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PRESS RELEASE

Victorian Flowers We Still Love Today:

New book *All about Flowers: James Vick's Nineteenth-Century Seed Company*

Nineteenth century seed company owner James Vick (1818-1882) believed in being fair and honest with his customers. That ethical stance inspired his integrative communication methods at a time when business owners thought 'hype' was essential. Vick had been an editor and writer before his seed business. He wrote his catalog and monthly magazine with words inspired with what would most help his customers.

This new book *All about Flowers: James Vick's Nineteenth Century Seed Company* by Thomas Mickey illustrates how the nineteenth century seed companies influenced both gardeners and the kind of garden that became essential, the flower garden.

The second half of the nineteenth century made possible a media-driven garden which included what the garden should look like, where it should be in the home landscape, and what plants ought to be in it. The seed catalogs, garden magazines, and horticultural papers of the time suggested the plants and indicated where to plant them in the garden.

James Vick's story has not been told yet. With his parents he arrived from England in 1833 and settled in New York. Within a couple of years he moved to Rochester, New York, where he began his mail order seed company.

Vick played a key role in gardens everywhere in nineteenth century America, whether of the wealthy, the middle class, the working class, or the city dweller. Vick inspired gardeners everywhere with his own passion for gardening with flowers and his desire to spread the love of floriculture.

From the early 1860s Vick published yearly seed catalogs and later also a popular monthly garden magazine. He systematized the seed business: growing seeds, drying them, packaging them, and shipping them around the country, well before both Sears and Montgomery Ward sent out their first catalog.

The eighteenth century gardens of England included flowers that became popular in the Victorian nineteenth century garden as well. Many of these same flowers continue to be essential in today's flower garden. The flowers include garden favorites like the geranium, nasturtium, lobelia, dahlia, morning glory, and hollyhock.

This book is based on several Vick archives in Rochester but also collections of Vick material from the Smithsonian, the University of Delaware, and the University of Massachusetts. Present-day descendants of Mr. Vick let the author examine their own memorabilia from the original Vick Company, including early copies of Vick's garden magazine and several chromolithograph illustrations.

Ohio University Press will publish *All about Flowers: James Vick's Nineteenth-Century Seed Company* in April 2021.

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