

Ardrossan Ayrshires are rich in history, No. 1 in the nation

BY DONNA TOMMELLEO

In pursuit of the wily fox, Colonel Robert L. Montgomery galloped across the rolling Delaware County hillside. He urged his steed forward and gathered himself for an oncoming fence.

Instead of the anticipated, graceful vault, both Montgomery and mount tumbled head over heels before landing on the opposite side. The horse galloped away, leaving the horseless Colonel to his own devices.

Stranded, Montgomery surveyed the countryside. Stirred by the beauty of his surroundings, Montgomery decided he would build his home on that very spot. It would be a home for his wife and four children, a home that would become the hub of a legacy that continued long after the Colonel's death. The year was 1909.

Today, the large stone mansion stands amidst 750 acres of prime eastern Pennsylvania farmland near Villanova, Philadelphia and her adjoining suburbs push against the farm's borders, but have yet to affect the land with "urban overrun." A most unlikely spot,

indeed, for a dairy. However, the dairy spawned from Montgomery's toil has become an agricultural institution, entirely managed by Montgomery's daughter Helen Hope Montgomery Scott.

Ardrossan Farm, a name derived from a large city in Scotland, is the home of the nation's leading Ayrshire herd. And just as Ardrossan, Scotland evolved from a small fishing village, the development of Montgomery's Ayrshires also had modest roots.

Hope Scott recalls the early days of the Ardrossan herd. Her father decided to milk the Scottish dairy cattle because he thought their milk, with naturally broken-up fat globules, would benefit his small children.

He brought nine Ayrshire cows and one bull from Scotland in 1910, she recounts. Upon reaching America by ship, the cattle were loaded onto a train and arrived at Bryn Mawr station, where they were unloaded and herded five miles down Bryn Mawr Avenue.

"And from then on, we've never



Electrical wires attached to the cupola date American Revolution. Scott's office once the aged stone barn to the 20th century. served as an overnight repose for George Washington. However, many of the 40 buildings on the Washington. Ardrossan estate have been standing since the



A lifelong animal lover, Hope Scott relaxes with one of her four-legged friends. In addition to her likeable Shepherd, the Scott household includes two loyal Whippets, small Greyhound-type dogs.



The love of horses runs deep within Scott as uprooted, wooden carousel steed decorates does her admiration of Ayrshires. This one of many rooms in the Scott home.

bought one female," Hope Scott explains. Subsequent matings were drawn from carefully selected outside bulls.

"We are very careful not to get them inbred. We have the most linebred herd in the United States," she notes.

The present day herd includes more than 30 cow families, and Scott admits her line breeding facilitates the sale of Ardrossan bulls.

"It's very popular now, because I'm able to sell bull calves anywhere."

Not only has Ardrossan cattle surpassed the state's breed average for milk production, but the 125-head, "very wet" milking string has been highly competitive with all breeds in county rankings.

"The herd has had an 18,000 pound herd average for the last four months," she offers.

But Hope Scott remembers well a time when the Ardrossan Ayrshires were gaunt and sickly and produced about 6,000 pounds of milk a year, a mere third of today's records. She remembers those days extremely well because they marked the beginning of her 33-year career as owner-manager.

She assumed control of the herd in 1949 following the death of Col. Montgomery. However, she stepped into the role, not as a seasoned cow woman, but as a hard-working horse fancier. Nine head of Ayrshires was not the only livestock Col. Montgomery transported across the Atlantic Ocean.

"My father brought six mares and a stallion from England in 1917 and my sister and I broke all the

horses and their colts," Scott remarks.

"But then, when my father died, somebody had to take over the herd. My brother was a businessman, one sister was an artist and the other was too much of a horse woman."

Scott admits that her station in life was not that of a dairy manager.

"Definitely, it was planned for me to be a party girl and get married to the right person, early. Which I did," she recalls. She is currently in her 59th year of marriage to retired stockbroker Edgar Scott.

In fact, when the family debated whether or not to change to beef cattle, Edgar Scott suggested to his wife that she accept the challenge in dairy.

"Then I became fascinated. I love the cows," she says.

Before his death, Col. Montgomery had been ill for 10 years, an illness that drastically reduced his activity with the herd. As a result, the herd, which had grown to 180 animals was an unthrifty bunch. When the proverbial reins passed from father to eldest daughter, Hope Scott found she had her work cut out for her.

"In the first place, I didn't know any of the terms. I didn't know how long an animal should milk. I

(Turn to Page A23)



Chester Billheim, general manager at Ardrossan, who began working for Scott about 30 years ago, attends at all calvings. He

watches, here, as a first-calf heifer plies her maternal instincts toward her newborn offspring.