



Wye Angus: A Living History

In 1937, what began as a sightseeing excursion of Arthur A. Houghton Jr. to the Eastern Shore of Maryland, led to one of the most unique Angus herds in the world, Wye Plantation in Queenstown, MD. So impressed with this scenic section of the Old Line State, Mr. Houghton acquired Wye Plantation before the winter set in that year. Wye Plantation had been the home of William Paca, one of the early governors of Maryland and the only non-Anglo-Saxon signer of the Declaration of Independence. Paca, who died in 1799, is buried at Wye Plantation. His heirs sold the property to a Centreville, Maryland family whose descendents owned it until 1937, when it was purchased by Mr. Houghton. An avid student of history and collector of rare books Wye Plantation proved an irresistible parcel to Mr. Houghton. Oliver Jones, a former county agent, farmer, and livestock dealer, whom was working with Sterling Harris, the real estate broker handling the transaction introduced Mr. Houghton to Jim Lingle. Jim Lingle became the manager of Wye Plantation and in the foreword of Mr. Lingle's book *The Breed of Noble Bloods*, Mr. Houghton writes:

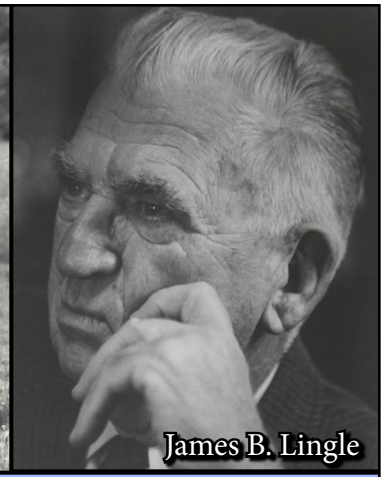
“Many men have dreams. Few men bring them into reality and live to see the results of their work. Jim Lingle had dreams of great cattle. Years ago he impressed upon me that the only purpose in growing beef cattle is to produce meat. He started his program with little; a bull calf, a few heifers and a determined faith. With unflagging persistence Jim Lingle worked toward the goal of his dream. He was determined to create greater beef cattle than the world had ever known; cattle that would be great in size, great in quality, and economically profitable to the commercial breeder...”

Although Lingle had previously worked primarily with dairy cattle, he admired the production qualities of Angus,

particularly the uniformity of the breed. Once Houghton and Lingle agreed on Angus as the breed of Wye, they began selecting stock for the new herd.

The herd was founded with 18 registered yearling heifers and one bull. Ten of those heifers were half-sisters, sharing the same sire, Blackcapper 24 of Page. Blackcapper was from Hartley Stock Farm in Page, ND. Mr. Lingle said of the operation “The Hartleys bred good Guernsey cattle, and while I was at Emmadine Farm, Mr. [Jimmy] Dodge had bought some of their cows. They had good scale and the best udders in the breed, and it seemed to me that if the Hartleys bred good Guernseys they probably had some good Angus cattle, too.” These first 10 heifers from Max Sherman's Bennet's Point Farm where the first additions to Wye Plantation, but they had hardly settled when 8 more were added also purchased from Max Sherman, but these had came from Kershaw Ranch in Muskogee, Oklahoma. 12 of those 18 cows still have continual influence in the herd today. No other females were ever introduced into the herd. There was however a temporary addition of a herd of 11 Red Angus cows in 1967 from Gilbert Watts in Altoona, Maryland. They were sold in 1973.

Mr. Lingle had went no further in his search for a bull that he had for his search for females. Blakeford Buxton 543628, the first male acquired, came from Blakeford Farm only about 7 miles from Wye Plantation on the other side of Queenstown (as Max Sherman's herd located at Bennet's Point a peninsula paralleling Wye). Blakeford Farms was owned by George Moffet an executive of Corn Products Company and managed by Guy Harmon, a friend of Mr. Lingle. The bull calf, Blakeford Buxton, was a combination of Earl Marshall and Blackcap Revolution breeding.



