

The following article was obtained by CFI member Shelly Oswald of Pennsylvania through research. Credit goes to the Glenbow Museum of Alberta for preserving the original draft of the document which is retyped and edited below. Thank you, Shelly, for your diligent work and perseverance! The article was written in about 1935 by Percival J. Timms, a leading Canadian poultry judge of the time. Unfortunately, Dr. Wilkinson passed away in 1936 before he could complete his work on a number of other varieties.

A new variety of poultry to be known as Partridge Chanteclers (formerly Partridge Albertans) originated by Dr. J.E. Wilkinson of Edmonton, Alberta, is to be admitted to the American Standard of Perfection. The new revision of the Standard which should be out in 1936 or 1937 will contain full particulars of this new variety which is to be classed with the American varieties. In order to have a breed or variety admitted to the Standard, certain principles have to be recognized, the first one being that a breed must have a distinctive breed character that can be identified readily by at least one conspicuous or a combination of conspicuous characters not possessed in the same combination of any other breed.

In the world of poultry certain breeds such as Plymouth Rocks, Wyandottes and Rhode Island Reds, etc., are known as Americans; Orpingtons, Cornish, Dorkings, etc., are known as English; Leghorns, Minorcas, Spanish, etc., are known as Mediterranean, and so on, the reason being the above specific varieties were bred and originated in those particular sections of the world. It may not generally be known that about 16 years ago a breed called Chantecler was originated in Canada by Brother of Wilford (sic) of Oka College, La Trappe, Quebec. Brother Wilford had been experimenting for a number of years previously with various crosses before obtaining his objective. In his experiment the following varieties were used: White Wyandotte, Rhode Island Reds, Dark Cornish, White Leghorns and White Plymouth Rocks.

This breed differs somewhat in type from the other varieties recognized as American breeds today, and is also very distinct in head points, the comb being very small and of cushion shape with a smooth surface; the wattles are also very small. The color of this first breed of Chantecler is white with yellow legs and beaks, and the birds lay a light brownish colored egg. About the time the Chantecler was being developed a dentist in Edmonton by the name of Dr. J.E. Wilkinson, a most ardent poultry fancier and enthusiast was puzzling his brain in order to find a breed suitable to Canada, more particularly to Western Canada where the climate sometimes gets very cold.

The farmers on the Western plains usually lost a number of their poultry in the winter time with badly frozen combs and wattles. Dr. Wilkinson had been particularly impressed with this in his travels in various parts of Alberta, and it was forcibly brought to his attention at the Edmonton show in 1914 when it was very cold. To use his words, he said, "it was a cruel spectacle to see the swollen frozen wattles and combs of really fine specimens."

He stated farmers and city fanciers alike had suffered heavy losses from frozen combs, wattles and feet. Birds under these conditions naturally fall off in production, and the male birds when drinking water get their wattles severely frozen, making them uncomfortable and sick. He estimated aggregate losses from such causes at several hundred thousands of dollars each year in the West.

With this situation before him, the Doctor evidently considered there was need of a new variety which could be kept profitably in the face of these conditions. He started immediately to produce a breed possessing pre-conceived characteristics such as rudimentary combs, small wattles, abundance of feathers, improved breast and thighs making them fit for table use, combined with a vigorous constitution and good egg production. His earlier efforts were directed in selecting rose comb varieties, but he did not commence crossing the varieties until 1919. The first matings were between Partridge Cochins and Partridge Wyandottes, and one between Dark Cornish and Partridge Wyandottes. The following year these crosses were mated one to the other, and several desired specimens resulted. Further matings were carried on with an addition of a Rose Comb Brown Leghorn, and at present the breed content is represented by Partridge Wyandotte (4), Dark Cornish (2), Partridge Cochin and Rose Comb Brown Leghorn (1 each). The breed is kept up to standard by outcrossing, for which he maintains two dominating strains and for the past 13 years the breed has been improved and known as Partridge Albertans, and is now being bred in every province of Canada with the exception of New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island. The largest number of breeders are to be found in Alberta, particularly in the Edmonton district where the breed is becoming increasingly popular.

