

# A FEW ANECDOTES ON THE ANCIENT SILVER BLACK-LACED WYANDOTTE

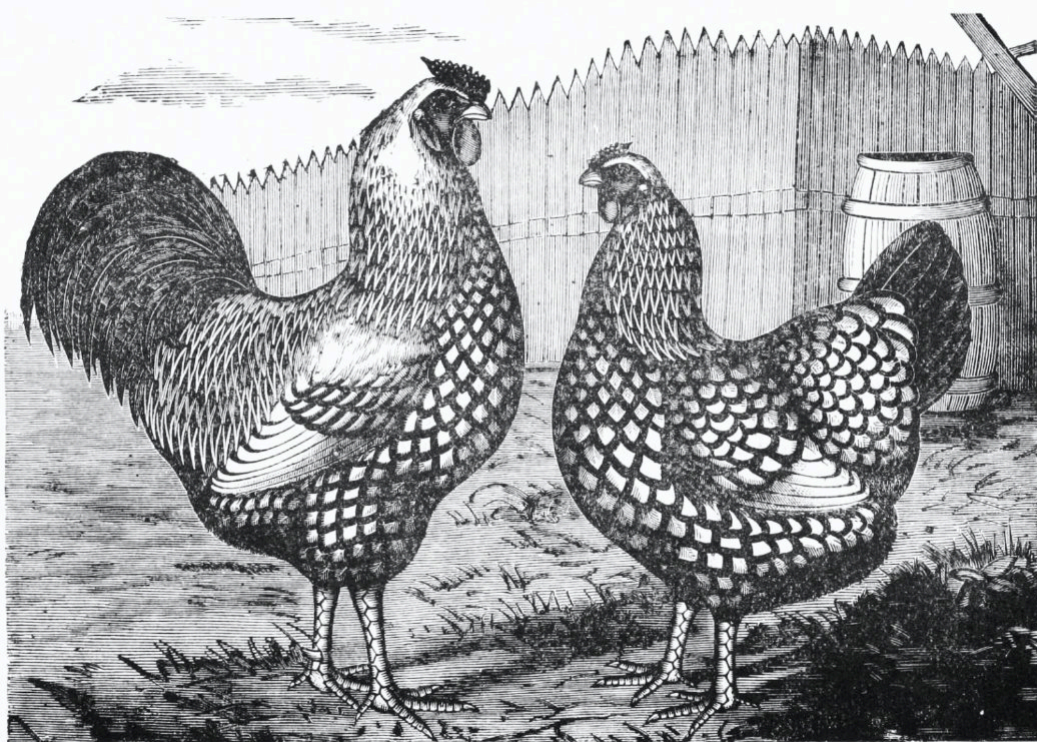
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Interpretations & old stuff  
written and collected by:  
Sigrid van Dort

## AMERICAN SEBRIGHTS/COCHINS

# 1882

*American Sebrights or Cochins.  
From: Thorne 1882.*

What do you do on a drizzly Sunday when you can't play outside without getting soaking wet? Then you go looking for old chicken books online or in your own library and sometimes you come across quite a few things you didn't know. Many know-things are outdated, but sometimes you also come across things that are still quite useful today that have faded from our collective chicken memory. Or you learn something about the origins of a particular breed that is interesting because you don't necessarily have to have that breed but your favourite breed contributed to it. Here is one such case of that, a serendipity...



AMERICAN SEBRIGHTS.

"BREEDING TO  
OTHER CHICKENS  
OR BREEDS TO  
IMPROVE A  
POTENTIAL OR  
STANDARD BREED:  
NOTHING NEW  
UNDER THE SUN"

Thanks to old publications like books and cahiers (= pamphlets or booklets with too few pages to be a book), we can follow the thoughts of those who came before us in the chicken hobby.

Of course, keeping and breeding chickens is an extremely serious business and many (men) derived their status from it. A status that was independent of their social status, which is what makes the chicken hobby so interesting, all those different plumages and corresponding attitudes. This caused quite a bit of friction, something that still plays out to this day.

