

THE

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WORLD



The Story of Edellyn Farms

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A classical contribution to Shorthorn breed history
that touches the large majority of herds in this country.

By BERTRAM B. FOWLER



Thomas E. Wilson

THOS. E. WILSON, Wilson, Illinois, owner of the famous Edellyn Farms and Shorthorn herd has been a leader of the industry for more than a third of a century. During that time no other herd has produced as many International grand champions, no herd has produced more successful sires for other breeding establishments and no man has exerted a more powerful influence toward the advancement of the breed as a whole.*

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The Story of Edellyn Farms

Foreword

THE story of any substantial and successful farm comes about as near to being an authentic segment of the story of a country and its people as it is possible to isolate in a written form. On the farm is contained the true essence of home. The city home at its best is little better than a domicile, regardless of the harmony of that domicile. Only on the farm can the roots of home find the necessary depth of soil to insure permanence. Only on the farm is home owner or home maker in touch with the basic elements that form the foundation of a home as truly as they form the foundation of a nation.

Only on a farm does the home maker come into close touch and accord with the eternal verities. Only there do the slow symphonic movements of the seasons have form and meaning in the truest sense. The trend of agriculture, its slow upward march in terms of soil conservation, improved methods of animal husbandry and agronomy, can be grasped through published graphs and charts by the objective student. But on the farm this upward movement becomes personal and subjective. To the truly successful farmer that progress is as close and personal as the soil beneath his feet, or the flocks and herds that graze upon his acres. Upon such acres he is in deep, soul-satisfying accord with nature in the cycle of beneficent change.

The farm is a fixed and constant source of creative power. In this sense the city is an artificial creation of man. As such it is in-

capable of self-perpetuation. The city must, if it is to survive in prosperity, receive its periodic and unfailing transfusions of new blood from the one available source, the vital rural areas. The city receives such transfusions in the steady influx of rural youth into city jobs. The history of industrial progress is, for the most part, the history of the rise of the rural recruits to positions of responsibility and power through which they infuse into industry the vitality and healthy endurance with which their farm background has imbued them.

As significant in another sense is the reverse flow of this migration. From the ranks of the rural migrants rise those who attain success in the urban world of finance and industry. Invariably the attainment of success turns the faces of these men back toward the land from which they sprung. That love of the land is something that is rarely quenched by success. So the reverse migration goes on. This migration has dotted the face of America with the farm homes of the successful ones who strive to re-attain the accord with nature and its verities which constituted their childhood and which seldom vanishes.

A portion of this migration meets with failure just as a percentage of the original migrants fail to attain in the city the success of which they dreamed. The failure of the returnees is written in the incongruous palaces which they erect, the marble swimming pools with which they seek to recapture the joy they knew in the old swimming hole.

But a portion of those who return with the love of the soil unquenched and the bond with nature unbroken make their contributions to the great upward surge of agricultural progress. Such men put into their farms the accumulation of their knowledge and substance and in return reap from its fields the harvest of true satisfaction from the face of improving acres. Such men on such farms re-establish the deep and cogent bond with nature and the enduring substance of nature. Such a farm is Edellyn.

A Foundation is Laid

Thomas E. Wilson, then the president of Morris & Co., the packing house in which he had started work as a clerk, purchased his first country acreage in the North Shore area of Chicago in 1914. There are those who know Mr. Wilson intimately who say that the decision to purchase the run-down sandy acreage, upon which stood no building worthy of note, was occasioned by typical Thomas Wilson sentiment. This version of the story has to do with a superannuated mare that had been boarded out by Mr. Wilson to strangers.



John Dickson, first manager of Edellyn Farms combined experience and integrity. There he helped develop one of America's greatest herds of Shorthorns.

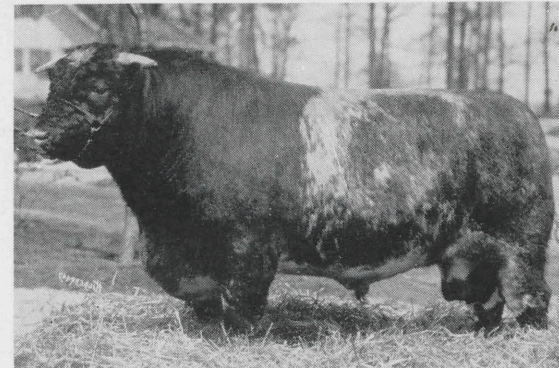
Visiting the farm to see how the old mare was faring, Mr. Wilson was keenly dissatisfied both by the condition of the mare and the treatment she was receiving. The story has it that he returned home with the idea of acquiring some suitable acreage for pasturage of his own.

