

Photo of the Month

Vick Will



Willhill Ranch, c.1940
Rogers, Arkansas



Neg. # 08787

Vick Will, a broiler producer from Missouri, moved to Rogers in 1940. Will opened the Willhill Ranch in 1941 and began raising Arkansas Broilers. The Willhill Ranch was an incredibly successful poultry operation. Taking advantage of electricity that came to Rogers shortly before WWII, Willhill Ranch was the most modern poultry facility in the area at that time. During the war, Willhill Ranch produced 78,000 birds per cycle and ran four cycles per year. Heating his 250-ft-long chicken houses with coal, Will needed a large crew of employees to staff his labor intensive operation. To aid in this process of staffing the ranch, Will had eight cottages built on the property to serve as living quarters for the local men who worked for him. While the actual Ranch was located several miles east of town, Willhill's main office was located at the Harris Hotel in downtown Rogers.

In addition to his Willhill Ranch, Will purchased the Vickwill Ranch in 1945, where he intended to raise turkeys. Quickly realizing that turkeys were not as profitable or familiar to him, he replaced the turkeys with laying hens, which he used to supply the chicks for his main ranch. In 1949, Will changed the landscape of poultry production in NWA by being the first producer to import Charles Vantress' new Vantress Cross, which had won the 1948 Chicken of Tomorrow contest. Using the Vantress Cross, Will won the 1949 AR Chicken of Tomorrow contest. Soon, many local farmers began raising Vantress Crosses. In 1955, Will sold his operation to local competitor Charles Garret of Garrett Poultry and accepted a position working with the legendary poultry breeder Charles Vantress at his new facility in Georgia. Will's work with Vantress led to

the creation of the Cobb-Vantress Chicken in 1961.