What, sociologically, was also very important was the knowledge you had, in addition to communication

skills and persuasion to convey your own knowledge with as much authority as possible. Something also important today, however, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries there was no social media, books were expensive and the ordinary man/woman had to invest financially in acquiring knowledge 'with authority', if they could.

Those who did not have the means were at the mercy of the loudest shouters, cronies to get things into the limelight for standard descriptions, scammers who told tall tales that people wanted to hear and they needed knowledge of the human mind to differentiate. Descriptions are snapshots in time.

Now they thought this way, ten years later that way about traits and colours in chickens. It must have been

maddening, grandpa's knowledge could just suddenly become obsolete. It was a 'CCC' - chicken-climate-change over the decades.

While crawling through the minds of the Wyandotte originators and those Who Know or were even there and talked to contemporaries, we read things we don't always think about when we are messing around with our chickens, seriously or funwise. No doubt the breeders of Wyandottes will have read everything about the history of their breed available way back to the 1870s, however, not everyone has. Sure not those who don't have Wyandottes. Creeping in the old heads and reading their musings has the advantage of finding out things that also apply to other breeds should





SILVER LACED WYANDOTTES

From a painting by Franklane L. Sewell of a pair of Modern Silver Laced Wyandottes owned and bred by Henry Steinmesch

Poor Sewell was initially sent real chickens and had to draw an ideal standard image of the modern Wyandotte based on that and textual instructions. Indeed they did not exist at all. Later, Sewell made photos of real chickens, which often looked nothing like the ideal image. It was literally pushing and pulling on leg height, (con)formation, wing stance etc. This then had to be put on paper analogously, i.e. with real pencil, after which the sketch then went back to the client. This went back and forth a few times and after everyone had had a pee over it, the sketch could be worked out. This is not much different from today, by the way.

Wyandottes not appeal to you. For example Brahma breeders, they don't need to know that their breed was at the cradle of Wyandottes, neither do Cochins breeders nor do the breeders of the old European breeds like Breda, the Hamburgs, Polish etc.

Here a few things that might be of interest. Or, a lot of useless information that is nice to know for that very reason.

Thorne 1882 in his book on: **AMERICAN SEBRIGHTS, OR SEBRIGHT COCHINS.**

"The first mention we find of this breed occurs in the Poultry World for March, 1876, in an article on "New Varieties," by D. W. Hooker, who writes:

"Where and how this variety originated I am unable to state, after diligent inquiry. It has marks of both the Brahma and Hamburg. The head is crowned with a good, double comb; wattles and ear-lobes both red and of medium size; hackle black, striped with white; back broad, with black, Brahma-like tail; breast white, deep and broad, and back and breast feathers deeply laced; wings primary feathers mostly white, and lower-wing coverts tipped with black, making a distinct bar; legs short and slightly feathered, colouring throughout clear black and white, with a tendency to grey on the hackle and saddle;

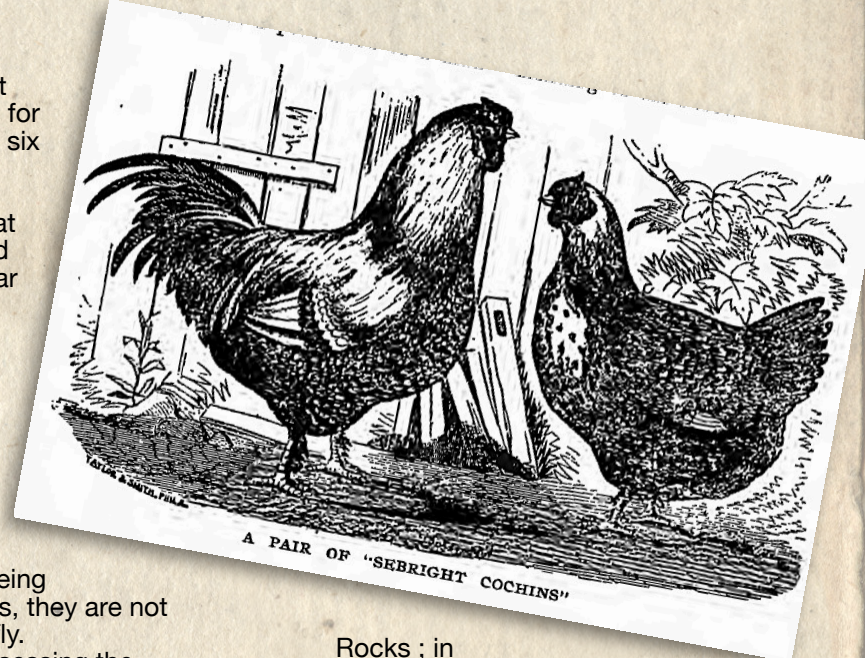
"Half tone reproductions of photographs made by artist Sewell, and used by him in delineating ideal Wyandotte males."

