

# A Short History of the Hereford Breed

The Hereford breed, as we know it today, originated during the mid 1700s along the eastern slope of the Welsh Mountains and the County of Herefordshire, England. Whatever may have been the character and type of the cattle in the Hereford area, the breed owes its development to the industrial revolution in Great Britain, which stimulated the growth of cities with a corresponding demand for beef for the workers. The first Hereford breeder was a gentleman by the name of Benjamin Tompkins, who in 1742 began a system of cattle breeding that exerted a great influence on the cattle in that part of the world. This is the first recorded history of selective breeding and planned matings for superior beef characteristics. The cattle bred by Tompkins over many years proved their superiority over other cattle at that time, and became very popular, dominating not only the home area, but over time, most of the great beef producing areas of the world.

Herefords were first imported to North America by Henry Clay, Kentucky, in 1817. In 1860, F.W. Stone, Guelph, ON, imported the first of this breed to Canada.

Frederick William Stone first came to Canada as a young man in 1931 and purchased 200 acres of land on the Puslinch Plains, south of where the city of Guelph now stands. He later established a store on Brock Road, and along with his store, he retained and operated his farm which he increased to 583 acres. In 1860 Mr. Stone returned to England where he attended the English Royal Show in Canterbury, and was greatly impressed with the quality of the Hereford cattle shown that year. He thought these cattle might be well suited to Canada, and upon learning that some top individuals were coming up for auction at a later date, commissioned his brother to purchase enough for a basic herd. The result of this action was the purchase of eight heifers and a yearling bull by the name of Patriot, from the very famous herd owned by Lord Bateman. It was noted at the time that the cattle imported by Mr. Stone were of the highest quality obtainable, and this explains, in part, why they and their descendants were able to play such a major role in the progress of the Hereford breed in Canada.

Up to this time, the vast majority of Hereford cattle were horned. Approximately 40 years later, in the late 1890s, a small group of breeders in the midwestern United States realized that it was both possible and practical to develop a polled or natural genetically hornless strain of Herefords. Historical records indicate the existence of naturally hornless beef cattle since the first description of civilization. Etchings and carvings in the pyramids of ancient Egypt show an occasional polled animal dating back nearly 4,000 years.

In 1898, an Iowa lawyer by the name of Warren Gammon of Des Moines, saw some Hereford cattle of the polled variety on exhibition at the Trans Mississippi International Exposition in Omaha, Nebraska. After conducting extensive research on

the subject, Mr. Gammon sent inquiries in the year 1900 to 2,500 members of the American Hereford Association attempting to find some natural hornless purebred Hereford cattle. He received 1,500 replies from which he purchased 11 head. Included in these purchases was a bull bred by O.F. Nelson, Hiawatha, Kansas, whose name was Giant, a great, great grandson of Anxiety 4th. Giant is recognized as the foundation sire of all registered Polled Hereford cattle.

In Canada, following F.W. Stone as a pioneer breeder of registered Herefords, was Mossom Boyd, Bobcaygeon, ON. In the early 1880s, Mr. Boyd became interested in Herefords and was a close student of animal breeding. He worked exclusively with Horned Herefords until 1903 when he became interested in the work being carried on by Warren Gammon. He visited Mr. Gammon and arranged through him to purchase two Polled Hereford bulls. Such has been the popularity of Polled Hereford cattle that by January of 1973 their numbers had increased to more than three million head.

Today Horned and Polled Hereford cattle each make up about 50 per cent of the breed's population in Canada. Carefully selected matings by thousands of breeders over the past 100 years have resulted in a reputation throughout the world for the superior genetics offered by Canadian Hereford cattle. This reputation has resulted in extensive exportation of Canadian Hereford seedstock to countries throughout the world since the late 1950s and early 1960s. This worldwide interest continues today with ever increasing exports to developing countries in central Asia, as well as South America. Consistent purchasers of Canadian Herefords include the United States, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and most western European countries.