom and dad are Arden (Lees) and Jeromy Charlton, the son of current CHA President, Garth Charlton and Canadian Western Agribition (CWA) president, Marilyn Charlton, who is also secretary for the Saskatchewan Hereford Association. Duncan's father Thomas and his

uncle Harold established the well-known Lees Brothers herd in 1949. Thomas took over the herd in 1964, renaming it Blair-Athol Polled Herefords. This is the herd which Duncan took over at the age of 24, with his father's untimely death. Duncan and brother Chris ran the ranch together until 1984 when Chris established the C & T herd. The family also branches out to the herd of George and Corey Lees of Glenlees Herefords. Duncan's land was always best suited to cattle. He stuck with Herefords because "they always paid the bills." Next year will be the family's hundredth year raising registered Herefords.

This is the story of people. It's the story of great cowboys and breed promoters and ranches. It's the story behind shows like Agribition, world class bull sales and a strong youth organization. But most of all, it's the story of a breed of cattle that persisted through the generations. This rugged, thick-hided white-faced breed is the one you can see on windy hillsides on cold, winter days, that is still out there foraging. It is perfectly suited to the North American continent. Stories of 20th century cattlemen walking their cattle 10 to 20 miles or more to livestock shows or to the trains that would take them there, in the days before trucks and



*Hereford Bull*

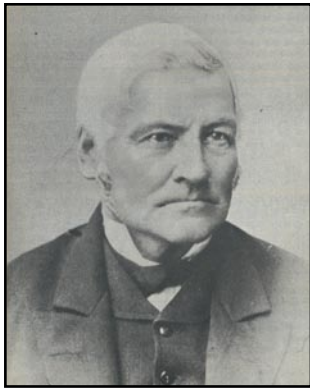
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THE CANADIAN HEREFORD BREEDERS' ASSOCIATION

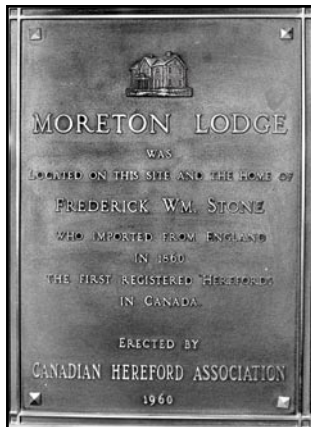
*Hereford Cow*



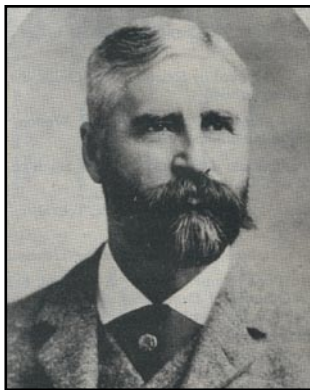




Frederick William Stone



Morton Lodge Plaque, the home of Frederick Stone



Mossom Boyd



Jim Hole

trailers serve as a metaphor to the breed's walk through pastures, rock, meadows and mountains from the Atlantic to the Pacific, through 150 years. "The feet on Hereford cattle are best of all," says young Saskatchewan breeder Murray Andrews.

How they got here is another story. "The English claim they sent Hereford cattle here over 200 years ago," says Norma Dunn, a former CHA employee. However, as 94-year-old Charles Scranton, Order of Canada and former CHA president, points out in a written history of the breed, North American associations were not in existence at the time, so a lot of the information on early importations has been lost.

At the time of Frederick William Stone's official importations of Herefords into Canada in 1860 and 1861, the country had yet to enter into Confederation. Within a few years of that historical date, Abraham Lincoln was elected President of the United States, then re-elected, before his demise in 1865. U.S. and Britain agreed to suppress the slave trade and serfdom was abolished in Russia; The U.S. Civil War raged; the Toronto Stock Exchange was created and the Red Cross and Salvation Army organizations were founded; the U.S. Department of Agriculture was created along with the first cattle importation laws; the flush toilet, moving pictures, pasteurization, the machine gun, roller skates, the fire extinguisher, the coffee maker and the first colour photographs were invented. So were the first pro golf tournaments played with the British Golf Open and the first pro golf tournament in Scotland.

