

Texas Longhorn Bloodlines

FOUNDATIONS OF THE PRESENT BREED

Compiled by D. Phillip Sponenberg,
DVM, PhD,
from a variety of sources

The Texas Longhorn is a good example of a landrace (or local, adapted breed) that has had varying fortunes. In the late 1800s the Texas Longhorn numbered in the millions. The numbers radically declined in the early 1900s, and continued to decline until the late 1950s and 1960s. At that point the breed became more popular, and increasing numbers of breeders banded together to assure that the Texas Longhorn would not face extinction. As with any breed, the direct foundation that persisted through the bottleneck is the real foundation of the breed. To put it another way, the millions of Texas Longhorns roaming the area in the 1800s are not what became the present Texas Longhorn. What became the modern Texas Longhorns are those few herds that were carefully tended through the lean years. These foundations are important to the breed, for they shaped what the breed is and what it can become.

Only a few families kept herds of Texas Longhorns through the lean years. Each of these lines was assembled from local cattle, so the breed was able to have a sampling of the geographic varieties of the original breed. The family lines that persist or were important in the foundation of the present breed include Grady Woods, Milby Butler, M.P. Wright, Emil Marks, Cap Yates. Other strains were assembled from a broader geographical range, and are more composite than the first five. These composite strains include Wildlife Refuge, Jack Phillips, and Graves Peeler.

The Grady Woods strain was developed in deep East Texas from local cattle. This bloodline was assembled in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Some cattle were spotted, some were solid colors. Many had very twisted horns. This line of cattle is important since it is the most eastern of the foundation strains, although it has had a minimal impact on the modern breed. Very few if any of this strain of cattle remain, although it has made some impact on a few herds.

The Milby Butler strain was formed from cattle in the eastern to middle Gulf Coast region. In 1923 Milby decided to keep his Texas Longhorns pure and away from other breeds he was keeping. His original herds included duns from the Gulf Coast, and white cattle with colored points from East Texas. He added occasional good animals when he could find them. In 1931 he added a white cow

from Phelps. A few of his cattle came from Esteban Garcia in Encino, Texas. One of these was Milby's excellent cow Miss John Wayne.

A Peeler bull was used for a very short while, although was killed before siring any but a very few calves.

Butler had up to 600 head of

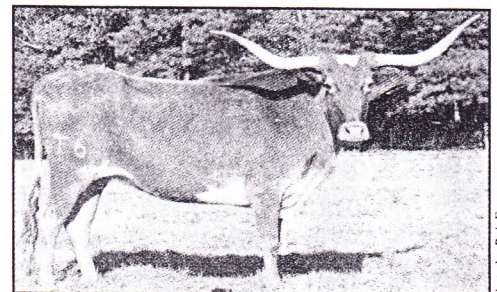
Texas Longhorns, and spent a great deal of time studying them and pairing them up for specific matings. The Butler line is an unique East Gulf Coast line of cattle with few bridges to the other lines. Butler cattle have been the foundation of many herds. Some of these herds continue to breed the line as a pure line, while others have taken advantage of crossing the Butler line with others to generate some outstanding cattle. Milby Butler liked very long horns, and this trait persists to this day in his cattle.

Just west of

Houston lay the ranch of Emil Marks. He began assembling local Texas Longhorns in the early 1900s. These were kept and conserved on his Barker ranch. He was inspired to do this because he thought that this type of cattle was simply better and more productive than others. His herds were kept as a distinct

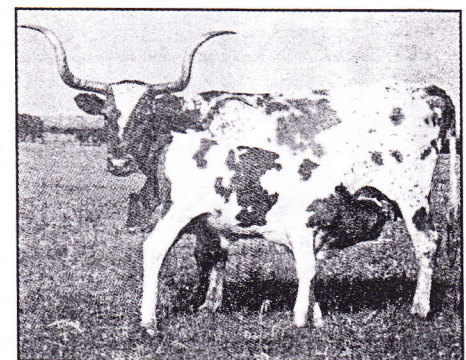


Butler Bull: Monarch 103



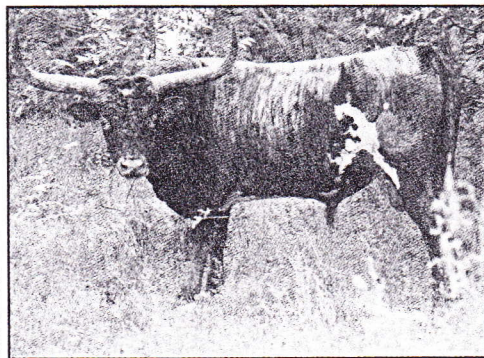
Bold Droopy: Milly Butler liked horns!

