

## History of Devon Cattle in the USA



In this article, I will attempt to tell the History of Devon cattle in the U.S. and the breeders which have owned them, improved them, and contributed to their preservation. Please forgive any omissions and inform me of such so that I may improve this piece as time moves forward.

Devon cattle records maintained by the Devon association date back to **1623/1624** when the pilgrims came to the U.S. The pilgrims sailed from Plymouth, on the south coast of Devonshire, England to the New World and named their settlement in North America the Plymouth Colony. On the ship Charity, along with the crew, were

three Devon heifers and a Devon bull which were sent from Devonshire to Edward Winslow, the agent for the Plymouth colony. Their immediate value was as draft animals. Cattle from Devonshire had long been recognized in England for their speed, intelligence, strength, willingness to work, and ability to prosper on coarse forage, in a wide range of climates.

**1640's** William Pynchon becomes first Meat packer in American history making corned beef from Devon stock.

In later years, other cattle were imported and contributed to the American Devon, which developed as the ideal multipurpose breed. None could surpass it for draft work, milk and beef carcass quality developed on poor and average forage.



In 1958 the American Meat Institute's directors met in Boston where AMI president Homer R. Davidson "met" William Pynchon, who made corned beef from Devon cattle in the 1640's and thus became America's first meat packer.



**Thomas Coke**

These records are the start of the U.S. Devon herdbook and correlate with Devon records in England, which date back to 23 B.C. Records were kept in England on the cattle maintained in this country until 1851. Between 1800 and 1851, Americans received 15 shipments of Devon from England.

**1817** First recorded exportation of pure-bred Devons from England from Thomas Coke to Robert Patterson (6 heifers and 1 bull(Taurus 197)).

Records for Devon as a purebred breed began in **1851**, when John T. Davy of Rose Ash in North Devon published the first volume of Davy's Devon Herd Book. The Davy family, along with the Quartly family from the same area, had been breeding pure Devon for at least 150 years prior to this publication.

In **1855** the first American Devon herd book in America was started by Horace Mills Sessions (completed in **1863**), the last volume of this series appeared in **1879**.

The **1868** American Devon Herd Book, Vol. 2, was published in Springfield, Massachusetts. This herd book contained the perfect description of Devon Cattle.

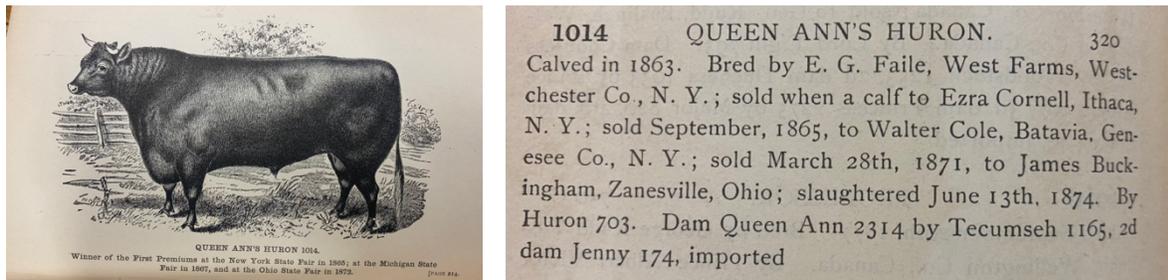
*"The late experience of the breeders of Devons only confirms their former opinion of the excellent qualities of the breed, for the three grand objects for which meat stock are kept, namely, milk, work, or beef, and their adaptation to many sections of our country, in preference to any other breed; also that they will produce as much milk, work, or beef, from the food consumed, or on a given quantity of land, as any other breed... The only objection ever presented to the breed, is "they are small;" but we can keep more of them, and that on shorter pastures and coarser food."*



**Artwork by: Joan Harris**

In 1884, the copyright for the book was acquired by the Devon Cattle Breeders' Society in England and continuous records have been maintained by it in England ever since. Devon Cattle from England were selected for their hearty forging ability, their rich milking ability, their docility, and their strength; they were brought to America to be used for milk and beef production and as oxen in the settling of the American frontier.