The Ontario Veterinary College was established in 1862. The 1800's also ushered in the advent of agricultural fairs.

Stone's herd, based at Guelph, Ontario, produced Herefords that

influenced the breed across North America. The University of Guelph and beef cattle research station are located on the property once owned by Mr. Stone, the recipient of many agricultural awards.

Stone's foresight to import only top quality stock available from Britain proved advantageous to the proliferation of the breed in North America.

Over the years, the breeds' primary strengths have prevailed. It is foremost the maternal breed. High fertility and efficiency have earned Herefords their permanence. But so has temperament.

"They are so easy to get along with," says Ray VanSteinburg, of Pine Butte Ranch. "It's important to me to enjoy whatever you're working with, particularly when you can produce a top saleable product." Herefords on pasture are "happy to see you", he says. And they are easy on fences.

"Herefords are low in maintenance and labour inputs," says Saskatchewan breeder Spence Sutter, whose family has been in the breed for 100 years. "One guy and one horse can handle 100 head, whereas 100 exotics would take three to four guys on horses."

"It's the little things that make the big differences," says VanSteinburg. "It's not what you get in the sale ring; it's the cost of getting them in there that counts."

It took the breed promoters to prove those facts – the likes of Wib Donaldson, Jonathan Fox, Louis Latimer, Walter Blume, Jim Hole, Doris and Stuart Fenton, Vern and Louise Croy, the Warnycas, Dave and Joe Hasson, Grant Hirsche, and Gil Henderson; Gene Hanson, Charlie Jones and the Powleslands. These were among the pioneers; the legendary builders of the breed in Canada.

Many have since taken their hands out of the water, as Latimer says, but



Hereford Breeders, 1983



Charles Scranton

the ripples still remain.

From the 19th century, Quebec breeder and renowned cattle judge H.D. Smith would later become President and secretary-manager for the CHA. He was the first to tattoo his cattle and had tattoos adopted by the CHA.

Ontario's Mossom Boyd follows F.W. Stone as a pioneer breeder, having introduced and developed polled Herefords in Canada.

Another early breeder, Senator M.H. Cochrane of Quebec, started a Hereford herd in 1865. In partnership with his son James, he later established the Cochrane Ranch west of Calgary and sold many foundation animals to Canadian and American breeders.

By the mid 1970's Latimer and Blume joined a CHA excursion to England and did well selling the "modern"

Canadian Hereford. Six bulls were taken for display at the Royal show and sold there, says former CHA general manager Perry Wilkes. "That was the beginning of really good exports to the UK."

Some stories aren't well publicized. The Cornish family from Ontario began breeding Herefords in 1921 when Milton purchased two heifer calves for \$200 each by mail order from western Ontario. One raised a calf every year for 20 years and lived to be 21 years of age. Milton's son Edgar and his family has demonstrated steadfast dedication to the breed through serious health challenges and moves. The family's motto exemplifies that of many a ranch family and breed pioneer: "The difficult we do immediately; the impossible takes a little longer."

Grandson Scott Cornish and his wife Paula bred the 2009 Grand Champion Female at Toronto's Royal Winter Fair.

Many long-time breeders are too numerous to list. Past CHA President Victor Oulton's family was one of the earliest breeders in the Maritime provinces.

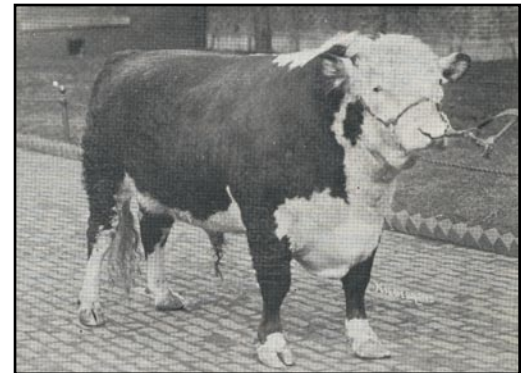
In Saskatchewan, breeders outnumbered all other provinces by the 1960s and among those who developed the breed there, besides the Lees and Sutters, were the Baskies, Catleys, Clarks, Davis Brothers, Dorrances, Fullers, Huntleys, Olsens, Palmers, Purdys, Reids and Sintons.