Photo by Bob Ferguson



*Marks Merrily
Emil Marks valued traditional functionality.*

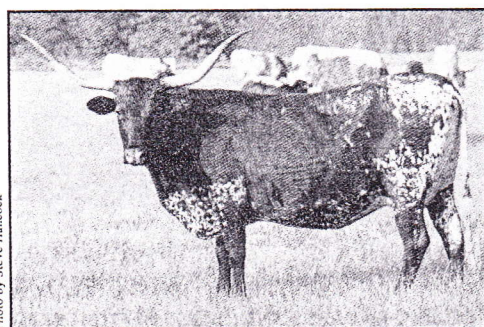
line with relatively few introductions. In 1967 he did add a Wildlife Refuge bull, and late in his life he also used a Butler bull. Until the 1920s Emil Marks kept nothing but Longhorns, and at that point he did keep some other breeds. He always had 200 or more head of pure Texas Longhorns.



Marks Bull: Marks Numero Uno

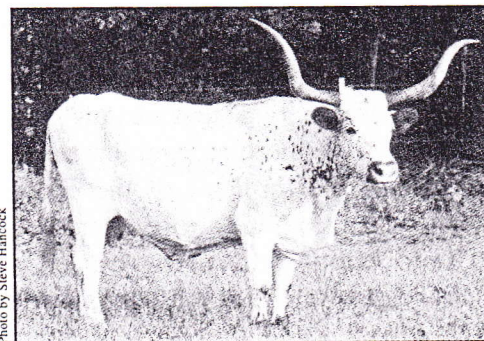
Photo by Debbie Davis

The Wright herd of Texas Longhorns hails from Robstown, Texas. This herd was begun in the early 1920s as Wright selected out cattle that were brought to his slaughterhouse. As a result of picking out the best Texas



Wright's Bow & Arrow 316/8
Wright picked out the best.

Photo by Steve Hancock



Wright's Bow & Arrow 2000

Photo by Steve Hancock

Longhorns, he ended up with 100 or so. These were mostly from the local area. In 1941 he was able to add 60 head of Longhorns from John Webster of Simmons City, Texas. A few other individual bulls have been added to the herd, from the Butler and the Wildlife Refuge strains. Wright line cattle are very rare today,

although many cattle in the registry are partially of Wright breeding. Especially typical of the Wright herd have been many linebacked cattle, although many other colors also occur in the line.

Cap Yates began assembling his Texas Longhorns in 1915, from cattle local to his far West Texas ranches. Many of these cattle originated in northern Mexico. Yates had a passion for the old, traditional style of cattle, and was very diligent to locate, acquire, and retain only the cattle that

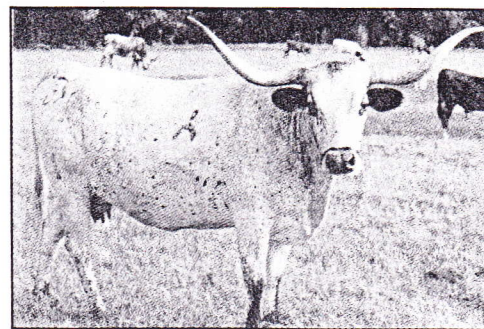
Marks valued the traditional functionality of the Texas Longhorn, and the Marks line contributed much of this to the present breed.

pleased his eye. Most of his cattle were from northern Mexico, although some few came from Graves Peeler, Emil Marks, and the Wildlife Refuge. He kept his Texas Longhorns scrupulously separate from his other cattle, and at his death in 1968 he had over 1000 head. The Yates line

figure d especially prominently in the early days of the registry. Important portions of the Yates line include Lely, and Schaleben cattle in addition to those more readily recognizable as Yates. A few ranches still keep the old Yates line going, in addition to the large contribution Yates line cattle have made to other breeding programs. Yates valued traditional conformation and twisty horns. He also valued the reproductive functionality of the traditional Texas Longhorn. The Yates bloodline has combined well with the other bloodlines in many herds.

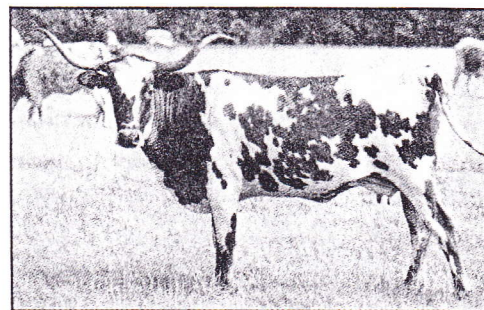
The Jack Phillips line of Texas Longhorns began in the early 1930s from cattle close to his East Columbia ranch. To these were added some Peeler cattle, as well as cattle from the Melgaard herd and the Winslow herd. Phillips also traded Copper JP to the Wildlife Refuge in 1964, and received a bull from the WR in that trade. In 1969 a few Guerra bulls were added.

Many of the popular animals in the Texas Longhorn breed today go back to the Phillips line, as it was widely used by many breeders. Very few of the old Phillips line remain, although certainly this is one of the bloodlines that has most affected the overall breed.



Yates 326/1
Yates looked for traditional style.

