



Mercer County Historical Society Newsletter

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Editor: Mary Jane Sticklen

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Black Angus in Mercer County

Submitted by Jim Runyon

"Aberdeenshire of America" signs used to proclaim that message throughout Mercer County—and the many black beef cattle grazing in the county gave evidence to that claim. The title was conferred by Frank Richards, secretary of the American Angus Association because Mercer County had more active Angus breeders than any other county in the U.S. The Angus movement in Mercer County began in 1882 when O.A. Bridgford wanted a hornless beef animal which he found in the Angus breed in Abingdon, IL. Laon McWhorter soon became an Angus owner as did the Candor brothers, W.L. and John.

The McWhorter herd was established by Laon McWhorter at Greenview Stock Farm in 1888 with the purchase of his first Angus bull from J.J. Rodgers of Abingdon, IL. Laon purchased his first cow from O.A. Bridgford the next year. His son, Hugh, continued the herd and served as secretary of the Mercer County Association for many years.

The Candor brothers also began raising Angus in 1888. Other families who became Angus breeders included Morgan, Brown, Carroll, Shoemaker, Thornton and Cabeen.

By 1900, Mercer County was a leader in pure-blooded Angus. Beginning in 1903, the breeders combined to offer breeding stock at auction after the county fair. Thirteen county breeders organized their own Aberdeen Angus Association in 1929, the first such county organization in the country. The Association held annual sales from 1929, publishing their own catalog that went to cattlemen nationwide. These sales attracted buyers from 37 states and Canada.

Evidence of the quality of Mercer County Angus is reflected by winners at the International Livestock Show Junior Champions:

1918 & 25	Willett H. Downey
1925	Pauline Brown
1931	Wendell Morgan
1938	Irene Brown
1939	Robert Carroll

Mercer Angus also claimed Grand Championships several years in the Carcass and 4-H classes.

(Source: Mercer County History, 1882-1979 and 50th Anniversary Edition 1919-1969 of Aberdeen Angus Journal.)



David, Irene Brown & "Mercer"

Mercer County Historical Society & Essley-Noble Museum

1406 - SE 2nd Avenue
Aledo, IL 61231
Phone: 309/582-2280

Hours: 1:00 - 5:00 PM
Wed., Sat., & Sunday
April through the end of October.



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For Genealogy Queries write to:

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Daniel and the Graveyard Event

By Donald O. Durning

When the farmers in our neighborhood bought the thrashing machine to separate the grain from the straw and chaff, Daniel Twelftree announced that he would be the one who operated the separator. No one objected so he got the job. He was highly pleased because it gave him the chance to order people around – which he did.

One thrashing day it was my job to haul the thrashed grain from the thrashing machine to the farmer's storage bin. Once that day when I was backing the wagon up to the thrashing machine I accidentally backed into Daniel. It was a slight bump and didn't hurt him but he took the chance to show off and "cussed me out good." I was a kid about 18 and resented that because I hadn't hurt him and I decided to get back at Daniel if I got the chance.

Grandma Durning and our father's older brother, Uncle Hugh, took Lyle and I from the Mannon family shortly after the death of our mother, Alice Mannon, and raised us until we were adults ready to go out on our own. Uncle Hugh was a member of the Masonic Lodge of Aledo and so was Daniel Twelftree. P.H. Dorothy, manager of the Mercer County Farm that housed and cared for those who were unable to care for themselves was a member, too. The County Farm was about a mile further out of Aledo along the main road where our mail boxes were. On a lodge night it was the custom of Daniel to come down to our house and he and Uncle Hugh would walk down to the corner to our mail boxes and ride into Aledo to the lodge meeting with Mr. Dorothy. After the meeting Mr. Dorothy would drop Uncle Hugh and Daniel off at our corner and they would walk up to our place where Daniel would light his trusty lantern and walk the rest of the way home alone.

The people who had owned our farm before we did had built a stone fence around a plot of ground about 15x20 feet along the side of the road between our place and Daniel's and had buried several of their early relatives in the graveyard. That graveyard was on Daniel's way home alone from our house and it was no secret that he was afraid to walk by there at night.



One lodge night shortly after Daniel had "cussed me out" at the thrashing machine he came down to our place without his trusty lantern. I noted the absence of the lantern and said to myself, "This is the time to give Daniel the big scare."

When it was about time for Uncle Hugh and Daniel to come from the mail box corner, I slipped the white cover off my pillow, put on my clothes very quietly and went up to the graveyard. Before long I heard Daniel walking up the road very rapidly. When he was almost even with me in the graveyard I let out a long mournful o-o-o-o-o and waved the white pillow cover where he could see it but couldn't see me behind the stone fence. Daniel took one look and started to run for home. I could hear his feet pounding on the dusty road as he dashed madly along.

Uncle Hugh and Lyle were waiting for me when I got home. I had to tell them what happened. Uncle Hugh was half-heartedly critical of me, but you could tell he was a little pleased, too.

Next morning, John Hazoke, hired hand of Daniel, came over when I was working to tell me what happened. He said Daniel usually came around the house and in the back door but last night he came to the front door and yelled and beat on the door to get in. He said Daniel almost tore that front door off its hinges trying to get it open and in the house. I acted surprised but John knew, having guessed what happened.

Sent to the museum by Darlene Durning Campbell. Her uncle, Donald O. Durning, gave her a collection of the family stories before his death prior to 1997.



Aprons

Submitted by Alicia Paul Ives

I don't think our kids know what an apron is.