By the 1980's more than 40 per cent of Canadian breeders were Albertan.

Hereford herds tended to be larger and longer-lived in British Columbia, according to Scranton.

The influence of the Douglas Lake Cattle Ranch and other commercial ranches were "of great value to the cattle breeders, not only because of the large number of breeding sires purchased but also because they stressed utility and thus discouraged the following of fads by breeders," says Dave Andrew, CHA general manager from 1942 to 1959, in his history of the breed entitled *The Hereford in Canada 1860-1960*.

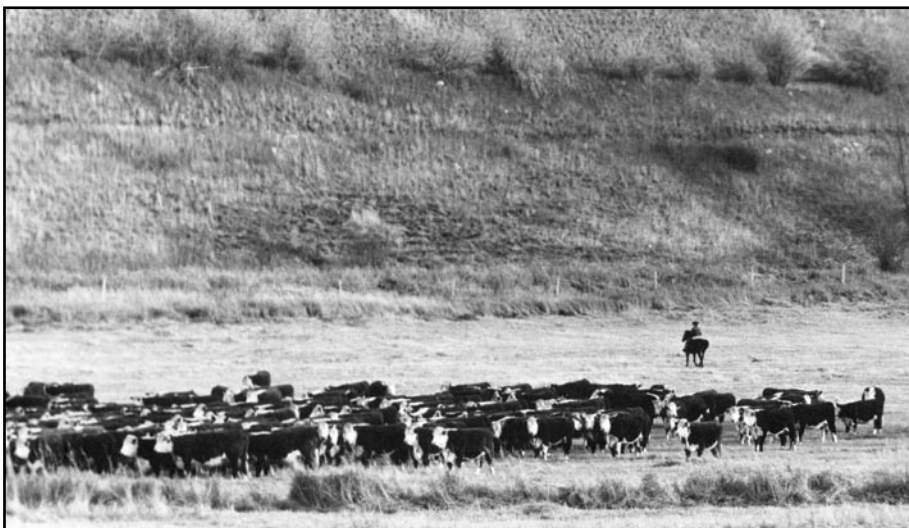
Notable breeders, of course, begot notable bulls, far too many to mention. But some "old boys" cannot be forgotten. Mossom Boyd's "Bullion the 4th" was a record breaking, top selling polled Hereford at \$2,025

Bullion the 4<sup>th</sup>

Ned 452E



Stanmore 43K



Douglas Lake Cattle Ranch



in 1914. The bull was resold by its American owners at seven years of age, bringing \$9,500, and breaking a new world record. His descendants commanded top prices for years to follow and many polled Herefords reportedly go back to this sire.

The Latimers talk about Four Square Leonard 25L as being the most influential in the Remitall herd. Four Square Modern Tone 42M developed another line that led to breeding Remitall Crusader 33C and the beginning of the Enforcer 107 line. The 42M bull and Remitall Leonard 38L left them a lot of good females, the latter of which was one of their top selling A.I. sires, according to Gary Latimer.

Ned 425E, Justa Banner and Predominant put Ponderosa Ranch on the map according to Don Jarrett, as WTK Bond 75A and his son, Continental 66F did for the W-T-K herd.

Jim Hole's Standard Lad 55C was Calgary Bull Sale Reserve Champion in 1973 and sold to Bar Pipe Farms where he became a foundation herdsire.

Standard Lad 93J, Standard Lad 95J and especially Stanmore 43K were among Hole's most influential sires. Bert & Marion Powesland of Rusticana Herefords, Alberta, and members of the Hereford Hall of Fame, built their cow herd on a bull called Ardmore C Domino 560, purchased at the Calgary bull sale. This bull also sired a number of bulls sold at subsequent sales.

Prince Domino 9th was behind the extensively used Silver Standard bull, says Ron Hanson. Hanson Ranches opened up some international trading opportunities with their BB Domino 1087 bull, the top growth performance bull in the world at the time. And LCI High Voltage 80S, bred by Doenz Ranches, is considered the granddaddy of many Canadian Herefords today and has been used worldwide.