Photo by Steve Hancock

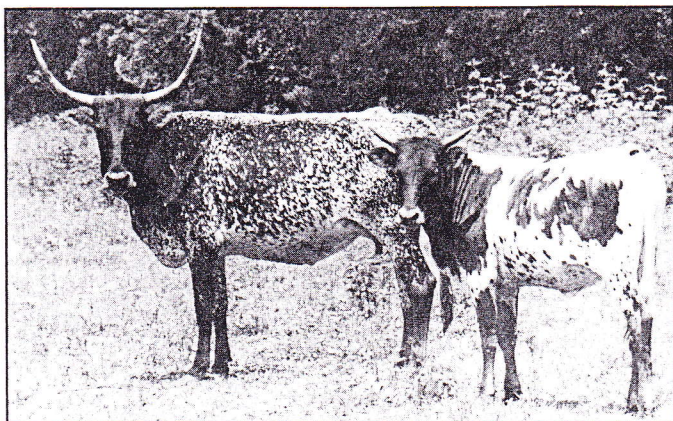


Yates 118/1 (Lely)

Photo by Steve Hancock



Phillips' Texas Ranger JP



1971 Phillips cow still producing in 1993.

One of the lines with the most recognition is the Wildlife Refuge line, which is actually more recent in origin than the other lines. The Wildlife herd began in 1927 with cattle from Doughty, Dew, and Brown. To this beginning were added various cattle over the years, including some

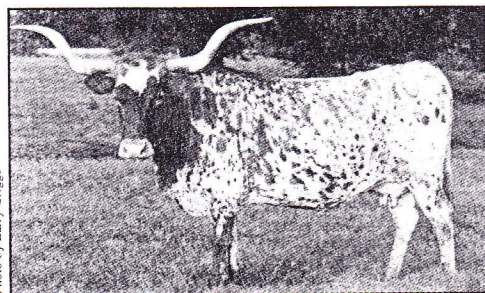


Photo by Larry Griggs

WR 20

Conservation directs the WR Program



WR 755

from Mexico (from the herds of Zuniga and Cia as well as others from the Monterrey area). Mexican cattle were added in 1931, 1936, 1941, and 1946. Many of the later Mexican cattle came from Clower. In the 1940s and 1950s Cap Yates provided many cattle to the Wildlife Refuge herds. Some of these were from the Yates herds, others were animals he obtained in Mexico. In 1966 the Phillips bull, Copper JP, was used, and in 1976 the Butler bull, Bold Ruler, was used. More recently additional Yates animals have been put into the Wildlife Refuge herd. Due to the long pedigrees and distinctive conformation of the Wildlife Refuge herd it has been popular with breeders, and many breeders keep exclusively Refuge bloodline cattle. The Refuge mandate is specifically conservation of the traditional Texas Longhorn, which directs their breeding program.

Graves Peeler was instrumental in assembling herds for the Texas Park Service, and also founded his own herd

of cattle. This began in 1931, with cattle from Yturria, Garza, Jourdan, and Guerra in addition to others. The original herd of cattle numbered 33, and of these most went to the State herds, with Peeler keeping ten cows and a red bull from Brownsville. Peeler cattle figured prominently in the herds of the King Ranch, which still has a herd of Peeler cattle. The original herd was assembled on a ranch next to Phillips, and these two traded cattle back and forth. Peeler cattle are now rare as a distinct strain, although some breeders remain committed to it and keep breeding these cattle as a genetic resource.

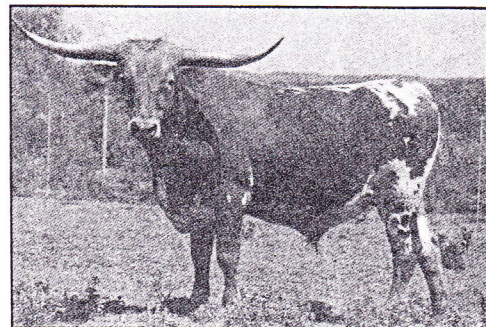


Photo by Robby Robinson

Two-year-old Peeler Bull
A genetic resource.

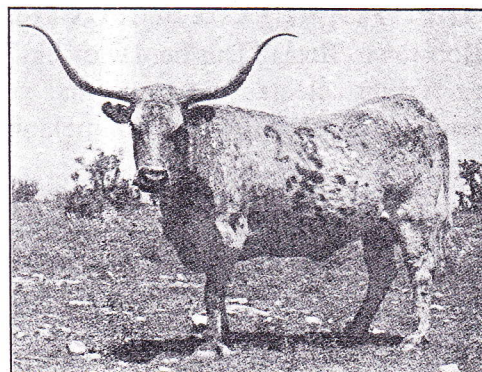


Photo by Robby Robinson

Peeler Cow

Other distinct lines of Texas Longhorns existed early in the century, and some persisted right down to the time of the founding of the TLBAA. Most of these were incorporated into the overall mix of bloodlines that has become the Texas Longhorn of today. The modern Longhorn owes as much to these strains that are now gone as it does to the ones that have more recognition as the founding families. All of the families of the Texas Longhorn are important to the breed, and are the foundation of what has become a very useful and interesting breed of cattle. Many of the foundations are now present only as a portion of the breeding of cattle in many herds. Others are still present as distinct strains due to the interest and success of breeders dedicated to the various lines. All are important to the breed, for the breed is shaped by its foundation. That foundation is these old family lines, and the breed is fortunate that most of these are still in existence. ■

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