

## Chapter 7

# Monte Sano Dairy

The Monte Sano Dairy supplied milk for a large trade in Huntsville. Located on Gladstone Place just two and a half miles from the Court House, it was within easy access of its patrons. The herd was composed of registered Jerseys, some imported directly from the Jersey Islands. In 1890 it was owned by Messrs. William E. Matthews and Milton Humes. The former lived at Gladstone Place and managed the herd.

Every precaution was taken to make the dairy and barn sanitary. The dairy was a limestone house of two rooms and an upstairs sleeping quarters for Mr. Meadows, the Swiss dairyman.

The dairy was situated at the foot of a fifteen foot cliff. The spring was on top of the cliff. The spring house was built of limestone. The water flowed from under a shelving ledge into a fine white sandy hollow and was piped directly into the cooling vats in the back room of the dairy. These vats were on the north and west sides of the room and were deep enough to submerge a five-gallon milk can.

The cows were milked in the barn across the lane at the hours of four o'clock in the morning and three o'clock in the afternoon. The floor of the barn was cemented and each cow had a stall. There were carriers to take the milk immediately to the front room of the dairy where it was strained and canned to be submerged in the vats to cool. Then it was bottled and capped and delivered to customers twice a day.

The cows were washed before and after milking. As soon as they were ready to go to pasture Mr. Meadows would go to the gate and begin crooning, "Coom, Coom! Coom on! Coom, Coom! Coom on!" Grandmother, as he fondly called Tower Princess, the first of the herd to be imported from the Jersey Island, was lead-cow. As she fell in behind him the herd pushed into a compact mass out of the gate and thence down the winding lane to the pasture.

On June 2, 1891, General Samuel H. Moore brought a government expert, a Mr. Goodall of Kansas, on to test Lily Flag, Little Goldie, and Analysis for butterfat. An unofficial private test had shown that in seven days Lily Flag produced twenty three pounds eleven ounces of butter; Little Goldie, twenty pounds three ounces;

Analysis, twenty pounds six and a half ounces.<sup>1</sup> The official test began on June 2, 1891. By May 28, 1892, Lily Flag had exceeded the record of the World's Beater, Beason's Belle, who had been the world champion butter producer up to that date.

On May 29th Lily Flag had produced one thousand twenty-nine pounds thirteen and one-fourth ounces of butter. Beason's Belle's full year yield was one thousand twenty-eight pounds fifteen and five-eighth ounces.

By this achievement, Lily Flag made herself the talk of the town. On June 2, 1892, Mr. Meadows sleeked her up, decorated her horns with flags (iris) and ribbons and took her below the barn to receive callers. One hundred and five persons registered,<sup>2</sup> were served to a glass of her milk, greeted her, and went off thrilled with her beauty. She really was a cow worth kissing. In October she had been valued at Ten Thousand Dollars.<sup>3</sup> That made her equal in value to many a farm in the South in 1891.

Her immediate worth was easily turned to account. One of the best cooks in Huntsville was Mrs. William E. Matthews. She conceived the idea of having a Lily Flag supper for the benefit of the Presbyterian Church. Accordingly, on June 15, 1892, the *Democrat* announced that those who wanted rare butter, delicious sweet milk or cream, butter milk, cottage cheese, ice cream of any flavor, sherbert, boiled custard, Delmonico Pudding, blanc mange, Charlotte russe, should call at the Lily Flag supper and buy these products made exclusively from her milk. Cakes and other by-products would also be available. On June 22, 1892, the same paper said that the dining room was crowded. Few people could believe that one cow could supply the needs of the town.

It was then necessary for General Moore to recognize his protegee. He did it in an "elegant" (the Clay's word, not mine) way. Fifteen hundred guests were invited to meet Lily Flag at the General's home on Adams Avenue.

A platform fifty feet square was erected in the garden as a dancing pavilion. Lit with gas and Chinese lanterns, the dance floor was polished so slick the dancers had a hard time keeping their feet. It was a merry place. It was gay with the flowers of Huntsville society from nine o'clock in the evening 'till three in the morning. An Italian band from Nashville "discoursed dancing melodies, dreamy waltzes, gay polkas, and fascinating Santiagos"<sup>4</sup> while girls with flowers peeping through their curls smiled over the tops of fans to flattering beaux. Between dances the couples

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1 *The Weekly Mercury*, April 8, 1891

2 *The Weekly Democrat*, June 8, 1892

3 *The Weekly Mercury*, October 7, 1891

4 *The Huntsville Weekly Democrat*, July 27, 1892

wandered through the gardens, visited the punch bowl, even went to the parlors where Lily Flag was standing on a silver platform under a flower-decked mantel. The great square parlors never looked lovelier. Mrs. Robert E. Coxe, Mrs. D. D. Shelby, Misses Jane Beirne, Sunie White, and Mattie Barnard had seen to that.

Lily Flag was as much at home as if she had been raised in the parlor instead of in the barn. It is surprising how well a cow can act. She was a thoroughbred indeed! And, then, she was worth Ten Thousand Dollars. No cow in Huntsville had ever been worth that before. So there she was in the parlor - not even dazzled by her elegance.

Then the citizens of Huntsville gave a banquet and dance for her at the Monte Sano Hotel on Monte Sano. Zenie Pruett, General Moore's cook, was caterer on this occasion. There were place-cards of Lily Flag and speeches and toasts to her. Stegall's wagonette made special rates for the round trip so that the whole of Huntsville could honor this Jersey if they desired. They did her full honor.

When the World's Fair opened she was shipped with Little Goldie to Chicago. General Moore would not allow her to be milked for twenty-four hours. It ruined one side of her udder. Even then the Hood Dairy paid Ten Thousand Dollars for her.

Mr. Meadows always believed that Little Goldie was a better cow. He did not think she was fairly tested.

The dairy changed hands in 1894. The standard of the old regime was maintained, however, and it served Huntsville throughout the decade.

Mr. William E. Matthews was a genial, tall square-shouldered gentleman with twinkling blue eyes which betrayed his weakness for joking. His keen sense of humor was shared impartially with rich and poor and made him a popular host and guest, master, and co-worker. He was an ideal husband and father. Having married his wife when she was only sixteen, he kept the romance of that love alive through great financial adversities and moderate prosperity. "Carrie" was his idol. She was his inspiration and helpmeet.

He knew farming and dairying thoroughly. Financial reverses deprived him of his own twelve hundred acre farm. Mortgages ate up all he made. In 1889 he moved to Gladstone Place where he established the Monte Sano Dairy. In 1894 he moved to town. Again he met with reverses. He was of such calibre, however, that they only proved his worth. Though he was put to desperate straights he never lost courage. He took what work he could find, wherever he found it and smiled through it all.