

ZACHERIA BARBERITZ:
FIFTY YEARS AT PARKE-DAVIS

By Merritt B. Romine

A well known Rochester citizen, Zacheria Barberitz, worked for fifty years caring for and immunizing horses. He was the first Parke-Davis employee transferred to Rochester in 1908 to help run the new 650 acre biological farm.

Zack started with Parke-Davis in Detroit in 1898, then he and his wife, Anna, moved to Griggs Street in Rochester where they raised their family while he worked at Parkdale, the biological farm.

Park-Davis' selection of the Rochester location was a boon for the small village. The Detroit to Bay City Railroad ran up through the Clinton River Valley into Rochester just next to the farm where employees could readily ship animals and products. Another asset was the Detroit Urban Railroad (DVR) that ran from Detroit and Royal Oak up Main Street making easy transportation for workers coming from Detroit. Many like the Barberitz family moved into Rochester to settle near their work.

During World War I and World War II workers on the farm cared for over 600 horses during the peak period of serum production. Each horse was bled over three gallons a month to produce anti-toxins, producing enough for anyone in the United States who wanted protection from certain horses' blood and the anti-toxins for diphtheria, scarlet fever, and tetanus were produced.

Barberitz remembered best the most celebrated horse at Parkedale Farm. "Tess" yielded 1,023 quarts of tetanus anti-toxin during her eleven years (1917-1928) at Parkedale. Tess was honored by the entire town when she was displayed on a parade float and she was accorded a special burial when she died.

Zack said animals at the farm were the best fed and housed in the world. They were exercised daily on the farm's half-mile track. Each barn accommodated fifty horses and was equipped with metal mangers to facilitate disinfection. The biological farm buildings were kept immaculately clean and painted white inside. Doctors as well as other employees wore white coats. Dip tanks were used to bathe the animals before operations were performed.

During the early part of World War I, a fire destroyed three barns, 100 horses, 40 heifers and ten span of horses and mules used to work the farm. The fire was thought to be the work of enemy saboteurs.

After 50 years of dedication, Zacheria Barberitz retired in 1948. The entire Barberitz family were musically inclined, and probably some of his retirement years were spent enjoying music, singing and playing instruments. St. Andrews Catholic church was founded in the home of Zacheria Barberitz. His oldest son John became the mayor of Rochester in 1963. Frank Barberitz, the youngest of three children and only remaining survivor, lives off South Boulevard and has just completed building a hand-crafted organ.

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