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The Hanoverian Horse in North America

Originally compiled by H. Norman Richardson, MD
(Blue text in parentheses indicates the names of the early AHS members' Hanoverian stallions.)

BIRTH OF THE AHS

The Hanoverian horse was developed in northern Germany in the state of Lower Saxony, the former kingdom of Hannover, where a flourishing horse-breeding industry has existed for more than 400 years. Since the end of World War II, when the tractor made horses obsolete for major farm work, the breeding goal has been to exclusively produce a more

versatile performance horse. Knowledgeable individuals in North America recognized a potential market for such an animal. Some of these early pioneers included individuals at Spruce Meadows in western Canada, Fritz Floto (Sandsturm) in eastern Canada, as well as others in the United States, especially Al Steiert (Abundance), Horst Kleinsorg (Manitu), Claude Stevens of Pamlico Farms (Equuleus) and Eugene Wright (Denar). The German Hanoverian Verband, led by Dr. Walter Hartwig, provided invaluable direction and advice, and was a rich source of quality mares to be bred to these stallions.

These mares were added to an immense potential breeding pool of other horses from outside populations such as Thoroughbreds and Arabs.

The Hanoverian Warmblood breed, along with others, slowly grew during the 1960s, accelerating in particular after the 1976 Olympic Games in Montreal. Due to distance and cultural barriers, it was difficult for the German Verband to serve its overseas members, and a growing number of breeders recognized a need for the establishment of a North American organization to serve them. From the beginning, it was

recognized that to be successful, such an organization would have to be operated in a manner similar to the Verband, which had very strict rules and set a high standard before a foal was issued a Hanoverian registration paper.

In order to properly market North American-bred animals, some sort of documentation or registration paper was needed. Sandy Gourlas (Gran Glander) in California and Dr. Richard von Buedingen (Dueker) in the east started organizations that did not pass the test of time. A larger one, which proved more viable, was formed by Eugene Wright and developed with Horst Kleinsorg, Barbara Sedwitz (Tanzenlicht) and other eastern breeders. It

was named The American Hanoverian Society (AHS) and was founded with an initial membership of only 40 individuals. The breeding rules and standards of the AHS are consistent with those of the Hannoveraner Verband (HV), the German Hanoverian breeding association. Incorporated in 1978 with rules and regulations similar to the American Trakehner Association, the AHS grew slowly and sought recognition by the HV. At first, many provisions of the AHS studbook did not complement those of the Verband, and approval awaited refinement that was

slow in coming.

By 1981, there were a growing number of mare owners who needed Verband inspections for their breeding stock. Many had been members of the early organizations and had papers from them. So it was with a backlog of issues that Dr. Walter Hartwig scheduled a Verband inspection at Glenwood Farms, owned by Jack and Judy Williams, where the Hanoverian stallion Diamont was standing in northern California. Eligible horses and foals were brought from many of the western states. After a very satisfactory event, Verband members met for breakfast on Glenwood Farms'



The spectacular filly Bellatessa HTF (Bugatti Hilltop-EM Comtesse/Cordoba), wowed the judges and spectators alike at the 2009 Hilltop inspection site. She is owned by Kris Schuler and was bred by Hilltop Farm, MD. © Erin McCardell/Hilltop Farm

beautiful veranda. Dr. Hartwig addressed the assemblage. Among other things he made it clear that an organization in America that was able to “stand on its own feet” should give service to our Hanoverians. He noted that there were several potential candidates, but that the AHS was the best organized to do the job if studbook problems could be resolved.

GROWTH OF THE AHS

At the time, the AHS was at a turning point since its founder and president Eugene Wright was retiring. A caucus of western members settled on asking Hermann Friedlaender (*Asiate*) to stand for election. He was on the Mare and Stallion Committee and was well known to the Verband for his past efforts and interest in the Hanoverian. He was the ideal person to lead the society in its further development. However Friedlaender was not well known in the East. After a vigorous campaign by these western supporters, he was elected as president at the 1981 fall meeting in Princeton, New Jersey. At the time society membership was slightly over 100 with under \$3,000 in the treasury.

