



# Haverford Township Historical Society



## HIGHLAND FARM

### John R. Valentine (1869-1921) and Elizabeth S. Valentine

By Richard D. Kerr

*It seems that much of the story of Highland Farm and the Valentine family is best told through contemporary accounts from that time. The following text is excerpted from A History of Delaware County Pennsylvania and Its People by John W. Jordan, published in 1914:*

John Reed Valentine, only son of John King Valentine and Virginia Penelope (Reed) Valentine, was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, July 22, 1869. His preparatory education was obtained at Haverford College grammar school, he being a member of the first class graduated from that institution. He then entered Haverford College, but was compelled to discontinue his studies there for a time. He then took special courses at the University of Pennsylvania for two years, later entering the law department of the University, whence he was graduated LL. B., class of 1895. His university career was one of fine achievement as witnessed by his membership in the Sharswood Law Club, a requisite for admission there being perfect scholarship in both collegiate and law courses.

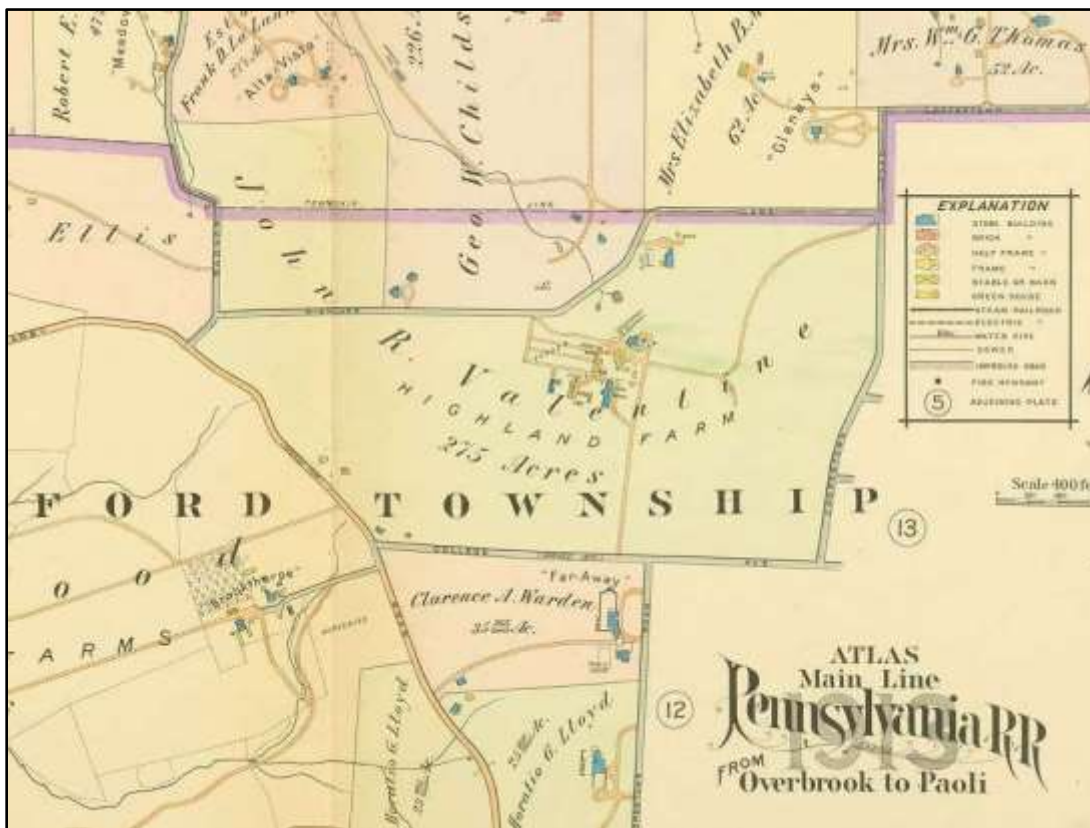
Although fully equipped for the profession of law, Mr. Valentine chose the life of a country gentleman, a career he has followed with great usefulness to his community and not from the standpoint of an "idle rich man." Shortly after his graduation he inherited a sum of money that he invested in "Highland Farm," his present home. This farm, located in the northern part of Haverford Township, Delaware County, originally consisted of sixty-three acres, adjoining his father's estate of one hundred and forty-six acres. After inheriting the latter, Mr. Valentine consolidated the two farms and purchased an additional one hundred acres, which now gives Highland Farm an area of nearly three hundred acres of exceedingly valuable land. The original house was built in 1704, but has been remodeled and enlarged until it stands as a splendid example of a country gentleman's home. The farm was the original Lewis tract, descending by inheritance to the Sheafs, by them sold to the Epwrights, from whom it was purchased by Mr. Valentine, the two transfers being the only ones by sale during the two and one-half centuries since it was first patented to a Lewis.

