



*Photo courtesy of Goshen Historical Society*

## Roots of Kunderd Farms

Many may be surprised to know that Goshen was once a hotspot for fresh flowers. Thousands of colorful gladiolus used to line fields alongside what is now U.S. 33. These fields were tended by Amos E. Kunderd, a horticulturist, who used the land as a breeding ground for specialized hybrids and to create a mosaic of beauty in the city of Goshen. The Natural Gardening Magazine 1919 issue described the view of the farm as colors that “not even the rainbow could rival” and “fairy land like.”

Amos Kunderd had loved flowers since he was child growing up in Kendallville, Indiana. He

completed school through the eighth grade, but continued reading whenever possible. Kunderd was an amateur gardener who studied hybridization, then began to raise seedlings and breed his own flowers. He moved to Goshen in 1909 in pursuit of more land for his flower farming and purchased 51 acres south of the Lake Shore Railway, where he started the famous Kunderd farms.

## A Blooming Success

Mr. Kunderd worked hard to build his new farm. He collected and hybridized peonies, roses, irises, and more, but his gladioli bulbs were of world renown. His Gladiolus were exhibited at the 1933 World's Fair in Chicago and he offered bulbs from his “A Century of Progress” collection. The farm's annual product catalogs were published and mailed to customers with flower descriptions including original names, prices, and stories from A.E. Kunderd. According to the Indiana Historical Society, he became nationally famous for the development of the Ruffled Gladiolus, which he named Kunderdii Glory. A.E. Kunderd used his original flowers to become very involved in Goshen life as well. The Goshen Democrat newspaper published articles about his generosity; he gave bulbs to the local school children and spoke with women's clubs, like the Beacon Light Literary club, about his Gladiolas.

Eventually, his farm was adopted by one of the largest national distributors and the flowers grown there were shipped as bulbs across the U.S. and all over the world. His 100 acre operation on the edge of Goshen allowed him to employ over 100 people in the area and in



*Fredericka, Pauline (Polly, holding the flowers) Amos, and children pose for a photograph, courtesy of Ancestry.com*

1929 one newspaper noted that Kunderd's mail accounted for one-fourth of the receipts at the Goshen Post Office.

Unfortunately, the farm fell into hardship after the 1929 stock market crash and never recovered the same success. Kunderd stepped back from the operation, but the farm continued to run until 1971, six years after A.E. Kunderd had died at age 98.



*Current view of Peddler's village, photo by Dave Zollinger*

The Kunderd Standard, as described by the Kunderd catalog, read, "The value of a single flower can never be measured in terms of money. Nature is not mercenary; she gladly gives the best she has that we all may enjoy a full measure of happiness. Nature is our partner in business, and never do I go out into the gardens without feeling her indispensable value. Our work consists merely of helping nature overcome many of her obstacles and in return she shows her gratitude by offering us the marvelous blooms I am proud to list in my catalog ..." This quote, written by A.E. Kunderd himself, exemplifies the care and commitment he had toward a partnership with his flowers and his community. Though his farm no longer

exists, his legacy is noted by the City of Goshen and is a proud part of Goshen's commitment to healthy environmental practices and innovating landscapes of beauty alongside the development of city life. Though the farm has since been developed into a shopping center, known as Peddler's Village, it is easy to imagine the sprawling fields of natural grandeur that once resided along U.S. 33. A historical marker of the farm can be seen alongside the road to mark the importance of this farm on the life of Goshen.

## Further Information (References)

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1933 gladiolus display "Century of Progress"

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