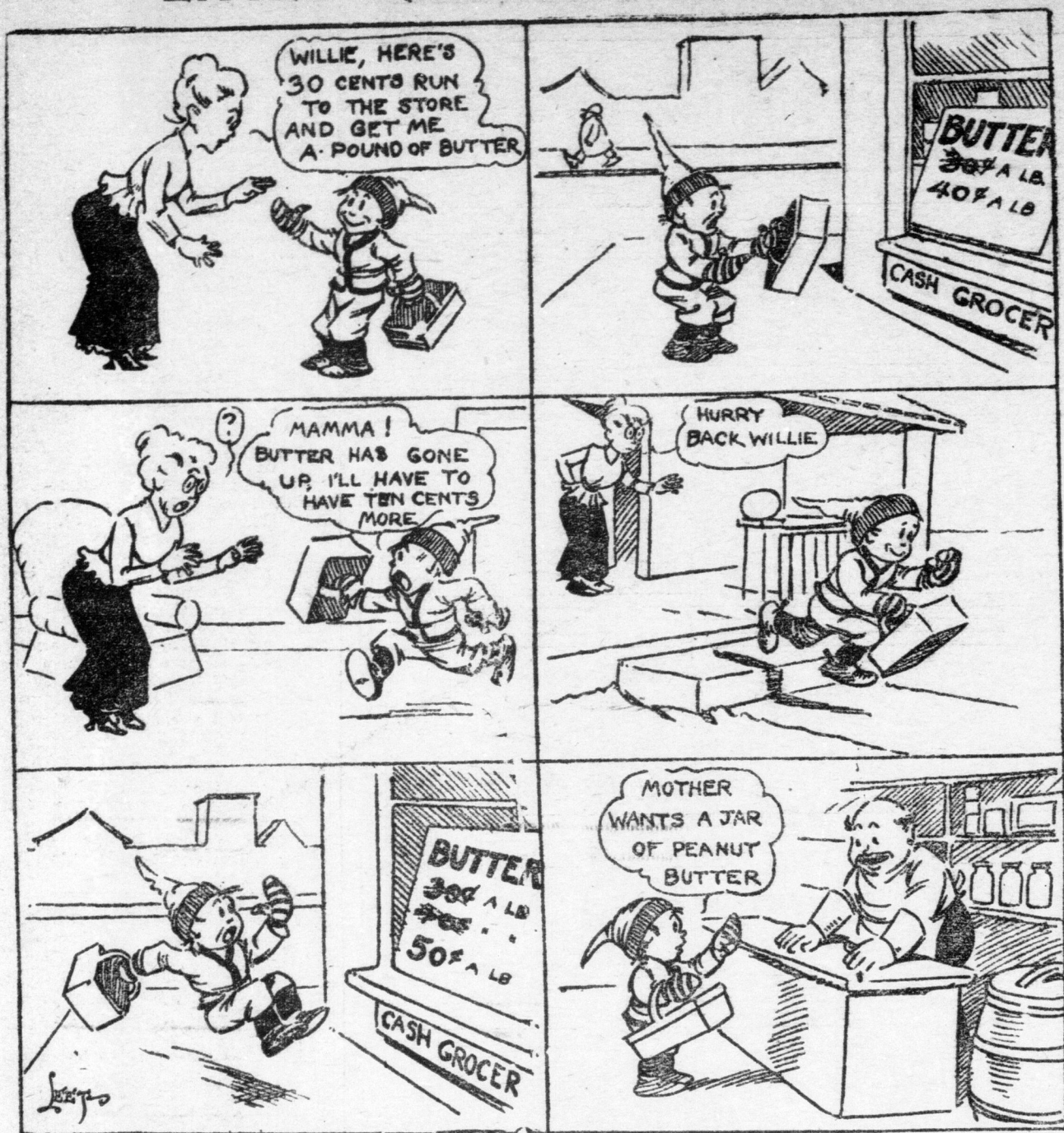


LITTLE IRRITATIONS OF LIFE



Five Hundred Hens in America's First Egg Laying Contest

Williamstown, Conn., Jan. 26.—Over at the Connecticut Agricultural College at Storrs, up among the Eastern Connecticut hills, 500 hens are laying eggs to the best of their ability. They are hens of the bluest blood in all poultry aristocracy, gathered together from various parts of the world for the first egg-laying contest ever held on the North American continent.

