

Brighton's Nurseries

The city of Rochester was dubbed the "Flower City" because of the many nurseries headquartered there. Indeed, the city had a world-wide reputation for being the source of fine plants and seeds. The trees and shrubs that we so admire today had their origins in the mid-nineteenth century.

Although not the first on the scene, George Ellwanger and Patrick Barry had perhaps the most famous establishment, the Mount Hope Garden and Nurseries, located in the town of Brighton. Both were experienced horticulturists when they began their partnership in 1840 and by 1843 had published their first catalogue featuring apple, pear, and apricot trees. In 1847, they donated fifty shade trees to the city for planting in Mount Hope Cemetery, creating a park-like atmosphere in a formerly neglected municipal burying ground. By 1859, Ellwanger & Barry owned over three hundred acres in the town of Brighton where they grew nursery stock that was shipped throughout the United States and to Europe.

In 1825 Electus Boardman established his Genesee Nursery on East Avenue near Goodman Street and specialized in forty varieties of apple trees. James and William Babcock grew nursery plants on their 125-acre farm on Clover Street. Later, William's son, A. Emerson Babcock, advertised apples, pears, and peaches grown on the same farm, "The Chestnuts." Emerson became the town supervisor of Brighton in addition to farming and horticultural consultation.

Other Brighton nurserymen were Jerome and Stanley Todd at the Railroad Farm on Clover Street near Monroe Avenue, specializing in fruit and garden vegetables; apple-grower Henry Peck at the Twelve Corners; and J. Frank Norris at Brighton Village, advertising himself in 1905 as an importer, grower, and dealer of all varieties of nursery stock.

Charles J. Brown founded Brown Brothers Continental Nurseries in 1894 on land purchased from Stephen Corwin on Winton Road and Atlantic Avenue. Diverting Thomas Creek as it flowed north from East Avenue, Charles Brown created a pond that was home to ducks in summer and ice skaters in winter. The nursery buildings included a columned office building and a stone warehouse that provided cold storage for nursery stock. The company specialized in fruit and ornamental trees. By 1914 Brown founded the Browncroft Realty Corporation and devoted 300 acres of his land for the development of residential lots.

Rochester may be the "Flower City" but Brighton's nurseries supplied the plants and trees and seeds that contributed to the nickname. The "flowers that bloom in the spring – tra-la" came from Brighton!

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