

Timeline

1827 Gamaliel Simmons of the pioneering Simmons family buys 160 acres, the northwest quarter-section of what becomes known as Section 27 of Novi Township.

1830 Novi Township is established. The first town meeting is held in the Greek Revival home of Cyrenius Simmons built on the 160 acres Simmons property.

1836 The property is sold to George Dennis whose family farms it for 62 years. George Dennis serves his community as a church deacon and town official. He and his wife are buried in the Aldrich-Knapp family burial ground on Nine Mile Rd.

1898 The farm is sold to James and Minnie Dunham, tenants on the Dennis farm, who divide the property after ten years and sell parts of it to relatives.

1918 The Dunham's son, Scott Harrison Dunham, dies a hero's death in France and is buried there, the only Novi soldier in World War I known not to return. The Dunham's put the farm up for sale. Jacob Fuerst and his second wife, Rebecca Raupp, reassemble the original 160 acres and establish the Fuerst Farmstead for their family of two sons and four daughters.

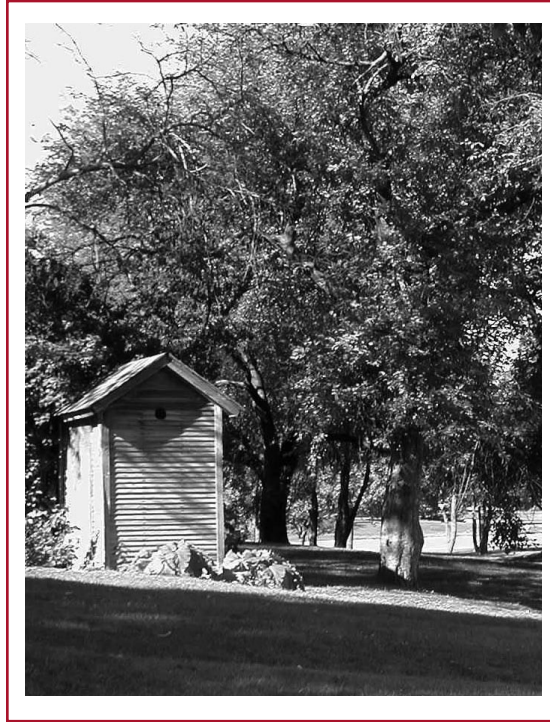
1930 The Fuersts, prosperous from dairy farming, truck gardening, and apple, peach and plum orchards, replace the existing house with a larger Arts and Crafts style bungalow. They add modern barns and other improvements including indoor plumbing and electricity.

1970 The Fuerst sisters sell the property to the Novi School District maintaining a life estate of five acres. Over the next two decades, the rest of the property becomes the civic and educational center of Novi: the site of the high school, city hall, police station, public library, Ella Mae Power Park and the relocated historic Novi Township Hall.

1997 The City of Novi acquires the Fuerst Farmstead from the Novi Community School District.

1998 The property is placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

2000 The City Council appointed Fuerst Farm Task Force submits a Five-Year Plan for restoration and re-development to the Novi City Council.



For further information,
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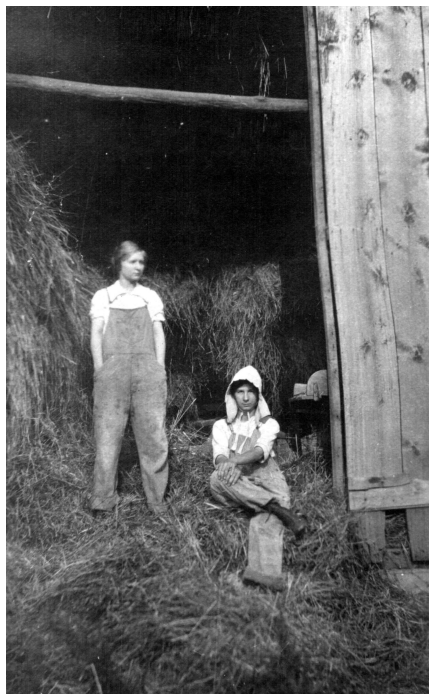
The FUERST FARMSTEAD

Novi,
Michigan



A National Register of
Historic Places
Property

The Fuerst Sisters



The Fuerst Farmstead is known for its last owners, sisters Ruby and Iva Fuerst, who lived in their family home until their deaths in 1991. The farm property has had a long and rich history that parallels the growth of Novi as a community.

The property is now owned by the City of Novi and plans are underway for its restoration, rehabilitation and reuse as a community facility for educational and recreational purposes. At this time the buildings are closed, but the gardens and walkways are open to the public.



The House

The Fuersts built this Arts and Crafts style bungalow in 1930. They utilized the cobblestone foundation of an existing Greek Revival house which this house replaced. The bungalow features fieldstone in a distinctive pattern in the chimney and in the foundation and supporting pillars of the porch. The windows that once flanked the chimney, the glass in the interior French doors separating the living and dining rooms, and in the doors to built-in bookcases on either side of the stone fireplace, were all of matched beveled glass design. Art Nouveau wall sconces line the living room walls and match a ceiling fixture in the dining room. Art Deco brass hardware accents the dark wood trim throughout the house. All are original to the house. Additional rooms on the first floor include a bathroom, two bedrooms and a kitchen. There are four bedrooms and a sleeping porch on the second floor and access to the attic. Windows, doors, shelving and wood trim recycled by the Fuersts from the original house can be seen in the basement.

The Barns and Outbuildings

There are three barns remaining on the property. The largest barn was used to house cattle and store hay. The second largest is a four-stall horse barn with a grain storage area. It has an attached milk-house. The third barn was used to store farm machinery. A fourth barn, built in 1876, was destroyed recently by arson. An outhouse, a smokehouse, a pump house, a chicken coop and two dog houses are clustered near the house.

The Orchard and Gardens

Apple and pear trees still stand and produce fine fruit every year. The Fuersts were wonderful gardeners whose handiwork can still be seen from earliest spring through the fall: the wildflowers they cultivated, the many tulip, daffodil and iris bulbs they planted, the large lilac bushes and the raspberry patch growing in the orchard near a small grove of black walnut trees. The fragrant bush and climbing roses the Fuersts favored are gone, but those too may be restored soon.