Whether this is an authentic version of the story or not is of little consequence. It is, of course, so typical of the man and his concern for those dependent upon him that it could easily be true. The fact remains that he did purchase his acreage and did turn the old mare loose on its grass. But just as true was the fact that he had come from a farm in rural Canada and had never lost his love for the soil or his concern for the betterment of all things pertaining to the soil and its products. It was inevitable that sooner or later he should turn to the contemplation of a farm of his own in which to plant the foundations of his home. If the old mare had anything to do with his decision at that particular time, she was merely acting in a role of minor impulsion.

The name decided upon by Mr. Wilson for the farm is somehow indicative of the closeness of the project to his concept of the farm as home. This farm was to be not merely a farm for the breeding of fine livestock, but primarily a home for his family. Therefore it was quite natural that he should have named it Edellyn, in a combined use of the names of his two children, Edward and Helen.

It must be remembered that in the case of Mr. Wilson his whole career had been in an industry that was in close and practical contact with the farm and the products of the farm. As the head of a packing house he was acutely aware of what was transpiring in agriculture. To his packing plants came the flow of livestock to be slaughtered and processed for the tables of America. It was natural, therefore, that he should have certain definite ideas on the opportunity for improvement of the meat-producing herds and flocks of the country. Just as naturally, therefore, when he

Browndale Count. The listing of some of his sons has the quality of a majestic roll call of the great in the breed.



became the owner of rural acreage, his mind turned to the idea of stock raising. It was but a short time after his original purchase, when in conversation with Frank W. Harding, a successful breeder of Shorthorn cattle, that Mr. Wilson said, "Frank, I'm thinking of buying some Shorthorns. When I'm ready I'll need your help."

It was also natural that Mr. Wilson should have instinctively thought of Shorthorns when he contemplated the purchase of cattle. To many with a strong dash of Scotch in their veins, the Shorthorn is the aristocrat of the bovine world.

Certainly this breed is inextricably bound up with all that is Scottish in character and tradition. Scottish breeders of Shorthorns have no monopoly on integrity, but no breeders cling more tenaciously to the highest concept of integrity. Behind every animal bred and raised by any Shorthorn breeder worthy of the name stands that unassailable integrity. It is the one all-important factor behind every sale and transaction.

Knowing this and relying upon it in all his dealings with the Scottish breeders, the American breeder of Shorthorns has taken over that integrity with the breed he has chosen. All breeders of livestock must, of course, have that integrity. But among Short-

horn breeders it is their heritage from the bleak and forthright hills of Scotland where the modern Shorthorn was developed and where it is still being improved today.

Such was the tradition of the breed that Thomas E. Wilson decided to establish on the farm. One of his first steps was to locate a combination of experience and integrity in a manager for his farm. He found his man in John Dickson. Dickson had been born on a farm in Scotland to a family of breeders of Galloway cattle. He came to Canada with a shipment of Clydesdale horses. Later he crossed the border and worked for breeders in Illinois and Indiana. He came to Edellyn to take charge and help Mr. Wilson develop one of the greatest Shorthorn herds that America has ever known.

No history of Edellyn Farms would be complete without a major reference to another man who came to the farm at about the same time as John Dickson to play an important part in the development of the fine herd. That man is Harry Ackerman, who arrived with the first arrival of the foundation stock and remained to build a reputation that today classifies him as one of the most expert handlers and fitters of show cattle in America. Today wherever Edellyn Shorthorns are shown, whether at livestock shows or at Edellyn



Harry Ackerman arrived with Edellyn foundation stock and remained to build a reputation as one of the nation's most expert handlers of purebred cattle.

says, Harry Ackerman is just about as well known as Edellyn itself.

