

# DEDICATION

*This documentary is a tribute to Hobart and Russell Creighton in honor of their legacy. Each contributed to Creighton Brothers in their unique way and style. Each was committed to sharing their success with family and friends.*

*Hobart and Russell always included the names and pictures of the employees in their publications. They understood that the prosperity of the company was due to the employees' efforts and they proudly informed the community that the workforce was behind Creighton Brothers' success.*

*"We have a fine group of employees. It is largely their work and constant interest which makes it possible for us to produce high quality eggs and chicks. They are the folks who rear our replacement stock, gather eggs, hatch the chicks, carton the eggs, and do the thousand and one jobs.....We are proud of them." (Hobart & Russell, 1956)*

*The employee is a distinctive individual to Creighton Brothers. Often they are friends and colleagues in the community. If they are new to the area, the relationship becomes integral and personal in a short amount of time. As a result, the employee remains committed and lengthy terms of employment have become the norm.*

*Your efforts are recognized and most appreciated. Your labors make us proud of you and of your countless accomplishments. This documentary is dedicated to each and every employee of Creighton Brothers---past and present. Thank you!*

*Sara Beth (Creighton) Russell  
June 1, 2000*

## Acknowledgements

I wish to thank my Grandfather and my Great Uncle Hobart for establishing a business that has in turn supported many extended family members and those in the community. I appreciate the family values that have been inculcated and modeled to me. As well, I thank my parents for continuing the teaching of family connectedness.

I am forever grateful that my Grandfather delighted in reminiscing--and that he dictated and wrote many of these stories for our benefit. Also, Hobart marvelously shared Creighton Brothers' achievements in brochures and pamphlets that now provide the historical account of the business.

Too, I appreciate that my father (Gale), Eddie and Ron contributed and proofed the documentary and tribute. Your efforts completed the necessary details.

Agnes Jane Plummer, Catherine Martin and Juanita Frederich, the earliest Bookkeepers and Secretaries at Creighton Brothers, were so helpful in painting a picture of what life was like in the early days where carbon paper was used in documentation. They brought those days to life and unfortunately a written account does not do justice to their spontaneously telling what it was like in the office. One story would lead to another. They were savvy women capable of maintaining the office while the business was in its earliest and most vulnerable stages. Again, my gratitude goes to them.

As well, I wish to express my appreciation to those in the office who assisted me in collecting the information for this documentary. They graciously assisted whenever I needed something.

For countless hours, relatives and employees allowed me to record their commentary. Their activities in Creighton Brothers plus their memories and perceptions of working for Hobart and Russell were shared. Thank you for making my 'roots' come to life again while recollecting Creighton Brothers' path.

Barbara, Josephine and I went through the early 1940s office records for several hours. The materials had been stored in the old hatchery building turned horse stall. The papers were filthy and so were we. The scattered papers proved to be valuable data and would be a war historian's delight. Thanks for the help with the great find.

John, Christian and Ashley gave me continual encouragement and support. Christian's humorous and honest editing proved that we are a team!



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Creighton Brothers—"A Family Farm" . . . . .	1
Words of Wisdom . . . . .	60
Goals. . . . .	62
Words of Love. . . . .	62
<u>MEMORIES</u> . . . . .	63
<u>ANCESTRY</u> . . . . .	65
<u>BOYHOOD</u> . . . . .	66
<u>YOUNG ADULthood</u> . . . . .	70
<u>ITS NOT A COINCIDENCE!</u> . . . . .	71
1926 Ledger page. . . . .	74
"They made \$13,000 in Three Years!" . . . . .	75

# CREIGHTON BROTHERS

## "A FAMILY FARM"

*Creighton Brothers began with a gentlemen's agreement but within a few years a written partnership, which included the wives, was necessary for legal and tax purposes. Creighton Brothers took the typical evolutionary process of family farms moving from a 'Two Mom--Two Pop' farm to a third generation family owned agri-business. Both brothers, hard working in their own right, contributed to the foundation of the values upon which the farm was built. The path was influenced by the boys' personalities--- Hobart was assertive and forthright while Russell was passive and soft-spoken. Accordingly, cultural and economic forces made their mark on the progression of this family farm.*

*Hobart and Russell's success stemmed from a commitment to create a quality product with the most cost effective production possible. Also, they readily shared a give-and-take relationship with area farmers understanding that joint efforts benefited Creighton Brothers, the local community and the industry. Initially, the boys admitted to their lack of expertise, yet they were not hesitant to utilize resources in the state's already established poultry industry to further their objectives.*

