

A History of Dreer's Nursery

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| <p>1.</p> | <p>Presenting tonight for your enjoyment a slide presentation of historical images and information...</p> <p>(click for Presenter...John McCormick)</p> <p>That's me, John McCormick, your presenter.</p> <p>I am a member of the Historical Society of Riverton, I serve on the Board of the Society, and I am editor of the Society's newsletter, The Gaslight News. Some of you may know me from my teaching days at Riverton School. I retired in 2009.</p> <p>(click to advance to next slide)</p> |
| <p>2.</p> | <p>(click for An Overview)</p> <p>The local nursery industry called Dreer's will be outlined...</p> <p>(click for History)</p> <p>Including a short history of its operations...</p> <p>(click for Garden Book color plates)</p> <p>... a slide show of some of the artistic illustrations used in their Garden Book catalogs...</p> <p>(click for Postcards)</p> <p>...and a glimpse at some of the postcards with which Dreer used to advise customers that their orders had been shipped.</p> <p>(click to advance to next slide)</p> |
| <p>3.</p> | <p>(click to show caption and picture)</p> <p>Henry Dreer's parents were German immigrants who were married in America at the end of the 18th century.</p> <p>(click to advance to next slide)</p> |
| <p>4.</p> | <p>(click to show caption and picture)</p> <p>Young Henry was fond of gathering seeds and would bring them home to cultivate, even as he was being trained in his father's cabinetmaker business.</p> <p>(click to advance to next slide)</p> |
| <p>5.</p> | <p>(click to show caption and picture)</p> <p>When he was 20 years of age in 1838 he began a small seed and florist enterprise named Hirst & Dreer with his partner at 59 Chestnut Street in Philadelphia.</p> <p>(click to advance to next slide)</p> |
| <p>6.</p> | <p>(click to show caption and picture)</p> <p>His first catalog was a simple two page price list in black and white with no illustrations.</p> <p>(click to advance to next slide)</p> |
| <p>7.</p> | <p>(click to show caption and picture)</p> <p>The partnership lasted only two years with Mr. Dreer assuming sole management of the firm. Within a decade, operations had expanded significantly and Dreer opened a larger store at 59 Chestnut St.</p> <p>(click to advance to next slide)</p> |

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| <p>8.</p> | <p>(click to show caption and picture) Business increased, and in 1863 Dreer moved into a larger store at his third Chestnut Street location. (click to advance to next slide)</p> |
| <p>9.</p> | <p>(click to show caption and picture) The Dreer name became synonymous with the highest standards of quality, selection, service, and integrity. (click to advance to next slide)</p> |
| <p>10.</p> | <p>(click to show first caption) Thirty years later, presumably, the business has outgrown two previous Chestnut Street addresses and the company published this 4 page Dreer's Horticultural Circular which offered a wide variety of bulbs, seeds, books, agricultural products, and implements. This one, too, is a simple black and white catalog without illustrations. (click to show inside pages) (click to show back page) (click to advance to next slide)</p> |
| <p>11.</p> | <p>(click to show first caption) In 1868, Henry A. Dreer published this four page Autumn Horticultural Circular. (click to advance to next slide)</p> |
| <p>12.</p> | <p>(click to show first caption) It offered a wide variety of bulbs, seeds, books, agricultural products, and implements. (click to fade caption and advance to next slide)</p> |
| <p>13.</p> | <p>(click to show first caption) (click to show inside pages) (click to show back page) (click to advance to next slide)</p> |
| <p>14.</p> | <p>(click to show caption and ad) Dreer catalogs, known as Dreer Garden Books or Garden Calendars, became more than simply price lists... (click to advance to next slide)</p> |
| <p>15.</p> | <p>(click to show caption and Garden Calendar cover) ...but rather gardening magazines complete with detailed descriptions, engravings and color plates, and planting and cultivating tips.</p> |
| <p>16.</p> | <p>(click to show caption and color plate) Later catalogs used signed artists at a time when other competitors' catalogs used simpler unsigned illustrations.</p> |