Interesting as is the past history, "Highland Farm" has a modern fame all its own. Mr. Valentine has made it the Mecca of Ayrshire cattle breeders of the United States. His herd of two hundred pure blooded Ayrshire is the largest and most noted in the eastern United States, including as it does champions in milk and butter production and a sire of unsurpassed performance.

For twenty years Mr. Valentine has been developing this herd of prize dairy cows, and by importation and breeding he has become the leading and best known owner of Ayrshires in the United States. A few names of champions in the herd will be familiar to those interested in Ayrshire: "Polly Puss" from 1903 to 1905 the American champion in the production of milk and butter; "Rena Ross" from 1905 until 1910 American Ayrshire champion in milk and butter production. Thus for seven years, 1903-10. Mr. Valentine's herd furnished the American champion milk and butter producer. In 1913, his three year old



Map of northern Haverford Township in 1892, prior to the creation of Highland Farm, showing the property of John K. Valentine (father of John R. Valentiner) and others.



This 1913 map shows Highland Farm at its peak of 275 acres and extending into Radnor Township, bounded by Radnor Road, Darby Road, College Avenue and Coopertown Road

heifer "Abbess of Torr," which he imported from Scotland, after personal inspection, won the "three year old championship" for imported Ayrshires. Mr. Valentine is also owner of a famous Ayrshire sire whose daughters, in proportion to their number, rank as the greatest producers of milk and butter over any similar number of cows in the whole world.



*Stone cattle buildings at Highland Farm, about 1921.*

The surroundings in which these cattle are kept give evidence of the deep thought and interest bestowed upon them by their owner, being roomy, modern and sanitary. To dispose of the product of his large herd, Mr. Valentine maintains a model dairy, operated under the most perfect sanitary conditions, employing the most modern approved dairy machinery and methods. But the herd is not maintained for dairy, but for breeding purposes, the young Ayrshires being eagerly sought for by dairymen and breeders. Mr. Valentine is president of the Ayrshire Breeders Association of America and a recognized authority on that most noted of all dairy cattle. He is devotedly attached to his beautiful country home with all its varied interests, but is not unmindful of his civic and social obligations. He has taken a lively interest in the club life of Delaware County and Philadelphia, being a member of the Racquet Club of Philadelphia, the Merion Cricket Club, the Radnor Hunt, Rose Tree Hunt, Pickering Valley Hunt, Green Spring Valley Hunt, the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society and various others. From 1901 to 1907 he was master of hounds for the Radnor Hunt, the pack of hounds now owned by the club having been bred, trained and presented by Mr. Valentine. To further gratify his love for the chase, he maintains a stable of ten high class thoroughbred hunters.

In politics a Republican, he has always taken interest in local affairs. He is a member of the county committee for the northern precinct of Haverford Township, served for three years on the township board of education, was chairman of the board of supervisors four years and the first chairman of the board of township commissioners under the act of 1910. While not formally connected with any religious denomination, he has a birthright membership in the Society of Friends, and has a special friendliness for the faith of his fathers.

Mr. Valentine married, June 8, 1898, Elizabeth Edith Simpson, born in Philadelphia, but at the time of her marriage residing at "Centre Crest," the Montgomery County home of the Simpsons. She is the only child of Thomas and Elizabeth Potter (Moulton) Simpson, her father the long time honored head of the Eddystone Steel Works at Chester, Pennsylvania. Mr. and Mrs. Valentine have no children.

*From the same source, we learn this of John R. Valentine's parents:*

John King Valentine was the son of wealthy parents. He was given a liberal education at Phillips Academy, Andover, Massachusetts; he entered Dartmouth College, where he completed his classical education; he then entered the law department of the University of Pennsylvania, whence he was graduated LL. B., class of 1855. He was admitted to the Philadelphia bar the same year and attained high rank in his profession. He was a long-serving district attorney for the Eastern Pennsylvania district, appointed by President Grant and serving until the first administration of President Cleveland. He

earned lasting reputation by his successful handling of the "Molly Maguire" cases and was the only prosecutor to obtain convictions in the Squire Root trials during the Star Route Mail scandals. Under President Cleveland's administration he was appointed, under the new federal elections law, chief of the United States election bureau. Later he was appointed United States commissioner of elections. He maintained a country estate at Bryn Mawr and a town house at 1805 Spruce Street. After his retirement from public life, he resumed private practice, forming a partnership with his son, John Reed Valentine, and Henry P. Brown in Philadelphia.

Virginia Penelope Reed was born on her father's estate near New Orleans, Louisiana, daughter of James and Adele La Tell (De La Tour) Reed. The De La Tours were of royal French blood, driven out of France during the revolution, taking refuge in San Domingo. When the blacks rose and proclaimed the Republic of Haiti, the family came to the United States, locating in New Orleans. John R. Valentine was their only child, and the only grandchild of his father's parents.

