

Historically Speaking

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What Came First, the Chicken or the Egg?

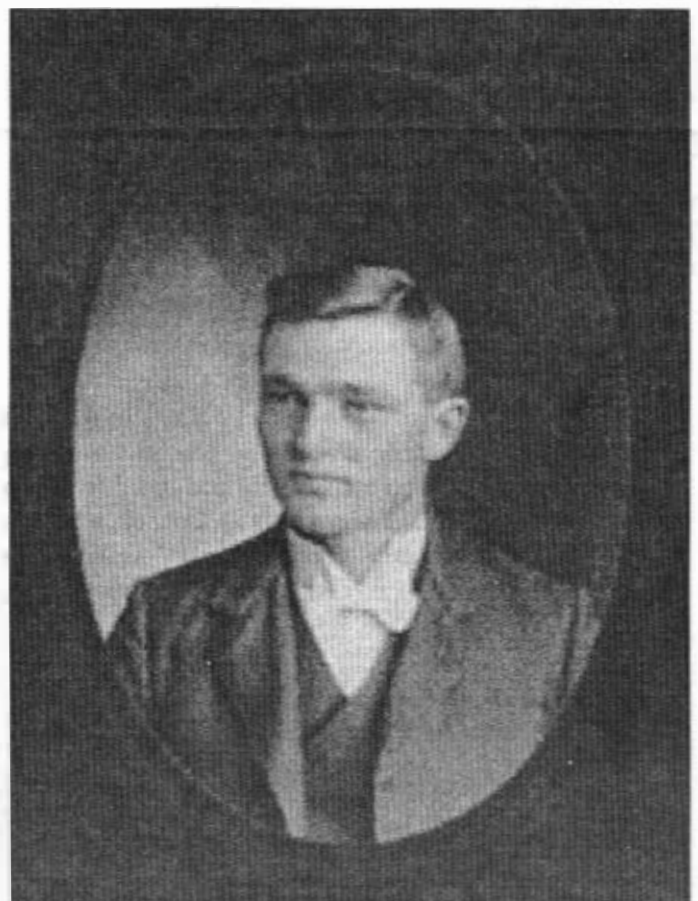
By Julie Spilinek

Old McDonald had a farm and on this farm he had some chickens, with a cheep, cheep here, a cheep, cheep there, cheep, cheep everywhere. During the mid 1800's to early 1900's almost every farmstead featured a small flock of hens, plus one or two roosters that were propagated by setting a few hens and allowing nature to finish the job of hatching and raising the chicks. These would provide the family with meat and eggs, plus a few extra with which to purchase or trade for other necessary items such as sugar, salt and other staples.

As more and more people moved into the urban areas, the demand for eggs and chicken increased. One enterprising Howard County couple, Paul and Mary Anderson, started a hatchery business that eventually became one of the most prominent in the state of Nebraska. They began breeding purebred poultry, set up incubators that made it possible to hatch a large number of eggs at one time and control the timing of the batches. This enterprise began in 1901 on their farm near Cushing and by 1922 had their business well established. By this time the raising of chickens became a source of cash for many farm families. They



Mary Hansen Anderson was born in Franklin, Pennsylvania in 1882 and died in St. Paul in 1965. She was one of only a handful of Nebraska business women during the early years.—Photo courtesy of Jane Anderson of St. Paul



Paul Anderson was born in Dannebrog in 1874 and died in St. Paul in 1955. His father, Mads, started Western Land Roller and was one of Howard County's early pioneers.—Photo courtesy of Jane Anderson of St. Paul

A Message From the President *Gary Peterson*

We welcome three new directors and they are Charles Govlik of St. Paul, and Larry Lukasiewicz and Kayleen Lukasiewicz of Farwell.

We wish to thank Jim Snow for all the things he was able to do for the society and for all the hard work he put in.

With spring coming there will be a lot of repairs and maintenance to be done during the summer.

We hope to see a lot of people visit this sum-

would purchase newly hatched chicks from a central source, as it was not economical for each family to invest in incubators.

