

John Deere celebrates a century of production

By Monica M. Walk
Special to The Reporter

HORICON — There is poetry in an iconic agricultural machinery company having deep Wisconsin roots.

For 100 years, John Deere Horicon Works has produced products for customers whose work is linked to the land, locally and around the globe.

The company celebrated its

Horicon factory purchased in 1911

Horicon factory centennial recently with a parade and an equipment display featuring old and new product lines.

"The parade was neat," said Horicon Chamber of Commerce Secretary Karen Boersma. "Sprinkled throughout, they had the oldest retirees, three different bands,

the 100, 200 and 300 series of (lawn) tractors, and equipment made in Horicon from museums and storage places."

The parade also featured a 1911 grain drill, John Deere snowmobiles and Gator utility vehicles, along with lawn care equipment. The items were later on display in

a tent museum in the company's parking lot at the corner of Vine and Lake streets. Local businesses and organizations participated in the celebration with parade floats and window displays.

Initially founded by George and Daniel Van Brunt to produce horse-drawn grain drills, the Horicon factory was purchased by Deere & Company in 1911.

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"One hundred years of successful business is a great accomplishment. It is a true testament to the skill and ability of the past and present employees of the Horicon Works," said Steve Johnson, factory manager. "We are extremely proud to be celebrating our history and heritage with both Deere & Company and the town of Horicon, Wisconsin."

Horicon Mayor Jim Grigg worked for John Deere Horicon Works for 25 years before transitioning to local governance.

"I know from personal experience how dedicated the residents of Horicon are to building quality products for John Deere," said Grigg. "In fact, the first thing visitors see when they come to Horicon is a John Deere sign. This anniversary truly highlights the great contributions the people of Horicon have made to John Deere over the last 100 years."

The Chamber's Boersma noted that Deere & Company is deeply involved with local volunteering and providing support for community groups. The company recently donated an X300 John Deere tractor with 42-inch mower deck to the Chamber's Sept. 25 Autumn Art on the Marsh raffle.

"John Deere Horicon Works has been a substantial portion of the city tax base," said retiring City Clerk and Manager Dave Pasewald. "In addition, it has been a very enjoyable company to have in our city, and we hope they stay a long time."

Boersma added that the company's contributions to the city's tax base helps citizens.

"It can't be calculated how much John Deere has benefited the City of Horicon for these 100 years," she said.

"The steady and good employment with benefits to residents gives our town delightful and productive community members, who



Employees at the John Deere Horicon Works plant work on the EZTrak mower line. (Submitted photo)

AG FOCUS

Since 1837, John Deere has delivered innovative products with an agricultural focus, beginning with founder John Deere's creation of a cast-steel plow.

Deere & Company's administrative center is located in Moline, Ill.

For more information about the company, visit www.deere.com.

HORICON WORKS PRODUCES MILESTONE PRODUCTS

It's the other green and gold synonymous with Wisconsin — and its rolling fields of farmland.

Like the Green Bay Packers, John Deere also has a reputation that transcends geographical boundaries.

That reputation — "Nothing runs like a Deere" — makes a small town like Horicon a big player in the international business market.

During John Deere's 100 years in Horicon, significant numbers have rolled off the production line:

■ 1861 — George and Daniel Van Brunt found Horicon factory to produce horse-drawn grain drills.

■ 1911 — Deere & Company purchases factory from VanBrunt Manufacturing.

■ 1958 — Name changed to John Deere Horicon Works.

■ 1963 — Introduce the 110 Lawn & Garden Tractor.

■ 1969 — Grain drills transferred to Des Moines, Iowa.

■ 1984 — 1 millionth tractor produced.

■ 1992 — 2 millionth tractor produced.

■ 1998 — 3 millionth tractor produced.

■ 2003 — 4 millionth tractor produced.

■ 2010 — 5 millionth tractor produced.

■ 2010 — 500,000th Gator produced.

Timeline provided by Deere & Company

in turn create a good place to live. Our town is proud of John Deere and their many

employees over the many years and would love to see those deep roots grow."