

# SPEEDING UP THE AMERICAN HEN

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Photographs by the AUTHOR

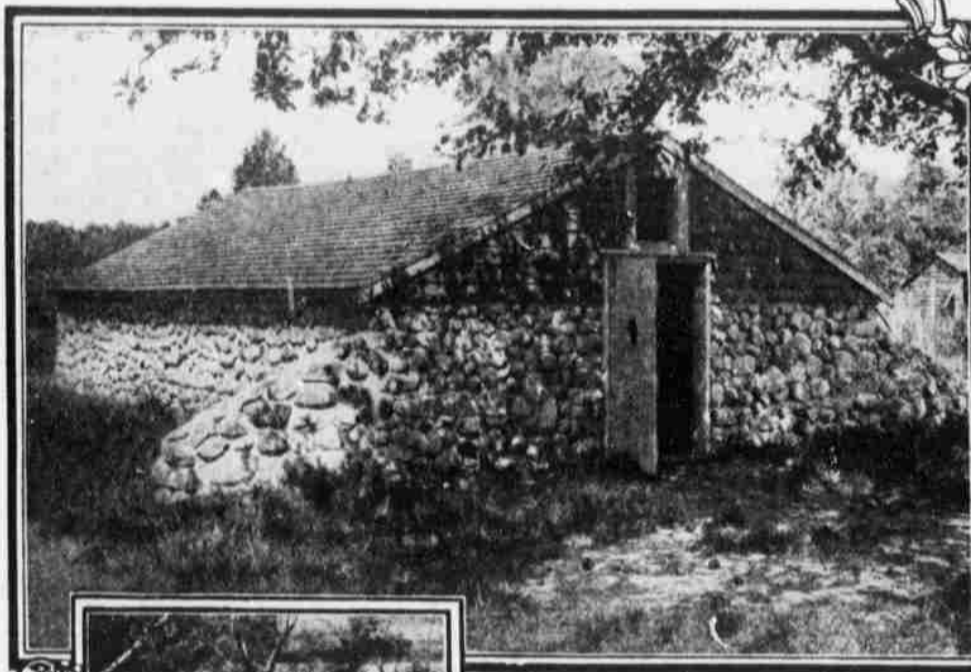
**I**F EVERY hen in the United States should lay one more egg a year, the annual production would be boosted by more than thirty million dozen. That is, classically speaking, a consummation devoutly to be wished—especially by family heads, to whom the five-cent egg is a standing offense.

Frankly, the American hen is by no means doing her duty. She isn't keeping pace with the times. She must be speeded up or fresh eggs will climb into the French artichoke and the alligator pear class. Already Kansas is canning "cracks" and "dirties" and preserved eggs have been imported, according to the news dispatches, from the land of the heathen Chinese.

After all, though, the trouble may be with the man behind the hen rather than with the hen herself. As now constituted, the laying fowl is pretty nearly an artificial creation, a kind of machine in feathers, yet withal a very delicate machine, which must be



More Attention is Being Paid by Experts to the Head of the Flock



An Incubator House Made of Field Stone—  
To the Left—an Automatic Feeder



handled with skill. The man who can make her lay has a right to boast.

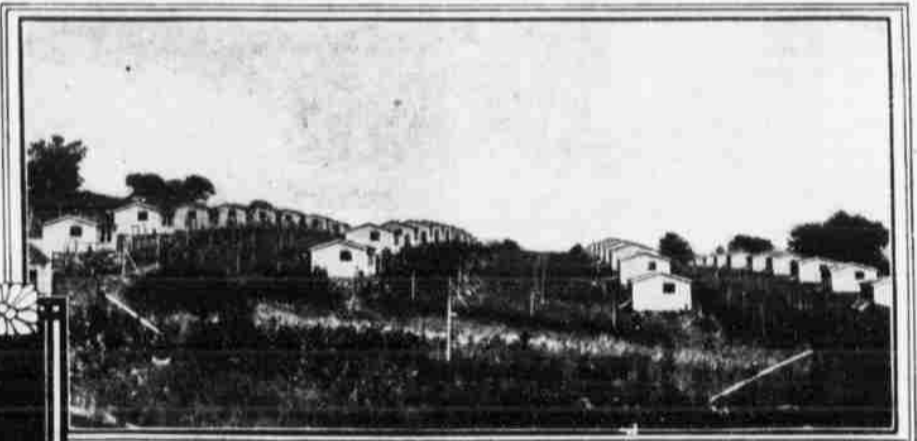
Experts all over the country are probing the secrets of the hen, trying to facilitate the egg-laying habit. All the experiment stations are at it. Therein, too, lies the reason for the egg-laying contests now in vogue. Out West instruction trains known as "egg spe-

cial" are being run for the benefit of the farmers. Even Uncle Sam has a chicken ranch a few miles from the White House where he is making his own experiments.

Some of the results are startling. Certain hens selected by well known breeders to compete in the great egg-laying match at Storrs, Connecticut, produced not a solitary egg the whole year through. Their owners supposed they were faithful, conscientious birds. They had the shape, the comb and even the song of laying hens. It remained for the trap nest to uncover the wretched deceit.

On the other hand, Oregon has produced a pullet which has laid 283 eggs in twelve months. She figures as hen "C-543" at the state college and holds the world's record to date. There is gloom in Missouri, where Lady Show You had previously achieved a year's total of 281. Such feats stand out in marked contrast to the work of the average hen. The point was cleverly illustrated at a state fair not long ago. Side by side were two wire baskets, one heaped high with nice brown eggs; its mate with but the bottom covered. Over the former was tacked this sign:

259 eggs — the number laid by one hen in ten months.



General View — Second International Egg-Laying Competition Plant at Storrs, Conn.—  
To the Left is Shown the New Way of Brooding Chicks

Over the second basket was also a sign, and it read:

69 eggs — the number laid by the average hen in ten months.

That was an object lesson which the farmers and the back-lotters were not likely to overlook. They are the people who supply the country with eggs, anyway. Unfortunately, they are the hardest to get at. Of course, the hen which lays 250 eggs or more in a year's time is a rare bird — perhaps always will be — but 150 eggs is not too high a standard for any tyro.

There is a lot of individuality about hens and about hen men. If you try to impose cut and dried rules on one or the other, you are going to find yourself in figurative hot water. Yet there are certain theories which have been pretty thoroughly tried out. There is no doubt, for example, that the day of the warm house has passed. Such houses make debilitated flocks and poor layers. Men who used to have double windows and double doors in their poultry buildings have knocked out all the glass and leave the doors open half the time, although in extreme weather they drop curtains over the windows (Continued on Page 8)