The Remitall Keynote 20X and resulting Boomer 46B and CS Boomer 29F bulls are legendary in the breed's most recent history, as is Remitall Governor 236G. Remitall Online 122L is another of the breed's most prolific

sires and is the only Canadian bull to achieve National Champion Bull honours in both Canada and the U.S. He was, in fact, a two-time U.S. National Champion. The majority of American Hereford pedigrees are believed to go back to these sires.

The baldies and buckskins of North America have promoted the value of the Hereford bull and female over time in commercial circles while Herefords also gained notoriety through specific events.

Canadian Herefords were put in the spotlight when Canada hosted the World Hereford Conference of 1976.

"A large international crowd representing over 20 countries was amazed at the quality of Canadian cattle and this was the start of major international exports," says former CHA general manager, Duncan Porteous. "Working together to host the conference really jelled the breed." The conference in Banff was followed by a 900-head Hereford show at Calgary.

Herefords have also been the main breed of cattle featured for years at the Calgary Bull Sale, the oldest continuously held consignment sale in North America, according to Joanne Hole, wife of the late Jim Hole and author of the sale's history. "It has been the benchmark sale for horned Herefords in Canada for many years," she says.

Edward Jupp, former fieldman for the Canadian Hereford Digest, attended the Calgary Bull sale for 25 years. He says the sale is an education for everybody in attendance. But it used to run for three to four days and is now reduced to three or four hours.

"The big city bull sales have all come down in size and significance," says former Digest owner, Kurt Gilmore. This includes the Regina Bull Sale which was once the largest halter-led bull sale in the world, according to former CHA general manager, Perry Wilkes.

Current CHA General Manager Gordon Stephenson's fondest memories of the breed involve the Regina Bull Sale where 300 to 400 Hereford bulls sold.

Herefords have also been showcased for years at the Canadian Western



Edward Jupp



Duncan Porteous with his winning calf at the Westbrook 4-H beef club show and sale. His calf brought in a record one dollar per pound for its 930 pounds.

Agribition, a show created by Hereford breeders.

This internationally renowned national livestock event was established in 1970, in large part, due to the efforts of Spence Sutter's father, Chris. Inspired by the stock show at Denver, Sutter wanted a



Canadian Western Agribition, 1971



Jonathan Fox, judging the 2nd Canadian Western Agribition



Regina Bull Sale



World Hereford Conference 1976 - Champion Female

major livestock show on the prairies.

He and Jim Lethwaite, Tom Lees and what would be the show's first general manager, Bill Blacklock, lobbied government, the exhibition boards and other cattle breeds. They also attracted Labatts and Chrysler who came on board as the show's first sponsors.

In the first show, Herefords outnumbered all other breeds, three-to-one. Gary Minish judged, followed by Jonathan Fox the next year, who judged on horseback in the old auditorium.

"Agribition had a major impact on exports and getting

overall purebred cattle industry... [such as] genetic improvement and genomics, international market development, risk management tools and the national information system, to name a few."

The collaboration with CBBC has helped to secure recent exports to Russia.

And what better way to ensure the survival of the breed than through the next generation. Herefords have "the characteristics that lend themselves well to youth," says former member Sarah Hasson in a recent Ontario Memoir of the breed.

The Canadian Junior Hereford Association was the first national junior cattle breed organization and it has grown to be one of the leading

**Herefords have also been showcased for years at the Canadian Western Agribition, a show created by Hereford breeders.**

breeders together once a year to collectively promote the breed," says Porteous.

Breed promotion and the integrity of Hereford pedigrees has been the domain of the Canadian Hereford Association since 1890. The CHA currently comprises about 1,500 annual, life and junior members across Canada and registers about 15,000 Herefords annually. Its current offices in Calgary were built in 1980 when memberships numbered over 45,000.

"The Canadian Hereford Association has been an active supporter and participant in the Canadian Beef Breeds Council (CBBC), its organizational structure, evolution and programs for a long time," says CBBC General Manager, Herb McLane. "This clearly indicates the recognition of the Hereford industry of the needs of the

beef breed youth groups in the world.