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| 17. | (click to show caption and color plate) This image was done by Alois Lunzer, an Austrian-born watercolor painter born in 1840. (click to advance to next slide) |
| 18. | (click to show caption and picture) From 1839-1850, the Dreer nursery was on the estate of William Hamilton, known as "The Woodlands" in Philadelphia, now a National Historic Landmark. (click to advance to next slide) |
| 19. | (click to show caption and picture) Later, his six small greenhouses were at 35th Street for twenty-three years until 1873 when they were moved to three hundred acres at Riverton, New Jersey. (click to advance to next slide) |
| 20. | (click to show caption and photo of founder) His son William F. Dreer entered the business in 1868 and, upon his father's death in 1873, took over business affairs in Philadelphia and Riverton, New Jersey. (Wait for photo of Wm. F. Dreer to appear before clicking to advance to next slide) |
| 21. | ((click to show caption) William F. Dreer made numerous trips to foreign countries to study growing methods and to establish relationships with foreign seedhouses. He was an active member of the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, treasurer from 1887-1888 and from 1898-1899. (click to advance to next slide) |
| 22. | (click to show caption) In 1892, he formed a corporation and permitted heads of departments to become stockholders. In 1924, he oversaw the company's move into an eight-story building at 1306 Spring Garden Street, Philadelphia. (click to advance to next slide) |
| 23. | (click to show caption) He had extensive private gardens at his three residences in Rosemont, Pennsylvania, Santa Barbara, California, and Woodstock, Vermont. He died in Vermont, September 8, 1918. (click to advance to next slide) |
| 24. | (click to show caption and photo) Generations of local residents worked in the greenhouses, nurseries, and experimental grounds which would become Riverton's major industry. (click to advance to next slide) |
| 25. | (click to show caption and photo) Some residents can still recall the ten acres of greenhouses, vast fields of trial grounds, and families whose economic well-being depended upon Dreer's. (click to advance to next slide)(click to advance to next slide) |

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| 26. | <p>(click to show caption)</p> <p>This 1876 map detail shows the location of Dreer Nurseries but offers few particulars.</p> <p>(click to show Cinnaminson map)</p> <p>(click to show detail of Cinnaminson map)</p> <p>(click to fade all and advance to next slide)</p> |
| 27. | <p>(click to show caption)</p> <p>At about this time, Dreer Nurseries created floral displays for the nation's Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia.</p> <p>(click to fade all and advance to next slide)</p> |
| 28. | <p>(click to show map and caption)</p> <p>This 1886 map detail shows the Henry A. Dreer Seed Farm situated between the Pompeston Creek, Fulton Street, and the Delaware River and the railroad tracks.</p> <p>(click to fade all and advance to next slide)</p> |
| 29. | <p>(click to show caption)</p> <p>This bird's-eye view map of Riverton from 1890 shows more development of the grounds over the 1876 map including more greenhouses.</p> <p>(click to fade caption and show 1890 Riverton map-wait for closeup of 1890 Riverton map)</p> <p>(click to fade all and advance to next slide)</p> |
| 30. | <p>(click to show caption)</p> <p>A writer in the April 1892 issue of the Gardener's Monthly and Horticulturalist magazine indicated that "the extensive establishment of H. A. Dreer, at Riverton, N.J." used two coal-fired locomotive boilers which were adapted for heating its ten hundred-foot-long greenhouses.</p> <p>(click to fade all and advance to next slide)</p> |
| 31. | <p>(click to show caption)</p> <p>The following index to the 1919 Sanborn map of Riverton refers us to section 13 of the map for more details on Dreer's.</p> <p>(click to fade all and advance to next slide)</p> |
| 32. | <p>Pause to look at map. (click to fade all and advance to next slide)</p> |
| 33. | <p>(click to show caption)</p> <p>The following detail of a 1919 Sanborn map of Riverton reveals the extensive grounds of Dreer's.</p> <p>(click to fade all and advance to next slide)</p> |
| 34. | <p>(click to show caption and first catalog page)</p> <p>The company would grow to have nurseries in at least eleven countries, and was once the world's largest grower of roses.</p> |
| 35. | <p>The first patented plant in the world was 'New Dawn', introduced by Henry Dreer in 1930. It would figure in the parentage of over a dozen other patented roses.</p> <p>(click to fade all and advance to next slide)</p> |