James B. Lingle

Arthur A. Houghton Jr. (1906 - 1990) chief executive of Steuben Glass, a division of the Corning Glass Company, was owner of Wye Plantation from 1937-1979. His last name pronounced HOE-Ten and his middle initial "A." is for Amory, named so after his great grandfather that founded Corning Glass Works in 1851. He was educated in elementary schools in Corning, NY. And at

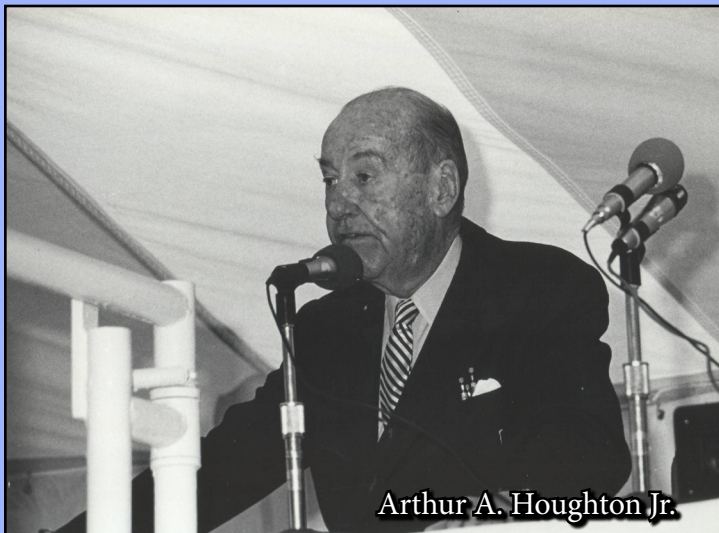
that he wanted to combine with business, Mr. Houghton had decided to start from scratch by destroying the old products that were not selling and trying to create a quality glass business that would incorporate imaginative design in technically superb crystal. There was a great effort to improve the design level, and many Steuben pieces did come to be shown in museums domestic and abroad.

Although he kept the title of president, Mr. Houghton interrupted his tenure at Steuben for for five years beginning in 1940. He served as curator of rare book at the Library of Congress until 1942, and then as an officer in the Army Air Corps in World War II for three years.

Mr. Houghton was a member of more than 100 organizations dedicated to education and the arts. He served on the board of the Metropolitan Museum of Art from 1952 to 1974. He was vice-chairman of a committee, headed by John D. Rockefeller 3d, to create Lincoln Center. He was vice president of the Pierpont Morgan Library, president of the English-Speaking Union of the United States, a trustee and chairman of the Cooper Union in New York City, honorary trustee and chairman of the Parsons School of Design, vice-chairman of the Fund for Advancement of Education, and chairman of the Institute of International Education.

Mr. Houghton said he believed one of his most significant achievements was the idea, along with that of his cousin, Amory Houghton, a former Ambassador to France, of creating the Corning Glass Center, which opened in 1951 to commemorate the centennial of Corning Incorporated. From that evolved the Corning Museum of Glass, one of the primary museums of its type.

He donated his estate, Wye Plantation to the Aspen Institute, an international public policy study organization. He transferred ownership of the major part of his Angus breeding herd to the University of Maryland in 1979.



Arthur A. Houghton Jr.

St. Paul's School in Concord, NH. As an undergraduate at Harvard, he became interested in English literature and developed a passion for rare books. Mr. Houghton joined the company after graduating Harvard University in 1929, and like his counterpart at Wye, Mr. Lingle, he believed in unrelenting quality. He once said that he wanted to "produce crystal in the highest standards of design, quality and workmanship, glass which would rank in history among man's greatest achievements."

It is part of the company folklore that about a month after assuming control of the new subsidiary, Mr. Houghton, dissatisfied with its product, spent a Sunday smashing every piece of glass in a company warehouse in Corning, NY. Armed with short lead pipes and clad in overalls, gloves and goggles, he and John M. Gates, an architect and company vice-president, flailed away at 20,000 items valued at \$1 million. With an interest in art

At the time Wye's herd was beginning, American breeders were raising Angus according to the standards then dictated by the show ring-small, compact, "baby-beef" type animals. Lingle wanted large-framed cattle, and he noticed the great size of Scottish-bred cattle. He particularly liked the "growthiness" of Scottish bulls. Between 1942 and 1958, Wye Plantation imported 19 bulls from the British Isles. Those bulls are responsible for about 75 percent of the germ plasm now in the herd. In 1941 and 1946 respectively, Wye added two Scottish-bred bulls to the herd. These were Juryman of Wickwire and Puck of Wickwire, both imported to the United States "in dam" from Scotland and born at Wickwire Farm in Earleville, Maryland. Following the death of Juryman of Wickwire in 1951, Mr. Lingle sought out to replace him with another bull or two from the same lines. The obvious source for such lines in the mind of Mr. Lingle was the Mulben Farm herd of William G. Mcpherson in Scotland, in which he placed an order for a bull or two, which resulted in the introduction of Mulben Envost and Mulben Eclator. Both of which bulls reached untimely deaths but not before making their mark on the Wye Program. In 1957, Lingle made a trip to the British Isles in search of more big-framed bulls to add to the Wye herd. His purchases included bulls from Scotland, Ireland, England, and Wales. Among these bulls was Prince of Malpas from the famous Harviestoun herd in Scotland. Prince was a bull of great proportion who sired some of the most feminine females developed at Wye Plantation during the 1960's. He also sired some high performing sons that met with considerable demand. Other imports included Jai of Frampton from Wales, noted for his tremendous muscle expression; Valour of Ardrass; and Gerge Swiftbrook were sons of Prince Paul of Barnolby from Ireland and both bulls were of exceptional height, length, and overall frame. The Wye Angus herd was closed to the introduction of additional germ plasm in 1958, with the exception of a research project.

