

A Grass Roots Advertiser Has A Birthday!

OLDS SEED COMPANY—A GROWING TRADITION SINCE 1888

By D.J. Meyer

The year was 1888 America was a country of 38 states, Benjamin Harrison was the 23rd United States President, and in Clinton, Wisconsin an ambitious young man named Leavitt L. Olds mailed out 500 copies of a four page price list of seed potatoes. On the cover he proudly proclaimed, "I grew myself every bushel offered." L.L. Olds, the son of a Clinton, Wisconsin farmer had grown up with a deep interest in growing potatoes, so much in fact that he would often skip out of school during spring planting and fall harvest times to help out on his father's farm.

When his father passed away in 1887 L.L. Olds aggressively took over his father's farm and began what is now the L.L. Olds Seed Company.

The potato growing industry began slowly around the turn of the century, and seed potato pioneers like L.L. Olds were responsible for tremendous growth in the industry. By 1920 Wisconsin had become one of the nation's leading producers of potatoes.

At the Chicago World's Fair in the late 1890s Olds Seed Company exhibited 65 potato varieties, one of which was a new development. By this time the Olds seed catalog had grown in size and distribution, and boasted an expanded agriculture product line which included corn, oats, barley, and garden seed. In 1903 L.L. Olds filed state incorporation papers in Madison, Wisconsin. The first report of the Board of Directors voted to give Mr. Olds a \$100 per month salary to manage his business. Some of the company's assets included one black horse valued at \$70, one gray horse valued at \$115, and a wagon with accessories for \$107.

Clearly Olds Seed Company was a progressive and growing company even in the face of disastrous fires which twice destroyed L.L. Olds warehouses of seed, once in 1901 and again in 1908.

It was after the second fire in 1908 that L.L. Olds decided to move his business from Clinton to Madison, Wisconsin. Here he could be closer to the University and work with seed developers.

In 1912 Olds Seed Company was cramped into rented quarters on Wilson Street in Madison. Later that same year Olds Board of Directors accepted a bid of \$47,109 to construct a new facility. And what a facility it would be, standing five stories tall, and constructed of concrete and steel.

Olds Seed Company moved into its new facility in 1913 where Mr. Olds and his employees looked forward to years of growth and prosperity. Little did they know of the economic upheavals that would soon rock the nation.

Throughout the 1920s and 30s the company faced many years of struggles and sacrifices. WWI, the stock market crash, the Great Depression and WWII all impacted the stability of the seed industry. Nationally seed houses suffered. One Kansas City seed house lost \$225,000. Another in St. Louis lost \$250,000. Many others were forced into bankruptcy. Only the better seed houses survived. Olds Seed Company struggled and survived, always looking toward the future and always trying to supply the customer with the best seed available. As Mr. Olds wrote in one of his early seed catalogs, "Good seeds make good customers; both have made our success. What makes a good seed house? My opinion is that quality should be given even greater consideration than all other things put together." Mr. Olds continued to write: "What do you think about it? Pure seeds, vital seeds, trueness to name and type, are not these the things that are of the most importance? Next I would name service, this includes such things as promptness, attention to detail, honesty and truthfulness. If you plant poor seeds you are lost, everything nearly depends on the seed. Make sure you get the best to be secured, the kind we offer regardless of price."

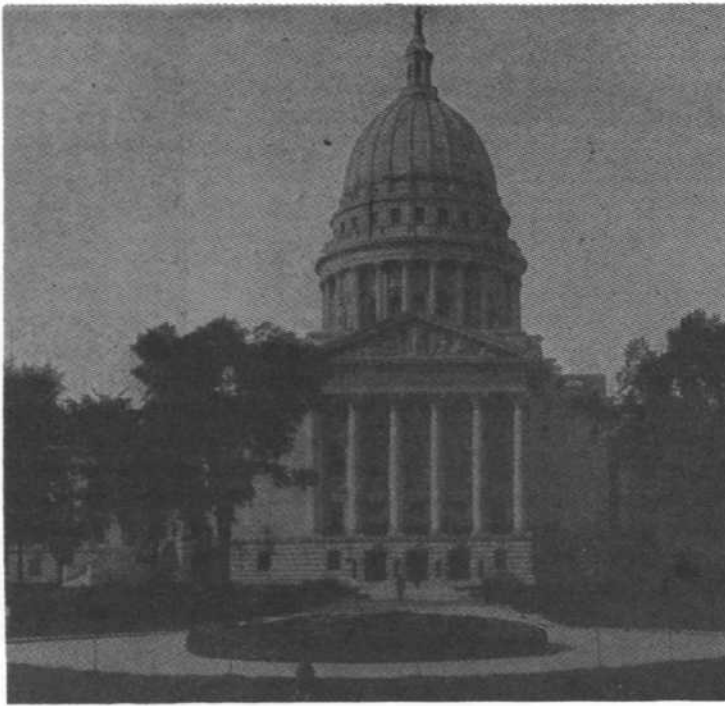
Mr. Olds wrote that letter in 1917. Today in 1988 we are proudly celebrating the 100th Anniversary of L.L. Olds Seed Company. A company begun by a man with dreams and desires to sell only the best seed available, a man who wouldn't quit even when faced with disastrous fires and economic upheavals. Today Olds Seed Company con-



