

# RAISING TURKEYS FOR THANKSGIVING

**T**HIS is the season of the year when the prospects for the turkey crop outweigh almost all other questions in the minds not only of produce men, but in the estimation of the great mass of householders. The supply, and consequently the prices, of turkeys have fluctuated so widely in different years within the past decade or two that there is always an uncertainty in the minds of the ultimate consumers akin to that mystery that invariably envelopes the "peach crop" early in the season. This explains in a measure why many far-sighted citizens to whom a few cents per pound difference in price is ever a source of worry now make it a practice to order their Thanksgiving turkey long in advance and it explains, too, why many of the turkey buyers who handle the birds on a large scale begin their rounds of the poultry farms earlier in the season than was once their wont and keep close tab on the growing fowl.

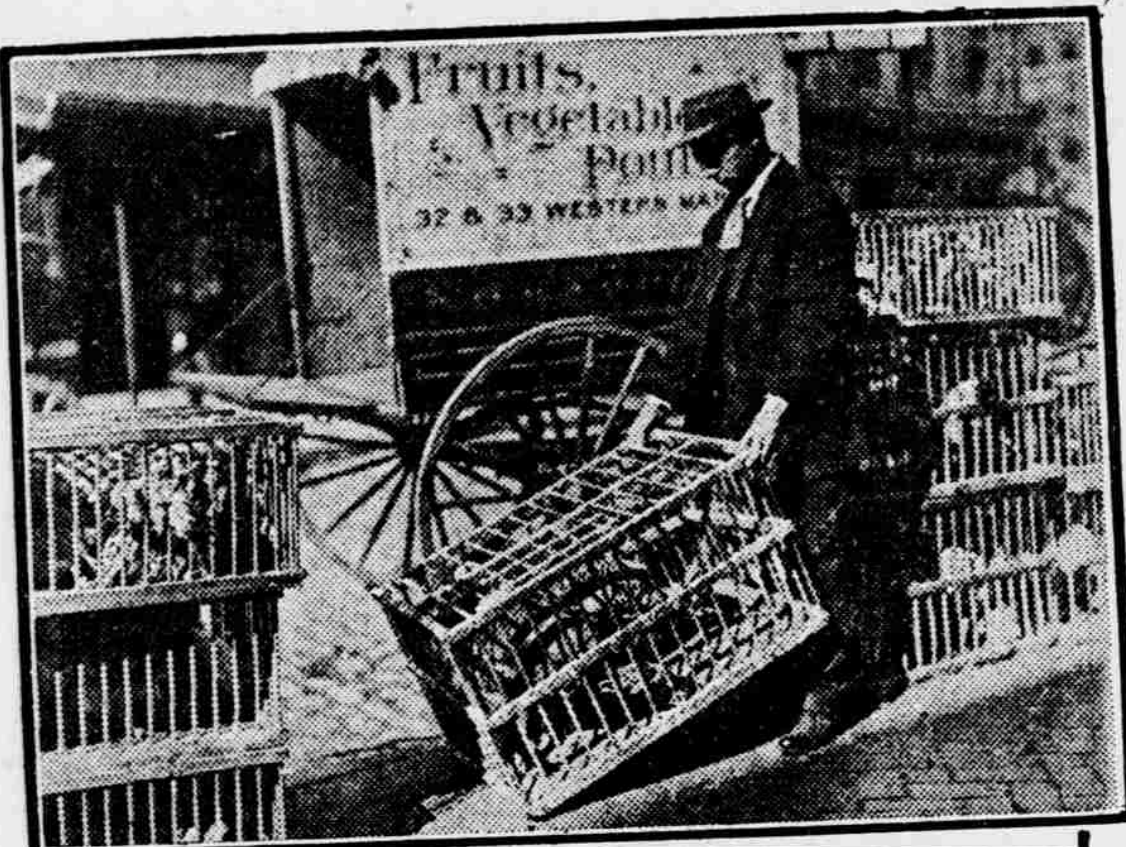
This "scouting" by the purveyors of our principal Thanksgiving delicacy is a wise move for, be it known, weather conditions throughout the spring, summer and autumn have a most important bearing upon the turkey crop at the end of November. For instance, if a wet spring be encountered great numbers of the young turkeys suffer. In some instances they are almost literally "drowned out." The autumn is a yet more crucial time in the turkey-raising industry. A open autumn, even if it be mild, is fairly auspicious, but the ideal condition is found in cool, crisp, bracing weather which inspires the turkeys to roam in search of food and causes them to



