

# *The Augusta Chronicle*

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## THE WAY WE WERE

# 'Flower Lady' let Augusta know spring was here

*By Bill Kirby Staff Writer*

Forget the calendar. Augustans used to know that spring had arrived because Agnes Anderson would open her Walton Way flower stand.

Agnes, usually referred to formally as Mrs. Rufus Anderson and informally as "Augusta's Flower Lady," started selling blooms near the old Bon Air Hotel in the 1920s. She continued almost 50 years until her death in 1969.

The season was official when she showed up with her truck full of daffodils, the newspaper reported, even if the calendar disagreed.

"Spring comes to Augusta, actually, when Mrs. Rufus Anderson sets up her display," The Augusta Chronicle reported in February 1957. "It arrived last week."

"For longer than many people can remember, Mrs. Anderson beat the robins," the newspaper declared in 1966.

Anderson would raise the flowers from her garden out on Wheeler Road, then bring them into town in a pickup, setting up on the Walton Way curb across from the Bon Air.

She said she started the flower business in 1923 and continued it through the 1960s, despite a couple of health challenges. At first, the hotel guests were her best customers, but soon others were regularly attracted to her blooms.

Anderson's popularity might have grown because she took requests.

"When I first began selling just daffodils and jonquils, my customers would suggest various flowers I should plant," she told the newspaper. "I have followed their suggestions through the years."

She said daffodils remained the most popular.

"I guess the reason must be their color, and the fact they signify spring has arrived," she said.

Anderson always called customers "her friends" and seemed to enjoy the social part of her floral endeavor.

In 1966, such a "friend" came through.

The city had painted yellow marking on the curb where she usually sat, prohibiting her standard flower stand arrangement. "A friend," identified as Mrs. Tom Blanchard, heard about the curb ban and offered Anderson the use of a nearby lot on Milledge Road.

Anderson had many fans, including some considered famous.



**Agnes Anderson started selling flowers near the old Bon Air Hotel in the 1920s and continued doing so for almost 50 years. [FILE/THE AUGUSTA CHRONICLE]**

During a visit to town by President Dwight D. Eisenhower and his wife, Mamie, Anderson said a steward from Augusta National Golf Club, where the couple stayed, stopped by her stand and picked up a bouquet.

“He told me after he had purchased some flowers that they were to be used for ... Mrs. Eisenhower,” Anderson said.