

THE SEBASTOPOL GOOSE

~ an Anthology

Chapter 4



The Sebastopol Goose in North America and Australia

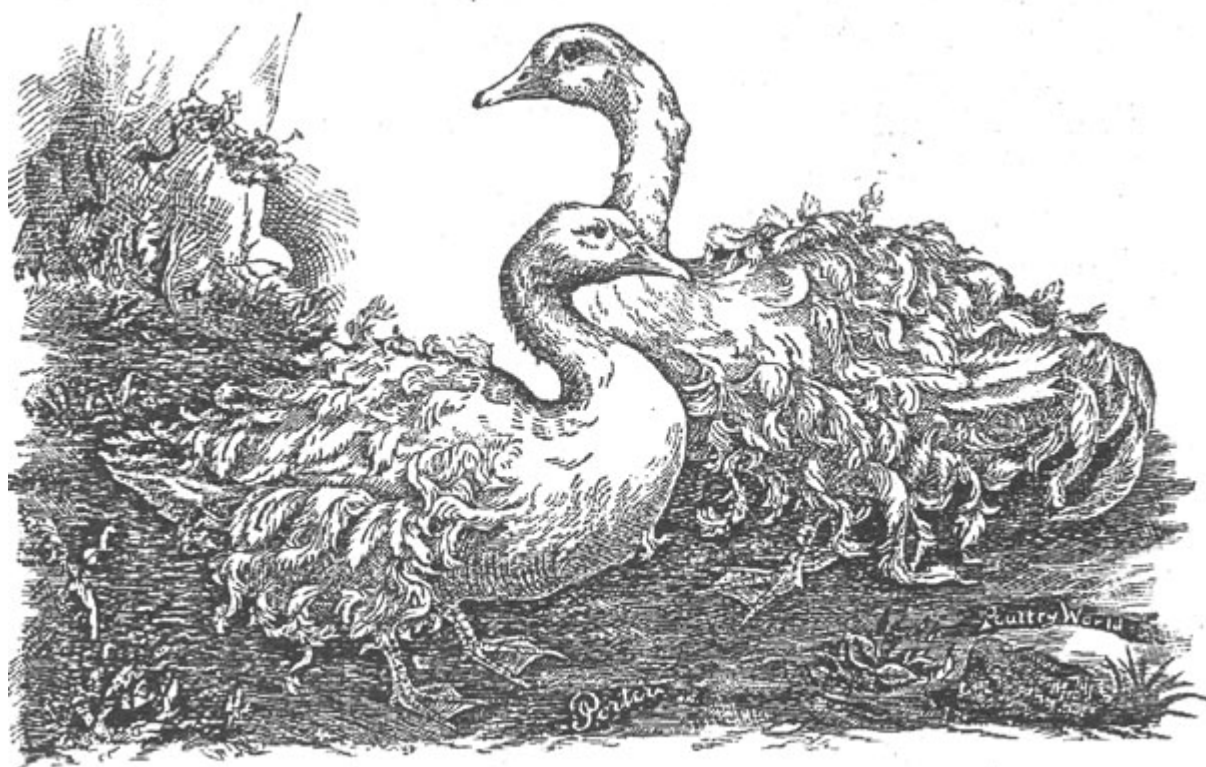
By: Jonathan M. Thompson © February 2013

The Sebastopol Goose in North America

A report of Harvey Bayly's exhibit of Sebastopol Geese at the Crystal Palace in September 1860, appeared in the American poultry press in November of the same year, which reproduced the illustration from *The Illustrated London News* (*vide post*).¹¹

At the New York Poultry Show, which commenced on the 14th December, 1870, all of the major prizes for European Poultry were awarded to exhibitors from Great Britain, and were sold at auction on the 20th December without a reserve price placed on them. Mr. J. C. Cooper, of Cooper Hill, Limerick, Ireland, who had previously been most successful in gaining prizes at the major Irish poultry shows, also won most of the classes at the New York Show. He won not only the President's special prizes for European Poultry, but also many other trophies, which included a 'First' for his Sebastopol Geese.^{13 & 16}

When the breed was exhibited at the Bridgeport Show in 1877, one early comment was that: "those dishevelled feathers, of the Sebastopol geese, look as though their mothers' had been killed in the war, and nobody had cared for them since." In the same year, William Simpson, Jr., presented two Sebastopol Geese to the Central Park Menagerie, New York.¹² Simpson was a well-known pigeon and poultry fancier, and breeder of Jersey cattle and Berkshire pigs on West Farms, Westchester, New York, which he ran with his father; he was elected permanent President of the National Columbarian Society from 1872.³



SEBASTOPOL GEESE.—Bred by C. E. L. HAYWARD, PETERBORO, N. H.