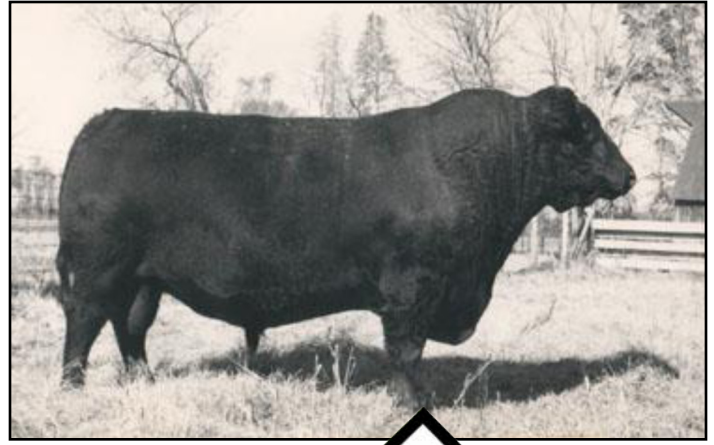
In 1949 Mr. Lingle attended a meeting of the DelMarVa Angus Association in Easton, Maryland, in which a new transfer from the University of Minnesota to the Maryland animal husbandry department, Dr. Willard Green, spoke on his experience in selecting breeding cattle on the basis of their gains on test. With the urging of friend Ken Clark and county agent Walter Eby, Mr. Lingle approached Dr. Green in the spring of 1954 to see if the university would feed some of the Wye bulls at the University. When Dr. Green told Mr. Lingle they were unable to do so, he made arrangements with Ken Clark to take 34 Wye bulls to his farm to be fed on

pasture. Mr. Clark would furnish the feed and was paid on gains. According to Mr. Lingle performance testing struck a chord with Mr. Houghton, ultimately involving him in the program. For three generations his family had built a highly successful business on research and records and this was an opportunity to apply the same methods to the cattle business. Mr. Houghton suggested that the University should help Wye Plantation on this research and records program. Dr. Green entered the picture in a continuing and official capacity and at the invitation of Wye Plantation he came to the farm, surveyed the set up, and agreed to supervise the weighing and testing. This work by Dr. Green founded one of the most comprehensive beef cattle performance evaluation programs in the United States. These efforts led to a vastly improved selection of superior sires from which Wye Angus established a lasting impact on the genetic make up of the national Angus herd. Through Dr. Green, the University of Maryland was involved in various research projects at Wye Plantation, through 1977 when Dr. Green retired.

In the late 1960s with the transition to large-framed cattle across the industry Wye Plantation found itself at the helm, as they were ahead of the trend producing large cattle from the inception of the program. Though Foremost of Wye to American Breeders Service in 1958 was the first substantial deal made by Wye Plantation, the sale of Lodge of Wye to Black Watch Farms in 1968 was and remains to this date the highlight of the program. Lodge was the first bull that was sold with a retained breeding interest as Mr. Lingle explained he was too valuable to the program to sell outright as Lodge, Conan, and Fortrel had acquired quite a following for semen sales. Lodge had already been used in 26 states and the reports had always come back good. Ray Burns & Gar Douglas of Black Watch Farms, studied the bull extensively, and asked several times throughout the course of a day if Lodge was for sale, the answer by Mr. Lingle each time was a resounding "no". Just as they were about to leave Ray Burns made an outright offer of \$250,000 for two-thirds interest and possession of Lodge. Mr. Lingle commented the bull was not for sale up to that point. Wye could have all the semen they needed for their program but no rights to merchandise the semen. The sale of Lodge did much for the acceptance of the Wye cattle. Conan of Wye, the heaviest and tallest bull ever bred at Wye, played his part in which some very influential individuals pushing the movement for larger cattle, declared him to be the biggest bull in the Angus breed for the time.