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| 36. | <p>(click to show caption and first catalog page)</p> <p>You can still find patented Dreer roses on properties of Riverton homeowners today.</p> <p>(click to fade all and advance to next slide)</p> |
| 37. | <p>(click to show caption)</p> <p>(click thru to show sequence of cards)</p> <p>These are the types of postal cards which would be sent to customers advising them that their order had been shipped.</p> <p>(click to advance to next slide)</p> |
| 38. | <p>(click to show caption)</p> <p>(click to show first card)</p> <p>Just intended to be a throw-away at the time, fortunately, many have survived which help give us a glimpse into what that expansive and thriving concern must have been like.</p> <p>(click to advance to next slide)</p> |
| 39. | <p>(click to show caption and flowers)</p> <p>Following are some pages reproduced from the 1908 Dreer's Garden Book which outlined the history of the company up that point in its 7th decade in business.</p> <p>(click to advance to next slide)</p> |
| 40. | <p>(click to show cover)</p> <p>(click thru other pages)</p> <p>(click to advance to next slide)</p> |
| 41. | <p>(click to show caption and photo)</p> <p>These enhanced and enlarged photos from those pages show details of some of the operations of the company here in Riverton.</p> <p>(click to advance to next slide)</p> |
| 42. | <p>(click to show first photo)</p> <p>At left is a display known as the Rockery.</p> <p>(click to show second photo)</p> <p>The caption in the 1908 catalog for this photo was, "Unpacking imported plants".</p> <p>(click to fade all and advance to next slide)</p> |
| 43. | <p>(click to show caption and roses) To quote Betty Hahle, "People came from the world over to study horticulture at their Riverton nurseries and to see the gardens in bloom from Spring until late Fall. Special flower shows were held at the height of the seasons."</p> <p>(click to advance to next slide)</p> |
| 44. | <p>(click to show caption and photo)</p> <p>There was always something to see in Riverton, no matter what the time of the year – May for early flowering perennials...</p> <p>(click to advance to next slide)</p> |

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| 45. | <p>(click to show caption and photo) ... June for roses...July and August for hemerocallis... (click to advance to next slide)</p> |
| 46. | <p>(click to show caption and photo) ...October and November for roses and chrysanthemums... (click to advance to next slide)</p> |
| 47. | <p>(click to show caption and photo) ...and the special display of water lilies lasted from July to September. (click to advance to next slide)</p> |
| 48. | <p>(click to show next title page scan) (click to advance to next slide)</p> |
| 49. | <p>(click to show caption and title page scan) In addition to publishing one of the most comprehensive catalogs in the trade, Dreer offered for sale a number of books ...“on Horticultural and Kindred Subjects, ” many self-published. (click to advance to next slide)</p> |
| 50. | <p>(click to show next title page scan) (click to advance to next slide)</p> |
| 51. | <p>(click to show next title page scan) (click to advance to next slide)</p> |
| 52. | <p>(click to show caption and two photos) Google “Japanese beetle” and you will read accounts which squarely place blame for the nation’s infestation on Riverton. (click to fade all and advance slide)</p> |
| 53. | <p>(click to show first caption) The Japanese beetle was first discovered in this country in August, 1916, by two men who were inspecting the nursery of Henry A. Dreer, Inc. (click to fade caption and show photo) (click to show second caption, beetle photo, Japanese iris illustration, and grubs photo) It had probably arrived in the grub stage from Japan in a shipment of iris plants five or six years before. (click to fade all and advance to next slide)</p> |