Australia started egg-laying contests; the Utility Poultry Clubs of England have had one or two and Germany has had one; it remained for the Connecticut college, the second institution to offer a course in poultry husbandry in this country, to have the first contest on the western hemisphere. Every breed recognized in the American poultry standard is represented among the competitors.

Hans Lobert, third baseman of the Philadelphia National League baseball team, enters a pen of White Plymouth Rocks from his Pittsburgh poultry farm. White Leghorns are entered in double the number of any other breed, and the runner up is the Barred Plymouth Rock, and there are as well Buff and Brown Leghorns, Buff, White, Columbian, Silver and Golden Wyandottes, Rhode Island Reds, White, Buff, Columbian and Partridge Plymouth Rocks, White and Buff Orpingtons, Black Minorcas, Anconas, American Dominiques, Black Langshans, Houdans, Cornish Indian Game and Buttercups. This last breed is not recognized in the American standard, but these birds are thoroughbreds, as every bird entered must be, under the rules.

From a dozen or fifteen states, from Canada and from England the birds have come. Judges, physicians, institutions, men, women, amateurs and professionals alike are represented. The Trappist monks have entered a pen of Rhode Island Reds from their agricultural institute in Quebec. Ellis Amos Ballard, who raises poultry near Philadelphia for the enjoyment of it, has in the pen of Houdans the striking looking black and white fowl, with a crest like the football player's hair of ten years ago.

The English entry was made by the Utility Poultry Clubs and the pen of White Leghorns comes from the Thos. Barron poultry farm at Catforth, England. The Sanatoria Poultry Yards at Swarthmore, Pa., and the Gaylord Farm Anti-Tuberculosis Sanatorium at

Wallingford, Conn., are represented one by White and the other by Brown Leghorns. Connecticut is, of course, largely represented, and so are Pennsylvania, New York and New Jersey; but the eastern poultry raisers are joined by their brethren from Michigan, where so many of the cold-storage eggs are laid and stored, and from Kentucky and West Virginia and Illinois.

Canada has four entries altogether, one other besides that of the Trappist fathers from Quebec Province and two from Ontario. White Leghorns, Brown Leghorns, Rhode Island Reds and Barred Plymouth Rocks show the catholicity of taste of the Canadian poultry raisers—not fanciers, since while many of the birds entered would do well in the showroom each is entered here simply for its egg-producing powers and not at all because it possesses any of the points which go to make up the breeder's ideal or any of the qualities best fitting it for the table.

Absolutely uniform conditions for every pullet entered mark the contest. They are housed in pens of five each in double houses accommodating two pens. Each entry consists of six birds and one from each pen is kept in reserve elsewhere than on the contest grounds. The fifty houses are identical in every particular and the hens are fed, watered and handled exactly alike and have the same 200 square feet apiece outside the houses to run in. There are no roosters in the pens and the contest, which is to be one year in duration, is strictly a hen party. Authorities say that the sterile egg is by far the better egg for any purpose to which eggs are put. It tastes better, keeps longer and is more nutritious. Each hen is there to attend strictly to the business of egg production, and they appear to be carrying the weight of that responsibility well; some of them lay two eggs a day to help out the average.

Yet what is the point of it all? The answer brings this egg-laying contest right home to every family in the United States.

Strange as it may seem, there is no standard for egg-producing poultry, and which-breed or what age, size or physical conformation may be looked to for the best and the most eggs are questions which today, after all the generations since the barnyard fowl first came out of Asia on its westward

way, are a matter of guesswork. Men know these things about milk, cattle and sheep and goats; in the case of all utility animals and farm stock men know to which strain of blood and which physical characteristics to look for the results they desire.

All but poultry; the man who would produce more or better eggs has no scientific basis upon which to work. He may try some system or simply trust to luck, but he must go it blind, hit or miss.

