



Colorado Simmental Association Inc.

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Colorado Simmental Association history - 1970 to present highlights

Compiled by Susan S. Russell

A group of dairy and beef producers, interested in breeding Simmental cattle, met in Denver on Aug. 22, 1970. This core group formed the Colorado Simmental Association, elected a board of directors and drew up articles of incorporation.

The initial officers and directors were M.C. McCormick of Holly, president; James C. Docheff of Broomfield, vice president; James E. O'Neal Jr. of Grand Junction, secretary/treasurer; and directors Myron L. Cuning and Oran K. Cuning, both of Brighton, Miles Davies of Deer Trail, Delbert Merritt of Kit Carson, Tom Risinger of Denver, and William J. Sparks of Two Buttes.

Membership took its task of developing and promoting Simmental in Colorado seriously. Despite being only five months old, CSA helped ASA host the 1971 American Simmental Association convention in Denver during National Western Stock Show events. Files show that CSA members helped manage the ASA convention for many years.

Colorado also hosted the first "national" all-Simmental sale on Jan. 16, 1971, with 300 head of ½-blood or greater Simmental cattle being auctioned in Denver.

A year later, the 1972 records show the *Simmental Saturday Nite Sale* offered 111 lots. National Western initially had no facilities available for the "new" Continental breeds to hold events on the grounds, but CSA wasn't deterred. Vernon Stone, a past president and 2007 CSA *Pioneer Award* recipient, recalls stalling cattle in the parking garage of the Hilton Hotel in downtown Denver, then trying to coax and load each sale lot into the service elevator for the ballroom auction. Although primarily a heifer offering, a purebred bull was consigned by Simmental Breeders Cardstom Ltd of Canada, and sold for \$20,000 to Fischer Simmental Ranch of Fort Collins, CO.

After that success, the sale moved to the National Western Stock Show "hill" in 1973, said then-sale manager Erroll Cook, who also is a past president and 2012 CSA *Pioneer Award* recipient.

Initially the sale was the only CSA-coordinated breed activity held at National Western. After negotiations and lobbying, a Simmental show was added at National Western Stock Show in 1978, said Cook, who also managed the show for many years. More than 200 head were exhibited in the initial show, earning the attention of other breeds and the National Western Stock Show, and securing a spot for the future, first on the "hill" and later also pens in the "yards."

At one of the early Denver events, Parisien (ASA registration #1) was put on display to heighten awareness about the breed, Stone added.

In addition to shows and sales, other early activities saw CSA put up cash premiums for Simmental-cross steers in the Colorado State Fair Beef Carcass Contest, co-sponsor the Great Western Beef Expo in Sterling, and erect booths at numerous functions. CSA hosted fall sales, primarily offering heifers and club calves in northern Colorado auctions, and a spring female sale, inside the Cow Palace Inn in southeast Colorado.

The breed promotion and activities also drew members, which jumped to 83 active and 79 associate members on the 1975 rosters, plus a new division - youth.

With an emphasis on the next generation, CJSA was formed in 1975 and the first state junior show and field day was held in 1978. With more than 150 breeders and juniors in attendance, 10-year-old David Kauffman of Fort Morgan showed the champion steer, a half-blood Dynamic son; and 11-year-old Chad Cook of Fort Collins won the heifer competition with a Bar 5 Sign of Signal daughter.

CSA continues to hold state junior field days, plus it hosted the AJSA National Classic in 2001 and the AJSA Western Regionals in both 2008 and 2009.

Bull tests were another research and promotional tool. Starting in 1974, Cook and Bernie Brown spearheaded the Best Yet Bull Test & Sale. Colorado then added tests on both sides of the Continental Divide with the Western Colorado Simmental Performance Bull Test and the Southeast Colorado Performance Bull Test & Sale, plus CSU's Northeast Colorado Bull Test near Atwood.

Like the bull tests and fall sales, for many years CSA had several regional affiliates or breeder groups active during the "Breed 'em All Simmental" boom. While CSA no longer coordinates bull tests, it does continue to sponsor sales and manage all the breed shows at the National Western Stock Show.

CSA strives to create enthusiasm for Denver activities and the Simmental breed. The *People's Choice Power Simmental* event, the brainchild of Willie Altenburg, another past president and 2016 *CSA Pioneer Award* winner, has been held since 2005 during the pen shows to stir crowd participation. Since 1993, *The One Sale* has offered about 60 live and embryo lots, plus an American Simmental-Simbrah Foundation benefit lot. The *Wild, Wild West Sale*, an auction open to CSA & CJSA consignors and guests, was held 2002-2020 at Brighton.

CSA has a marketing opportunity advertising program that's popular with its members, plus it has added internet and social media to its outreach efforts.

Colorado has been privileged to have a core group of multi-generational volunteers at its helm, plus CSA has been fortunate to achieve continuity with the help of several long-time secretaries, including James O'Neal (1970-73), Oran Cummings (1973-79), Gayle Cook (1979-1984), Steve Davies (1984-1998), and Susan Russell (1998-current).

Through the years, CSA & CJSA volunteers also have guided efforts on the national scene. For example, seven CSA leaders - Willie Altenburg, Robert Campbell, Chad Cook, Steve Davies, Miles Davies, Curtis Russell and Susan S. Russell - each served on the ASA board of trustees. Further, CSA is proud to have the names of Coloradoans Willie Altenburg, Miles Davies, Dr. Earl Peterson, and Reflected R's Curtis & Susan Russell inscribed on the international leadership pages of the *World Simmental-Fleckvieh Federation's Golden Book*.

In recent years, CSA's adult membership roster lists about 30 ranches, but it proudly maintains its "small but mighty" designation for its many annual achievements.