Wye Plantation's popularity came at an opportune time, though the semen cryogenics had been going for a couple of decades, it was improvements in liquid nitrogen storage and shipment, paired with its increase in popularity for its implications in the importation and exportation process that really took shape in this era. As of January 1975, Wye had over 1000 semen customers in 45 states and 11 foreign countries.

In 1979, Mr. Houghton gifted the University of Maryland with the Wye Angus herd. Accepting the gift, the University of Maryland Foundation was formed, and an agreement was made to make animals deemed excess to research needs available to the public, holding an annual sale each April since 1978. In December, 1979, the proposed plan was completed. The plan envisioned Wye to be an innovative multidisciplinary research, extension and education center with the following six major foci: Cattle Breeding and Genetics; Integrated Pest Management; Plant Breeding and Genetics; Energy Development, Usage and Conservation; Quality of Life; and Interaction of Land and Water Agriculture/Aquaculture.



Prince of Malpas (Above)



"Wye Angus Winter"
Photo by Daniel Poet
(Below)



The Wye Influence

Within the University System of Maryland, the Maryland Agricultural Experiment Station was charged with managing the herd on a daily basis and it continues to do so today. The program today is a balanced mix of both basic and applied research, educational outreach through Extension, and education and training of undergraduate and graduate students in beef-cattle science and production. The underpinnings of the research effort include work toward understanding and improving the efficient production of beef cattle in an extensive, forage based system while implementing and demonstrating the components of profitable, sustainable and environmentally sensitive beef cattle production.

The true value of the Wye plantation is in the genetic history of the herd, which is supplemented with a written history, photographs, as well as relentless record keeping, making it one of the most documented herds in the world rivaled only by such programs as the Line 1 Herefords of Ft. Keogh Research Center. The availability of this closed breeding population provides unique advantages in terms of conducting basic and applied beef cattle research. Individual animal variation, due to genetics, is significantly reduced which improves the interpretation of research results. In addition, the use of a limited number of bulls across a fairly homogeneous population of females results in larger numbers of individual sire groups of calves for study. Whenever individual variation is reduced, the significance of scientific findings is improved.

Aside from its applications to research the Wye cattle have an inseparable influence on the Angus population, as well as that of the Brangus and Red Angus breeds.

Of top 10 Angus Pathfinder sires in 2011 for eligible daughters, 8 carry the influence of Wye bulls, of the leading 10 sires for qualifying daughters all 10 can be traced back if not numerous times to Wye sires.

PS Power Play, born April 2nd of 1977 at Penn State University has appeared on the cover of the Angus Sire Summary, the Pathfinder Report, the "Power of One" ad, and was used for a few years as the reference pedigree featured on the back of American Angus Association registration papers (only to be replaced by his son Scotch Cap). Though largely of Emulous breeding he can be traced through the maternal side of his pedigree via Menteith of Graham 37 to Micheal of Wye. PS Power

Play along with 11 other sires have been tested free of all simple recessive genetic defects and genetic factors monitored by the American Angus Association. Of these 12 sires, 8 of them can be traced to the Wye program, with 3 of them coming directly from the Wye program, Fendell of Wye, Lodge of Wye, and Chenault of Wye.

Also, take for instance the story of Forever Lady cow family of Gartner-Denowh Angus Ranch. Two Forever of Wye sons was used in the Gartner-Denowh program, Forever 1100 GDAR and Candolier Forever 376 (which was a result of a sire-daughter mating of Forever of Wye). The namesake family was led by matron, L T Forever Lady 395 G D A R (formerly of the Eileenmere Lady or Donna tribe), who traced to Candolier Forever 376 three times; and Forever Lady 163 GDAR (formerly of the Kem tribe) which was by a daughter of Candolier Forever 376, back to a granddaughter of Forever of Wye. Gartner-Denowh is also listed as the breeder of another daughter of Candolier Forever 376, Donna A A R 74, the dam of AAR New Trend.

The contributions of Wye plantation is not only genetic. For the extent of its existence it has served as a breeding grounds for the master breeder. Many men and women have passed through the Wye program and went on to change their industry and inspire others to greatness. Some of which have never set foot on Wye Plantation have taken inspiration from The Breed of Noble Bloods instilling their own spin on Mr. Lingle's philosophy. The Angus program at Wye is a living breathing part of history.

*Thank you to Wye Angus for providing the pictures. This article is an adaptation from **A Breed of Noble Bloods, Beef by the Bay, the Wye Angus website, the 2011 Wye Angus Sale Catalog, and the highlight of the late Mr. Arthur A. Houghton Jr. is taken from his obituary in the New York Times by George James.***

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