Fig. 1.

A report of 1878 features an illustration (Fig. 1.) that bears a strong resemblance to that which later appears in Charles Cornevin's publication of 1895 (*vide ante*, chapter 3), and states:

Sebastopol Geese

The beautiful but grotesque appearing birds shown in the accompanying engraving, and known, generally, by the above name — although sometimes called the **Danubian Goose** — were bred by C.E.L. Hayward, of Peterboro., N.H., and are very fine specimens of a singular variety. They are, it seems, quite common along the Danube, and appear to be a variety of the common Goose, breeding freely with it, and producing perfectly fertile progeny. The striking peculiarity of these lies in their plumage, which is exceedingly beautiful, a pure white, and somewhat resembling that of the Frizzled fowl, although differing from them greatly, in one respect: whereas, the feathers of the Frizzled fowls are, for the most part, perfectly webbed, and have considerable stiffness, those of the Sebastopol Goose are much more slender and weak, being, perhaps, more like the feathers of the Silkie fowl than those of the Frizzled.

The least breath of wind is sufficient to move the long curling feathers that, in many cases, trail to the ground. And, as will be seen in the engraving, some of the feathers are themselves split, and divided into narrow filaments.

Mr. Hayward certainly deserves great credit for his endeavours to disseminate in this country, this particular and handsome variety of goose, which came originally, we believe, from the Black Sea. ^{17.}

Mr. Hayward was an importer and breeder of all types of land- and water-fowl; and he later advertised to obtain specimens of the breed in 1887. ^{14.}