*Creighton Brothers entered the industry when the producer had no control over the selling price of the product. They were in direct competition with other producers in the country. In time, egg producers grew in size and improved their efficiency levels. Creighton Brothers was committed to cost effectiveness, conservative growth and efficiency to become one of the major producers of quality eggs and egg products. The vertically integrated farm made the necessary adjustments to cope with each changing phase of the industry.*

*Seventy-five years ago Hobart and Russell laid the cornerstone to what is now a prominent agri-egg business. Today Creighton Brothers plays a viable role in the national and international egg industry where it continues a diverse and innovative course with family tradition, progress and service being its hallmark.*



**1923**

**WHICH CAME FIRST, THE CHICKEN OR THE EGG?**  
**The pigs came first!**

Hobart and Russell purchased sows from their retiring father for about 23 cents a pound or about \$45.00 each. Their father had been successful with hogs so it was logical to continue with a hog-farming project. Russell took active management for the 25 sows in order for Hobart to continue teaching and assist in the financing of the operation.

On the 38-acre tract that was part of their father's homestead, the brothers built a wooden hog building, 30' x 120', with 40 windows on the south side and 20 sky windows in the roof. In the spring, the sows had 150 piglets but when they were ready for market, the boys received only 6 cents per lb.

**1925**

**A GENTLEMEN'S AGREEMENT**

Hobart (28 yrs.) and Russell (22 yrs.) began their poultry business. At the time, Hobart was teaching but had to pursue more education to continue teaching or find another vocation. Russell was driving his father's Model T Ford for the county as a school bus.

Several factors made poultry farming the next plausible venture. First, Chet Manwaring, who was teaching with Hobart and whose father already had a poultry business in Mentone, probably influenced the brothers to pursue poultry. Second, the industry was already proving to be a prosperous endeavor in the area because it was easier to keep the birds free from disease in the Midwest than in other parts of the country. Last, Hobart and Russell were reared in farming and it was an already known profession for them.

Hobart was short on cash due to the failed hog business and to the debt incurred for his new home. The boys also had the debt from the purchase of the land. Russell invested \$1,650.00 in the project; Hobart owned the empty hog building.

The hog house was converted into a laying house. The farrowing pens were removed while dropping boards and roosts were installed.

The brothers ordered 2800 White Leghorn baby chicks in the fall of 1924 for 23 cents each from the Manwarings in Mentone, Indiana for a delivery in the spring. At the same time, ten coal brooders were



bought and set up in the hog/hen house in preparation for winter. Since only 2000 chicks were delivered that spring only 9 stoves were used.

Fifty (50) or so chickens were killed the first night by rats! The next day the holes were caulked with concrete and Russell sat in the car in the building with a shotgun and flashlight. No more losses would be incurred!

Russell cared for the chickens. Once a week he took barrels to Nappanee to buy buttermilk. The pans of buttermilk were put beside the pans of water where the birds ate freely. Also each week, the chicken houses were cleaned. Initially straw was used on the floor. (Usually a load of manure was swapped for a load of straw from a local farmer.)

Russell mixed the feed on the floor with a scoop shovel. He shoveled it back and forth 7 times in order for it to be mixed well. Then the feed was bagged in a 100-lb. bag and carried to the wooden feeders.

In the fall the boys housed 1,200 good laying pullets in the remodeled hog/hen house. They placed all birds in the one house for the winter.

Russell's day consisted of feeding chickens, gathering eggs, pumping and carrying water to the chickens. He gathered eggs once a day like his Mother had; he was too busy to do otherwise. Since eggs were gathered only once a day, there were many broken and dirty ones on the wood floor.

The gathered eggs were put into wooden candy buckets purchased for about fifteen cents from the Thomas 'five and ten cent' store in Warsaw. Two hundred eggs would fit into these wooden buckets. With inclement weather, a gunnysack covered the bucket until you could get the bucket to Hobart's house where it was handed in through the window. At delivery time, the egg cases were sent back out the window. The Warsaw Farm Bureau came to the farm and paid between 25 and 28 cents per dozen for ungraded eggs.

In one of the basement rooms, the eggs were cooled, cleaned and stored. Russell and Esther, Hobart's wife, cleaned the eggs with sandpaper. The eggs were not washed in water in order to keep the pores closed.

