

“Father of Rose Greenhouses”

John N. May was born on November 9th, 1840 and moved to Madison from Middlesex, England. He began a rose growing business, eventually extending this business to full commercial-scale. He bought the property at 37 Pine Grove Avenue and moved to Summit with his wife and three children in 1880. He added onto his property so that it was 403' x 907' sq/ft and built a second house at 49 Pine Grove Avenue.

Many colleagues and friends have said that he was the first person to put Rose culture in America on a commercial basis and the first to place roses on benches. He constituted the rose greenhouses that produced a new industry in New Jersey. During his time, one sign of wealth was keeping flowers around your house or in your yard. His business, along with the 12 other florists in Summit at the time, was booming. Summit had generated a new prosperity. By the 1890's he sold around 500,000 flowers each year. After several years of experimenting he created a rose bush that would be grown in greenhouses all over the country, the white Bride rose. He also was the creator of the “Olympia”, a pink rose. His expertise in gardening combined with an unmatched skill in creating new roses made him a prominent figure in his field.

The members of the New Jersey Florists' Association elected him as the first honorary member. He was one of the founders of the American Rose Society and served as the treasurer for many years. He was the first president of the New York Florists' Club, the founder and treasurer of the Chrysanthemum Society of

America, and the president of the National Society of American Florists. He was also a member of the Pennsylvania and New Jersey Horticultural Societies, and a president of the First National Bank of Summit. He was an esteemed man not only for his accomplishments in extending the horticulture world, but also for being a great friend and an aid to anyone in need. An example of his giving nature was when he created a bowling alley just for his employees, for the sole purpose of recreation.

He passed away on May 13th, 1928, but will always be remembered as the "Father of Rose Greenhouses", a major contributor to the growth of Summit during his time, and an admired friend throughout the community.