

Mac Cuddy



FARMER AND INDUSTRIALIST

Alfred McInroy “Mac” Cuddy was born in Kerwood, Ontario in 1919. He excelled at sports and in academics, winning a number of trophies at Strathroy Collegiate. Mac soon found enjoyment in cadet training, becoming commander of the Cadet Corps in his final year at Strathroy Collegiate.

In 1938 he won a scholarship to study horticulture at the Agricultural College in Guelph (now the University of Guelph), earning a degree in landscape architecture in 1942. Mac won a scholarship to Harvard University to continue studying landscape architecture but turned it down to serve in the Royal Canadian Army, where he trained Canadian troops in physical education. After the war Mac returned to Strathroy, saving enough money to buy a 100-acre farm in 1950, where he lived with his wife and their children.

Mac soon acquired 1500 turkeys, and his farm became a hatchery operated according to his innovative methods that would forever change the poultry industry. Instead of letting his turkeys roost in covered sheds and roam the barnyard, Mac brought them inside and experimented with artificial lighting to fool the birds into thinking that breeding time was all year long, rather than in the spring. This enabled him to supply customers with hatching eggs and day-old poults on an as-needed basis. These lighting methods are now standard practice with turkey breeders around the world.

Mac began cross-breeding his turkeys with other breeds to improve their look and taste, eventually producing a white turkey with heavier, juicier meat. With this success the business continued to grow, and Cuddy Farms became one of the largest poultry producers in the world. In 1971 the company expanded into the United States and opened a hatchery in Germany. Cuddy soon became the exclusive supplier of poultry products to McDonald’s Restaurants of Canada Ltd., and there was a time when one of every five turkeys served in the United States was hatched from a Cuddy egg.

Mac’s work led to Strathroy becoming known as the Turkey Capital of Canada, and the annual Turkey Festival celebrates the industry’s success. Fanshawe College’s Horticulture Technician program utilizes the Cuddy Gardens in Strathroy as a core component of their curriculum, which is a testament to Mac’s lifelong interest in horticulture.

Mac passed away in 2006, leaving a legacy of focused, determined work that helped shape a global industry.

THE TURKEY MAN