James Buckingham, a Devon breeder in Zanesville, Ohio, began publication of the American Devon Record in 1881. The first four volumes were published under his direction, bringing Devon registry records up to May 1st, 1887.



Queen Ann's Huron (reg#1014)-as pictured in 1<sup>st</sup> American Devon Record

In 1884, American Devon Cattle Club records were started and a continuous program of importation of top bloodlines lead to a resurgence of the quality of Devon Cattle as we know them today. Mr. Buckingham, with the aid of several other prominent Devon breeders, was instrumental in organizing the American Devon Cattle Club on March 26th, 1884, at a meeting in Pittsburgh's East End Hotel. The American Devon Record became the official herd book of the Club, which published six volumes. Like most other livestock registry associations in the United States, the American Devon Cattle Club found the cost prohibitive to produce a limited edition herd book. Volume 10, the final volume of the American Devon Record, was published in 1947. Duplicate registration certificates are maintained in the breed's registry office for verifying the ancestry of registered animals and to protect the genetic integrity of the Devon breed in the United States.



“Napolean 8902”

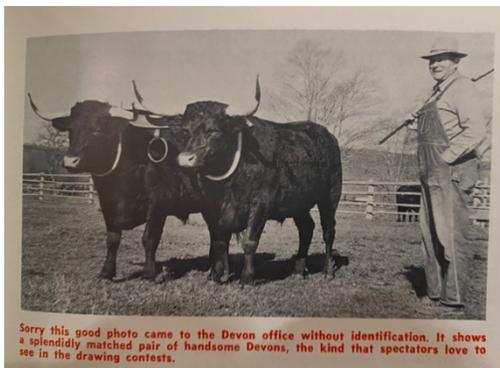


“Missouri 9097”

**1913** First polled sport born in the herd of Ralph Coffing and sold to Case and Elling, “Napolean 8902” (Dam: Alpharetta H13661 / Sire: Leo H8564)

**1915** “Missouri 9097”, the second polled sport is born in herd of Case and Elling (Dam: Linnie Stump 14464 / Sire: Madero 8708) Missouri was first sport to sire registered calves

After the death of L.P. Sissons, secretary of the American Devon Cattle Club, in 1916, the club was reorganized and incorporated under the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts as the American Devon Cattle Club, Inc. This action was accomplished at a meeting of the incorporators held on July 24th, 1918, at the American House in Boston. The corporation operated under that name for 53 years until it was changed to the name, Devon Cattle Association, Inc., at an annual meeting of the membership in Springfield, Massachusetts, on January 22nd, 1971.



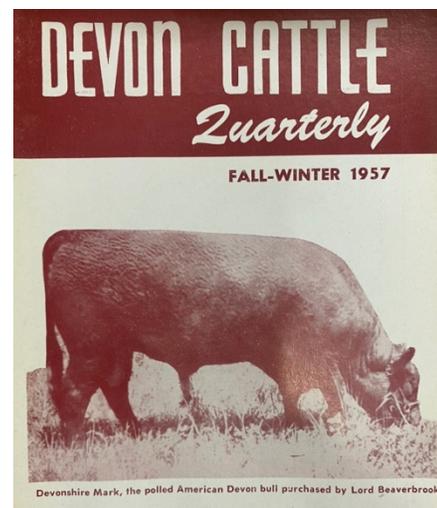
Sorry this good photo came to the Devon office without identification. It shows a splendidly matched pair of handsome Devons, the kind that spectators love to see in the drawing contests.

Between **1929** and **1978**, 37 bulls and 81 females were exported from England to the USA.

In **1952**, a small group of breeders decided to form a separate association for dairy cattle and maintain triple-purpose stock. This American Milking Devon Association registry represents a gene pool of

triple-purpose cattle able to be productive under minimal management conditions and in a harsh environment. -In 2022, Devons still participate in the Oxen pull competition in New England states.