On June 25, 1922, a fire destroyed the Cushing hatchery and the couple decided to rebuild in St. Paul. To insure against another fire the new hatchery was constructed of brick and provided space for offices, in addition to a large shipping area. It became known as the Loup Valley Hatchery. Since chicks can live for two or three days without food, it was possible to send them by truck, trail, even

the mail, to places as far away as Texas. The Andersons sent the first ever Nebraska shipment of 25 chicks via air mail during National Air Mail Week in 1925. Each winter a catalogue was sent out describing the various breeds available and almost immediately orders would arrive.

The hatchery was so successful the Andersons built a large brick home next to the hatchery in 1937. In 1938 they opened a store with a cold storage locker system. It sold poultry feeds and other supplies necessary for the successful poultry producer. They purchased cream, eggs, and poultry from local farmers. The eggs were candled and repackaged for sale to the residents in town. They also purchased and resold excess broilers and older hens. Paul Anderson died February 8, 1955, and his wife, Mary, closed the hatchery.

It was not unusual for a farm family to raise 300 to 500 chickens—roosters and/or broilers for eating and hens for their eggs. Most of these were purchased in February or March, allowing the broilers to be big enough to eat by late spring or early summer. The weather during February and March was still quite cold so it was necessary to provide heat to the little birds, thus the need for brooders, and other supplies. As a result, other businesses emerged or expanded due to this demand. Although most farmers grew the grain needed to feed their livestock and poultry, the more progressive farmers soon realized the need for the more specialized feed, especially for the young chicks. Special formulas were being introduced to increase egg production and enhance the growth of meat birds. Drug stores even banded remedies for certain diseases that could affect



Nebraska's first hatchery was started by the Andersons and was located near the village of Cushing in Howard County—Photo courtesy of Jane Anderson of St. Paul



The success of the business meant the Andersons could build one of the finest homes in rural Howard County (above). This home still stands northwest of Cushing. After a fire destroyed their first hatchery in Cushing, the Andersons would rebuild a new and expanded hatchery in St. Paul (below). It helped put the town on the map. The building still stands.—Photo courtesy of Jane Anderson of St. Paul



chickens. Many grocery stores would take eggs in trade; later they actually paid cash for the eggs. During the peak of production in the 1940's, 50's and early 60's trucks would be sent out to pick up eggs from area farmers. Most creameries also handled eggs.

The early fairbooks, published annually, included advertisements from area individuals or businesses that featured supplies related to the production of poultry. It's interesting to note that several cattle and hog breeders also sold a variety of chickens. The 1922 issue included Max



Mary Anderson looks over her pride and joy—her chicks.—Photo courtesy of Jane Anderson of St. Paul



Loup Valley Hatchery's chicks were shipped to every state in the U.S.—Photo courtesy of Jane Anderson of St. Paul

Adams, proprietor, of Dannebrog and Happy Hollow Stock Farm—Jens Christiansen, owner, also of Dannebrog. (Ads from a few of these are printed in this newsletter.)

Mrs. Mary Gregersen of Elba was the buying agent for the Fairmont Creamery Co., a dealer in eggs, cream and poultry. The company also sold baby chick feed and milk



Above is the cover from a box of chicks that were shipped via air mail from St. Paul's airfield. Chicks could survive up to three days without food or water and were sent by rail, truck, and even airplane all over the United States.—Photo courtesy of Jane Anderson of St. Paul

mash. Harold Macurdy of St. Paul managed the Mutual Produce Co. which also bought poultry eggs and cream. The 1931 fair book included the Elba Co-operative Creamery, who bought cream, eggs, and poultry; Frank Miller's Store of St. Libory was a dealer in cream and poultry; the Fairacres Stock Farm, A.A. Rohman, propri-



The entire Anderson clan contributed to the hatchery's success and growth. The above photograph is from the 1925 Loup Valley Hatchery catalog and shows members of the family preparing the chicks for shipment.—Photo courtesy of Jane Anderson of St. Paul

etor, sold Angus cattle and Wyandotte chickens; Eugene Griesler was a breeder of pure bred Hereford cattle and White Wyandottes.