The first order of business for the new president was improvement of the studbook. Friedlaender implemented his Action Plan. Throughout his years in office he refined it with the goal to make it more acceptable to the Verband while maintaining its integrity and AHS independence. His executive vice-president, Richard Maioriello (*Wigwam*), was an ardent supporter and aided greatly in continuing negotiations with the Verband by accompanying Friedlaender to Germany at crucial times. Virginia businessman Lou Thompson succeeded Friedlaender as president, serving from 1987 through 1993. During this time he oversaw the reciprocal agreement between the HV and AHS that enabled the AHS to assume full responsibility as the HV’s successor organization in the United States.

Judy Williams Ehlers signed the formal working contract between the Verband and the AHS titled “On the Proceeding of the Hanoverian Breed in the United States of America” on January 8, 1995. This was a historic occasion for the American Hanoverian Society, and conferred full legitimacy upon the

organization. At this time, 17 years had passed since the society’s founding and the AHS had matured greatly. Judy Ehlers served six years as society president (1994–2000) during which many new initiatives were undertaken. Foremost was the full computerization of the central office, thereby enabling the society to maintain its own database and issue its own registration (foal) papers.

FINDING ITS HOMEBASE

Initially, society business relating to horses was transacted in Friedlaender’s home office. After his election to the executive secretary position, Norman Richardson (*September*) used his living room to cope with myriad administrative details. The first formal office was established in the town of Capitola, which was near Friedlaender in Soquel, California. When Thompson was elected president, the office was moved to Woodinville, Washington, under Judy Hedreen. In 1993, the AHS board of directors voted to move the society’s headquarters to Lexington, Kentucky. Eventually a permanent central office was established at the Kentucky Horse Park, a 1,200-acre state park known worldwide for hosting the annual Rolex CCI****. The Kentucky Horse Park is visited by almost one million visitors annually and successfully hosted the 2010 World Equestrian Games.

The AHS central office is one of more than 35 national, regional and state equine associations, commissions and organizations currently located at the Kentucky Horse Park in a complex known as the National Horse Center. Neighbors include the United States Equestrian Federation (USEF), The United States Pony Clubs (USPC), the American Association of Equine Practitioners (AAEP), and the Kentucky State Racing Commission. Another close ally situated within the horse park is the United States Dressage Federation (USDF). Lexington is widely known as the “Horse Capital of the World.” The Kentucky Horse Park is the crown jewel of central Kentucky’s Bluegrass Region, which is home to hundreds of millions of dollars worth of the most valuable Thoroughbreds in the world. Churchill Downs racetrack, site of the world famous Kentucky Derby horse race, is but a one-hour drive from Lexington.

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With a final jumping score of 8.25 (9/7.5) and a pedigree full of jumping prowess, new Elite Mare Candidate Sophia Loren S (Sir Caletto-EM Samonie/Singular Joter) gained entry to the Jumper Breeding Program in 2011. EMC Sophia Loren S was bred and is owned by Silverhorse Sporthorse, CA. © Sheri Scott

MEMBER SUPPORT

During their respective tenures as president, Thompson and Ehlers made this period noteworthy by immensely improving all aspects of administration and by introducing modern business organization and practices. Thompson retired Richardson's office-generated Member's Forum newsletter and began *The American Hanoverian*, a truly professional magazine. This quarterly publication is a vital tool for keeping members throughout this vast country in touch with AHS activities. The society's flagship

publication, started in 1981 by Horst Kleinsorg, is the annual AHS Breeders' Guide and Stallion Directory. This 200-page book includes comprehensive articles on AHS registration procedures and features full statistical information on each of the society's approximately 107 licensed stallions. It has become a major tool for AHS breeders and new members. Other publications produced by the society include the Corporate By-Laws and Rules of Registration, which is updated as necessary, and an annual Inspection Tour book. The society's website (www.hanoverian.org) is

currently maintained and constantly updated by Publications Editor Sandra Werkheiser. The current Executive Director Hugh Bellis-Jones has supervised the evolution of all these and other initiatives to reach their current state of excellence.

A native of Great Britain, Hugh Bellis-Jones became the AHS Executive Director in the summer of 1995. Since that time, the society has grown considerably and now has approximately 2,000 members located throughout the United States and Canada. Together with Registrar Sandy Clevenger, Bellis-Jones oversees the day-to-day workings of the society at the AHS central office in Lexington. The society now has an annual budget of some \$600,000 and has certainly come a long way from its initial membership of 40 and an annual budget of \$5,000!