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| 54. | <p>(click to show moving beetle photo and first caption)</p> <p>A dozen or so specimens were collected because it was recognized as new to New Jersey.</p> <p>(click to show 2nd caption and moving beetle photo)</p> <p>At first, efforts were made to eradicate the pests including quarantining lands and spraying with poisons.</p> <p>(click to show 3rd caption, nursery photo, and moving beetle photo)</p> <p>Twelve light trap stations each of 400 candlepower were used to attract beetles to pans of kerosene.</p> <p>(click to fade all and advance to next slide)</p> |
| 55. | <p>(click once to show photo, moving beetles, and caption)</p> <p>Boys and girls were actually paid for each quart of dead beetles that they could hand-pick and kill.</p> <p>(click to advance to next slide)</p> |
| 56. | <p>(click to show caption, photo, and moving beetles)</p> <p>By 1921, the infestation had spread to the golf course at Riverton Country Club.</p> <p>(click to show print article on golf course damage)</p> <p>(click to advance to next slide)</p> <p>The story of the insect's depredations on local golf courses is as follows. It was first definitely observed injuring grass roots in the spring of 1921. During that summer the infestation in the greens of the Riverton Country Club, Riverton, New Jersey, was light (about 100 to the square yard) and the injury was confined to the edges of the green, which had not been properly watered. In 1922 the infestation in these same greens was heavier (about 300 grubs to the square yard), and, injury to certain of the greens was pronounced. At the same time the Moorestown Field Club, four miles distant, on the edge of the heavy infestation, was undergoing the 1921 experience of the Riverton club. During 1923 the turf of the greens on the Riverton course was in some places ruined. The infestation in the greens was running as high as 1,000 grubs to the square yard. The situation on the Moorestown course is virtually the same as at Riverton, while the Torresdale Golf Club, in Pennsylvania, is now undergoing the 1921 experience of the Riverton club.</p> <p><small>http://turf.lib.msu.edu/1920s/1924/240497B.pdf The Japanese Beetle and Its Relation to Golf Courses, Address Delivered by B. R. Leach, U. S. Department of Agriculture, before the Annual Meeting of the Green Section, January 5, 1924.</small></p> |
| 57. | <p>(click to show photo, caption, and beetles in motion)</p> <p>In general these efforts did not make a visible dent in the beetle population, and by 1921 approximately 213 square miles of territory were infested in New Jersey, in comparison with one-half square mile in 1916.</p> <p>(click to advance to next slide)</p> |
| 58. | <p>(click to show caption and photo) And no wonder it flourished! Here it had more than 200 food plants, including practically all the economic crops grown in the state.</p> <p>(click to advance to next slide)</p> <p><small>http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/~insects/jb.htm</small></p> |

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| 59. | <p>(click to show caption and illustration)</p> <p>In addition to the foliage that was destroyed by the adults, the grubs were a serious pest in lawns, golf courses, and pastures. Some pastures had as many as 700 to a square yard.</p> <p>(click to advance to next slide)</p> <p>http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/~insects/jb.htm</p> |
| 60. | <p>(click to show caption and news clipping)</p> <p>An arsenal of chemical and biological controls has been thrown at the beetles ever since. It is likely that this pest will not be eradicated, only managed.</p> <p>(click to advance to next slide)</p> <p>http://www.heraldextra.com/content/view/221884/ http://pest.ceris.purdue.edu/searchmap.php?selectName=INBPAZA http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/~insects/jb.htm http://ipm.ncsu.edu/AG271/corn_sorghum/japanese_beetle.html</p> |
| 61. | <p>(click to show caption and map)</p> <p>Now the Japanese beetle occurs in over 20 states from southern Maine southward into Georgia and westward into Kentucky, Illinois, Michigan, and Missouri.</p> |
| 62. | <p>(click to show caption, screenshot, and closeup of screenshot text)</p> <p>Today the USDA maintains the Japanese Beetle Quarantine to protect the agriculture of the Western United States and prevent the artificial spread of the Japanese beetle from the Eastern United States.</p> <p>(click to advance to next slide)</p> |
| 63. | <p>((click to show caption and cue pictures of products)</p> <p>Traps, milky spore disease, poisons, and cutting-edge stuff like neem and nematodes will remain in our arsenal for fighting the advance of these insects of mass destruction.</p> <p>(click to advance to next slide)</p> |
| 64. | <p>(click once to show captions and beetle picture)</p> <p>Others may use a more hands-on approach, as in years past, hand-picking beetles by the hundreds, off of the raspberry and rose bushes, and dropping them into jugs of soapy water.</p> <p>(click to fade all and advance to next slide)</p> |
| 65. | <p>(click to show caption and catalog front)</p> <p>The original Dreer's Garden Books were obviously intended to showcase the company's wares, but in recent years they have become coveted collectors' items from coast to coast.</p> <p>(click to advance to next slide)</p> |
| 66. | <p>(click to show caption and catalog front)</p> <p>Museums, university horticultural departments, and private individuals duke it out in eBay auctions and visit websites of antiquarian booksellers in order to purchase these catalogs, sometimes for \$100 or more.</p> <p>Following are a dozen of the colorful catalog illustrations which have become collectors' items.</p> <p>(click to advance to next slide)</p> |

