

THOMAS D. SHERFICK AND HIS INDIANA DAHLIA FARM

Boyhood Hobby Brings Good Fortune

By Henry S. Wood

Indianapolis Star, Indianapolis Indiana, Oct 17th, Agricultural Page

Five years ago a boy, who grew up in the Lost River district of southern Indiana, went to Loogootee to attend the county fair, the first time such an opportunity had come to him. He had never seen a railroad train before, so with a dollar in his pocket to spend he anticipated a great day.

Back in the hills he had been nicknamed "Grandmother," because he spent most of his time making flower beds. His father often punished him because he would not quit the flower bed to do other work.

Early in the morning he reached the town in which the fair was being held. He went to a photograph shop to see pictures made of his school in the hills. The photographer, knowing the boy's interest in flowers, handed him a florist's magazine.

This ended the fair as far as the boy was concerned. He took the magazine, quit the crowds and the noise of the ballyhooing and spent the day perusing it. Upon learning that he could insert an advertisement in the magazine, he bought a stamped envelope and mailed the balance of the dollar to the magazine for an advertisement offering flower tubers and plants for sale or exchange. Without spending a nickel at the fair, not even for dinner, he walked over the hills to his home, anxiously waiting for a reply from his advertisement.

\$100,000 Worth

This boy was Thomas D. Sherfick, manager and owner of the Indiana dahlia farm. This farm is one of the largest in the middle west, if not in the entire United States. This year he has produced approximately \$100,000 worth of tubers and flowers. His business is so extensive that he spends \$8,000 a year for magazine advertising and \$6,000 for catalogues.

Shortly after inserting his first advertisement, Sherfick began to receive inquiries. In all, forty-two different ones came. As a result, he sold \$14 worth of flowers from his yard and made a number of valuable exchanges.

When Sherfick's father saw that the young florist could sell \$14 worth of tubers from a small plot in a corner of the yard, he allowed him to use three acres for the purpose of growing flowers. The next year young Sherfick went into the business more extensively and mailed leaflets describing his variety of bulbs, tubers, and plants for sale.

A banker became interested in the flowers that Sherfick grew. He made the young man a loan of \$900 to extend his business. His business has grown so fast that in less than six years after he inserted the first advertisement, he has bought a twenty-acre farm entirely covered with dahlias.

1,000 Varieties

Sherfick's farm is within a few miles of New Albany. There he is growing 1,500 different varieties of dahlias, the largest number grown by any florist in the world. It is a beautiful scene to see acres of flowers of every color.

Sherfick gathers the blossoms and sells them in Louisville and Chicago, the sale being only a small part of the dahlia business. The major part is the sale of tubers. Each tuber will reproduce about three-fold a year. The tubers range in price from 15 cents to \$50 each. Sherfick averages about \$1 each for his tubers. In the fall the tubers are dug and placed in a large storeroom, each variety placed in a bin by itself.

Sherfick considers his business as having an unlimited field. He has observed that a large percent of the homes in the country have no flowers. This has given him faith in the extension of his business.

Sherfick has found that dahlias will grow on poor clay ground and produce a more beautiful blossom than when grown on fertile soil. His soil is clay.

This young florist seems to have an inherent love for flowers and it makes him happy to know that he can make money while doing the thing he likes to do best.

The exact same article above was reprinted in a local paper with this opening paragraph:

The following article concerning former Lost River township boy, Thomas D. Sherfick, and his Indiana Dahlia Farm is reprinted from the agricultural page of the Indianapolis Star of Oct 17, in which it was accompanied by pictures of Mr. and Mrs. Sherfick and view of their twenty-acre field of dahlias.

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