

2013

CHRIS W. LIECHTY

Chris Liechty promoted the agricultural industry in Fulton County by being very involved in poultry production and processing from 1930-1972. Chris founded Superior Quality Hatchery in downtown Wauseon in 1930 and later built his registered brand name Sunnycrest poultry processing plant south of Wauseon. Chris was an industry pioneer in large scale cross breeding of poultry, tailored to certain market needs and was a Northwest Ohio pioneer in developing the processes for raising capons for their outstanding meat quality. His poultry business brought families into the area from elsewhere and created a significant number of jobs in the county. At the peak of hatchery operations in the 1950's-60's, Chris was hatching 50,000 chicks per week, year around, and utilizing farmers who owned breeding stock or shares of the Sunnycrest operation in the county.

Chris was known for trying many other joint poultry ventures to advance the industry. His emphasis was always on *trying*, whether or not success was guaranteed. In that regard, he always encouraged young start-up farmers to try the poultry business and was well known for loaning start-up funds and delivering chicks or equipment on a hand shake. He also participated in joint ventures throughout Ohio and in Texas and Latin America. Chris also spent much time writing articles for the industry based on learning he had gained from study and experience.

What was most unusual about Sunnycrest, in its prime, was that it was described as a then-new term, an "integrated" poultry business. He bought and sold eggs, hatched or sold them; bought, hatched and sold unique breeds of chicks; raised his own poultry or purchased them from local growers to be dressed in his facility; transported eggs or chicken with his own trucks; and distributed fresh or frozen product via his Toledo wholesale facility. As the viability of the small to medium sized poultry businesses across the U.S. went into decline in the late 1960's, Sunnycrest was one of the last two or three to survive in Ohio.

Chris was known as an exemplary Christian business man and helped establish the new Evangelical Mennonite Church in Wauseon, now Crossroads Church. Chris had a perfect attendance record with the Wauseon Kiwanis Club for over 25 years, holding various posts and he was a charter member of the United State Poultry and Egg Producers Association and its first treasurer.

For all of his efforts in promoting agriculture in Fulton County, we welcome Chris Liechty into the Agricultural Hall of Fame.