Mr. Wilson's close association with the farmers and producers of livestock across the whole sweep of America had made him acutely conscious of the trend that was even then beginning to develop in agriculture — the trend toward the conservation and improvement of the land through a combination of livestock and improved grasses. This trend, that was later to become a major one in agriculture, was then being seriously considered by a comparatively few pioneers in this field. The very nature of the operations at Edellyn, with the acreage run down through abuse and misuse, made the farm a natural one for such a development.

In Edellyn Farms Mr. Wilson had, not a rich man's hobby, but a laboratory in which he could prove some of his sound theories in agricultural practices, particularly in livestock breeding and proper land use. But it is hardly conceivable that he could have foreseen the success that would, within twenty years, have

the Shorthorn breeders of America beating a path to Edellyn, a path that has continued to be beaten deeper and broader, year after year.

From the beginning Edellyn Farms was developed as a practical, working stock farm. When Mr. Wilson built his country home there, he constructed no elaborate country mansion. The house he built was a home, spacious, comfortable and liveable. Instead of the usual country estate adjuncts of swimming pools and exotic gardens, the house is embraced by natural grounds of lawns and groves. The vistas seen from the house are mostly those of lush fields for the grazing and feeding of the herd that constitutes the basic economic foundation of Edellyn.

From the start the farm was planned to be a functional one. As more and more acreage was added, the same program of crop rotation and soil conservation was put into effect. As a result the run-down acres taken over and added to Edellyn Farms were gradually but surely brought back into full productivity.

All buildings on the farm today are as functional as the land itself. At the outset most of the existing old buildings on the farms were so dilapidated and neglected that they had to be torn down. Some of the old farmhouses on the various farms purchased and incorporated into the farm as it now exists, were rehabilitated and modernized to provide homes for the staff of herdsmen and farm help which expanded as the operations of Edellyn developed. The barns which house the great Shorthorn herd are unpretentious. Nowhere on the whole system of farms is there anything that is invested with the too common aura of the rich man's playground.

For Edellyn is a working farm. Upon it has been developed in the most practical manner, one of the finest cattle herds on the continent. Like the acreage and the farm buildings, the herd is a working unit, paying its own way and justifying economically the time, thought, and energy that has gone into its creation.

Clinton K. Tomson, secretary of the Amer-

ican Shorthorn Breeders' Association, says of Edellyn, "The operations on the farm have been so practical and thorough that the farm makes a living model for any breeder to copy."

Once a year the farm does blossom forth in true manorial splendor. This is the occasion upon which the lawns are covered by tables and Mr. Wilson and his family play host to the throng that deploys upon the farm on the occasion of the annual Edellyn sale. But even this event is as functional as is the farm and its operations. The crowd that gathers at Edellyn every June is no aggregation of the merely curious. Here and at this time are gathered the cattle breeders of note from all over the United States and Canada. These men come in their hundreds to bid on the great cattle offered for sale and by their coming, pay true and practical homage to the man who is recognized as one who is responsible for the creation of Edellyn.

True to his early remark to Frank Harding of Anoka Farm, Mr. Wilson turned to Mr. Harding, not merely for advice, but for cattle as well. From Mr. Harding he purchased Princess Royal and Augusta Anoka 11th. From Robert Miller of Canada he

acquired Roan Lady, Jubilee 10th, and Village Maid 39th. In 1918 he imported the cows Blinkbonny 4th, Whitehall Janet, Floradora 6th, Beaufort Moss Rose, and Colleen Rose-blush. From Carpenter and Ross he bought imp. Brandsby's Princess 8th, the Queen Mysies 3rd, and 11th, and imp. Whimsical. With these and other cows carefully chosen from the best families he was slowly laying the foundation for his future herd.

In 1918 the roan bull Kingwood was imported and placed in service at Edellyn. Kingwood was a good bull. But he was not a great bull in the sense that the regal sires who were to make Edellyn world famous were great. The first of these royal sires was yet to come.

A "Count" When it Counted

Long before Thomas E. Wilson had even considered such a farm as Edellyn, an event occurred which was to have a profound effect upon the whole history of the Shorthorn breed in America. Just at the turn of the century E. S. Kelly, a Shorthorn breeder of Springfield, Ohio, imported 25 cows from Scotland. Among the 25 was one cow that to this day is considered by Shorthorn breeders

Calrossie Mercury — first Perth supreme champion to come to this continent — son, sire and grandsire of Perth supreme champions, he was brought to Edellyn to found a new Shorthorn dynasty in North America.