Devonshires Mark P13666 owned by Fred Wyvill(7knolls farm), bred by Leo Parker(Devonshire) exported to England and bought by Lord Beaverbrook(Fishleigh)



Devonshire Mark, the polled American Devon bull purchased by Lord Beaverbrook

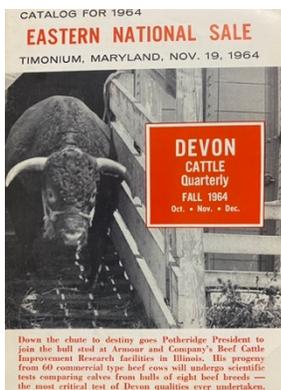
On October 11th, 1978, a Devon Cattle Association, Inc. was formed as a Missouri not-for-profit corporation. A merger of the old Massachusetts Corporation into the new Missouri Corporation was approved by the respective memberships on November 19th, 1978. The merger became effective January 1st, 1979.



The premier breeders in the early days of the DCA were Pete Bostick in South Carolina (pictured to the left with his wife and Kenneth Hinshaw standing to his right), Senator Wayne Morse whom had herds in both Maryland and Oregon, Ron Anderson and Tom Harrison in Eagle Point, Oregon. There were also a number of breeders in the deep south where most of the show competition was held. Dr Stewart Fowler, a geneticist at Texas A&M University, became the secretary

and registrar for the breed. (1980) Dr Fowler recognized the high quality of Devon carcasses when working as a packer buyer. Dr Fowler would implement the 205 day weight and other performance recording applications for the breed.

From 1950-1980 bulls were imported from Great Britain to expand the genetic profile of existing Devons in the US. The most influential Devon bulls were Wadhayes Sunshine, Potheridge President, and Fishleigh Famous. Potheridge President became a certified meat sire, a designation given to bulls that produced 30 choice carcasses from progeny in a controlled test.

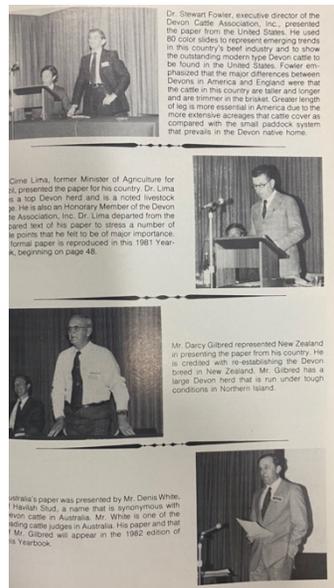


The Potheridge President bull was used in New England and at Tomotley's Plantation to create the President line of Devons.

In 1976 the bull Lufton Guardsman was imported from Andre Mitziack's herd in Great Britain, and the bull Fishleigh Fieldsman from the same herd but different

breeding was imported by Fred Wyvill in the state of Maryland. The Fieldsman bull was subsequently sold to Glen Jones in Oklahoma and a son of this bull (Lakota's King Henry A176) would later have semen exported to Australia and sons sold to Canada and Mexico. A brother to the Fishleigh Fieldsman bull, (Fishleigh Famous) was supreme champion of all bulls in Great Britain at the Royal show and subsequently showed up as grand sires in the pedigrees for Devonacres main herd sires, (Ellel Calgary and Cascade Mr. Ideal).

In 1980, the World Devon congress was started. Naturally the first host country was England, the home of the Devon. In 1984, The World Devon Congress would come to the U.S. for the first time, Effingham Plantation, Hibbard Cline, Lyons Ranch, Burst Ranch, Irma Lampton, and Berry College, Georgia were the stops. Berry College hosted the congress. Things were looking up at the time of the congress, but by the years end several major breeders had left the cattle business for personal reasons unrelated to cattle and with the industry's shift towards feed lots and yield grade pricing schemes, the Devon struggled to fit in.



