

Poultry Industry

During the peak of Castro Valley's poultry industry in the early 1900s, the area housed **hundreds of thousands of chickens**. Ranches stretched across the valley, with farms appearing as fields of white dots—hens roaming freely. Families like the **Alcorns** managed ranches with **3,000 chickens**, while hatcheries like **Hayward Rio-Linda** and **California State Hatchery** produced thousands of chicks weekly.

Castro Valley had a thriving poultry industry in the early 1900s, earning it the nickname "**When Chicken Was King.**" The area was home to numerous chicken ranches, hatcheries, and poultry farms that played a significant role in the local economy.

- **Chicken Ranches:** Families like the **Lundgrens** and **Alcorns** operated ranches with thousands of chickens. The Lundgren family's ranch on Stanton Avenue was typical of the time, featuring long brooder houses for raising chicks. The Alcorn family managed a ranch with **3,000 chickens**, delivering eggs to Oakland and Berkeley restaurants before George Alcorn taught classes at UC Berkeley.
- **Hatcheries:** One of the first hatcheries on Castro Valley Boulevard was **Hayward Rio-Linda**, which could hatch several thousand chicks per week in the 1920s. The **California State Hatchery**, built in 1934, was owned by the **Lorge family** and became a modern facility for chick incubation. Chicks were boxed in groups of 100 and shipped worldwide or delivered locally by truck.
- **Poultry Industry:** The **White Leghorn Chicken** was the dominant breed in the valley, and brooder houses were heated with oil fuel, though fires were a common hazard. The poultry industry was a major part of Castro Valley's identity until suburbanization transformed the landscape in the mid-20th century.