For many AHS members, the most important aspect of the society's work involves the organization of the annual inspection tour. The United States comprises a truly vast area and every year the visiting judges from the German Verband are amazed at the work that goes into flying teams thousands of miles across the continent and back. Yearly inspections require that several teams visit up to thirty sites for the purpose of grading mares for entry into the studbooks, licensing of stallions, conducting Mare Performance Tests and registering foals. Retired HV Managing

and Breeding Director Dr. Jochen Wilkens once commented that AHS inspections consisted of "long days and short nights!" It takes great precision to make our inspection tour work like clockwork year after year.

Since 1994, in order to protect the integrity of the registry, the AHS has required that all foals must be parentage verified before the registration certificate is issued. The current method is the use of DNA typing services from the University of Davis, California. Karin Himmelmayer (*Spartan*) served as the society's Studbook



During the 2012 annual meeting in West Palm Beach, Florida, AHS Executive Committee Board members (l-r): Rick Toering, Dr. Barbara Schmidt, President Edgar Schutte, Suzanne Quarles and Vanessa Carlson gather with Executive Director Hugh Bellis-Jones and Dr. Ludwig Christmann, HV's Director of International Affairs, Development and Education.

Keeper for many years. She worked closely with the Registry Department to ensure the accuracy of AHS registration papers. In 2010, the latest number for which figures are available, the AHS had 242 active breeders, i.e. individual members who activated one of more AHS-approved mares by payment of breeding dues. In 2011, the AHS inspected a total of 206 mares at 27 sites in the United States and Canada. Of this number, 194 were accepted, comprising 150 Hanoverians and 44 mares of outside (non-Hanoverian) populations. Entered into the Main Studbook were

180 mares while 14 were graded into the Studbook. The AHS will register approximately 450 foals of 2011.

Verband Committee members are present at every stallion kuering. AHS mare inspections parallel those held in Germany and are judged to the same scale. This means that a mare inspected in the United States may be entered into the breeding program of the HV without further inspection. Stallions that pass licensing in the United States are likewise automatically entered into the HV studbook. The importance and value of having a reciprocal studbook with Germany cannot be overstressed. The AHS Mare and Stallion Committee guides the breeding program with considerable input from current HV Managing and Breeding Director Dr. Werner Schade and Dr. Ludwig Christmann. Every year, one of these two individuals attends the AHS annual membership meeting. This yearly gathering of AHS members is held in January or February and usually rotates between west and east coast locations. The meeting consists of three days of business, educational and social events. At the 2004 AHS annual meeting held in Houston, Texas, Dr. Wilkens stated that the AHS should be the model for all Hanoverian societies outside of Germany. He added, "The AHS will always remain the biggest and the best!" We are grateful for this vote of confidence from Dr. Wilkens.

As in Germany, the AHS requires that licensed stallions be performance tested prior to being granted full breeding approval. This may be accomplished through the 70-Day Stallion Testing or by attaining required scores in competition. Within two years of licensing, the stallion must successfully complete a Stallion Performance Test at an AHS-approved test facility, where stallions are evaluated in dressage, show jumping and cross-country. On the final weekend of the performance test, guest riders also evaluate the stallions. For the past three years in North America, an AHS-recognized 70-Day Test has been hosted each fall in accordance with FN-approved protocol at the beautiful Silver Creek Farms facility in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma. Until the Stallion Performance Test is completed, the temporary breeding approval is limited to two years during which the stallion is restricted to the registration of a maximum of 20 AHS foals per year.

ORGANIZATION OF THE AHS

A 12-member board of directors governs the society. The board includes representation from throughout the United States and meets in person twice a year. As befits a democratic organization, each board member is elected by membership vote to serve a four-year term. The existing members of the board now choose the president. In 2001, Douglas Leatherdale, well known in Germany as owner of the outstanding Hanoverian stallion His Highness, became the society's fifth President. Leatherdale is the retired chairman and chief executive officer of The St. Paul Insurance Companies, a large international insurance firm operating in over 20 countries with over 16,000 employees worldwide. The society benefited greatly from the considerable business expertise he brought to his position as AHS president. In 2011, Leatherdale elected to step down from his position and, in a move that was well received by the AHS membership, Edgar Schutte of Rainbow Equus Meadows, a large Hanoverian breeding farm in Lincoln, California, was elected AHS President and will serve a four-year term from 2011-14.

