

Photo of the Month

The Poultry Industry



Belle Blackburn and child feeding chickens, Second and Elm in Rogers, 1902. (Negative #N008381)

At the turn of the century, apples were the major local crop. When disease and pestilence began to plague area orchards in the 1920s, a new source of farm income was needed.

Area farmers had always kept poultry for family consumption or local markets. When Edith Glover began a poultry business around 1921, her profits so impressed her father that he became the first large-scale broiler producer in the county. Other farmers soon followed and eggs and chickens became the major "crop" of Benton County.

Before World War II, farmers raised small flocks, turning the birds out to range and feeding and watering them by hand. The birds were then hauled to St. Louis or Chicago by truck for processing.

Modern integrated companies developed after World War II. Poultry growing grew in scale and became highly mechanized. By the 1980s marketable birds were turned out in six weeks instead of the sixteen weeks necessary in 1930. Local companies built their own processing plants and became industry leaders.