One of the most enjoyable events of the entire Shorthorn year is the lunch served at Edellyn Farms, Wilson, Illinois, on the occasion of the annual sale. On this day Mr. Thos. E. Wilson, owner, is host to Shorthorn cattle lovers from every section of North America and frequently from foreign countries. Above is shown a part of the crowd partaking of the Edellyn hospitality.

Farms, Libertyville, Illinois, for Edellyn Golden Drop 40th, one of the best of the Mercury daughters bred to Royal Leader.

The 1946 sale opened with Royal Leader 37th out of Imp. Collynie Lady Augusta going to Herschel H. Allen of Hi-Ho Farms, Phoenix, Maryland. But the top bull of the sale was Royal Leader 33rd, a near perfect bull out of another great imported dam, Scotson Jealous Jean, going to W. F. McCanless of Salisbury, North Carolina, for \$7200.

However, the sons of Calrossie Mercury served notice that they were still very much in the running when Edellyn Renown Mercury out of Brae Lodge Buttercup 5th went to George Cox of Grand Forks, South Dakota, for \$6200.

The average for bulls at this sale was \$2480. And the heifers were still creeping up on the bulls with an average this year of about \$1754. Indeed, one of the features of this sale was the consistently high prices paid for heifers representing the fusion of Mercury-Royal Leader blood. Edellyn Beauty 23rd with Calrossie Mercury blood on both dam and sire's side, carrying the services of Royal Leader 23rd sold for \$2500 for shipment to South Africa. Edellyn Orange Blossom 58th, a daughter of Royal Leader, carrying the service of Foremost Mercury, brought \$3000. Edellyn Maud 10th went to Charles Ewald of Waldorf, Minnesota, for \$2200. Edellyn Rosebud 6th out of Imp. Robina Rosebud by Calrossie Mercury bred to Royal Leader 23rd went to W. F. McCanless of Circle M Ranch, North Carolina, who also took Edellyn Crocus 7th, a heifer by Golden Mercury and bred to Royal Leader; Edellyn Flossy Shane 5th, also, by Golden Mercury and bred to Royal Leader; Edellyn Broadhooks 26th, an Edellyn Command heifer bred to Royal Leader; Edellyn Orange Blossom 62nd, a Calrossie Mercury heifer bred to Royal Leader; and Rosewood 97th, a daughter of Brawith Mercury, bred to Foremost Mercury.

The McCanless purchase at this sale was

typical of the manner in which the owners of fine Shorthorn herds were buying sons and daughters of the two great bulls in their program of foundation building and herd improvement. No finer tribute could have been paid to the magnificent standards set up by Edellyn Farms.

The list of farms like Millgate, Don Hills, Cherry Hill, Arnold Brothers, Sni-A-Bar, Hi-Ho, Elcona, Rasmussen & Sons, Blotz Bros., Byron Hawks Farms, S. O. Harris, Gregg Farms, is but a partial list of those breeders who infused Mercury and Royal Leader blood into their herds working almost incalculable improvement.

To return to the 1946 sale, Broadfield Farms, Ridgeville, Indiana, paid the top heifer price of the day when they bid \$4000 for Edellyn Flossy Shane 6th, a daughter of Royal Leader out of Imp. Flossy Shane. Once more we must note that again and again we find that top priced bulls and heifers in these sales go back on their dams' side to the 1933 heifer importation.

Some idea of the extent of the spread of Edellyn bloodlines can be gathered by a list of the states to which these bulls and heifers traveled. At this one sale alone the buyers represented herds in the states of Maryland, South Dakota, Minnesota, Wisconsin, North Carolina, New Jersey, Iowa, Illinois, North Dakota, Montana, Missouri, Texas, Oklahoma, Indiana, Kansas and Ohio. In the course of a very few years Edellyn breeding stock went to practically every state in the Union, to Canada, South Africa, Australia and Argentina. And in almost every case the get of the individual that had been sold from Edellyn went outward from its new location in ever-widening circles.

It has been observed that as far as showing records are concerned, the Mercurys and Royal Leaders of the war years were not allowed to prove their worth in that respect. There was, however, one grand testing ground for them during this time. The old International Short-