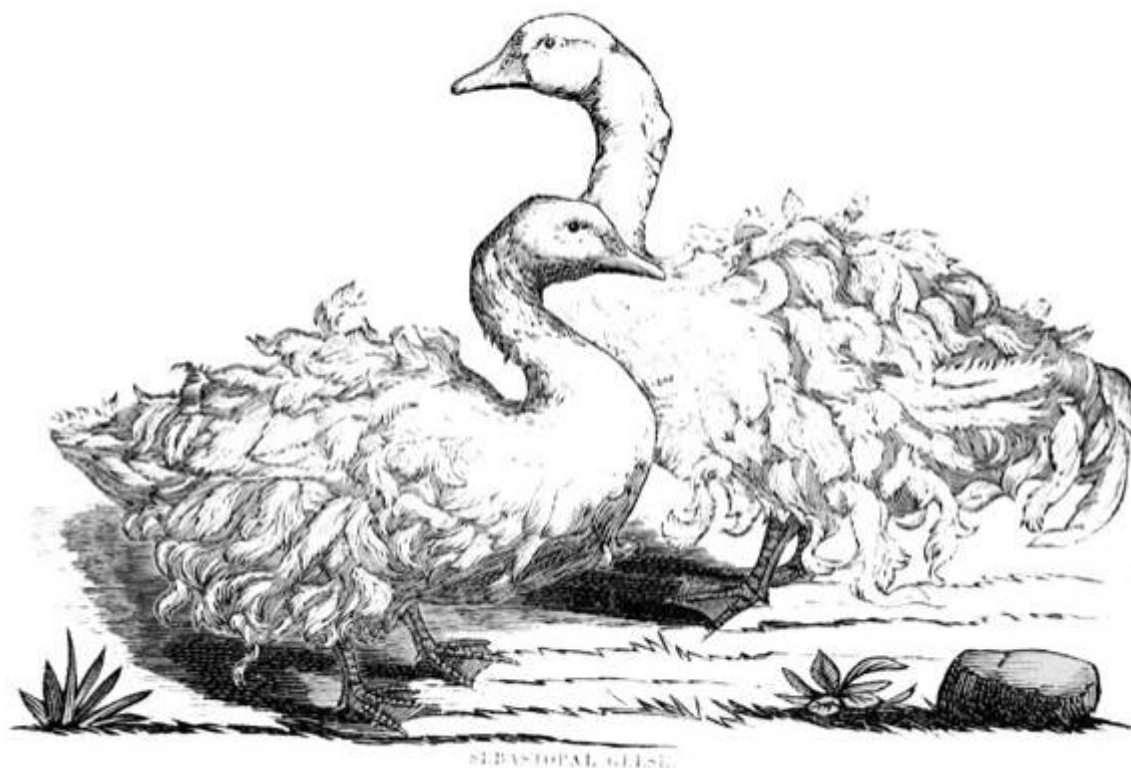


Fig. 2.

The above illustration re-appears, tidied-up, (Fig. 2.) in 1882 with the text:

This goose is remarkable for its peculiar curled plumage, which is best represented in the cut than it can be by verbal description. In size the Sebastopol goose is small, its chief merit being its oddity. In colour it is pure white.

It was first exhibited in England in 1860, by Mr. T. H. D. Bayly, who imported it from Sebastopol. In this country it is sometimes called the Danubian goose and is said to be common along the Danube. ^{19.}

In this work there is no hesitation in giving 'Sebastopol' as the place of origin.

A further import of two Sebastopol Geese "from London" (presumably the Zoological Society) was received by the Zoological Society of Philadelphia in May 1879. ^{21.}

The 1878 / 1882 illustrations (Figs. 1. & 2.) are most probably drawn from specimens of the breed as it was found in America at that time.

In 1894 the following article appears with a sketch of a Sebastopol Goose (Fig. 3.):

SEBASTOPOL GEESE
They Have a Most Beautiful Plumage and Rounded Bodies.

The Sebastopol goose resembles the Embden or German races in shape, although the former is possessed of a little more elegance of form, and is perhaps more swanlike. It is found in nearly all the colours which the German geese show, white and gray, or white alone. The pure white are probably considered the most handsome, and are the only ones sent to purchasers paying high figures, but

those with gray upon them would be just as attractive. The distinguishing features in the Sebastopol geese are the long, ribbon-like plumes which grow above the wing bar. These graceful feathers lend a very aristocratic look to their possessors as the wind waves them when the birds are standing, or when floating back upon the water's surface as the birds swim. The city on the Black sea, near which they are found, gives their name. That portrayed here was sketched in the Jardin d' Acclimatation of Paris. The habits of the Sebastopol geese are those of the ordinary breed, and they combine the useful with the ornamental in their beautiful plumage and rounded bodies.¹⁵