The 1944 issue features Jensens Grocery of Boelus who advertised the “highest prices paid for cream, eggs and poultry,” also the Harding Cream Company of Dannebrog managed by Joe Mar Jensen. By the mid 1950’s,

some entrepreneurs had disappeared, but others appeared, such as Day’s Produce of Cotesfield, Jake’s Feed Store of St. Paul, and Farmer’s Union Cream Station of Dannebrog.

As mentioned earlier, by the mid 1960’s few farms were raising chickens for the purpose of selling the eggs. Some still produced broilers to sell to friends and neigh-

BALIMAN'S WHITE ROCK YARDS
ST. LIBORY, NEBR.

ACCREDITED FLOCKS TRAP-NESTED

Standard Bred and Fed to Lay.

STOCK and EGGS from PEDIGREED BIRDS

Hen No. 23 laid SIX eggs in three days in 1921 and FIVE eggs to three days in 1922.

Pullet No. 462, Pure Fitchel direct, laid 100 eggs in 100 days, and as this goes to print, is STILL producing an egg a day.

Buy your COCKERELS EARLY and Get First Choice
Breeding Pens Selected by State Poultry Exper. and Judge. Come and See our Flocks.

From the 1922 Howard County Fair Book

M. W. OAKESON
The party to see for you!

POLAND CHINA HOGS
AND
BUFF ORPINGTON CHICKENS

The laying strain and good bone type

When ever at Cushing stop and see them. Also see them exhibited at the Howard County Fair.

CUSHING, NEBR.

From the 1922 Howard County Fair Book, an interesting combination



Paul Anderson prepares to deliver another shipment of chicks. Their business kept the Union Pacific and Burlington lines in St. Paul very busy, as well as the highway.—Photo courtesy of Jane Anderson of St. Paul



Paul and Mary Anderson and their children helped the hatchery grow to become one of the largest in the United States. They are, left, Paul, Mary, Alice, Elmer, Hilma and Florence.—Photo courtesy of Jane Anderson of St. Paul

boys. These, too, were dwindling year by year until the end of the century when very few chickens could be seen on farm yards. The emergence of large poultry producers reduced the profitability of farm flocks. Stricter health regulations would not allow small grocery stores to sell farm eggs or poultry. Hatcheries became few and far apart. A few folks still raise chickens for their own use. Although I've been tempted to join the majority, no mass produced chicken can match the taste of a home grown one, or the eggs they lay. As I write this, I am contemplating my next flock.

Jane Anderson, granddaughter of Paul and Mary Anderson, graciously shared the information about the Loup Valley Hatchery.

The Wegner Medicated Poultry Roost




KILLS LICE AND MITES
A Money Maker for the Poultry Raiser
SEE IT AT THE FAIR

ALFRED M. JACOBSEN, State Distributor ROY NIELSEN, Sole Agent
Dunsmuir, Calif. Dannebrog, Neb.

From the 1922 Howard County Fair Book

BOELUS HATCHERY


Quality
Baby Chicks



Full line of
PURINA FEEDS

Everything in Poultry Supplies
Book your orders early. Reasonably Prices
and the best quality available
COME IN AND VISIT

BOELUS HATCHERY
Mr. and Mrs. Herman Fraassen, Owners
Boelus, Nebraska



From the 1955 Howard County Fair Book



The house that chickens built was completed in 1937 and was one of Central Nebraska's finest homes. Located on Howard Avenue, it still stands on the western edge of St. Paul.—Photo courtesy of Jane Anderson, St. Paul



The Andersons opened Loup Valley Hatchery Store in 1938, which had a cold storage locker system. Today it is the home of Twin Loups Quality Meats.—Photo courtesy of Jane Anderson of St. Paul

Need Information On County's Veterans

The Veterans Committee of the Howard County Historical Society would like to honor all the veterans of Howard County in the Veterans Books at the Museum.

We do have some entries from the Civil War up to the

present time, but many more are missing. Any veteran, or their family member, needs to fill out a simple form and this will be filed for interested future generations.

Forms are available by contacting any committee member (Jerry and Janet Hruza 308-754-4893, Ray Leth 308-754-4189 or Evelyn Dvorak 308-754-4977) or requesting a form by writing Howard County Historical Society, Box 1, St. Paul, NE 68873.



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