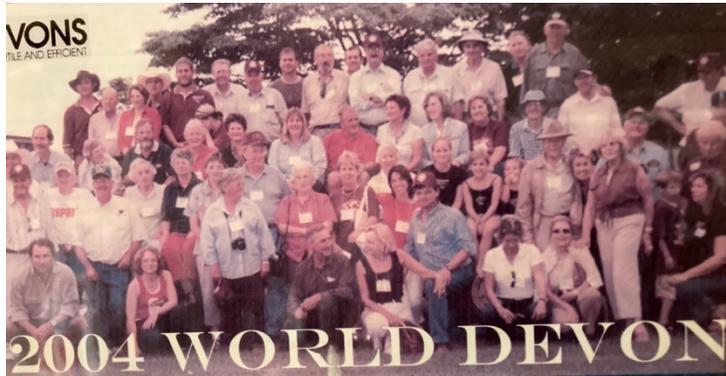
Grain was cheap and cattle could be fed in confinement adding a pound of meat to an animal for less than .23 cents/ pound. Feedlots placed a premium on larger framed cattle that would continue to grow before fattening which was profitable with the cheap price of grain, Continental breeds became profitable to the feedlots and medium and

smaller framed animals with lower maintenance cost tended to fatten too quickly in feedlots. However, the relatively smaller framed animals because of their superior feed efficiency, high meat quality, and lower maintenance cost would soon find their niche in the grass finished beef world.

The years that followed were tough for the Devon and many breeders resorted to crossbreeding as the Devon cross seemed the only way to make money. Breeders numbers would diminish, as did registrations.

In 1990 the Devon herdbook records were manually transferred into a computer-based system by breeders Jeremy Engh (Lakota Ranch) and Richard Evans (Dove Farm).

In 2000 the Devon was well on its way, having been glorified in the grass-fed beef world, the prices, number of registrations and membership were all rising rapidly.



In 2004 the U.S. hosted its second World Devon Congress. Vista Knoll Farms, Carlton Ranches, J&S Red Devons, Lakota Ranch, Mt. Vernon, Stratford Hall, Hancock Shaker Village, and Watson Farm were visited on the tour.

Also in 2004, imported semen from the Rotokawa herd in New Zealand was brought to Lakota Ranch, this blood line was the first Devon import into the U.S. in over 20 years.

In 2005, the membership of the Devon Cattle Association voted to rename the association, The American Devon Cattle Association, and was re-incorporated in the state of Virginia.

In 2006, two events of great significance occurred, a group of breeders left the American Devon Cattle Association (ADCA) and formed what would be called the North American Devon Association (NADA). This is not the first time this has happened, but it is the first time a group of this size had split the breed. Also in 2006, the first National Devon show took place in this country in over 25 years. It was held in Kearney, Nebraska and judged by Dr. Allen Williams.



J.Engh, C & M Trantham, V. Fortenberry, B. Grant

In 2014, the ADCA and NADA joined and formed Red Devon USA. RDUSA was structured with a large board that reduced in number as time went forward. The registry would move from associated registries to Canadian Livestock registry corporation (CLRC). This was all voted into place by the Board of Directors of both organizations on Sept. 28, 2014 at Lake Junaluska, North Carolina. RDUSA was reincorporated in the state of Massachusetts.



**In 2014, the RDUSA DNA policy was voted into place; this policy requires parent verification on all animals submitted for registration going forward. RDUSA was the first Devon organization to require this and the first major cattle breed in the U.S. The Veterinary Genetics Lab at the University of California Davis was contracted to maintain these records and do this work.**

**In 2019, RDUSA moved its registry to the National Center for Beef Excellence, NCBE.**

**In 2024 RDUSA, AMDA, and Devon breeders from around the globe will gather in the U.S. for our 3<sup>rd</sup> World Devon Congress, the first here in 20 years and the last for 20 years. We will celebrate 400 years of Devon history in the U.S., their numerous contributions to our way of life and quality of life, and the birth of the cattle industry in the U.S. Please join us, more information about the World Devon Congress or about Devon cattle can be found at:**

**[www.reddevonusa.com](http://www.reddevonusa.com)**

**[www.milkingdevon.org](http://www.milkingdevon.org)**

**[www.devoncattle.com](http://www.devoncattle.com)**