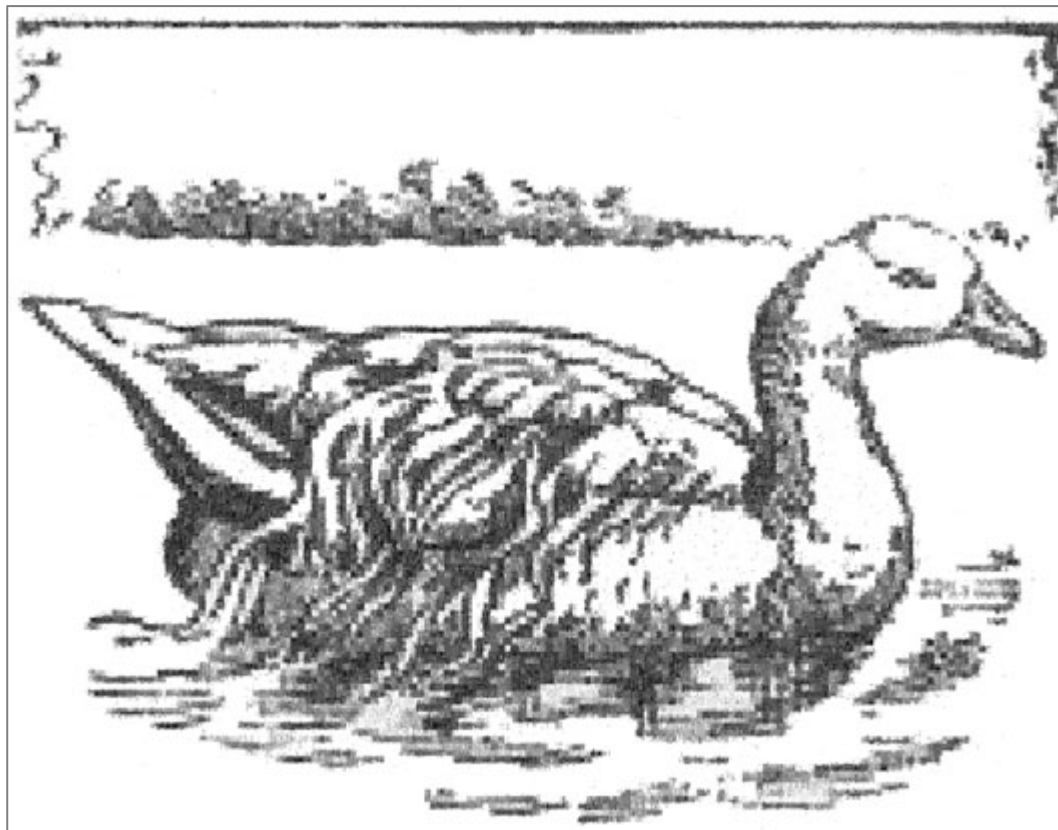


Fig. 3.

The American edition of Harrison Weir's book, *Our Poultry*, entitled *The Poultry Book* (1905), states that the Sebastopol Geese in the USA were very rare, and had been experiencing difficulties with fertility until a Mr. Smith, of New York, mated them to Embden Geese to impart additional vigour; the progeny from the first cross was mated back to the parent line, producing extremely good results.²⁰ This probably accounts for the change in the beak-colour from rosy-orange to the orange and the slight increase of weights, when compared with the original birds.

Sebastopol Geese are mentioned by the experienced poultry-writer, John Henry Robinson, as being quite scarce in the USA in the early 1900's, and he presents the illustration from the British newspaper, *The Daily Mail* (1905), as: "*Sebastopol Geese on an English farm*" (1913) ~ Lord Alington's farm, in fact (v.a.) ~ and the same illustration, once again, as a "*Flock of White Sebastopol Geese*" (1924).^{8 & 9.}

In his work specifically on ducks and geese (1924), Robinson presents images of a Sebastopol Gander (Fig.4.) and a Goose (Fig.5.), but does not state the provenance of the photographs; which is unusual, as elsewhere, Robinson fully attributes the images taken from other sources.^{10.}