*The following is excerpted from "Local Health Boards and Medical Milk Commissions" by David Wilbur Horn Ph.D., American Journal of Public Health (the journal of the American Public Health Association), Volume XII Number 10, October 1922:*

In the jurisdiction of the Lower Merion Health Board, since its establishment in 1907-8, two certified milks have been produced by other unofficial bodies. The Bryn Clovis certified milk was for years controlled (in a professional sense, not financially) by the Philadelphia Clinical Laboratory; it later passed under the supervision of the Milk Commission of the Philadelphia Pediatric Society. The Highland Farm certified milk was in the same sense controlled by the laboratory of the Bryn Mawr Hospital and later by the laboratory of the writer; in 1916 it passed under the supervision of the (neighboring) Haverford Township Board of Health.

*The following obituary for John R. Valentine appeared in the industry publication The Ayrshire Digest (Volume 6 Number 7, August 15, 1921):*

**Death of John R. Valentine  
Noted Ayrshire Breeder Succumbs to Typhoid  
Former President of Ayrshire Breeders' Association**



JOHN R. VALENTINE

John R. Valentine, of Highland Farm, Bryn Mawr, Pa., died at his home at Bryn Mawr on Saturday, July 9, 1921, and interment took place in the old St. David's Cemetery. Mr. Valentine contracted typhoid fever. He made a splendid fight but succumbed to its effects after ten days' illness. Mr. Valentine was 53 years of age.

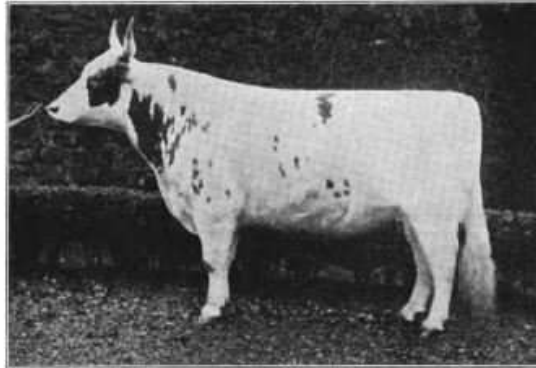
After graduating from college he studied law and was associated in practice with his father, John K. Valentine, and Henry P. Brown. He officiated as Chairman of the Haverford Township Commissioners for several years. Mr. Valentine was well known in horse circles, officiating as an official at many of the prominent horse shows of the country. During the late war he served as lieutenant colonel in the Remount Division, being quartered at Camp Kearney and officiating in the selection of mounts.

For some twenty years John R. Valentine was an active and prominent breeder of Ayrshire Cattle, his greatest achievement being the breeding of the famous Rena Ross family. He spent a year in Scotland

studying the breed and selected a group of Ayrshires which he imported in 1909. From then on he diligently fostered Advanced Registry work and made many notable records which were of championship caliber. At Highland Farm he developed the great bull Finlayston, the premier A. R. bull of the breed. At the present time Baron's Best of Bargaenoch is doing great service. The Highland Farm Herd consists of about 200 head, most of which were home bred. The product of this herd is marketed as certified milk by the Highland Dairies, Inc., of which Mr. Valentine was president.

THE AYRSHIRE DIGEST

HIGHLAND FARM  
Makes a specialty of  
FOUNDATION COWS



IMP. BARON'S BEST OF BARGENOCH 12858

All animals offered are Bred at Highland Farm  
Choice Young bulls ready for service  
Herd under Federal Inspection

FARM LOCATED AT BRYN MAWR, PENNA.  
Nine (9) miles from Philadelphia on the Main line of the Penna. R. R.

VISITORS ALWAYS WELCOME

COL. JOHN R. VALENTINE, Prop.