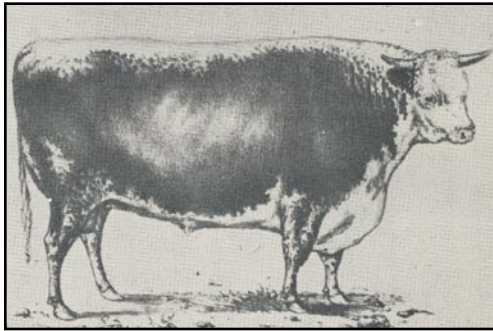
The CHA introduced the first junior memberships in 1963 for members under 21 years of age. In 1967, Dr. Bob Watson and Philip Schleihau of Ontario pioneered the development of the Canadian Junior Hereford Council.

The World Hereford Conference in Alberta was the catalyst to a lot of junior excitement and that year, the CHA recognized the need



1983 Calgary Bull Sale





Depiction of Ancient Hereford



C. 1950's



"Baby Beef"/"Belt Buckle" Herefords



CHA advertisement from the '80s.

for more organization within the junior organization, appointing a coordinator and adding junior provincial associations to the CHA. The first national junior show was held in 1978 at the University of Manitoba. The first Bonanza, a

producers, high interest rates of the eighties, a grading system change which favoured the growth of the Angus beef brand, Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) in the U.S., oil patch wages of \$60-\$70/hour, stagnant prices and most notably, BSE.

## The Canadian Junior Hereford Association was the first national junior cattle breed organization and it has grown to be one of the leading beef breed youth groups in the world.

national junior event that rotates to a different province each year, was organized by Marion Powesland, Stu Fenton and Ed Newton, and was held at Red Deer, Alberta in 1980.

At this point in his life, Duncan Lees says his boys, who did well in the junior association, encourage his activities as a cattle breeder more than anything now.

What Hereford breeders and the breed itself have endured, to-date, is impressive. The most obvious trend the Hereford breed has withstood is that of frame size adjustments. The earliest of the English breed were up to seven feet tall. Bulls and females of the 1700's were up to 3,000 or 4,000 pounds, respectively. These Herefords were primarily used as oxen to pull implements. The 1940s and 1950s witnessed the proliferation of "baby beef" and "belt buckle" cattle, which manifested the desire for smaller cuts and earlier maturing cattle. It resulted in a lot of single-trait selection, leading to genetic mutations which have since been eliminated.

The 70's and 80's manifested a new trend toward taller, leaner genetics to compete with newly imported exotic breeds. The breed has since recovered to idealize a more moderate beast between the extremes.

Among the breed's challenges, over time, are, disease, a decline in agriculture and a corresponding decline in memberships; increased costs of production, the loss of income tax incentives to many

Still the breed has persisted. It is estimated that well over 30 per cent of the beef cow population in Canada carries Hereford breeding. Technology changes in communication, transportation and data recording has helped support and give new life to the breed. And Pan American EPDs have opened new market opportunities.

