



D.M. Ferry Company

In 1852, Dexter Mason Ferry left New York and came to Detroit to earn money for college. He was hired to keep the books for a seed company and by 1856 he was a partner in the newly named company, Gardner, Ferry, & Church. It was not long before it became D.M. Ferry and Company. His seed company sought to encourage home gardening. D.M. Ferry was one of the first companies to package seeds and sell them in stores guaranteeing fresh seeds, ones right for the vicinity, every year. The packages included assortments of vegetable and flower seeds. The company experimented with seeds to improve existing ones and also to introduce new varieties.

In 1902, the D.M. Ferry and Company of Detroit needed more room for experimentation so it bought 568 acres of land in Avon Township. The seeds were harvested and bred in Avon Township and then sent to warehouses in Detroit where they were tested for germination. The seeds were then shipped to farmers across the U.S. and also Canada, England, France, and Japan. Newspapers, such as *The Rochester Era*, were excited about the possibilities the company would bring reporting, "[A]s during the active season several hundred will be employed...at least one hundred all the time, and as the land lays along the trolley, Rochester will derive great benefit thereby."



In 1913, D.M. Ferry purchased an additional 113 acres north of Hamlin Road, moving the Detroit experimental and trial gardens to Rochester. It was also during this time that most of the farm buildings, greenhouses, boarding houses, and rental houses for married workers and their families were built, all on the north side of Hamlin Road. The large horse barns, implement barns, and open-air drier were built on the south side of Hamlin. By 1923, the farm grew to 850 acres adding a large sheep feeding farm, hay barn, and seven silos. In 1929, D.M. Ferry merged with the C.C. Morse Company of San

Francisco forming the Ferry-Morse Seed Company of Detroit and San Francisco.

By 1940, with the increase in population and home gardens near the seed company, problems with cross-contamination occurred. The sheep barn was rented for a brief time to the Boots and Saddle Club (1939) and the hay barn burned down killing several horses (also in 1939). In 1940, a plane from Selfridge crashed into the farm while doing maneuvers, killing the pilot. By 1944, operations were suspended. About 640 acres south of Hamlin was sold to Howard McGregor, owner of the National Twist Drill and Avent Oaks Stock Farm, which is now presently Hampton Golf Course. Land north of Hamlin became Christian Memorial Cemetery. The Ferry-Morse Seed Company is now located in Fulton, Kentucky.