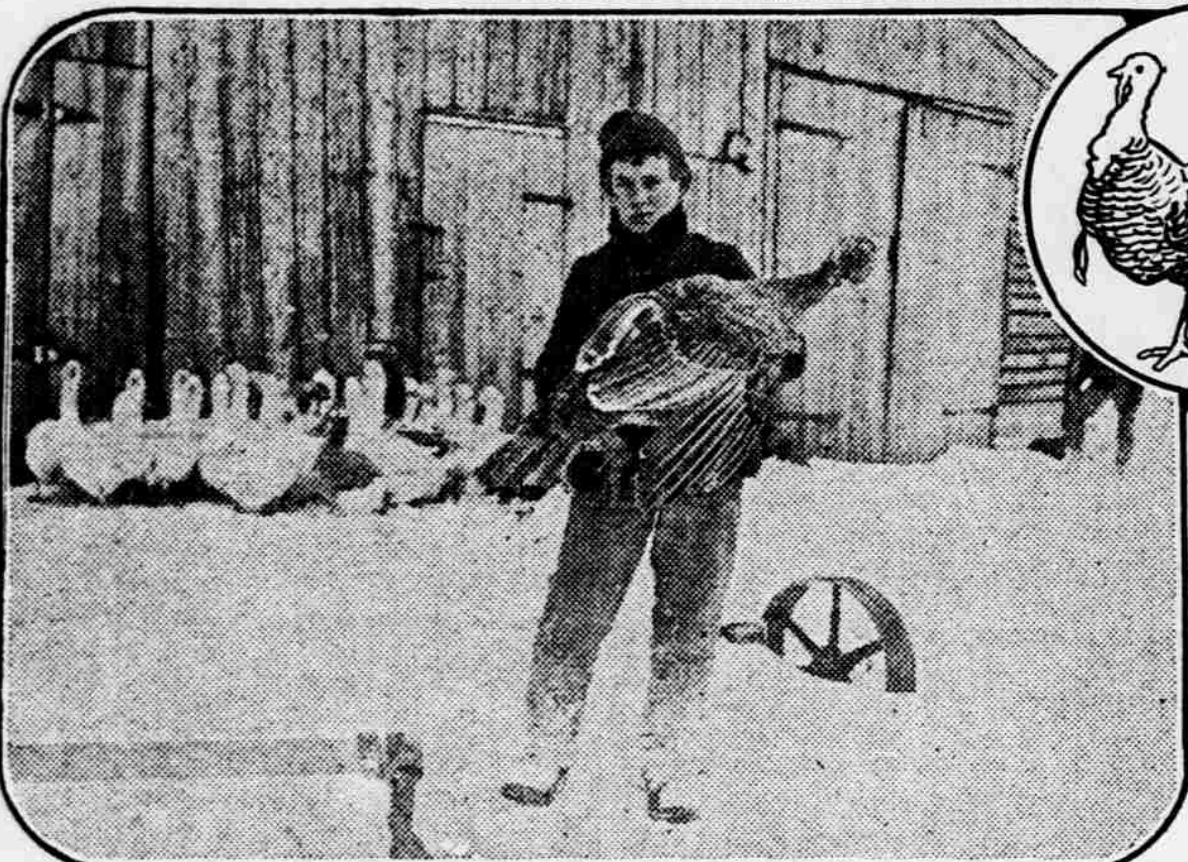
PREPARING THE TURKEY FOR MARKET



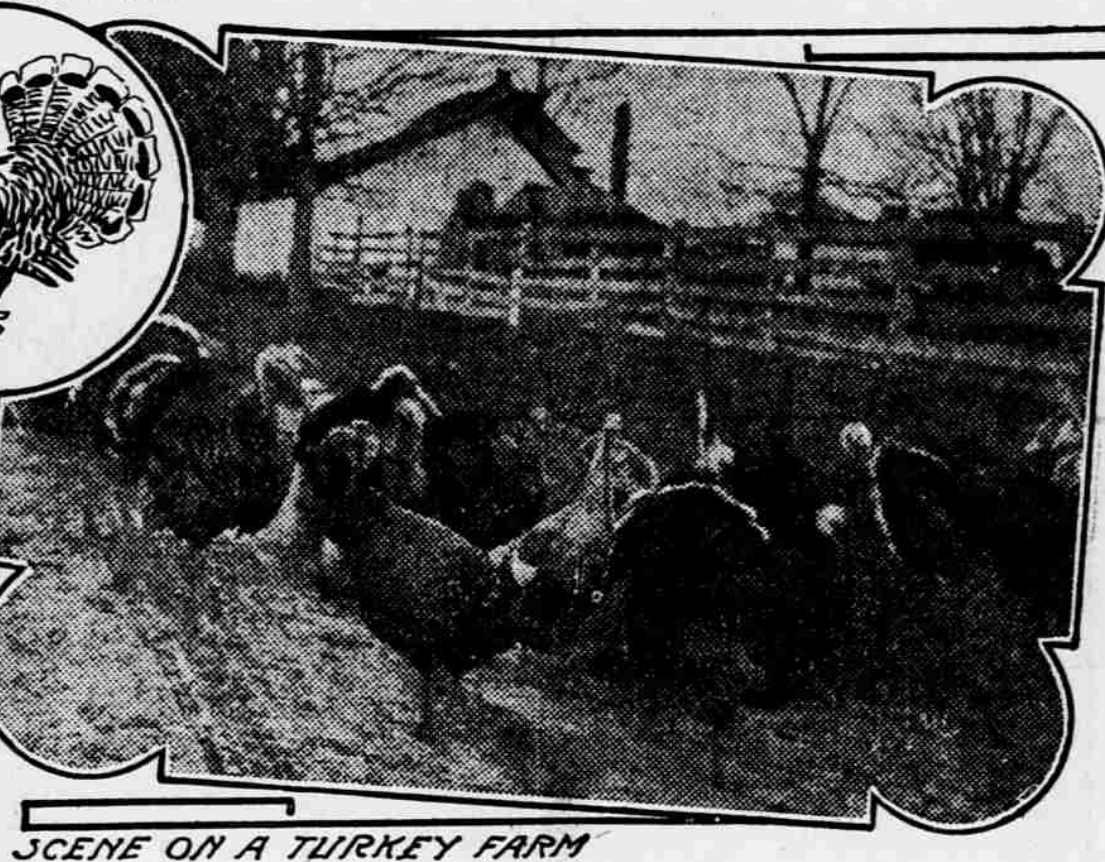
A THANKSGIVING BIRD



HANDLING CRATED TURKEYS AT THANKSGIVING



READY FOR THE THANKSGIVING RUSH



SCENE ON A TURKEY FARM

fatten in prime condition. Such weather conditions also lighten the cares of the farmer who does not devote his entire attention to turkeys, and who usually has so many other responsibilities that he is mighty glad when the turkeys can shift for themselves—to say nothing of the benefit to his pocketbook. These farmers and poultry raisers, it may be added, are about the only classes in our national community who never need give a thought to a bird for the home table on Thanksgiving. There is always some sort of a turkey for the gathering round the festive board at the homestead. We may digress for a moment, too, to add that in late years there has come a great change in sentiment on the part of many of the farmers as to the Thanksgiving turkeys for their own tables. In days gone by there was often a disposition to regard almost any old gobbler as sufficient for the home folks. All the choice birds were sent to market, because they would bring the best prices, and the farmer and his household not infrequently had to put up with the leavings, as it were. Latterly, however, as greater prosperity has come to so many of the farmers there is a growing disposition to regard the best as none too good for the kings of the soil, and this applies to turkeys as to everything else. Consequently it is usual for the progressive farmer to retain one of his tenderest birds for the kith and kin that break bread with him on Thanksgiving, and not infrequently the chosen bird has been singled out from the others long in advance and is specially fattened in accordance with the tastes of the family.