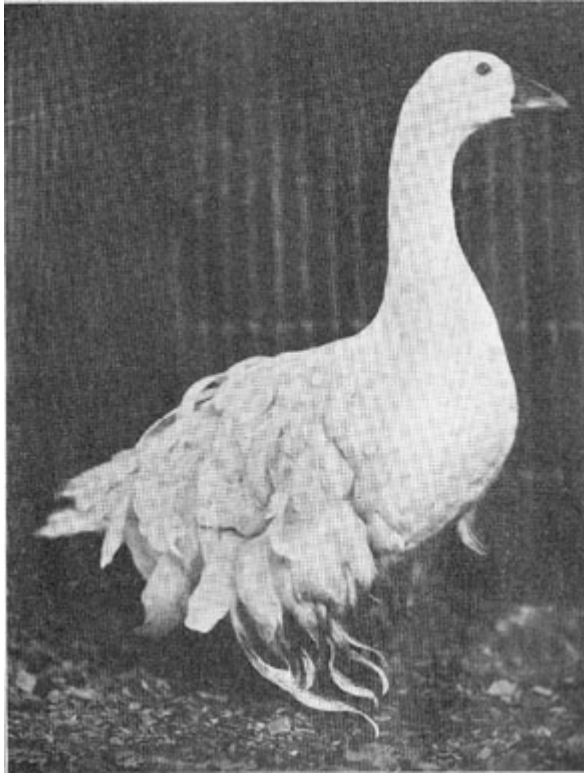


Fig. 4

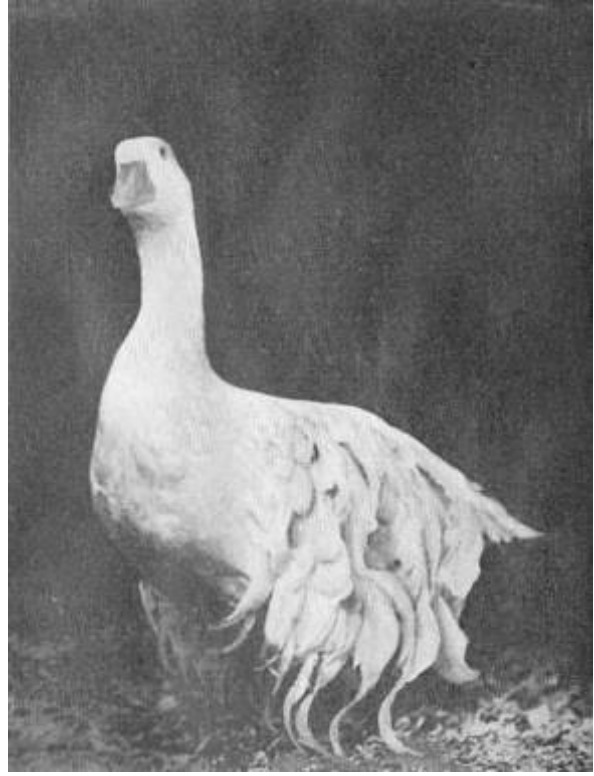


Fig. 5.

The Sebastopol Goose was still rare in the USA when Morley Jull wrote an article for *The National Geographic Magazine* in 1930, which was, at that period, not recognised as a standard breed in the United States. The illustration (Fig. 6.) by Hashime Murayama depicts two geese; one shows breast-feathers that are obvious curled and the other smooth-breasted with curled feathers over its back and sides.⁵ This illustration appears to be the first to depict the breed displaying curled breast-feathers; all previous depictions are of birds with smooth breasts and trailing plumage falling from their shoulders and backs.



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EGYPTIAN AND SEBASTOPOL GESE

Painting from Life by Hashime Murayama

The Egyptian breed is a replica of the wild species originally found in northern Africa and along the lower Nile. The Sebastopol goose is noted for its peculiar feathering, giving the plumage over the body a wavy appearance.

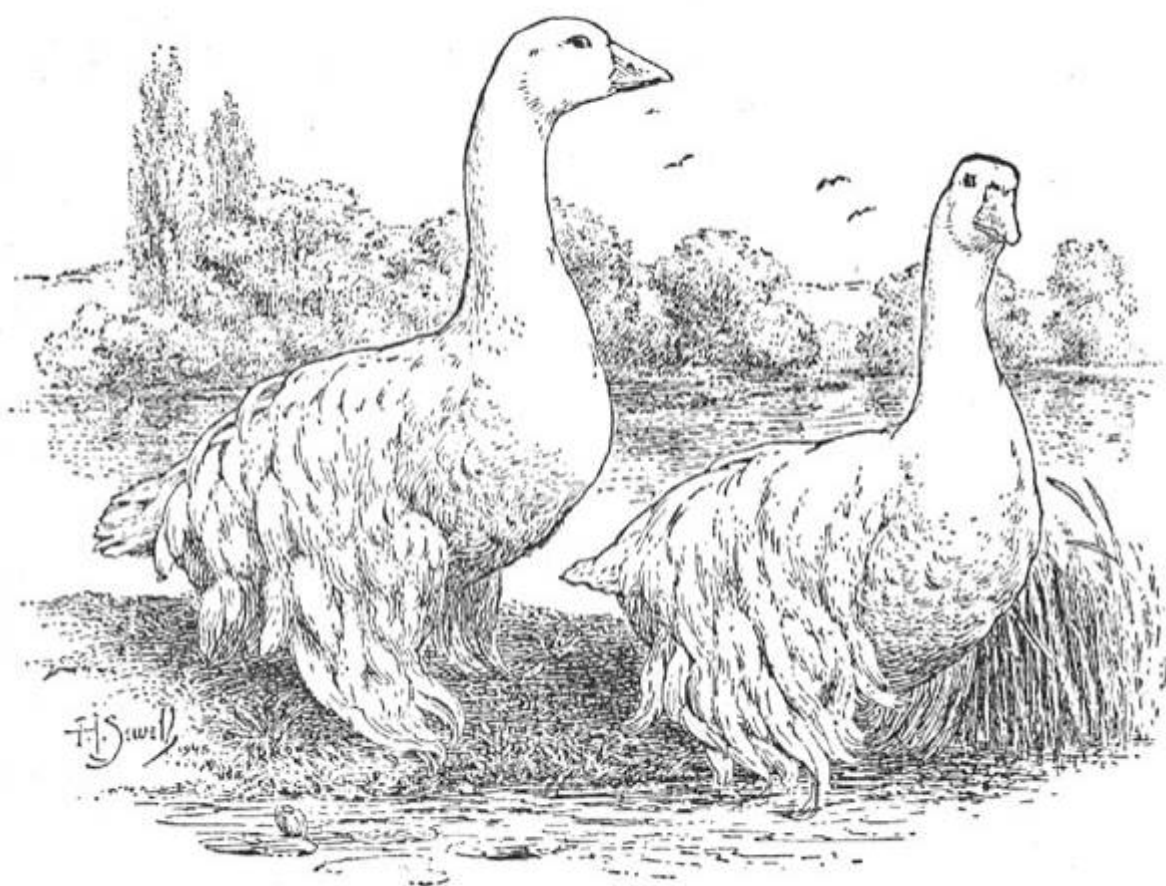
Fig. 6.