The principal use of Grandma's apron was to protect the dress underneath, but along with that, it served as a potholder for removing hot pans from the oven.

It was wonderful for drying children's tears, and on occasion was even used for cleaning out dirty ears. From the chicken coop, the apron was used for carrying eggs, fussy chicks, and sometimes half-hatched eggs to be finished in the warming oven.

When company came, those aprons were ideal hiding places for shy kids.

And when the weather was cold, grandma wrapped it around her arms.

Those big old aprons wiped many a perspiring brow, bent over the hot wood stove. Chips and kindling wood were brought into the kitchen in that apron.

From the garden, it carried all sorts of vegetables. After the peas had been shelled, it carried out the hulls.

In the fall, the apron was used to bring in apples that had fallen from the trees.

When unexpected company drove up the road, it was surprising how much furniture that old apron could dust in a matter of seconds.

When dinner was ready, Grandma walked out onto the porch, waved her apron, and the men knew it was time to come in from the fields to dinner.

It will be a long time before someone invents something that will replace that old-time apron that served so many purposes.

REMEMBER:

Grandma used to set her hot baked apple pies on the window sill to cool. Her granddaughters set theirs on the window sill to thaw.

They would go crazy now trying to figure out how many germs were on that apron.

I don't think I ever caught anything from an apron.



Mary Watson



Welcome Twyla!

Welcome to Twyla Holmes, our newest member, to the Board of Directors. Twyla was born in Stites hospital in the center of downtown Aledo, the daughter of Warren and Phyllis Mitchell Morrow, both of whom have lived their entire lives in Mercer County. She was raised southeast of Joy, by the Peniel cemetery and had 3 brothers, with one still living, Gail Morrow who lives on the home place. Twyla graduated from Joy in 1960, the year before the school became Westmer. She has been married to Jim Holmes, another lifetime Mercer County resident, for 48 years and they have 5 children, 11 grandchildren and 2 great grandchildren. Twyla worked for the GM-Chrysler dealership in Aledo as cashier/receptionist,

title clerk and office manager. Since leaving work, she has been researching family histories on both sides of their families and helps out part time at the Main Street Antique shop in downtown Aledo. She and Jim also help out with the Mercer County Historical Society and have become familiar faces at various events.

Jim retired this spring and they enjoy traveling, yard work, grandchildren's activities and riding their 4 wheelers.



***Fall Open Meeting--Lincoln at 200
Modern Myths Concerning
our 16th President***

Mark **October 20** on your calendars and join us for the Fall Open Meeting at **7:00 p.m.** at the Essley Noble Museum. Our program will be by Michael Zecher, celebrating the life of Abraham Lincoln. While not a professional Lincoln scholar, Michael has been studying about Abraham Lincoln for over 30 years. In preparation for the bicentennial anniversary of Lincoln's birth, Michael will discuss some of the popular myths surrounding Lincoln that have emerged over the last several years. Everyone is encouraged to bring their own questions about the life of Abraham Lincoln.

Michael is married to Jennifer, daughter of Doug and Janet McCaw. This should be a very interesting program and the evening will also give you an opportunity to visit the museum before it closes for the season. The event is free, refreshments will be served and the public is welcome.

Lincoln Quotes:

Do not worry; eat three square meals a day; say your prayers; be courteous to your creditors; keep your digestion good; exercise; go slow and easy. Maybe there are other things your special case requires to make you happy; but, my friend, these I reckon will give you a good life. - Abraham Lincoln



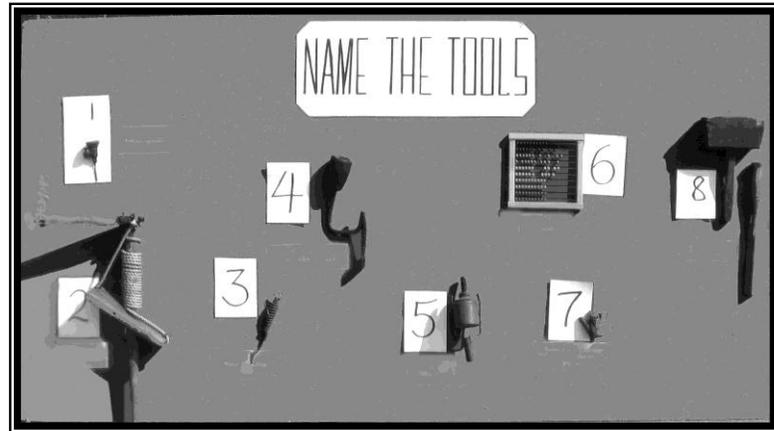
I don't know who my grandfather was; I am much more concerned to know who his grandson will be. - Abraham Lincoln

Name the Tools Contest Mercer County Fair

The Name the Tools contest again, drew great interest at our fair booth. The correct answers were:

1. Garden sprinkler
2. Corn shock tier
3. Stove plate lifter
4. Buttress (Evens horse's hoof for shoe)
5. Oil lamp
6. Abacus
7. Miner's oxygen sensor
8. Wooden Mallet & corner chisel

Congratulations to Amanda Soseman who correctly identified all the items and to Zeke Snyder who won the random drawing. Thank you to Ronn Dillavou and Jim Runyon for assembling the board.



Coming Events

- Oct. 20** Fall Open meeting 7:00 p.m. at the museum - Michael Zecher on Abraham Lincoln
Oct. 29 Last Day museum is open until April '09.

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