There has been much discussion on the part of the public in recent years regarding the comparative scarcity of small turkeys—that is six to eight pound birds—in the Thanksgiving market. There is no difficulty in fixing the responsibility for this disappearance of the small turkeys. It is due to the growing tendency among turkey raisers to devote their best efforts to the "bronze" variety of fowl—the largest variety of the bird. The lure of the American love of bigness has made itself felt in the turkey realm, and the 30 to 36 pound birds which have attracted so much attention at fashionable hotels and on banquet boards have come to be regarded as the most desirable specimens of that fowl, which becomes for one day each year our national bird.

It must be admitted, however, that the bronze variety of turkey not only holds the post of honor because of its size and its rich plumage but also, in the estimation of many epicures, because of its flavor as well. There is no doubt that the size of the bronze variety—its standard weight ranges from 16 to 36 pounds—is to be attributed to the fact that the birds of this family originated from a cross between the wild and the tame turkey. For that matter, the wild turkey of North America was the ancestor of all our present-day domestic turkeys, but the "crosses" which have been made in the case of the bronze variety have been particularly fortunate in inducing mammoth size. However, one of the officials of the department of agriculture recently declared that the bronze turkey had been developed too much in the direction of size, and if he can convert the turkey raisers to his way of thinking we may see some years hence an era of smaller bronze turkeys of even finer flavor than those regarding which such enthusiasm has been manifested by lovers of the good things of life.