"They talk of forcing the hen to lay, of compelling the production of more eggs," said Professor Stoneburn, of the Connecticut College. "I wish I knew how to do it, but I don't, for it can't be done." Professor Stoneburn was the first pupil of Dr. Brewer to go to teaching poultry husbandry, and Dr. Brewer is the father of that study in this country.

This contest will furnish a wealth of data on which to base a standard. When it is over the utility poultryman will have facts to work on as to which breed is the best egg producer and what characteristics in the individual hen make for the best eggs and the most of them. Besides that, there will go out from this contest at the end of next October, and be distributed far and wide, 500 hens about which every poultryman can be known of any application to this subject of egg production is known, and from those of the highest egg-producing type will be bred other generations of fowls with an efficiency in this line which in ten years should very materially increase the number of eggs laid in the United States and this should very materially decrease the cost to the consumer.

The ideal of the poultryman is 200 eggs a year from each hen. It is realized only in occasional cases. The actual average yield of the 370,000,000 hens in this country is somewhere about 75 eggs a year for each hen. The hen which lays 120 eggs in twelve months is a mighty good hen. It pays its owner a profit. The hens kept for egg production alone average nowhere near that. It is hoped they can be brought to average that and better by scientific methods based on the data furnished by this contest.

There is its human interest. Suppose the average of eggs to the hen were raised to 85 or 90 or even 100. As the average went up the price would

go down, for the number of hens will increase with the population. Then look at the financial side of it in distinction from the economic. If the average number of eggs was raised by one egg, that would mean a total of \$9,250,000 worth of eggs at 30 cents a dozen, below which fresh eggs do not fall these days. So that the prospect of determining how scientifically to compel the American hen to do her duty has tremendous possibilities.

The advisory board, which has planned the contest and made the rules and regulations and is now supervising it includes George A. McDevitt and F. V. L. Turner, of the Philadelphia North American; Dr. A. A. Brigham, of the South Dakota School of Agriculture; Professor Homer Jackson, of Pennsylvania State College, and Professor H. F. Stoneburn, of the Connecticut Agricultural College, representing the science of poultry husbandry; Professor Thomas F. McGrew, of the International Correspondence Schools, Scranton, representing the poultry fanciers who raise thoroughbreds; Dr. Prince T. Woods, managing editor of the American Poultry Journal of Chicago, and Dr. Nathan N. Sanborn, editor of the American Poultry Advocate of Syracuse, N. Y., who represent the poultry journals and the practical poultrymen, and Professor F. Clifford, of Pennsylvania College, who is the Canadian representative on the board.

With this board of directors settled upon the next problem was where to hold a contest of this importance and it was only after long consideration that the Connecticut College was chosen. The contest is not under the immediate direction of the college as such. Working with the college under state and federal patronage is the Storrs Agricultural Experiment Station, on the staff of which Professor Stoneburn is poultry husbandman, and the egg-laying contest is under its management, with Professor Stoneburn in charge.

Professor Stoneburn was trained for the insurance business, and had been in it for some time in Philadelphia and Newark when his eyes went back on him and he sought an outdoor life, running a farm in northern New York. His strength and determination overcame his ignorance of farming and pulled him through.

Gradually it made its way into his consciousness that what paid him his croft was his poultry—he was a book-keeper and his books showed this one by degrees he became a poultryman; but he didn't know anything about poultry. He went to the Rhode Island State College to learn something about it from Dr. Brigham, who offered the first courses in it in this country. A long and severe illness taxed his resources and resulted in the sale of his interest in the New York State farm and he became Dr. Brigham's assistant, and finally in 1902 he took the chair of poultry husbandry at Storrs.

The scene of the egg-laying contest is that of a sunny hillside facing the south is a sight really worth seeing. The entire plant is new and was provided for this affair. Fifty poultry houses of the most modern sort stand in four long rows inside a heavy eight-foot wire fence, with gates at convenient points. Each row is fenced off from the others, and the same wire fencing is used for the yards in the foot of the hill, with gates at convenient points. Each row is fenced off from the others, and the same wire fencing is used for the yards in the foot of the hill, with gates at convenient points. Each row is fenced off from the others, and the same wire fencing is used for the yards in the foot of the hill, with gates at convenient points.