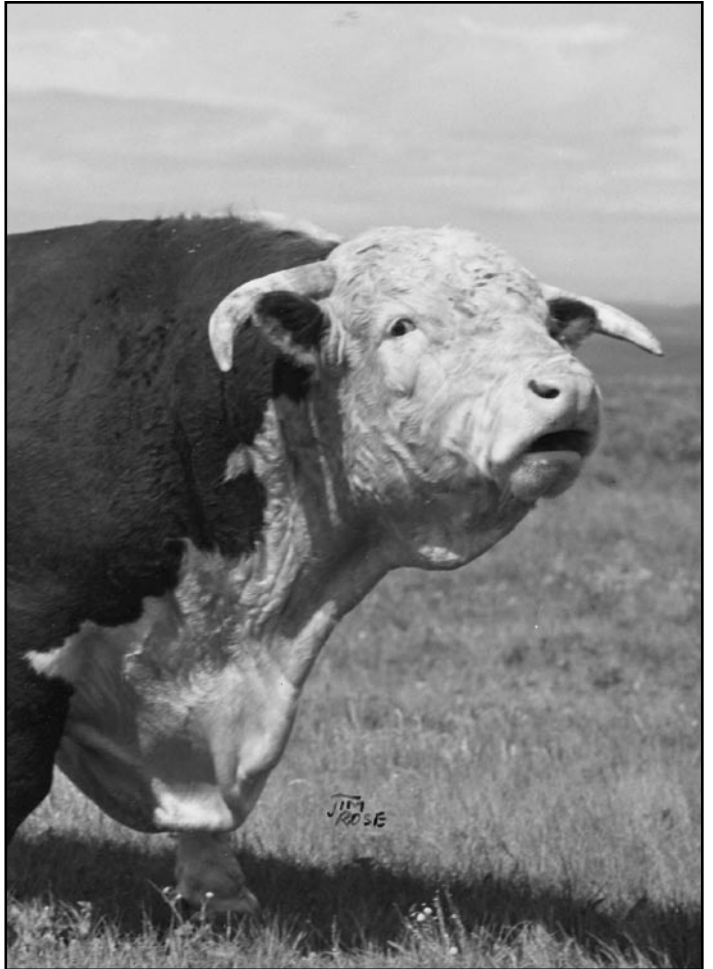
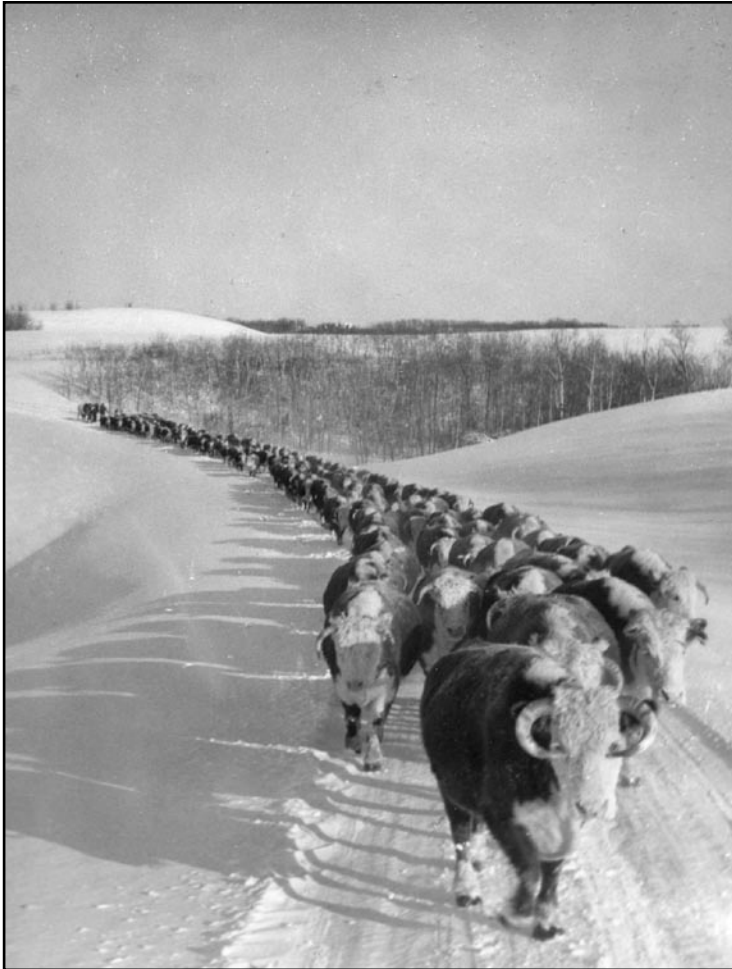
While the white face is a dominant trait worth hanging on to among the sea of breeds that systematically "went black", change is also important, in the words of Louis Latimer. "The ability to change is more essential than change itself," he says.

Ron Hanson, for one, would like to see Hereford breeders usher in a new era of cooperation.

Porteous says the emphasis on environment and increased need to cut cow herd costs indicates a strong future for Herefords. He is hopeful that the World Hereford Conference, to be hosted by Canada in 2012, along with the Branded Hereford Beef program, "will generate enthusiasm among the troops."



*Editor's note:* Thank you to everyone who talked to me to make this article possible. Unfortunately, it's scope and size does not allow me to mention the names of everyone I talked to. However, please note that we will run a retrospective series of articles throughout the year in future issues of the Digest, featuring some of the stories that you shared with me.



The legendary REMITALL ONLINE 122L at side of legendary Hereford dam REMITALL CATALINA 24H