weight, about eight pounds for the cock and six for the hen. Their valued points are that they are good layers the year round; they are not troublesome to break up from sitting; they are fine for the table, dressing a rich yellow; and while being good foragers, they are not disposed to fly.

"Though possessing the characteristics of a pure breed, so marked as to be distinguished the moment the eye rests upon them, they have not yet bred true enough to feather to knock at the door of the Standard. There is yet much variety in the lacing; in some the comb shows yet the 'pea,' and in others the Hamburg point. Some also are clean-legged. But with careful breeding they have a fair prospect of becoming one of the most valued of our domestic fowls. I trust their breeders will not knock until their points become so established that the fraternity shall bid them a cordial come in."

"In November, 1877, Mr. M. L. Kidder writes in the same journal of this breed, adding the name American Sebright:

"In size they are much like Plymouth

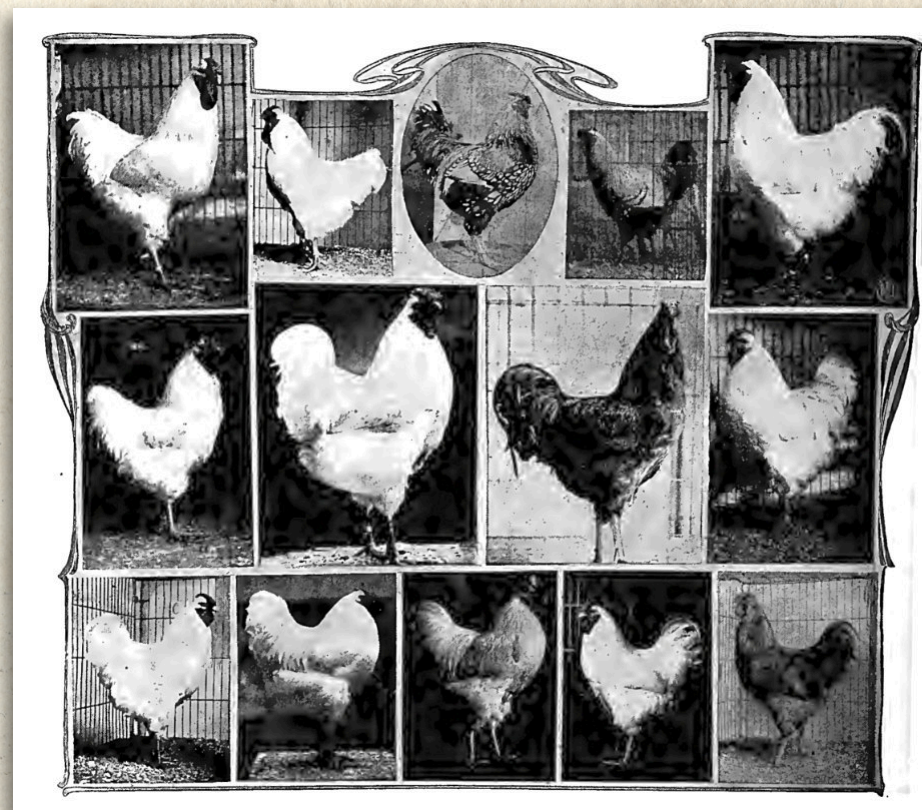


Rocks; in form they are like no other; bodies are very deep and wide, carrying a large amount of the very best quality of flesh. In color, as the name seems to indicate, the breast of the cock and the entire body of the hen much resemble the beautiful white and black of the Silver-laced Sebright Bantams, except that the lacing is broader. Hens' necks are striped like Brahmas', and they have a glossy, green-black tail, a little larger than a Brahma's. The hen has a very low, flat rose-comb. Her weight at maturity is six to eight pounds. The colour of the cocks, except the breast, is much like that of the Dark Brahma; but the form is more like the Dorking. Weight, eight to eleven pounds. Both have, or should have, clean, bright yellow legs, free from feathering. They are very quiet, social birds, excellent layers, sitters and mothers without that inveterate sitting propensity of all Asiatics. The chicks feather early grow plump at six weeks, and are prime for the table after eight weeks old. They are very hardy and healthy, and for general food qualities and purposes I have never raised their equal."

"In September, 1879, Francis Soule writes in the same journal of this breed, calling it the American Sebright, as follows:

"At the last exhibition of the Massachusetts Poultry Association, held in Boston, I called the attention of two of the committee to my fowls, and asked what prospect there was of their being admitted into the Standard. They said they were fine birds, and the breeders of this variety should agree upon the standard. But as long as some want single combs and some rose-combs; some feathered legs and some smooth legs, they cannot agree to admit them."

Mr. Soule further proposes that breeders agree upon rose-combs and





smooth, yellow legs — such fowls, in short, as are shown in our illustration, on page 115."