Each house is of wood, 12 feet square, and with a partition through the middle, so as to accommodate each two pens of birds. A yard 20 by 50 feet, with 200 square feet of space for each pen, is attached to each side. Enough of the front, sides and partition are of wire netting to permit perfect ventilation and easy access for sunshine all day long, and frames covered with cotton cloth can be let down to protect the hens from the elements while preserving good ventilation. Everything in them is movable, and they are on skids.

Trap nests are used of Professor Stoneburn's own model. They are of wood, as is all the construction, and when the hen goes in a trigger is sprung which locks the swinging front down so that she cannot get out until released. The attendants have a regular schedule of visits. When a hen has laid an egg the number on her leg band is read, and she is released. Then the attendants mark on the egg the bird's number and the pen number, the latter with a rubber stamp, and makes the proper record on the pen record sheet hanging on the wall.

This record sheet is renewed weekly and contains blanks for recording everything about the pen and its occupants. The eggs go to the office of the contest, where loose leaf records tell all about them. Each egg is weighed, and its weight recorded. A two-ounce egg is the proper egg, and these are weighed in hundreds of a pound. Any egg not weighing 12½ pounds is culled out, but there are few culs. Most dozens weigh 26 ounces. The eggs are put up in dozens in a patent carrier and crated and shipped to Philadelphia. The carriers are marked to show that these are international con-

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test eggs. A firm there pays 45 cents a dozen for them through the year.

So that the contest will really not cost anybody anything. Indeed, there is provision in the rules for a pro rata distribution of any money remaining at its end among the owners of the hens. A state appropriation pays for the new plant, which the college and experiment station would have had to have anyway.

While these records will show much as to the different breeds and will give the owner facts upon which to work in breeding and otherwise when he shall have received his birds back, it is from the weekly weight records of the birds and the exhaustive series of physical measurements which are being taken as the contest progresses and the incidental facts noted on the condition records about individual birds that Professor Stoneburn and the experiment station expect to glean more of the data which will show the true egg type of hen as certainly as the dairy type of cow is known.

The pens are fed on the dry mash system, for the colleges have come to believe that the best. Several of the owners of contesting birds have retained at home pens of them as nearly identical as possible with those sent to Storrs and are trying different systems of feeding on them for the twelve months to see whether they may make discoveries or not.

In each house are water pans, cups of grit and of shell and for green feed a big beet is hung up. The grain is fed the pullets from an ingenious machine which drops kernels into the corn husk litter on the floor to be scratched for when a hen pecks at a wire-net cylinder filled with grain and thus turns the rod to which it is attached.

It was in October that the birds began arriving at Storrs and the contest started on Wednesday, Nov. 1. At present the English hen is well in the lead, it being no unusual thing for its White Leghorns to lay an egg a day apiece and keep it up for days at a time. These White Leghorns are of a different type from the United States standard. They seem smaller, because their hushers are sleekly on the body, but they are broad and chunky and probably weigh more than the apparently larger American bird.

Some of the pens have one or two White Leghorns and one or two of the owners send chicks hatched too early and forced a little fast. Of course they will come out of this and later lay eggs, but they will find it hard work to overcome the handicap.

There are prizes of every conceivable class, and they will come in for something in the list. It includes cups for

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Did You Ever Play Lawn Tennis Wearing Skates? They Do in New York, Where Idea Is Popular

New York, Jan. 26.—Gleiding over the ice of the flooded tennis courts of the Hamilton Grange Lawn Tennis Club, members of the organization play hockey, baseball and tennis daily.

ball the players have been scratched on the ice and in their efforts to play the game, but adding to the hilarity. The tennis rink will be continued while the ice-making weather continues. It is the hit of the winter.

Several times players, trying to start a rally, have carried away a net, delaying the game, but adding to the hilarity. The tennis rink will be continued while the ice-making weather continues. It is the hit of the winter.



ANNE HAMILTON AND ARNOLD SAYRE; MISS MARY HAMILTON.