

**THE AMERICAN BREEDS OF POULTRY,  
THEIR ORIGIN, HISTORY OF THEIR  
DEVELOPMENT, THE  
WORK OF CONSTRUCTIVE BREEDERS  
AND HOW TO MATE EACH OF THE  
VARIETIES FOR BEST RESULTS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649046164

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Cover @ 2017

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PUBLISHED BY  
AMERICAN POULTRY JOURNAL  
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

1921

70 1911  
AUG 10 1911

SF427  
P6

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JAS. W. BELL & CO  
CHICAGO, ILL.

Main Lib.  
Agric. Dept. Nutrition Unit.

## PREFACE

The purpose of this book is to present an authentic history of the origin and development of the American breeds of domesticated fowls and set forth the proper matings to be made in each of the varieties.

The writer also has undertaken to explain the widespread popularity which the American breeds today enjoy, by setting forth the reasons why this type of fowl is the most useful and productive. Moreover, it has been his aim to point out why a further extension of their breeding is both practicable and desirable.

With a firm economic foundation upon which to build, the next step has been to show the permanence of the position occupied by constructive breeders of these fowls and the vital relation that their breeding yards bear to the poultry industry as a whole.

It seems highly desirable to make plain this important relationship between the breeder and the national industry of producing poultry meat and eggs for human consumption, that the true dignity of the breeder's craft may be fully understood and appreciated, and that the beginner may feel justified in devoting the time necessary for a thorough study of the principles which underlie the breeder's work.

The title of this book was suggested by James W. Bell, publisher of the American Poultry Journal, and its production has been made possible by him. More than a year has now elapsed since the work was started. As I have proceeded in writing the manuscript the horizon at times has seemed to broaden and recede. However, the leisure necessary for research and study has been granted cheerfully, and the expense of travel to gather certain details on history and mating has been met as cheerfully. Therefore, may I not in the words of Swinburne say to J. W. B.:

"Take, since you bade it should bear,  
These, of the seed of your sowing—  
Blossom or berry or weed,  
Sweet though they be not, or fair,  
That the dew of your word kept growing,  
Sweet at least was the seed."

I desire to acknowledge with appreciation the suggestions of my friend W. H. Smith, assistant professor of animal husbandry, University of Illinois; the freely given experience of numerous successful breeders, each of whom is credited in the text; and the help and inspiration gained from Eugene Davenport's "Principles of Breeding."

FRANK L. PLATT.

## The American Breeds

<i>Breed</i>	<i>Variety</i>
PLYMOUTH ROCK . . . . .	{ Barred White Buff Silver Penciled Partridge Columbian
WYANDOTTE . . . . .	{ Silver Golden White Buff Black Partridge Silver Penciled Columbian
RHODE ISLAND REDS . . . . .	{ Single Comb Rose Comb
BUCKEYES . . . . .	Buckeyes
DOMINIQUES . . . . .	Dominiques
JAVAS . . . . .	{ Black Mottled

Blue Plymouth Rocks, Rhode Island Whites and Black Giants are new varieties which also are treated in the text.



## CHAPTER I

### ORIGIN OF THE AMERICAN BREEDS

Origin of the fowl—Introduction of the fowl to Europe—Important developments of fowls in eastern Asia—Introduction of the Asiatic type to America—Crossbreeding that led to the production of the American breeds—Appearance of the Plymouth Rock, Wyandotte and Rhode Island Red

The American breeds are the production of poultry breeders, often called fanciers. Their history is modern. If the Dominique and Java are excepted, it may be said that the other four breeds which comprise the American class—namely, the Plymouth Rock, Wyandotte, Rhode Island Red and Buckeye—have been developed and introduced since the close of the Civil War. Thus, within the lifetime of men still living, American breeders have done what nature had not done in all the epochs of history. They have originated a new economic type of fowl and given to the world the Plymouth Rock, the Wyandotte and the Rhode Island Red.

This remarkable achievement came about not as the result of the creation or sudden appearance of totally new features, but rather as a result of the new breeds inheriting qualities and characteristics which were drawn from already existing foundation stock.

† The early history of the modern American breeds shows them to have originated from the crossbreeding of three distinct and distantly related types of fowl. One type, which was the home stock, had been carried to the eastern United States by the early settlers from England and western Europe. The other types were imported to America from southeastern Asia and from China. An account of these Old World groups of fowls should prove an instructive preface to the rise and development of the American breeds.