**Then 37 years later...**

**RELIABLE POULTRY Journal 1919 on the silver black-laced Wyandottes origins there are many other and new accounts from Those Who Know....**

One of the paragraphs is fun regarding the origin of the colour, which we can trace back genetically by now given the 'light' or silver black-columbian, the 'dark' or silver pencilled (Pg) for pencilling and additional black (Ml) to give the single lace. All genes were there ready to be used from Brahma and Cochin as they were 'sorted out' based on comb and colour from the Shangae. The rose comb was sourced elsewhere, perhaps they did use a Hamburg? It wasn't that simple in the past as genetics was not a Thing in the Fancy. Although Davenport published lots on chicken genetics, it didn't spill over to the fancy chicken breeders by lack of social media or practical (for breeding) in donaldduck translations for everyone to understand. Or breeders preferred to believe what their eyes saw resulting in massive numbers of chickens they had to breed to get it 'right'. Here is the fun text of 1919 on the silver black-laced colour of the Wyandotte.

"Nothing new under the sun  
To recapitulate, we have seen that the

Wyandotte, so far from having been a newly composite fowl at the time of its introduction, was undoubtedly a survival of an old type so well fixed as to have endured through repeated outcrosses; so far from being originally comprised in part of Dark Brahma, it is shown to have been already a well-established type when crossed with the stock of fowls out of which the Dark Brahma itself was a selection; so far from having been a descendant of the Hamburg and Sebright bantam, it has been specifically stated by the originators never to have manifested any marks of reversion to them. Upon the other hand, there is strong suggestion of an internal nature that the original Wyandotte may have been descended, through the Breda, from stock out of which the Hamburg itself was derived — the pre-historic Polish, from which the crest had become eliminated.

Indeed, there is nothing new under the sun! The Silver Polish; attractive to a few, a redoubtable egg type of the past, had but to shed its general troubadour make-up, put on a modern headgear and clean-looking skin, and by the combined influence of Malay and Dorking - mutually corrective in build — to assume the true poultry type, distinctly new as to physical exterior, but essentially old of feather pattern and useful traits derived from its composite extraction. This Breda stock was sufficiently prepotent in type; and colour as to have stamped these characteristics upon the clean-legged and yellow-skinned fowls already popular in this country at that early day. Perhaps a

more plausible theory of the source of the "Silver Sebright" is supplied by an old English Fowl known for two centuries or longer as "Mooney" which developed in Lancashire. From having been closely identified with the Hamburg as an outcross to perfect the latter's plumage, the "Mooney" may be regarded as a collateral branch of the Hamburg family. The name "Mooney" seems to have been locally English, and the same type of fowl when bred in America might naturally have taken on a name descriptive of their plumage like the name "Sebright," which has been colloquially used in a popular sense to denote a composite pattern of plumage. Mr. Doubleday in his letter to Mr. Ray, quoted in this chapter, said of the Silver Sebright: "The cocks had the wing-bars of the Wyandottes of today."