The Sebastopol Goose was accepted to the American Standard in 1938, but only in its all-over curly type; the smooth-breasted, trailing-feathered type was not accepted or had been over-looked in the selection process. That Standard fundamentally remains in place to the present day.

Some ten years on from the breed being standardised in the USA, another American writer on poultry, Paul Ives, says of them:

Snow white in color with blue eyes and bright orange bill and legs and feet and long, curved plumes hanging from back and sides, sometimes reaching the ground, and the short feathers of the front and under belly curled closely, . .

Ives description follows the accepted standard, but the illustration (Fig. 7.), drawn by Franklane L. Sewell, shows the smooth-breasted, trailing-feathered type; with the figure of the goose reversed from Robinson's (1924) photographs (*vide ante*) ~ in contradiction to the printed standard.⁴



A pair of Sebastopol Geese. Original drawing by Franklane L. Sewell.

Fig. 7.

In the years that followed the Standardisation of the Sebastopol Goose in America, the breed fell into a decline; although not 'rare', the breed was in few hands and the quality of the birds was questionable.

However, from the mid 1950's, W.C.(Bill) Garber at his Sunniholme Yards, Simcoe, Ontario, Canada, worked with specimens of the breed and thoughtfully line-bred them into the most remarkable specimens of the over-all curly type to be found anywhere; in recognition of his efforts he was named as the International Waterfowl Breeder's Association's '*Waterfowl Person of the Year, 1979*'.

In 1976, some of Bill Garber's birds found their way into the hands of a number of dedicated breeders in the USA. By sharing their knowledge and their birds amongst one-another, and adhering to the policy of line-breeding established by Mr. Garber, the breed experienced an up-turn in its fortunes. Today, truly outstanding representatives of the breed are to be found and continue to flourish in North America.

The following is reproduced from the International Waterfowl Breeders Association's publication of 2010 by kind permission of Dave Kozakiewicz (USA).

Fondly remembering
W. C. "Bill" Garber
Simcoe, Ontario, Canada



William Garber and his Sebastopol goose, Sebastian III, have a heart to heart talk in the back yard. Mr. Garber says Sebastian is his best goose, having the longest and curliest feathers of all his birds. (Staff

Bill was the kindest and humblest of men. He bred a number of varieties of exceptional poultry at his Sunniholme Yards over the years but it was his Sebastopols that had his heart and ongoing dedication. He bred and exhibited for the sheer fun of it, but his Sebastopols took the waterfowl world by storm and became the stuff of legend. His homebred exhibits won Grand Champion Goose and even Grand Champion Waterfowl at such prestigious shows as the CNE, Toronto's Royal Winter Fair and the old Ohio National. Bill's birds were regarded "by unanimous acclaim as the very best strain in North America".