**Origin of the fowl.** The original wild stock from which the old domesticated races descended is believed to have had its origin in Asia. That continent has the largest land area, the most varied climate and food supply, and, in fact, the general aspects of nature are the most diversified in the great geographical division of the earth known as Asia.

Inhabiting the primeval jungles of India and the Malayan countries there may be found even to this day a little wild fowl, *Gallus bankiva*. Charles Darwin, the great English naturalist, accepted this jungle fowl as the parent source of all the breeds of domesticated chickens. It is a black-red colored variety, similar to the Brown Leghorn, but much smaller than the Leghorn. The traveler to that far country who spends a night on a clearing, with the lofty forests

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and dense thickets round about, may awaken in the morning to hear the crowing of these cocks, and during the day he may hear the cackling of wild hens and the peeping of their chicks.

One who has had this experience has remarked on how strange it was to hear rural sounds of civilization and domestication in the vast solitude of the jungle. He has told of being on a piece of cultivated land near the haunts of the wild fowl, after the crops had been cut, and seeing twenty or thirty of the birds advancing boldly into the open in twos and threes. But no game is more difficult to reach, and before the stealthiest human foot could approach they had taken wing like quails and found covert in the recesses and dense foliage of the jungle.

It is said that the natives catch the wild fowls by stretching a rope across where the birds are believed to walk; and tied to the rope are



*Gallus Bankiva*, or Jungle Fowl of India, as Painted by Louis A. Stahmer, From Models in the Field Museum, Chicago.

strong hair nooses into which the birds are run; or, if the rope is laid on the ground, the birds may step into the nooses, which tighten and hold them.

**Jungle fowls in domestication.** The bankiva is hardy when confined in captivity, and it withstands climatic changes to good advantage when transported from its native haunts—offering a basis for that adaptability of fowls to the wide range of conditions around the

world to which they have been subjected. The young birds become tame when reared in confinement. This is an interesting trait of this wild species, because an adaptability to domestication seems to be one of the rarest qualities possessed by animals. The pheasant, for instance, is truly wild, and there is an indescribable timidity about it that will not permit it willingly to accept the company of man, his care and protection in exchange for its own life in the wild. It has been stated that the number of different kinds of animals which man actually has domesticated, in the "thousands of years capturing, subduing and taming hundreds of different species of all classes," does not amount to fifty.

There are three other varieties of wild *Galli*, in addition to the bankiva, and all bear some resemblance to the common domestic fowl. The late Homer Davenport had all four kinds on his farm at Morris Plains, New Jersey. He found the gray and fork-tailed varieties particularly wild, and it was impossible to handle them to any extent. "They never become tame, and grow restless, however large their aviaries may be," he wrote. Undoubtedly the four varieties are allied somewhat closely, for they have been known to cross between themselves and produce fertile offspring. The bankiva, however, is known to cross with domestic stock and produce offspring that is fertile.

Darwin rejected all of the varieties, except the bankiva, as probable progenitors of the domestic fowl, because of certain dissimilarities. However, there was some lingering doubt in the mind of the old naturalist, for he wrote: "Finally, we have not such good evidence with fowls as with pigeons, of all breeds having descended from a single primitive type." Later investigation, including the experiment commenced in 1903 by the Ceylon Poultry Club to determine the possibility of the Ceylon jungle fowl, or *Gallus stanleyii*, having been one of the varieties from which domestic poultry had its origin, resulted in showing in a limited way that when the *G. stanleyii* is bred to domestic fowls, the hybrids are not altogether sterile when bred between themselves. This is of interest, for it suggests the possibilities of some other wild species, of which no trace now remains, having influenced the early domestic fowl. History on this matter is very incomplete.

**Introduction of the fowl to Europe.** While the theory has been advanced that the bankiva is a feral race—which is to say, tame stock that has escaped into the wild, like the wild horses that roamed over the western plains which were descendants of horses brought to America by the Spanish invaders—the more general opinion prevails that the bankiva was the progenitor of the early European stock. The sculptured Lycian marbles now in the British Museum portray a type that is representative of the jungle fowl. The bankiva is the diminutive prototype of the Black-Red Game of the old English fighting stock, and also resembles the Brown Leghorn, an Italian breed.