

## The Daffodils

By Irene Gammon

The daffodils or Easter flowers as they were commonly called were quite a business in the area at one time. They are also called jonquils. The town of Alma had fields of Easter flowers around it, and almost every home in the town had a patch of flowers which they shipped on the Illinois Central Railroad to the Chicago markets along with a lot of other fruits and vegetables which they shipped in their seasons.

Charlie and Bessie Gammon were born and raised in Alma, so after they were married and lived in Kinmundy, they planted all their lots in Easter flowers. They bought a lot on Highway 37 on which they planted flowers. They also owned lots in Alma, which were in flowers. When all the flowers bloomed, they were really busy, picking, counting, and tying in bunches of a dozen. The bunches were packed in boxes with about 50 or 60 dozen in a box. The boxes were addressed to markets in Chicago, taken to the I.C. Depot in Kinmundy and shipped on the evening train for early morning markets in Chicago. Then later they shipped them by truckload with Diss trucking whenever Alma people had enough for a truckload. The truck would load in evening and drive all night to Chicago, getting there for the early morning markets. They hired school kids to pick flowers before and after school and also help to get the flowers ready for boxing.

Mr. and Mrs. Fred Alexander of Kinmundy also had a patch of flowers, which they shipped. They later donated their patch of flowers to the Christian Church so they could make money for the church. People from the church volunteered to do the work.

Mr. and Mrs. Gammon shipped their flowers every spring until Mrs. Bessie Gammon passed away in 1961. Then Mr. Gammon sold his flowers on Highway 37 from a table beside the road for a few years. After Mr. Gammon died in 1969, Fred and Irene Gammon inherited the flower patch on Highway 37. Since they had always helped their parents with the flowers, they continued to sell flowers on the highway from a table with a box for the money when they weren't there. They left cans of flowers in water and used the honor system, which worked very well. After Fred Gammon passed away in 1976, Irene continued to sell flowers on the highway until 1996 when she sold the property to Lewis and Helen O'Dell, who built a house there. There are flowers still blooming in the back and by the side of their house each spring.

Larry and Phyllis Ritter bought several rows of flowers on the south of the lot of flowers. They have sold flowers from their front yard all through the years. There are several different kinds or varieties of flowers including King Alfred, Emperors, Empress, Van Wavern Giants, which are all yellow shades, and white ones called Poets or Narcissus and Mt. Hood.

Irene Gammon has a lot or hill east of her house planted in flowers of many varieties. The yellow ones bloom first and then the white ones