The quality of the birds and the man himself led to his being
IWBA Waterfowl person of the Year, 1979

The "Danubian" Goose in Australia

Under the name of "Danubian Geese", the breed was first imported into Australia in the early 1860's by Mr. Edward Wilson of Arundel Farm and Riddell's Creek, Keilor, Melbourne, and formerly of Hampstead, London, England.

In 1841 Edward Wilson, at the age of 28, left Britain hoping to improve his fortune in Australia. He arrived at Sydney and sometime after settled in Melbourne, where he became a co-proprietor and editor of the *Argus* newspaper; which was to eventually bring him a very large fortune as annual net profits rose to £22,000 by 1872.

On retiring from the *Argus* in 1856, he set up as a model gentleman-farmer, purchasing Arundel Farm, Keilor, near Melbourne, and pursued his interest as an acclimatisation enthusiast, importing species from all over the world to be trialled or released; the stock being cared for by his overseer, John Wilson Anderson.

His sight began to fail, and in 1859-60 he visited England for advice, travelled in Europe and served on the committee of the General Association for the Australian Colonies. It is probable that, while in Europe, Edward Wilson visited the Jardin d'Acclimatation in Paris, where he would have encountered *l'Oie Frisée du Danube*.

On returning to Melbourne, in February 1861, Wilson became a founding member of the Victorian Acclimatisation Society, which was an offshoot of the Victorian Zoological Society, and was largely responsible for the foundation of parallel societies in the other colonies and of nine Victorian branches. Edward Wilson was its first President and forged links with the Jardin d'Acclimatation in Paris, creating a reciprocal arrangement for the exchange of all manner of live specimens; he held the position of President until he relinquished that office in 1864.

In that year the Société Imperiale Zoologique d'Acclimatation (Imperial Acclimatisation Society) of France awarded him with a gold medal: "*in recognition of his indefatigable labours in the cause of acclimatisation.*"¹⁸

1864 was also the first year in which "Danubian Geese" appeared at poultry shows in Australia; firstly at the Victorian Poultry Society's 3rd Annual Exhibition, held at St. George's Hall, Bourkes Street, Melbourne on the 4th August. The *Argus* reports:

For common geese, Mr. E. Wilson took the first prize for a pair with which there was no competition, but they were, nevertheless, first class in character, and of remarkable weight. Toulouse and Danubian geese, exhibited by the same gentleman, were also prize-takers. The former have been seen at previous shows. Their principal merit it is their enormous size, and we are glad to hear that they are breeding. The Danubian geese are more of a fancy sort, for their plumage is grotesque, hanging about them in ribbons. They were imported by the exhibitor.¹

Edward Wilson most probably obtained his "Danubian Geese" from the Jardin d'Acclimatation, as any such geese being sent from England would be known by the name "Sebastopol Geese".

Another report on the Show states: There were only three exhibits of geese, which comprised a pair of the Danubian species — only remarkable from the circumstance of the feathers on the back being all awry.²

However, Edward Wilson did not personally attend these shows. In 1862 he again went to England; on the return voyage his sight deteriorated so badly that he returned to England immediately, and late in 1864 he had an operation for cataracts; he regained good vision in one eye, but decided to remain in England close to the best medical aid.



Above: Sebastopol geese. Breeder and photographer: Dave Kozakiewicz (USA).

He initially lived at Addiscombe near Croydon, but in 1867 he bought Hayes Place, Kent, the eighteenth-century home of the Pitt family. Surrounded by nephews and nieces he dispensed endless hospitality, aided by a small army of servants; the amenities included a small zoo which contained emus, kangaroos and monkeys. Colonial visitors were always welcome; he was on close terms with the Darwins, Archbishop Tait, Edward Lear and Hugh Childers.

As he intended to remain in England, in 1867 Edward Wilson gave instructions for dispersal sales of all his possessions and live stock in Australia to take place; and his overseer, John Anderson, set about advertising the sale of the Toulouse Geese and six pairs of "Danubian Geese" ~ "from stock introduced into the colony by Mr. Wilson, and which have always taken prizes." ¹.

