



*A Heritage
of Excellence*

SUNNYSLOPE ANGUS

Producing Quality Beef Since 1898

Sunnyslope Angus is one of the oldest registered black Angus operations in the nation.

In 1898, among the rolling green hills of southeastern Minnesota, Peter Abrahamson established the herd when he purchased his first black Angus bull, Duke of Lanesboro, and his first heifer, Ivy of Canton. Two years later, he started selling Angus cattle. By 1902 his herd numbered over 30 head.

Sprinkled throughout Peter's farm diaries are notes about his cattle: when people inquired

about the Angus, a record of bulls he sold, and when each cow gave birth. Quite often, cattle buyers would call on the Abrahamsons, stay overnight, pick out their animal the following day, build a crate, and ship it home by railroad express. In the winter of 1903, Peter actually delivered four young bulls to farmers in the Spring Valley area by sleigh—a 60-mile round trip.

Peter traveled often to Angus sales and meetings, and in 1915 he was instrumental in launching the Minnesota

Sunnyslope Stock Farm – 1906. In addition to Angus cattle, Peter Abrahamson raised Percheron horses, Poland China swine, Shropshire sheep, White Wyandotte chickens, Shorthorn cattle, and dairy cows. The Angus cattle were his favorite enterprise.



Next Production Sale

**Monday
February 12, 2024
1:00 pm**

Lanesboro Sales Commission
Lanesboro, Minnesota

Online Bidding

DVAuction

Selling

- 47 bulls
- 20 bred heifers
- 29 bred cows

ssangus.com



Angus Association, serving as its first secretary. An early 1900s newspaper profile claimed, “Pete never gives you a ‘bum steer’ and is always on deck with the right kind of bull.” He took a leading interest in movements that advanced the welfare of the American farmer, and his obituaries described him as “a great Angus man.”

When his health failed in 1938, Peter Abrahamson managed to add one final entry in his diary: “I looked after the cattle.”



Today, 126 years after Peter’s initial purchase of Angus breeding stock, Sunnyslope’s herd includes 230 cows. Three generations of Peter’s descendants work together to keep pace with changing industry trends. The family sells breeding stock (bulls and females) at their annual production sale at the Lanesboro Sales Commission in Lanesboro, Minnesota. The

At the American Angus Association’s 2023 convention, Phil and Ruth Abrahamson were inducted into the Angus Heritage Foundation. Miss American Angus, Kelsey Theis, and Mark McCully, Association CEO, presented them with this honor. Now in their eighties, Phil and Ruth look back on decades of growth and change in the industry.



main focus of their program is breeding docile, easy calving animals that grow and grade well.

HERITAGE FOUNDATION

Raising livestock requires commitment and perseverance. Managing the operation in such a way that it brings positive and fundamental change to an entire industry requires thoughtful vision—along with a healthy dose of courage and conviction.

The American Angus Association created the Angus Heritage Foundation in 1983 to honor the contributions of visionaries who have gone above and beyond for the Angus breed. At the Association’s 2023 national convention, Phil and Ruth Abrahamson were inducted into the Heritage Foundation for their innovation, service, and leadership.

Phil and Ruth have witnessed dramatic change in the industry during their decades-long work with Angus cattle. A major career highlight for Phil has been his pioneering work with performance testing.

PERFORMANCE TESTING

Phil joined the Angus Association’s AHIR program in 1960, when performance testing was in its infancy. At that time, it was an intriguing, experimental, and sometimes controversial method for genetic advancement.

Phil became the first breeder to work with the University of Minnesota on performance testing. In 1960, with assistance



Three generations of the Abrahamson family work together on Sunnyslope to continue the legacy their ancestor, Peter, established in 1898. Pictured are Phil and Ruth (seated), their daughter Julie, her husband Keith Ekstrom, and their children.

from Dr. Jay Meiske, Dr. Bob Jacobs, Dr. Al Harvey, and Dr. Chuck Christians, Phil developed a way to genetically advance cattle through scientific measurement rather than on phenotype alone.

The early phases of performance testing only included data for birth weight, weaning weight, and yearling weight, as well as a performance ratio based on that data, calculated by the American Angus Association.

As testing evolved over the years, expected progeny differences yielded objective, measurable differences between animals and, importantly, between herds.

In 1973 Phil attended the very first University of Minnesota Extension Cow-Calf Days. Five decades later, he attended the 50th annual event as the guest of honor.

“Philip and his wife, Ruth, have ties to the U of M going back to the 1960s, working alongside researchers and spreading the word about genetics and performance testing,” said Eric Mousel, Extension livestock educator. “Their family has made their mark on quality Angus beef and continues to do so.”