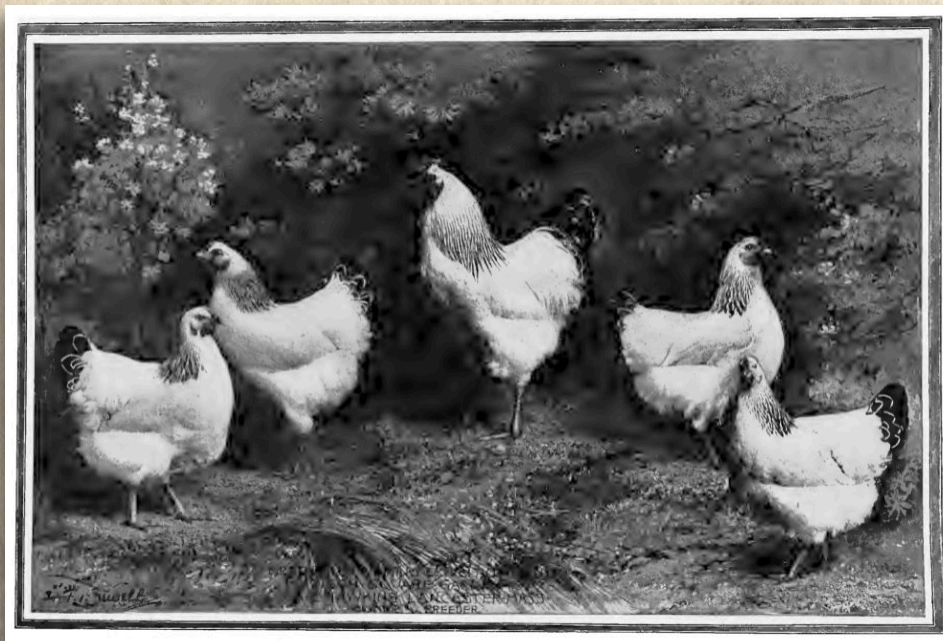
**Where does the name Wyandotte come from?**

**We all know what a Wyandotte is, but not everyone knows the origin of this odd name which has nothing in it that sounds familiar other than the breed we know, to most fanciers. The same issue of the Reliable Poultry Journal 1919 on Wyandottes tells:**

"Derivation of Name (Wyandotte)  
Editor's Note: It is understood that the name of this breed of domestic fowls is derived from that of a once numerous tribe of North American Indians, known in the early days as Wandots, Wiandots, Wayondots, Weyondottes, Wiondots and Wiyandottes, which name finally became Wyandottes. History states that the peninsula between the lakes Huron, Erie and Ontario was occupied by two distinct peoples, speaking dialects of the Iroquois tongue. The Huron or Wyandottes dwelt among the forests which bordered the eastern shores of the fresh water sea, to which they left their name Lake Huron. The Wyandottes were in some measure an agricultural people. The new International Encyclopaedia, Volume XX, says: "Wyandot (properly Wandot or Wendot, of uncertain etymology), or Huron, an important tribe of the, Iroquois stock. The original Wyandotte were known to the French as Huron; this tribe was made up of the Wyandot proper or Huron and the neighbouring cognate Tionontati, who probably outnumbered the Wyandot when the two tribes united in 1650 and abandoned their country to escape the Iroquois."  
The End.

*Sources:*

*Complete poultry book, Thorne 1882  
Reliable poultry Journals on Wyandottes*



Columbian Wyandottes. First prize pen at New York, 1907. A remarkably fine pen, male and females showing the great improvement made in colour of neck and tail. The male and the females to the left also show improvement in type; the females on the right are too long and straight in the back being of the Brahma type.