At the Edmonton Winter Show some 4 or 5 years ago this breed was the largest class in the show. They have also been continuous winners at the Royal Show in Toronto for the past 10 years, and were exhibited at the World's Poultry Congress at Ottawa in 1927, and again another exhibit was exhibited at the World's Poultry Congress in London, England in 1930. Much

favorable comment from the overseas breeders was received after this Congress. Mr. Ayscough H. Thompson, writing in an English paper made the following comment: "The Albertans are a large breed, the cock looking to weigh quite 10 lbs., with substance in every direction. The Partridge Albertan is a breed I hope to hear more from over here, feeling sure it is one which would do well in exposed situations. The appearance of both sexes is certainly in their favor, being handsome in the extreme, with the stern Malay head surmounting the massive body and beautiful plumage. If their useful qualities are equal to their appearance, their future as a breed is assured."

Since that time they have been exhibited at most of the leading shows in Alberta and have definitely improved so much that at the Royal Show in Toronto, November 1934, where 8 or 9 breeders had over 30 birds in competition a Committee of Judges met on behalf of the American Poultry Association to inspect this new breed to ascertain if they were worthy of being admitted to the American Standard of Perfection. After giving them a very thorough inspection the Committee referred their findings to the American Poultry Association and after very careful consideration in accordance with the principles adopted by the Association the Secretary, Mr. E.B. Campbell reported to Dr. Wilkinson that the Examining Committee had found the breed of Albertans originated by him was of the Chantecler type and could qualify as Partridge Chanteclers. This was acceptable to the originator and Dr. Wilkinson has just received a further letter from the American Poultry Association stating they have complied with all the requirements of the constitution, the Committee has recommended they be admitted to the Standard of Perfection as Partridge Chanteclers, and assuring the originator of the fullest cooperation on the part of the American Poultry Association - which is the highest authority on the American continent in poultry matters.

Dr. Wilkinson in developing the new variety had many obstacles and disappointments to overcome. Many anxious weeks were spent during breeding season wondering what certain matings would produce and also keeping close watch on the broody hens during the incubation period. He also had both constructive and objectionable criticism concerning his new variety. When he told them he wanted a good sized bird that would be fit for the table, he was told to raise turkeys instead by one breeder; another breeder who kept Barred Rocks alluded to these Albertans as "those mongrels." However through thick and thin the Doctor has now reached his objective and is to be heartily congratulated on the acceptance of this new variety to the American Standard of Perfection. It brings honor to the West to have the efforts of one of its pioneers prevail in such a fine undertaking, and the thanks of the Poultry Association and Poultry Departments of Governments not only of Alberta, but of the three Prairie Provinces especially, are due the Doctor for achievement which no doubt will prove of untold value to the Poultry industry of the West, as this variety is not only beautiful but useful and is most suitable for the Western plains.

A number of trap nest records have been kept and one pullet in particular at the close of 52 weeks on September 16, 1934 in her pullet year had laid 238 eggs, and no doubt when this breed is bred more universally we shall hear of them making records at the Experimental Laying Stations. From information just received birds of this variety have been shipped to other parts of the world. A shipment of 12 pullets and 2 cockerels left Edmonton this month for England to a poultry breeder at Thames Dutton and no doubt they will give a good account of themselves. This shipment is being followed with keen interest by Dr. Wilkinson and other breeders of this variety.

In comparison with the White Chantecler the Partridge is a little heavier, weighting as follows:

Cock - 10 lbs; Cockerel 8 1/2 lbs; Hen 7 1/2 lbs; and Pullet 6 1/2 lbs.

This is approximately about 1 lb. a bird more than the White. Both the Partridge and White Chantecler can be said to be of a hardy type and in general a utility bird.

Dr. Wilkinson has also developed a number of Buff Albertans. These have been shown at a few shows in the West and at the Royal Show. However he considers that this variety requires a little more time before he can with confidence place them on the market in the advanced stage of perfection he desires to attain. He has also produced specimens of Red, Black and Columbian varieties and it is hoped that he will be able to bring the Blacks to the forefront in the near future as it is believed this will prove a popular variety.

P.J. Timms, one of Alberta's leading poultry judges and the writer of this article has judged many classes of Partridge Albertans, and he considers this breed has improved wonderfully during the past 6 or 7 years. He states that within a few more years he expects to see the Partridge pencilling on the females to equal some of the best Partridge Wyandottes and Rocks now shown. Mr. Timms, who was Secretary of the Alberta Provincial Poultry Association for 15 years, was the first to bring to the attention of the Alberta Government the possibility of Alberta Poultry winning prizes against the best of stock exhibited by poultry breeders in the Dominion at the Royal Show.