



Parke-Davis Farm

Parke, Davis and Company was authorized to produce the diphtheria antitoxin after receiving the U.S. Biological License Number One in 1903. The company was located in Detroit but it became increasingly difficult to house the large number of monkeys, horses, rabbits, and other research animals at the company's main lab; the company determined that a farm was needed. In 1907,



Parke, Davis and Company bought 340 acres in northeast Avon Township called Parkedale farm. The location was situated ideally near the Detroit United Railway (D.U.R.), allowing workers easy access to Detroit. October 8, 1908 was the dedication of the new farm, which included sterilization rooms and a vaccine propagating building. By 1909 the farm included 200 horses, 25 to 50 cattle, 150 sheep, and employed 20 men. The horses produced the antitoxin for diphtheria and tetanus, the cattle produced a vaccine for smallpox preventatives, and the sheep

made serum. Only the healthiest animals were used and all were well cared for. Exotic plants were also grown on the site and used for drugs.

The farm expanded in 1913 with an additional 160 acres along the Michigan Central Railroad. At its largest, the Parkedale farm occupied 700 acres. During World War I, a suspicious fire destroyed three barns and many animals; enemy saboteurs were blamed for the arson. Also during the war, vital antitoxins for gangrene were produced. Parke-Davis' chief products were antitoxins and vaccines as well as farm crops for feeding the animals. The farm continued to produce vaccines for diphtheria, scarlet fever, tetanus, smallpox, anthrax, and in the 1950s, the Salk polio vaccine was introduced. In 1958, through land donation and sale of land, Parke-Davis was reduced to 370 acres.



By 1988, Parke-Davis was well known for its antitoxins and vaccines as well as drugs such as Benadryl and Surital. By 1997, Warner-Lambert (who owned the Parkedale farm in Rochester) announced its intent to sell the farm because the drugs produced there were no longer in the company's "strategic plans." The vaccine production at Parkedale was moved to other companies. In 1999, the old 27-acre farm located off Letica Drive near Parkedale Road, was slated for demolition. Citizens wanted to convert the barns into a community center specializing in historically significant events. The Letica Development Corporation owned the barns and resisted all efforts to preserve them. On November 23, 1999, the corporation received a permit from the city of Rochester to raze most of the buildings; demolition began that afternoon. A few of the old barns still stand and are now home to JHP Pharmaceuticals.