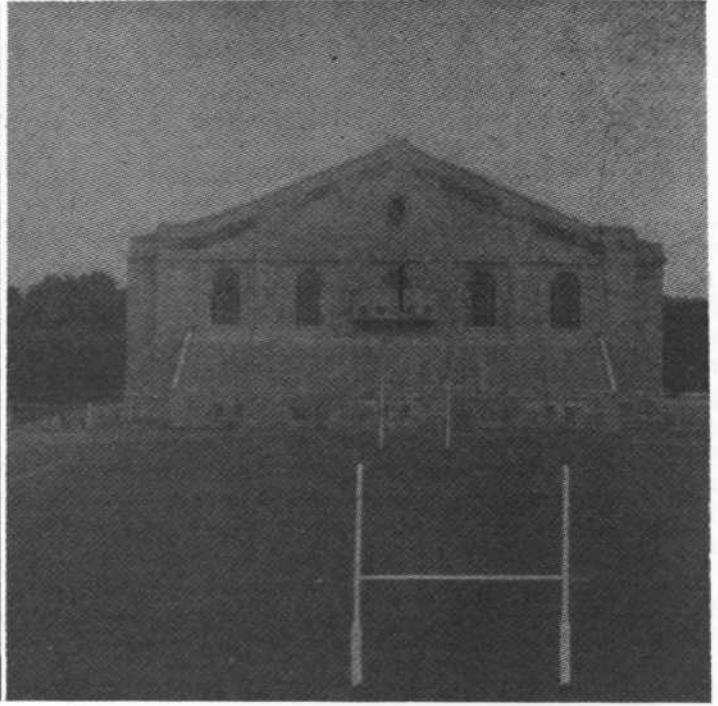
Original Olds Seed Company — Clinton, WI



Olds Board of Directors - late 1800s



Wisconsin State Capital, 1915



Camp Randall Stadium, 1933

OLDS

100th Anniversary Celebration Look how we've grown!

For 100 years now Olds Seed Company has been carefully blending grass seed.

Our 1915 catalog proudly displays Olds Madison Parks grass seed blend gracing the new State Capital. Our 1933 catalog shows Olds Athletic Mix growing in the then new, Camp Randall Stadium.

Today, Olds turfgrass blends are widely distributed in the North Central States. Blends we develop for sun or shade, fairways or greens. Blends that are heat tolerant, drought resistant and highly durable.

The professionals at Olds don't take anything for granted, every turfgrass blend is designed to give you the results you want and need.

This Spring call the professionals at Olds! Call toll free 1-800-397-SEED (7333). In the Madison area call 1(608)249-9291.

- * CUSTOM BLENDING
- * LARGE SELECTION OF ELITE BLUEGRASSES AND FINE-LEAF PERENNIAL RYEGRASSES
- * FREE DELIVERY



L.L. Olds Seed Co. P.O. Box 7790 Madison, WI

tinues to thrive under the same principles set by L.L. Olds.

As we enter our second century of operations serving the Upper Midwest we do so from a foundation of financial stability and excellent reputation. Our company goal is not to be the largest seed company in the nation, from a geographical standpoint, but to be the best seed company in both quality and service in the Upper Midwest.

The Upper Midwest is our specialty, and your home turf. To bring you the best, we've assembled a team of well qualified seedsmen, agronomists and horticulturists. Our wholesale trade area is serviced by eight district sales representatives. Our effective trade area covers all of Wisconsin, Northern Michigan, Northern Illinois, Eastern Iowa, and Southwest Minnesota.

Specialized product managers are individually responsible for our farm, garden, turfgrass seeds, and horticultural supplies. As we search for new germplasm and supervise research activities, they continually upgrade our products.

Quality control of Olds Seeds is in the capable hands

of our registered seed technologist, who operates our modern, well-equipped seed testing laboratory. Therefore as technology grows, so do we.

Olds' continued success will be dependent on new varieties, varieties borne out of research.

Olds Seed Company has a close working relationship with private and public breeding organizations that specialize in contractual breeding work. These organizations execute standards established by Olds Seed Company. These two essential components give Olds a great benefit in the seed industry. That benefit is the ability to carefully select only the top performing and most disease resistant varieties available from a number of top breeding organizations.

It has been well over a century since Leavitt Olds ran home from school to help plant potatoes with his father, and if he could come back today I'm sure he would be proud to see how the fruits of his dreams and hard work have grown into an organization that is a leader in the Upper Midwest's agriculture industry.



Chicago World's Fair



Retail store at Williamson Street



First floor warehouse



County fair exhibit — 1917



Wilson Street office — 1910



The morning after the fire of the main warehouse — 1908



Chris Wendorf, Turfgrass Products Manager



Seed Lab & Technologist — 1980s



Current Olds Warehouse



Customer service department



Shipping and receiving docks





Vern Paulson
Deliveries — 1940



Williamson Street facility — 1913



Seed technologist — 1940



Milling room — 1940

L.L. **OLDS** SEED COMPANY