

## Ardrossan Ayrshires

# Born in Scotland and raised in America

BY JOYCE BUPP  
Staff Correspondent

**VILLANOVA** — The year was 1910. And in the village of Bryn Mawr, on the outskirts of Philadelphia, a freight train pulled into the station. In a short time, a group of Ayrshire cattle was herded from a boxcar and out into the street.

It was near the end of the long journey for these traveled cows. They had earlier been driven from barns at Ardrossan, Scotland, and loaded onto a ship headed for America. When the ship finally docked at its destination, the cattle had then been transferred to the freight boxcar for the next leg of their journey.

Local residents Colonel Robert L. Montgomery and John Valentine had waited with eager anticipation for the arrival of their red and white bovine purchases. With plenty of hands to help with the herding, the cattle were directed down Bryn Mawr's main street and the remaining five miles to where soft straw beds, grassy hay and sturdy southeast Pennsylvania fieldstone barns awaited their arrival.

Nine of those cows and a young sire named White Robin went to the rolling estate pastures of Col. Montgomery. The son of a lawyer, and one of 11 children, Col. Montgomery had served the country through both the Spanish-American War and World War. He was a production-side aviation specialist and a flier, whose interests ranged from the technology of autogyro flying machines to breeding fine cattle and horses.

It was the latter interest that had initiated the shipment of Ayrshires. About the same time, Col. Montgomery had also imported six three-quarter-bred Irish mares and a Thoroughbred stud. Before long, Colonel Montgomery's three daughters were kept busy breaking and training the young horses.

Progressive thinking marked the agricultural philosophy of Col. Montgomery, who had as a civilian become a successful investment broker. Diseases ran rampant through herds of domestic livestock, and Col. Montgomery

was determined to protect his horse and cattle herds.

In his farsightedness, he had purchased land which included many springs of fresh, clear water. Knowing that diseases could be transmitted by other animals drinking from upstream, Col. Montgomery ran all water crossing his property, but originating elsewhere, through underground piping systems. Only water originating on his property was used.

It was a strategy that may have paved the way toward establishing Ardrossan as a bastion of Ayrshire breeding. John Valentine's cows all died, primarily to that dreaded scourge of cattle, tuberculosis. Of Col. Montgomery's original Ayrshire imports, only one was lost.

"Father had very pronounced ideas about health requirements. No animal that left the property could ever come back," relates the daughter of the Ayrshire importer, Mrs. Hope Montgomery Scott. She and her husband, Edgar, have continued the family's Ayrshire cattle breeding.

In fact, under the Scott's direction, Ardrossan Farms has developed in production and type a herd considered by many in the industry as the top Ayrshire breeding operation in the United States.

Today, the 115-head herd has a rolling average of 19,533 milk and 805 fat. And production continues to climb, with the breaking of the 20,000-pound herd average barrier a real possibility for the first time in Ayrshire breed history.

Ayrshire breeders from across the country, attending the National Ayrshire convention this week at Grantville, will tour Ardrossan Farms. They'll visit this outstanding herd of cattle, view the picturesque rolling hills and pastures and enjoy a picnic on the spacious lawn of the estate's main house.

But record-setting production and type were not always the hallmark of this herd. Had it not been for the interest of Mrs. Scott, a vital part of Ayrshire history might have been lost.

The Ardrossan herd has

basically been developed through a line-breeding philosophy, coupled with the genetics of outcross sires blended with herd bloodlines to maintain strengths and upgrade developing faults. In those early years, new sires continued to be imported from top Scottish breeders. Later, as more domestic herds developed outstanding stock, top bulls were acquired from across the country.

About 1921, a fire destroyed the barn where the Ardrossan herd was housed. Animals were moved across the hill to the site where they are still tended in meticulously-kept stanchion barns.

Years later, Col. Montgomery's health was faltering and he had experienced strokes. Herd quality and production were declining. Mrs. Scott had grown up helping with the family's horses, and had taken an interest in the cattle somewhat, as well.