Russell made the wood egg cases and wrote "Creighton Brothers" and the address on the top. The ends and sides came in bundles. The 'rig' held the ends and the sides were nailed with egg-case nails taking about 5 minutes per case to make. Whenever anyone had a bit of free time, they put egg cases together. (This particular type of wooden egg case was used until the mid-1940s. The bundles were delivered by the trailer load when CB was big enough to require that many.)

Initially, there was no income. The investment had been made to establish the operation but additional costs for feed and coal were necessary until the chicks could lay. The boys lived frugally and survived because of their garden.



## 1926

**Layer House #2 was built utilizing the same dimensions of the hog, now chicken house!** Little was known about nutrition for chickens raised in confinement. It was known that the birds needed protein so fish meal was mixed with the corn that the boys had taken to the mill for grinding. Then bran flour was added. The mixing was done by shovel on the floor.

Word, probably from the Purdue Agricultural Department, spread that chickens raised in confinement were missing nutrients that they would have received normally from pecking at green grass in the open. It was suggested that sprouting oats be given to the chickens so they could peck at the oats and in return enhance the fertility of their eggs plus be healthier, stronger chickens.

House #2 had a basement room built specifically to grow oats. Counters built along the sides held wooden boxes or pans for growing the oats. After 5 or 6 days the oats began to sprout and the trays were placed in the aisles where the chickens could peck. However, the rats moved in and were eating the oats faster than they were sprouting! This sprouting oat project lasted only a few years.

Another time, a load of food grade carrots was purchased for the purpose of letting the chickens peck. This proved to be fruitless and the load of carrots was put in the driveway to be run over.

## 1927

**Market demand and prices were studied in order to get the best price for the eggs!** Hobart went to Chicago to find a market and he found several including the Palmer House that paid enough to make shipping more than worthwhile. This led to purchasing other farmer's eggs and Russell picked up the eggs in a Chevrolet Touring Car with the back seat removed. According to Russell, CB paid 70 cents per dozen to the local farmer and CB received 80 cents per dozen in Chicago.

Some of the eggs were shipped by Express from Atwood. Russell took the eggs to Atwood and put them on the train to Chicago. Occasionally, Russell would get to Atwood after the train arrived blocking him from getting to the loading door. He would drive as fast as he could to Etna Green beating the train so he could load the eggs.



**Layer House #3 was built the same size as the previous two.**

**A new Hatchery! CB now produced and sold eggs and chicks!**

As poultry farmers, Hobart and Russell were interested in 'getting the eggs' so they pursued birds that would lay plenty of big eggs and would lay above the 200 average per year. Actually, their own successful breeding was a result of introducing some high record stock to some local matings.

After proving to themselves that they could make money from large and small flocks of White Leghorns, they started a hatchery. The hatchery was started in a small building next to Hobart's home.

The first incubator was installed with a 15,000-egg capacity. This Petersime incubator was the first model that was all electric. (Previously, they were heated by hot water or steam.) The boy's brother-in-law, Leonard Eiler, was the first Hatchery manager.

They had no orders, yet in one day's selling from farm to farm, orders for 20,000 chicks were secured. The Creightons' reputation for building up the quality of their layers in their own breeding program had spread into the community.

Hatching took place 2 days a week between January and May. Customers wanted the baby chicks at that time in order for the chicks to grow outdoors in the summer months and to be into egg production by the fall.

This hatchery building eventually was expanded to house 7 Petersime incubators (1936) and to make office space.

**Baby chicks were raised in brooder houses (10'x12') heated with hard coal brooder stoves.** For 8 years coal stoves were utilized then oil stoves, then electrical.

The brooder houses were moved to a new location each year because if left on the same ground there was an increased chance of disease.

**Each Monday and Thursday during the winter months, baby chicks were taken to the post office in Warsaw where they were sent by parcel post all over the Midwest.** The chicks were delivered within 2 days. New baby chicks could go without feed and water for a couple of days with relatively low mortality.

**Research.** The brothers quickly recognized their lack of expertise in the poultry business. Hobart had studied 2 summers at Winona College and a year at Indiana University. Russell had spent time at Purdue studying agriculture and poultry. Now, both studied extension courses and all available poultry literature. They managed to get away to poultry conventions and short courses at the Purdue Poultry Department.