In addition to the board, much of the Society's work is conducted and overseen by various standing committees. Each is composed of volunteer members who donate considerable time and expertise to the society. The society's Treasurer heads the Finance Committee,

which is responsible for overseeing AHS finances. In conjunction with the Executive Director (who is a permanent appointee), each fall the Finance Committee produces a proposed balanced budget for the upcoming fiscal year. This document is thoroughly reviewed and amended as necessary by the full board at its summer (June) meeting. The central office sends monthly financial statements to the Finance Committee in order that each member may be kept fully apprised of the society's financial outlook. Each year the AHS arranges for an independent external audit of the year's accounts, the results of which are presented to the membership at the ensuing annual meeting and published in the society's quarterly magazine.

The Awards Committee is very active and directs the society's popular awards program that recognizes and rewards AHS members competing their Hanoverians in dressage, eventing, show jumping, hunter/jumpers and sport horse breeding competitions. This is a sector of the society's operations that has expanded greatly in the past few years.

The Breeding Technology Committee is composed of equine veterinarians and other professionals in the fields of horse management and reproduction. This committee is a source of valuable educational material, much of which is published regularly in the society's quarterly magazine.

DEVELOPMENTS IN THE LAST DECADE

In 2002, under Leatherdale's leadership, the AHS applied for and was accepted as a full voting member of the World Breeding Federation for Sport Horses (WBFSH). In joining this important

world body, the AHS became one of 55 member studbooks from 23 countries throughout the world. Another significant accomplishment occurred in 2001, when the AHS became the first studbook in North America to fully incorporate the Universal Equine Life Number (UELN) into its registration procedures.

In 2005, the AHS implemented the North American Hanoverian Jumper Breeding Program (JBP), which

is based in part on the successful experience of the Programm Hannoveraner Springpferdezucht (PHS) established in 1993 in Germany. A cooperative effort between the AHS and the two regional Hanoverian breeding clubs in Canada, the Jumper



Owners of 2010 Sport Horse Breed Show winners included Diane Nauman with daughters Rachel and Alexis Proteau, Sandra Hunt with presenter Dr. Barbara Schmidt, Jo Ann Thomas, Marion Dresel O'Connor, and representing Hilltop Farm, Natalie DiBerardinis.

© Jody McNannay



Left: After completing all necessary registration requirements, the April 7, 2011 foaled Hanoverian colt Szebastien (Shakespeare RSF-EM Ghenoa/Gold Luck), owned and bred by AHS Publications Editor Sandra Werkheiser of Pennsylvania, received the complimentary USEF lifetime-recording number 5217604, which is also now permanently recorded on his AHS registration papers. As part of the agreement with the USEF, AHS-registered foals are also automatically added to the USEF American Performance Horse (APH) Registry, which is open to all American-bred performance horses and intended to showcase horses bred in the United States. © Sandra Werkheiser

Breeding Program is intended to promote the breeding of high quality Hanoverian show jumping horses in North America. To be selected for the program, mares and stallions must have both an appropriate jumping pedigree and demonstrated jumping ability or offspring with demonstrated jumping ability.

In another milestone, in 2009 the AHS became the first registry to reach a contractual agreement with the United States Equestrian Federation (USEF) regarding life recording. AHS-registered foals, beginning with the foal crop of 2009, now automatically become USEF life recorded as part of

the regular \$185 AHS foal registration fee. All registration requirements (completed application, photographs, parentage verification through DNA, etc.) must be at the AHS central office by December 31 of the foal's birth year. This date has been determined by contractual agreement with USEF. After this date it will cost individual yearling owners \$85 to lifetime record their horse with USEF.

The AHS is pleased to offer this added value to our membership at no additional cost. This partnership between the AHS and USEF will allow both organizations access to accurate data for both pedigree and performance. The AHS will provide USEF with full breeding data on each foal and, in return, the USEF will provide the AHS with a USEF life recording number for each foal that will be noted on AHS registration papers. In addition the owner will also receive a life recording certificate from the USEF. ❖



One of the most successful jumping horses in Canada, George, by Garant out of a mare by Don Juan, competed at the Pan Am Games last year in Guadalajara with Jill Henselwood and won the World Cup qualifier at Bromont. © Rau