PHILIP C. PALMER, V. S., Manager

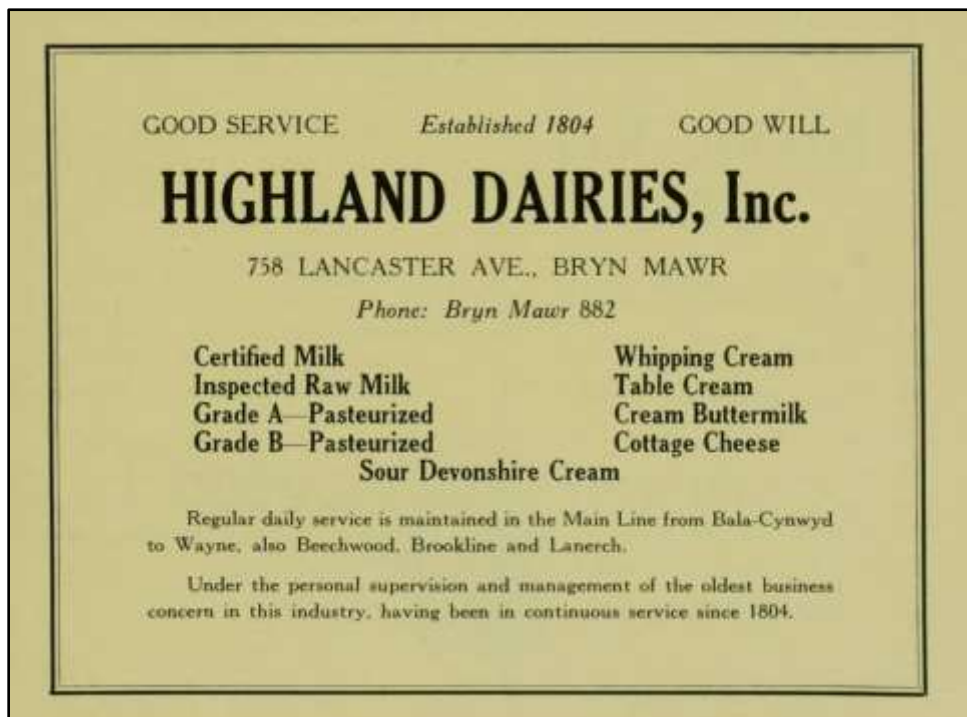
Advertisement for Highland Farm (1921)

For four years Mr. Valentine officiated as President of the Ayrshire Breeders' Association and for many years as a director.

The late John R. Valentine is survived by his widow, formerly Miss Elizabeth Simpson, of Haverford, Pa.

*Other notes:*

In addition to Highland Farm, John R. Valentine also had a related business. When you breed and raise cattle, you also end up with a steady supply of cows' milk. Valentine established Highland Dairies, Inc. to process and sell milk products. He built a facility just across the county/township line at 758 Lancaster Avenue in the Bryn Mawr area of Lower Merion Township.



*Highland Dairies advertisement from 1925*

By some means not yet uncovered today, he was able to advertise that the business was “established 1804” and “under the personal supervision and management of the oldest business concern in this industry, having been in continuous service since 1804.” Notices for bids for general construction of a “milk station and bottling house” for Highland Dairies and Highland Dairies Milk Condensing Co. appeared in industry publications in August, 1920.



Both quart and pint glass milk bottles marked for “Highland Diaries, Inc., Registered, Bryn Mawr” survive in the hands of collectors today. A photograph of a 1920-era REO truck, with a body built and lettered for Highland Diaries by the Boyertown Auto Body Works of Boyertown, Pennsylvania is also in existence, and it is likely that it was made for Valentine’s dairy, although other Highland Diaries existed around the United States. As the 1922 article from the American Journal of Public Health quoted above reveals, this was an era when pasteurization and other processing of raw milk was just beginning, often to the anger and resentment of dairy farmers who felt it was a slap at the cleanliness, health and integrity of their farms, herds and milk products. This is why hospital and medical laboratories were testing milk, at the same time that nascent government health boards were taking on jurisdiction.

There were many other places with the name “Highland Farm” including a tavern in Radnor Township (the building is now part of the Agnes Irwin School) and a farm in the northeast corner of Lower Merion Township which became part of the Alan Wood “Woodmont” estate.

When the Township of Haverford was incorporated as a “First Class Township,” a population-based category of municipal government under Pennsylvania law, in 1912, it was John R. Valentine who served as the first president of the Board of Commissioners.



Illustration by the Author  
MRS. JOHN R. VALENTINE ON "FALLIAN"

Valentine supported the foxhunting activities in our area back then, as mentioned above in the excerpt from Jordan’s history, but it is his wife, Elizabeth Simpson Valentine, who appears in the published foxhunting journals of neighbor J. Stanley Reeve, perhaps America’s foremost and best-known personality in this area of endeavor. John R. Valentine and Reeve, both of Haverford Township, were two of the three founders of the Bryn Mawr Hound Show, an event which took place in conjunction with the Bryn Mawr Horse Show at the Polo Field in Haverford Township, and which continues today in more rural Chester County.

*Silhouette created by J. Stanley Reeve and published in one of his books on foxhunting.*

After Valentine died in 1921, it was Elizabeth Simpson who continued to keep the Highland Farm and Highland Diaries in operation for a number of years thereafter. Over time, some lots around the edges of the 275 acre property were subdivided and sold for house lots. Wholesale development as a suburban subdivision named Highland Farms was tentatively approved in January 1955 and produced Meadows Lane, Williams Road, Blackburn Lane and their homes. In addition, land at the northeast corner of the old farm was bought by the School District of Haverford Township to build Coopertown Elementary School, while Haverford Township bought adjoining land just to the west to create Highland Farm Park, with baseball field, tennis court and basketball court. The development of Tracy Terrace and its homes happened as a separate smaller development, known as the J. Wayne Ortlip Plan.

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