In the autumn of 1867, H.R.H. Prince Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh (2nd son of Queen Victoria and at that time 2nd in line to the British throne) made the first visit to Australia by a member of the British Royal Family, attending an enormous number of official engagements during his stay. ⁶.

On the 27th November Prince Alfred attended the Grand Annual Exhibition staged by the Port Phillip Farmers' Society, held at Brunswick, Melbourne. All manner of farming implements and farm live stock were on view from 26th – 28th November, and although the presence of the Prince attracted vast crowds, the Society was

in financial difficulties and was wound-up that year; eventually to re-surface in 1890 as the present Royal Agricultural Society of Victoria.²

The poultry exhibit was reported to have been low in both entries and in quality; however, those birds that did gain a prize were considered deserving. Mr. Edward Wilson's "Toulouse Geese" and "Danubian Geese", under the supervision of John Anderson, were among the prize winners.⁷

The following spring, while attending a charity picnic in suburb of Sidney, Prince Alfred survived being shot in the back in an assassination attempt; the would-be assassin was duly hanged.

Mr. Anderson's husbandry had been very efficient, for ten pairs of "Danubian Geese" were offered for sale in 1869.¹



**Left and below:
Sebastopol geese. Breeder and
photographer: Dave Kozakiewicz
(USA).**



Within a year of the cessation of the transportation of convicts to Western Australia (1869), the importation foreign species had also stopped and the Society began displaying exotic animals in its gardens. In 1872 the society's title changed to 'The Zoological and Acclimatisation Society of Victoria'; and in 1910 it was granted a Royal charter.

During its period of activity (1861- 1869), the Acclimatisation Society imported and released dozens of alien species into Australia in a quite indiscriminate fashion; European Sparrows to Arabian Camels were tried ~ the rabbit, in particular, flourished and many European song-birds became a considerable nuisance to fruit farmers.

In England, after several heart attacks, Edward Wilson died peacefully at Hayes Place, Kent, on 10 January 1878. His remains were taken to Melbourne and interred on 7 July according to the rites of the Church of England. He was unmarried, and in his will he made twenty-six legacies of £100 a year to long-standing female friends in the colonies; but the bulk of his estate was used to form the Edward Wilson Trust which, since his death, has distributed several million dollars to Victorian charities, especially hospitals. A bust by Thomas Woolner stands in the State Library of Victoria.

In present-day Australia the breed is referred to by the name of "Sebastopol Goose".

Summary

1860: The Sebastopol Goose had not been described in Western Europe until a pair is sent to England from the port of that name on the Crimea Peninsula; it arrives on English shores in 1860 and is exhibited at the Crystal Palace Poultry Show in the September of that year by T. H. D. (Harvey) Bayley.

These birds are white, smooth-breasted, with trailing feathers from the shoulders and back, with reddish-pink beaks and feet.

The breed also appears in Paris in 1860, under the name "Danubian Geese"; and was also known as the "Turkish Goose", after its donor.

From the 1860's, onwards, the breed is to be found in collections across most of Europe.

1863: Representatives of the breed had probably made their way to Ireland at about the same or earlier period, as they appeared at Irish Shows from 1863 under the name "Danubian Geese".

1864: The breed reaches Australia by 1864, in all probability sent from Paris, under the name "Danubian Goose", when it was exhibited by Edward Wilson.

1870: In 1870 the breed is sent from Ireland, under the name of "Sebastopol Goose", to be exhibited in America at the New York Poultry Show.

1870-71: The specimens that had prospered in Paris are eaten by the populous.

1879: Further specimens arrive in Philadelphia, USA.

1885: The breed re-appears at the Jardin d'Acclimatation, Paris.

1938: The over-all curly type of the breed is accepted into the American Poultry Association Standards.

1947: Both types of the breed appear in the German Poultry Standards.

1982: The over-all curly type is accepted to the British Poultry Club Standards.

1985: The smooth-breasted, trailing-feathered type is accepted to the British Waterfowl Association Standards.

1997: Both types of the breed appear in the British Poultry Club Standards.



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