## **"They Made \$13,000 in Three Years"**

The boys believed their success in 3 short yrs. was first, due to purchasing the best pullets available from a noted breeder farm to insure that they were starting with quality stock. Second, they noted that the hog house proved to be a satisfactory style building for poultry and had thus built 3 in 3 years. Third, they aggressively found the best markets for their eggs. Fourth, they knew to keep records of laying hens even if it was on the hen house walls!

*"All went well, especially well in view of our inexperience . . . It was tough sledding that (first) winter. Coal cost money, feed cost money, and there was nothing coming in. A four-acre potato patch and good potato prices saved the day for us. We were lucky, for that was not planned,"* said Hobart.

The boys admitted that they were ignorant regarding much of poultry farming. The fact that they did not 'cull' the first year was a bit embarrassing. Also, they really didn't know what to feed the pullets to insure high egg laying capabilities. When asked how they did it, Hobart replied, *"Don't know exactly. We mixed our own mash, putting in 20 percent meat scraps, but in addition to that we fed all the skim milk they would take. Perhaps the milk did it"*. (Poultry Tribune December, 1928)

## **1930**

### **8400 layers.**

#### **Breeding program---1st year of Record of Performance work.**

CBs' breeding records were summarized and published. All breeding stock was tested by an authorized State agent under the supervision of the State Poultry Association. CBs' official rating was Pullorum Clean and continued that rating throughout it's breeding program.

To qualify as an R.O.P. layer, the birds were tested and records were kept on their performance for a year. The female reaching the following requirements received the R.O.P. stamp of approval:

- 1) Lay at least 200 eggs at the program's standards. (CBs' standard was 250 eggs.)
- 2) The eggs must average a minimum of 24 ounces to a dozen.
- 3) The body weight average must be 4 lbs.

The best of these birds were selected for CBs' special matings. To be U.S. Certified the chicken was to be sired by males from dams that were R.O.P. To be U.S. Approved, the chicken must come from a female bird with an R.O.P. rating.

When the 'best' birds were selected for the breeding program, they were banded and put into trapnest houses. These houses were divided into pens with twenty females and one male. When a hen entered the nest the door came down where she remained until the foreman made his hourly check. If she had layed an egg the egg was matched to the leg band number. For every egg, record was kept of the hour layed, the egg weight and the chicken's weight. The eggs were then placed together in incubator trays each week. At hatching the chicks were banded and again records were kept as they matured.



**Chicken house #5, a 2-story laying house (120'x30'x16') was built.** It had 40 electric brooding heaters or hovers and each hover could warm 400-500 baby chicks.

The 2-story house was built because it had been recommended that a 2-story house could be more economical. (There were a few 2-story houses in the industry.) It proved to be more economical to build but not more economical and practical to maintain. It was too difficult to get the feed in and the eggs and manure out. This was the only 2-story house CB built.

A total of 6 chicken houses were built at the Hobart home-place and each of these houses held 500-600 chickens. This farm was named, 'The Pedigree Farm'.

**Fire.** About 1930, house #4 burned to the ground! It was full of baby chicks--4000-5000 in number. Russell and family saw the flames from their home about 4:00 AM. Russell had just checked the hard coal brooder stove; it was his job to make the rounds at night and check the stoves. He had returned home and was getting into bed when a neighbor began pounding on the window yelling that one of the chicken houses was on fire. House #4 was never re-built.

**Depression.** "In the depression years, Hobart and I drew out \$10.00 a week to live. We had our own meat, 'Leghorn roosters' and a cow from which we divided her milk---and we raised potatoes" (Russell, 1992)

During the summer of the depression, the banks closed. Hobart and Russell had meat and eggs but were left without cash. The families grew a large pickle patch and took them to South Bend to earn some money.

The New York buyers quoted prices and if you wanted to sell at that price, you sent eggs by rail to New York. CBs' graded eggs were taken in 30 dozen cases to Mentone, Akron and Burket to fill boxcars to be shipped to the New York markets. According to Russell they removed the gravel bed on their truck replacing it with another bed and then removed the cab in order for him to sit on the gas tank to steer this egg-hauling vehicle! If necessary, due to snow, the brothers used their father's bobsled and team of horses to get their eggs to rail.

## 1931

**Poultry Breeding-- The first pedigree eggs!** CB purchased 100 pedigreed hatching eggs from the foremost poultry farm, The Hanson Leghorn Farm in Corvalice, Oregon. Hanson was known for his consistent contest winnings but he also had high flock averages for a large number of pullets. CBs' goal was to secure a high flock average.