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| 67. | (click thru to show 12 catalog pages) (click to advance to next slide) |
| 68. | (click to show booklet cover) This small booklet details the elaborate Dreer Exhibit on the Garden Pier in Atlantic City. (click to advance to next slide) |
| 69. | (click to show page 2) Note the mention of Spring Grove Nursery (75 acres), Riverview Nursery (125 acres), and Locust Farm Nursery(70 acres). (click to advance to next slide) |
| 70. | (click to show page 3) It may be inferred from the first line that this pamphlet was printed in 1915, Dreer's 77th year of business. (click to advance to next slide) |
| 71. | (click thru to show pages 4 and 5) Dreer was famous for its hybrid roses. (click to advance to next slide) |
| 72. | (click to show pages 6 and 7) Hardy plants are known as perennials, or plants which grow and flower again for several seasons. (click to advance to next slide) |
| 73. | (click to show pages 8 and 9) Imagine having a flower named after you as George Strohlein, Director of the Dreer company, did. (click to advance to next slide) |
| 74. | (click to show pages 10 and 11) The Dreer Nursery even bred new types of water lilies in its lily ponds on the Riverton grounds. (click to advance to next slide) |
| 75. | (click to show pages 12 and 13) The Dreer name gained a national and international reputation for quality. Inc. was a vital industry for more than a century. (click to advance to next slide) |
| 76. | (click to show pages 14 and 15) There were other firms which specialized in bulbs, or seeds, or farm crops, while others sold books, or implements... (click to advance to next slide) |

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| 77. | <p>(click to show page 16)</p> <p>...but Dreer's was a rare company which did it all and did it extremely well for over a century.</p> <p>(click to advance to next slide)</p> |
| 78. | <p>(click to show caption)</p> <p>These pages scanned from the 1938 Hundredth Anniversary Edition of the Dreer's Garden Book give us our last glimpses into the role which Riverton played in that enterprise.</p> <p>(click to show 2 catalog pages and closeup of text)</p> <p>(click to advance to next slide)</p> |
| 79. | <p>(click to show caption and catalog page)</p> <p>It is hard to believe that such a large part of life in Riverton would come to a close in the coming decade.</p> <p>(click to show enlarged catalog page)</p> <p>(click to advance to next slide)</p> |
| 80. | <p>(click to show postcard)</p> <p>(click to fade postcard and show caption)</p> <p>The firm of Henry A. Dreer, Inc. closed due to a variety of circumstances in 1944 and the land that it occupied was developed into housing lots.</p> <p>(click to advance to next slide)</p> |
| 81. | <p>(click to show caption and webpage screenshot)</p> <p>The Dreer legacy lives on in the form of the \$20,000 annual William Frederick Dreer Award at Cornell University.</p> <p>(click to advance to next slide)</p> |
| 82. | <p>(click to show caption and webpage screenshot)</p> <p>The innovative seedsman who died in 1918 left an endowment to Cornell which allows one or more students to spend from six months up to a year abroad pursuing his or her interests related to horticulture.</p> <p>(click to advance to next slide)</p> |
| 83. | <p>(click to show works cited)</p> <p>(click to fade and show next list)</p> |
| 84. | <p>The End</p> <p>Hotlink should connect to HSR website.</p> |