Sixty-four years of performance testing have resulted in powerful Sunnyslope sires:
 S S Rito 0715 OH3 (Mathematician)
 S S Traveler 6807 T510
 S S Objective 0T26
 S S Absolute B66
 S S Odyssey H71
 S S Enforcer E812
 S S Enterprise E84
 S S Command E88
 S S Voyage



LEFT: S S Objective 0T26 sold in Sunnyslope's 2007 sale to ABS. He is the #9 bull in the breed for registered progeny.
 LOWER LEFT: S S Enforcer E812 was the top-selling bull in Sunnyslope's 2019 sale, purchased by Spruce Mountain Ranch, Baldridge Bros., and the Conover family.
 LOWER RIGHT: Enforcer's dam, S S Miss Daybreak K011 3K17, is part of Whitestone Farm's donor program in VA.



GENOMIC TESTING

Phil and Ruth's daughter, Julie, and her husband, Keith Ekstrom joined the operation in 2010, along with their children.

Keith implemented genomic testing on all of Sunnyslope's bulls and heifers. In a relatively short time, it became an essential management tool.

“By sampling an animal's DNA, we can more accurately determine its actual genetics before that animal has any calves on the ground,” Keith said. “This enables our customers to buy with added confidence.”

Before genomic testing was available, “you would need multiple generations of calves before you had the complete picture of what an animal could do,” Keith recalled. “Now you have all that information before the calf is six months old.”

Sunnyslope has invested in DNA testing to help customers make informed purchasing decisions. This data helps customers select breeding stock for the traits they are looking for

in order to produce calves with increased potential.

MULTI-GENERATION CUSTOMERS

In 1904 Thomas Lawler purchased a bull from Sunnyslope Angus. Over a century later, his great-grandsons, Tim and Steve Lawler, purchased three heifers at Sunnyslope's 2020 production sale, continuing a valued customer relationship.

Generations of families have been buying cattle from Sunnyslope. The Lawler family, based near Eyota, Minnesota, is Sunnyslope's oldest customer.

When Thomas Lawler purchased his bull, Peter Abrahamson made a notation in his diary on April 14, 1904: *Lawler bot a bull, made a crate and shipped him on noon train...*

Peter started selling cattle in 1900; thus, Thomas Lawler was one of Sunnyslope's earliest customers. His son, William Lawler, also purchased cattle from Sunnyslope in the early 1900s. William and his wife

took a horse-drawn cutter to Lanesboro, stayed overnight with Peter, bought a bull the next day, and shipped it home on the train.

“Every generation of our family has had a relationship with Sunnyslope Angus,” said Steve Lawler.

While he was at the university in the 1970s, Tim Lawler heard about an emerging movement in the beef industry called performance testing.

“Somebody from the university said that Sunnyslope Angus was performance testing,” Tim recalled.

Around the same time, Steve Lawler heard about performance testing while he studied Agronomy and Animal Science at UW–River Falls.

“We were looking for performance tested herds in Minnesota and Wisconsin,” concurred Steve. “We wanted performance tested bulls, and Phil Abrahamson’s name came up immediately, because he was one of the only ones doing it at the time. We adapted it right away and started performance testing about 1979-1980.”

Today the Lawler brothers focus on soil health via rotational grazing and cover cropping. Tim said that work leads to producing a product the consumer will buy: “well-marbled, juicy, tender beef.”

Their pursuit of soil health keeps this generation of the Lawler family coming back to Sunnyslope. Like many customers, the Lawlers need calving ease in their animals, as well as feed efficiency and growth. Beyond the basics, though, they are looking for animals with good feet and big



rumens—“good square cattle,” Steve asserted—that can thrive on both grass and crop land.

THE 46TH ANNUAL SALE

Phil and Ruth held their first production sale in 1978. Next week Sunnyslope will hold its 46th annual sale on Monday, February 12, at 1:00 pm at the Lanesboro Sales Commission.

“Our sales have traditionally been in June,” said Phil’s oldest grandson, Daniel. “This year marks Sunnyslope’s first winter sale. A new season will allow us to sell new offerings.”

For the first time, Sunnyslope

will be selling coming two-year-old bulls, as well as bred heifers and experienced cows.

The sixth generation to live and work on Sunnyslope is excited to see where this new direction will take the farm.

“This farm and these cattle are our inheritance,” noted Daniel. “My siblings and I appreciate the sacrifices and hard work five generations put into developing the Angus herd as a successful business. They inspire us to invest a similar effort to continue developing and growing the legacy for the next generation.”