Also at this time, 3 roosters at \$25.00 each were purchased. One died making this a costly endeavor.



The pedigree eggs were priced at \$2.00 but since they were purchased in January and in bulk, Hanson sold them for \$1.00. The pullets hatched from these eggs proved to be CBS' successful foundation stock.

Now CBS' goal was to establish good stock to 'get the eggs' not to become a "breeder" farm. In time, it became evident that the average poultry farmer was interested in the 'high flock average of big eggs' and CB had established a stock by which they could produce this for the local farmer.

## 1932

**Hobart began a 16-year service in the Indiana State Legislature, the last 6 years serving as Speaker of the House.** He authored legislation establishing the Baby Chick Department and the Indiana State Poultry Association for the administration of the National Poultry Improvement Program. Hobart also actively served on the State Budget Committee. In 1948, he received the Republican nomination for Governor. He lost the election and returned to CB full-time.

**Management.** From the onset, Hobart was the 'front man'. Now that much of his time was taken with legislative duties, Leonard Eiler, the husband of the boy's sister Marjorie and a jack-of-all-trades, became the crew leader. Leonard managed the hatchery that operated between January to May peaking in April. He also made chick deliveries in the northern half of the state. In the summer and fall, Leonard was 'crew chief' of construction or remodeling. As well, there were always eggs to clean and manure to haul! Russell was superintendent of the housing operations including overseeing the trapnesting procedures.

**Russell's new home was built next door to Hobart's.** Russell married Gaynell Horn in 1926 and the couple lived in Atwood until 1932 when they moved onto the Pedigree Farm next door to Hobart.

At one time in their new home, 200 baby chicks were started in the basement for a neighbor until the neighbor could get his hen house built. The neighbor's hen house was slow to go up and the growing chickens with their growing smell consumed the Russell household! "We tried to be helpful." (Russell, 1992)



## 1933

### **Producing Health Eggs for Fancy Trade**

How "Creighton Brothers' Health Eggs" are Produced—How we Raise Our Chicks and Feed Our Layers—Sanitation Very Important On Our 8,000 Farm—  
Food Value of Eggs Depends on What is Fed.

by Hobart Creighton, Warsaw, Indiana

"All birds from which their stock was produced, were pedigreed. The eggs produced were prized as "Creighton Bros" Health Eggs" due to (1). the high standards of feeding the layers and (2). the high standards of sanitation for the chickens.

The baby chicks were started on a mash containing dried milk, dehydrated alfalfa leaf meal, cod liver oil and other protective and necessary ingredients. At 4 weeks, cracked corn and wheat was added to their diet. They are allowed to eat as much grain and mash as they want. At the time the hen goes into production, CB fed its birds: the mash diet plus fishmeal including vitamins and minerals, potassium iodide, and yeast.

CB maintained a high sanitation standard. Each spring the brooder houses were scrubbed with boiling water after which a fire gun was used to thoroughly disinfect them. The brooder houses were moved each year to a new location. The laying houses were kept clean. Dropping boards were covered with netting so the feet of the birds stayed clean. Water founts were scrubbed daily. A nest was provided for every five hens. Eggs were gathered often and immediately taken to the basement to cool.

Most eggs are shipped to Chicago and New York. Special trade in Chicago take the eggs where they go to hotels, restaurants, and grocery stores. In New York, the eggs are shipped to regular receivers who in turn distribute them to fancy trade. Some of the eggs were railed in refrigerated cars to New York through a cooperative egg shipping association in Kosciusko County. However, the final net price determined where sales were made." (Poultry Success, 1933)

### **8000 Layers.**

**CB donated eggs and their flat bed truck to take United Brethern youth church members to camp at Oakwood Park.** Each summer for many years, CB donated eggs and transportation to camp. The UB members, luggage and food were loaded onto the open-sided truck and taken to Wawasee, Indiana.

## 1934

**Chicago World's Fair--Century of Progress Egg Laying Contest.** CB won Grand Champions in both egg-laying contests---cages and open pens. CB trapnested their contestant birds to determine which was their best layers. CBs' pen of White Leghorns was 'highest' pen of all varieties for the entire period of the contest (5 months) with 1060 eggs and 1101.95 points giving CB considerable publicity.

**Russell Farm was purchased (farm across from current office).** CB needed more land and an 80-acre farm, house and small chicken house (#7) became available during the depression for about \$50.00/acre. The