



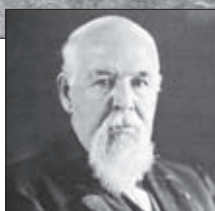
Giant

The two creators of the Polled Hereford — founder Warren Gammon and his chosen bull.

In continuation of recognizing Hereford Legends, we focus on Giant, a Hereford bull whose name rings true. He commands a giant place in Hereford history. But it's hard to determine whether we should be recognizing Giant, who was just a bull used by a mastermind who revolutionized the Hereford industry, or the man himself, Warren Gammon. It can be argued he founded the first truly American cattle breed: the Polled Hereford.

At any rate, it seems hard to discern the two, for they are irrevocably connected through the creation of Polled Hereford cattle. In 1898, when Gammon decided to begin selecting for polled cattle to create a naturally hornless beef animal, polled Herefords were considered undesirable mutants.

And Gammon was a lawyer from Des Moines, Iowa, so what was his interest in creating a breed of cattle that, at the time, nobody wanted? In Orville Sweet's book "The Birth of a Breed," Sweet writes that Gammon's interest was piqued after seeing polled cattle exhibited at the Trans-Mississippi International Exposition in



Warren Gammon

Omaha, Neb., in 1898. And, Gammon's desire for knowledge grew while he was reading a

graduate paper written by his son on Darwin's "Origin of the Species" and "Plants and Animals Under Domestication." Intrigued, Gammon began studying Darwin's theory on how mutations and variations could be made permanent by systematic matings.

Gammon became engrossed in the idea of testing such a theory by finding purebred hornless Herefords and creating a purebred Polled Hereford. So he wrote each of the then 2,500 members of the American Hereford Association (AHA) in search of naturally hornless purebred Herefords. The mutation was obviously common because he received about 1,500 replies and ultimately chose four bulls and 10 cows. Sweet explains Gammon culled two barren cows and one bull, so from the remaining 11 animals, he set out to accomplish his goal.

Although all 11 cattle were registered with the AHA, there was no differentiation on their records identifying them as polled. So Gammon started the American Polled Hereford Club (later to become the American Polled Hereford Association)

to keep records of these polled animals. Thus, with a measly 11 registrations, Gammon founded what would become one of the largest beef cattle breed registries in the world.

Meanwhile, an average-looking bull, whose contribution could not be foreseen, was born in 1899 and was sold as a yearling to a commercial breeder. Giant himself was a scurred bull, but after most of his first crop of calves was hornless, he was angrily returned to breeder O.F. Nelson of Hiawatha, Kan. Shortly thereafter Nelson received Gammon's letter searching for registered hornless cattle, and he jumped at the chance to sell an otherwise unmarketable bull.

Giant was chosen as herd sire from the four original bulls Gammon bought and was literally the father of the first registered Polled Hereford offspring.

Although Gammon received great opposition at first and registries were slow to come in, he didn't give up. He traveled the country acting as a one-man public relations effort for the Polled Hereford breed and allowed his home to operate as the association headquarters. He served as executive secretary for the breed until 1911, when his son Bert Gammon succeeded him.

Even though it is difficult to determine who is truly the father of the Polled Hereford — the sire Giant or his breeder — both deserve accolades for their legendary contribution in creating the American Polled Hereford Association and developing the first breed of cattle native to America. **HW**

Editor's Note: *Do you know of a legendary bull you think is worthy of being named a Hereford Legend? If so, e-mail Sara at sgugelmeyer@hereford.org with the name of the bull and a brief explanation of why his story should be told in a Hereford Legend column.*