

History of Poultry Raising Industry in Santa Cruz

Large oaks from little acorns grow, a true and an oft repeated saying, applies in the fullness of its meaning to the beginning, and to the growth of the poultry industry of this Santa Cruz district. Scattering flocks of mongrel fowls were to be found in this vicinity previous to a score of years ago and there was little or no community action on the part of poultry keepers. The onward march of time has worked marvelous changes; overshadowing, obliterating former practices and conditions. Systematic, progressive, scientific poultry breeding; the establishment of hundreds of well-appointed poultry plants; miles upon miles of quarters for housing fowls, young and old; lengthy, continuous in their construction, taking the place of detached poorly arranged, badly ventilated houses, such as were to be seen on every hand, have changed the aspect of this avocation in every detail and in its entirety.

To bring the poultry keepers in close touch, for the purpose of benefiting each other, and to formulate a plan for the enhancement of community interest, about the year 1895 a score or more members of the fraternity organized...the Santa Cruz Poultry Association. Miss E.M.C. Forbes and the late Phillip Hynes having been the prime movers in the matter. Of the many charter members but two, to our knowledge, are still living, at least in this community, viz: Miss E.M.C. Forbes and H.C. Henney, the latter serving long years as the very efficient secretary of the organization.

The meetings of the association were first held in the public hall at Seabright, that attractive suburb of Santa Cruz then being a wide-open acreage of grain fields. The flocks of poultry were not only limited in number but in capacity. The market for eggs produced was limited, the greater number being exchanged at stores in town for various articles. After a while this barter gave way to a different, better method of marketing. Even at that early date in the history of egg farming on a small scale, the Archibalds of Soquel bought eggs laid in the surrounding country, a business in which these reliable, energetic people have continued up to the present time, of late years making a specialty of selling day-old chicks.

In those long passed days very few incubators were used and those as a rule of small size. Year after year these machines increased in number until at the present writing they are to be counted by the hundreds, a majority being of medium capacity when compared with the mammoth machines in operation in many localities in this country. One of the latest accessions to the industries of Santa Cruz is the Charters incubator factory, East Side, which it is hoped may be the entering wedge for the establishment of other notable industries pertinent to poultry culture, in this city and environs.

It was in those primitive days in poultrydom, as pertains to the business in this locality, that the popular poultry house originated. The plan, in embryo, being suggested by Miss Forbes, formulated by Mr. Hynes, [and] afterward constructed by a Mr. (Pegleg) Smith, who adopted the plan and by whose name it still is known. Much improved in its appointments this house is still, and bids fair to long continue to be, exceedingly popular. This pattern of house and the Weeks building, of which there are comparatively few in this district, are the ones that are most in favor with our poultrymen. Both patterns are, in construction, built in units are made as lengthy as may be desired, some of the latter being one

hundred or two hundred feet long. Each possesses merit, but as to the adoption of this or that one there is divergence of opinion.

The advantage these above mentioned poultry houses have over the colony houses found on many premises is that countless steps are saved each day, as the caretaker makes his rounds. Yet the later patterned buildings are to be found in large numbers in many parts of the county. About 1912 the Philo pattern of poultry houses had found favor with poultrymen in many localities and they were well tried out here, but were found to be adopted only to small flocks kept in backyards. They were some time since discarded. The houses were three by six feet in size each holding six hens. At one time C.F. Bliven, who kept fine bred Rhode Island Reds, had twenty-five of these yards. C.H. Forman kept ninety hens on a town lot at an annual profit average \$1.70 per hen.

The year 1911 was pronounced by President Hynes to have been the poorest he had experienced, owing to the high price of poultry foods and the low price of eggs. Our poultrymen had, by this time, made up their minds that high food prices had come to stay for a considerable length of time.

An egg exchange was established in this city in April, 1912, by Lehman, Green & Foster, quite a number of egg farmers having been patrons of the firm. Attractive terms were promised and a large number of eggs were delivered to the firm. This state of affairs continued for some time, but, not long thereafter, the firm above named went into bankruptcy and considerable loss of money to consignors of eggs accrued. Afterwards Oudahy & Co. made acceptable offers for eggs produced hereabouts and gained a footing which is held to this date, large quantities of eggs being handled by them through their representative, Williamson & Garrett. Upon the organization of the central California producers' association, [1918–1919 City directory lists Poultry Producers of Central California—ed.] two or three years ago, several of our poultrymen took shares in the concern, their success being so flattering that the number has steadily increased. The fraternity are alert to the advantages of co-operation, by reason of which the business is continually expanding. There has, of late years, been a steady enlargement of the business, a condition of affairs which bids fair to continue for an indefinite time. Things in local poultrydom were never so promising as at present.



*C.H. Forman on his chicken farm at 538 Mission Street, 1913.
(Photograph is the property of SCPL.)*

The S.C. Poultry Supply Company commenced operations in 1912, a number of our local poultrymen taking stock. S.H. Campbell was chosen manager, which position he has held ever since the date mentioned. The business has rapidly increased. The warehouses facilities have been greatly enlarged. In the very large and constantly growing poultry food supply business other parties have a share, the trade having reached large proportions, aggregating between \$15,000 and \$20,000 per year.

After acceptably filling the office of president of the poultry association for twenty years or more, Phillip Hynes declined to fill the position which he had very efficiently, faithfully and acceptably filled, at the annual election, January, 1915, on account of his anticipated removal to Pasadena for an indefinite time. Howard Foster was elected to fill the office thus vacated. At this meeting the long-time serving secretary, H.C. Henney, one of the most popular members of the association, declined a re-election and A.W. Robinson was chosen to fill said office. Mr. Foster declining re-election at the annual election, 1916, Prof. Buron, of the high school, was chosen to fill the office, which position he very acceptably occupied until 1918, he then declining re-election. This popular gentleman has recently accepted a responsible position at Fresno, to which place he and his family moved several months ago.

The first two presidents of the Santa Cruz Poultry Association have departed this life for that beyond, after prolonged lives of activity in their several spheres of business activity, among other achievement, doing their utmost to further the

welfare of the association under consideration. Their memory will never fade in the minds and hearts of their life co-workers.

The history of the Santa Cruz Poultry Association ends with the spring of 1918, when it merged into the [Santa Cruz] County Farm Bureau center, of which agricultural organization it is, and will remain, an integral part. It has well served the purpose for which it was formed, having done, through its earnest, devoted members, men and women, very much to place local poultry culture on the firm footing it today enjoys.

Sources

- *This article appeared in the Santa Cruz Sentinel. April 18, 1919. p. 8.*

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