Of course the vaunted bronze variety is not the whole thing in turkeydom, for there are six other standard varieties, the branches of the family in addition to the bronze, being, the Narragansett, the buff, the slate, the white, and the black. Many people who think that we have been enjoying pretty appetizing turkey from time out of mind may be surprised to learn that the prestige of the turkey as an article of food was seriously threatened a few years ago through carelessness and lack of foresight in breeding methods. Not much was said about it, except in the poultry papers and at the conventions of poultry raisers, but the menace was sufficient to arouse the more progressive turkey raisers, with the result that they mended their ways, put a ban on inbreeding and went in for the purebred or standard-bred turkey, with the welcome outcome that rich, new, vigorous blood made its influence felt in infusing strength and vigor in turkey flocks all over the country.

In the case of growers who have had the benefit of enough experience to qualify them for the work, turkey raising is, under favorable conditions, a highly profitable occupation. No other kind of live stock will return so large a profit to the successful producer as will poultry, and tur-

keys do not bring two or even three times the eight cents that Uncle Sam's expert has set down as a figure that will yield a profit. Of course, the farmer who can sell his turkeys direct to housewives can get from 25 cents per pound up—according to the state of the market and the quality of the fowl—but even the growers who market through commission merchants, as most of them do, ought to net from 16 to 20 cents per pound, providing the sales agent is not allowed to pocket more than his share of the sales price. Of course, for the grower to net 20 or 24 cents a pound, it is necessary to have the choice, specially fattened turkeys that bring top-notch prices in the markets catering to the wealthy class in the large cities.

Recent years have witnessed a change in the methods of shipping turkeys to market. Many fowl are yet hauled to town, as in days of old, in the farmer's wagon, but the largest share of the turkeys for city markets are now shipped by express. Just at Thanksgiving time when turkeys are coming to market in car-load lots many of the birds make the journey by fast freight, but under such conditions a man must be sent along with each car load to feed the birds, so that in the end it is likely to be just as cheap to send the birds by express, the transit thus being accomplished in a few hours and no feeding en route being necessary. To carry out the present-day policy of haste in transferring the turkeys from the farms to the dinner tables of the folk in towns and cities, we find special automobile trucks waiting at the railroad stations to receive the crated birds as they are unloaded from the cars, and these motors rush the turkeys without loss of time to the commission houses, hotels or other destinations. A few years ago a car load of live turkeys was a shipment of such unusual size as to cause comment. Nowadays such consignments are handled by the hundreds at Thanksgiving time, and a car load of live turkeys was, on one occasion, sent from New York to San Francisco, the rental of the special car for this journey amounting to \$70. In Chicago there are dealers who receive a dozen car loads of turkeys a day at Thanksgiving time, and as many as 25,000 birds have been received in that city in one day at the height of the rush to stock larders for Thanksgiving.

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"Mamma, how long does a honeymoon last?"

"Lady Laclands with a bitter smile made answer:

"The honeymoon may be said to last, my dear, until your husband begins to pester you for money."

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## Coat of Mail in Garment

While rummaging in some boxes to which he had fallen heir from a former tenant of the house he lives in at Lander, Wyo., Pat Curry came across what appeared to be an ordinary blue serge coat. He tried to haul it from the box and it required both hands to get it out.

Curry at first thought he had found

a treasure coat and that it contained gold coin. When he lifted it out of the box it gave forth a metallic rattle. He slit one of the pockets and discovered that between the serge and the heavy silk lining was concealed a complete suit of steel armor. The steel plates are two inches square, a sixteenth of an inch in thickness, perfor-

ated at one end and sewed, lapping each other, on to a cloth framework that exactly fits the interior of the garment.

No one can be found in Lander who can give any clue to the identity of the owner of the strange suit or armor. It is thought by many that it is a relic of the days of the Overland mail and was worn by some one who feared attack from Indians and that it came to Lander in the early days. Others believe it belonged to some

one who had a mountain feud on his hands and feared an ambush by the enemy.

### The Soldier's Wit.

A veteran of the Civil war, having received from the government a new cork leg in place of the one lost in battle, perpetrated this witticism in his return letter of thanks:

"'Tis sweet to be re-membered for what I have done."—Lippincott's.



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