

The poultry industry in Livermore was not confined to Verde Farm. In 1910 and 1911, a number of breeder shows sprang up around the area—Stockton, Hayward, Oakland, Petaluma, and in February 1912, in Livermore. The Stockton show in November 1911 had so many fine entries from Livermore that the exhibited birds were worth between \$8,000 and \$10,000. Wells Fargo refused to ship them in the ordinary way, instead sending them in a special railroad car. W.H. Bissell won a number of prizes for his white, buff, and black Orpingtons. Captain J.H. Brown, besides several awards for his white Leghorns, won a silver cup for best display.

Captain Brown built his home, called Saxonhurst, a mile south of Livermore. He came here about 1909 after his retirement from a life at sea. He set up his business, the Standard Single Comb Leghorn Farm and, with the help of J.W. Neuman, constructed a model series of buildings, including an incubator house. In 1911 they had thirteen yards, each with its own roosting house and dusting shed. From January to the end of May in that year, they had sent 15,000 eggs through the incubator and sold 40,000 non-fertilized eggs. W.H. Bissell bought a small farm of 25 acres, which included a "pretty little grove with twin oaks in the foreground" in 1909. He named it "Twin Oaks." The farm

Do You Remember?

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More Peep Peeps, Cluck Clucks

was near what are now the soccer fields in Independence Park at the south end of Holmes Street. In the 1920s it became the home of pugilist Max Baer and his family, who changed it into a pig farm.

Livermore's gravelly soil with its good drainage and plenty of sunshine are two advantages for chicken farmers. In 1937 our community had between 500 and 600 commercial flocks, which in 1936 had produced between 15,000 and 20,000 cases of eggs. Robert W. Cook came from Castro Valley to run a chicken farm using Barred Rock hens on East Avenue. According to the *Herald*, "Reports are that Cook plans to specialize in development of breeding stock. He will probably have a flock of 2,500 hens at the start of his operations." He shipped chicks to New York and even to Guam in 1946. One night a dog invaded his premises and killed 48 of Cook's prize thoroughbred chickens.

Last week I wrote about the Poultry Producers of Central California, a cooperative that operated what

is now the Livermore Feed and Farm Supply. Another cooperative, the Hayward Poultry Producers, bought the Livermore Feed and Seed at 1327 Railroad Avenue near L Street from Edward A. Collier Jr. and Rollo D. Jackson in 1949. The Hayward Poultry Producers building, valued at \$45,000, burned down completely on the evening of October 12, 1950. The razed building was originally a warehouse for the Hetch Hetchy project.

After World War II, the Veterans' Bureau and the California Bureau of Agricultural Education set up the Veterans' Institutional On-Farm Training program. Veterans who were engaged in full-time farming could apply for the program, which included night-school classes at their local high school and supervision of their farming operation by the instructor. Veterans who qualified could receive monthly subsistence pay up to \$97.50. In 1949 there were 19 veterans enrolled at Livermore; 16 of them were developing poultry farms, according to the *Nulaid*

News, monthly publication of the Poultry Producers of Central California.

Poultrymen Albert Knapple and Harold Bruns started their chicken operation in Livermore in 1945.

Their egg house had concrete walls eight inches thick and used five inches of commercial insulating material in the roof. An evaporative cooler kept the temperature below 70 degrees in the hottest weather. They collected eggs three times a day. They had a setback in 1948, however, when they lost about 600 chicks from Newcastle Disease, a viral infestation.

Despite superstition, Burton Duke of Hayward and Edwin Van Ormer of Castro Valley, decided to take their chances and opened their new business, the Livermore Hatchery and Feed store, on Friday, the March 13, 1953. The store was at 116 North L Street, the building currently used by the Buenas Vidas Youth Ranch Thrift Store. Duke and Ormer did not raise chickens for their eggs or their breeding. They sold their chicks to poultrymen who raised fryers, chickens for eating. Their hatchery could hatch up to 25,000 chicks a week. They carried the Ralston-Purina checkerboard brands of feed. To promote fryer production in Livermore, they built a model plant at Tesla and Cross Roads in 1955. Duke showed the new plant to reporters and emphasized the importance of "absolute cleanliness" in the operation as well as



Burt Duke of Livermore Hatchery and Feed shows students how the hatchery works.

good air circulation. Not long after demonstrating the plant to the public, it was sold. Duke and Ormer expanded their feed stock to feed for other animals, and from that decision, it was a simple change to having various pets for sale—they carried parakeets, tropical fish, hamsters, and guinea pigs. They began to sell nursery supplies as well and soon added a nursery at their store. They changed the store's name to the Chequerstor. After 17 years, they lost

their lease on L Street. The Van Ormers retired, and Burt and his wife, Connie, opened a new business—Duke, Etc. which no longer had anything to do with chickens.

I have been researching chickens for four weeks, so if you notice a somewhat overweight woman with white flyaway hair hurrying by in the library as she says "cluck, cluck," it's probably me.

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