"I just like all animals," she smiles. Her father didn't necessarily agree with her girlhood interest in the herd.

"He told me that was not for a woman to do," adds Mrs. Scott.

In 1948, when she began working in earnest with the Ardrossan herd, an Ayrshire friend who looked over the cattle called them "the most neglected herd he'd ever seen."

The herd of 180 head was then producing a yearly average of 6,000 pounds milk and 307 pounds of fat.

"I really didn't know where to turn for help," Mrs. Scott recalls. "But I decided that if a cow hadn't made 7,000 pounds after three lactations, she would have to go. The first time one produced over 500 pounds of fat I was staggered."

After just two years under her direction, the herd average had doubled. And, by 1950-51, Ardrossan Farms had become the first certified TB and Brucellosis-free herd in the nation.

She is quick to offer credit to others. Dr. Ernest Duebler, a veterinarian who had helped care for her father's herd, and his son James, were among her early advisors. "He urged me to make up a book of the cow families, in addition to the other cattle records I was keeping. And I was still continuing to break horses as well."

Her husband also earns Mrs. Scott's praise for his support and interest, as does her brother. In fact, it was Mr. Scott who insisted that "you must have a good bull."

"And it was at a time when we had been losing a thousand dollars a month on the herd; pretty soon I was doubling that monthly loss," she laughs. But, that was because equipment all needed upgrading and barn repair work done.

Temperament of the herd left something to be desired, too, she relates. Some of the cattle were so



These are the nine original cows at Ardrossan Farms that were imported from Scotland. They were the foundation for the herd that is on the threshold of a 20,000 pound herd average.



Herdsman Heinz Meilke is especially proud of Ardrossan RC More Sun. She was number in the nation for her age, making a 2-6 305-day lactation of 22,870 milk, 4.4 test, and 1015 fat.



Calves in the nursery, or "Edgar's Barn," have individual wire pens which are moved every two weeks for cleaning and disinfecting.



The main dairy barn, of picturesque stone with decorative cupola, is a focal point of the National Ayrshire Convention tour to Ardrossan Farms.

high-strung that at milking time, their back legs were sometimes secured from kicking by a string tied to the leg and fastened to a stall across the center alleyway.

Then, Homerun Martyr moved in with the herd. This first outstanding herd sire provided solid breeding foundation stock to help upgrade the Ardrossan bloodlines. He was followed by Blackwood Warbeau, acquired from breeder Cuthbert Nairn. Interestingly, Nairn had been among those on hand in 1910 to help move the original nine Ayrshire cows down the Bryn Mawr streets to the Montgomery barn.

A third foundation sire at Ardrossan was Reidina Double Dawn, loaned from veterinarian Dr. Deubler. An outstanding bull for both milk and fat, Double Dawn sired the first 20,000-pound producer in the Ardrossan herd.

Goals at Ardrossan have continued leading toward improvement of production and type. That these goals are being met are evidenced by the five top herd producers up for association recognition for records of over 25,000, and the 27 Excellents and many Very Good individuals in this

herd brimming with size, strength and outstanding udders.

Success of the herd has been largely built on the foundation of deep-pedigreed, homebred cow families. Coupled with that is the dedication, management abilities, and cow breeding "sense" of Mrs. Scott and her intensely-loyal and hardworking staff.

An incredible amount of respect is evident between employees and employer at Ardrossan. Mrs. Scott's appreciation of her staff is obvious, and they are equally quick to credit her for her knowledge and dedication to the herd.

"Without Mrs. Scott, this wouldn't happen," they say, adding that this admiring and respectful relationship between staff and owner carries over to the calm demeanor of this herd.

Farm manager is Chet Billhime, who's been at Ardrossan for 28 years. In addition to his farm management responsibilities, he helps milk the herd, freshens out all the cattle, and with his wife Helen, raises all the calves from weaning age to about six months.

Heinze Mielke has been the dairy

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A young bull peers over the fence, possible bloodline banner bearer of the future. Many Ardrossan herd sons have gone into AI use in Canada.