

News from Rare Breeds Canada
Do you know your goat history?
Part 4: Saanens
by Rebecca Lange

In the early 1900's in Canada, Saanen goats could be found in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario and New Brunswick. Although not the most popular breed in terms of registration numbers, they enjoyed a distribution across the country unlike any other breed on record at the time. Most were imported stock from the United States, in particular a large number came from the Supreme herd, of Robert and Mrs Inez Glahn, located in Los Angeles, California. It is the Supreme herd name that dominates the first Saanen's recorded with the Canadian Goat Society. Mrs Glahn was credited in Irmagarda's Richards book: "A Guide to Modern Milch Goats" published in 1914; with having a herd that showed a prime example of the development of the dairy goat.

Alongside, the importations from America some were also made from Switzerland, by Mrs Ethelwynne A. Barker of New Westminster, BC. Bred by Frittenburg Nurforr of Langran, Switzerland, the goats arrived via Manchester Depot in Vermont and were thereafter transported to New Westminster. Amongst those; Alta Blanka is recorded as being a white, hornless female, born in the Spring of 1917. Alta Kibi a later recording a male, hornless, white Saanen was born on May 31st 1920 and was imported "in dam".

Aside from their pure counterparts several inspected (what were to become grade) Saanens are entered into the first CGS (Canadian Goat Society) herd book. A female inspected doe, born in March 1912 and simply name Crowe 1, is the first ever Saanen recorded with CGS. Crowe 1 was owned by Arthur Crowe of Victoria, BC, but went on to be purchased by Henry C. Foster, also of Victoria. Thirty-seven places in the registry later, is the first recorded male of the time - San Andreas 1711A, born on May 3rd 1917, he was described as being white and hornless. Originally bred by Frank P. Stedman of Los Angeles, Andreas was owned in Canada by LI Schinker and later by George Pilmer of Victoria, BC. Pilmer was influential at the time, not only as Secretary for the Livestock Branch in the province; but also for being involved in the BC Goat Breeders Association and for his credited assistance with the compilation of a BC Agriculture goat bulletin.

Later in the CGS herd book appear the first recorded progeny of two goats listed in the registry. Skookum Beauty, is the first female Saanen to be registered as such. Born on June 12th 1918, Beauty was rather impressively a quad with 3 males. Described as being white and hornless, she came from the herd of F. Porter in Egmont, BC and is recorded as the progeny of Bralef King Franz (sire) and Betty Fraser (dam). The first buck to meet the same criteria was Saan Monarch, also white and hornless, but born much later on July 12th 1921. His sire being Francois and dam: Betty Fraser. Monarch, was bred by Leslie J. Marshall of Edson, AB and later in life moved to the home of Mrs T. N. Tyler of Gull Lake, SK.

Between 1917 and 1922 a total of 169 Saanen's were recorded with CGS, making them the third most popular breed in Canada at the time, following behind the Toggenburg and Nubian. In 2009, they were listed on Rare Breeds Canada's Conservation List as being "At Risk".

With thanks to Sharon Hunt, General Manager of the Canadian Goat Society for the use of the original CGS Herd Record Book, which was invaluable in writing these accounts.