

# Hugo Feed Mill Celebrating 100 Years

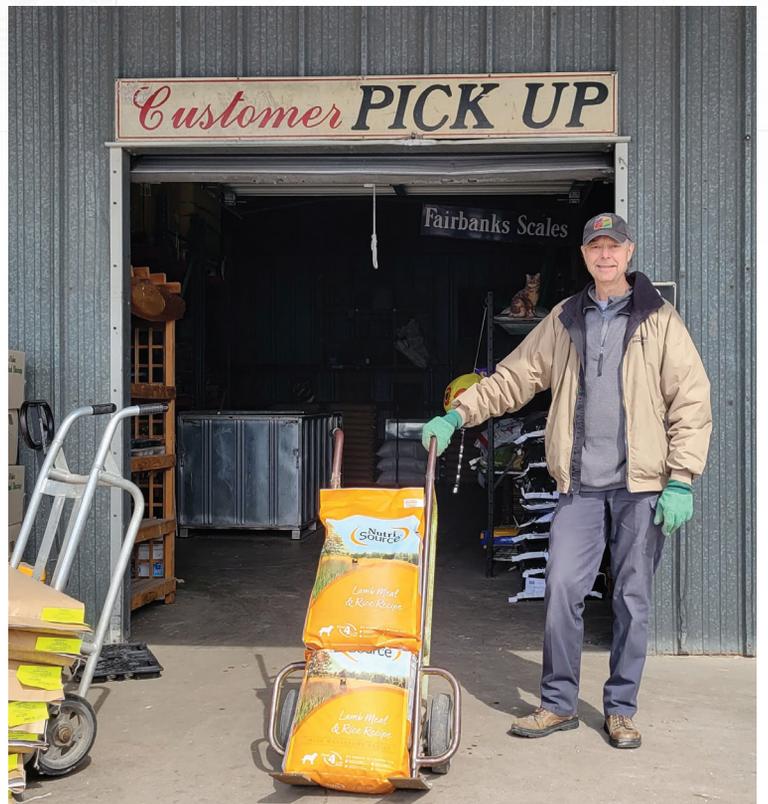
By Angela Lutz

The Hugo Feed Mill and Hardware store is celebrating 100 years of business this year! Steve Marier, who manages the store, has worked there for over half a century, beginning part-time at age 15. After graduating high school, he started working full time to help his dad, Joe Marier, with the family business. "We help customers solve their everyday household and outdoor seasonal needs," said Steve. Their knowledgeable staff have become experts in lawn and gardening, pets, home repair and maintenance and more. "We consider ourselves problem solvers," said Steve. "We will help you create a plan providing expert guidance you can trust and quality products you can rely on for results." Steve enjoys helping people with their projects and goals, and sharing his experiences and information with customers. "I've been fortunate with so many customers over the years letting me know what advice worked and then that knowledge gets passed on," said Steve. He also attributes the business's success to adaptability. "I've been adapting our business plan as needed to fulfill the needs of my community. Remaining agile has kept our business going in every type of economic climate. To fulfill our mission and help the community we must also grow with it when times change." Hugo Feed Mill and Hardware is located in downtown Hugo, serving both suburban and rural customers.

"We're still close to the city and we're still country, and that



hasn't changed much," said Steve. Long time residents of Hugo, The Marier family bought the Mill in 1923. Steve is the fourth generation of Mariers to be working at the family business and grew up across the street from the store. In the 1930's the Mill was primarily a country grain and farming business. They also sold coal by the tons. Steve remembers the Blacksmith shop and climbing on feed sacks as a child. Another fond memory of his was the 'Free Chick Day' promotion the Mill started in 1971, where the more feed a customer bought, the more free chicks they got. Steve planned to get out of school early that day to help, but then came to find out the 1,500 chicks were gone after only 1 ½ hours - the most chicks given away in one day was 5,500.

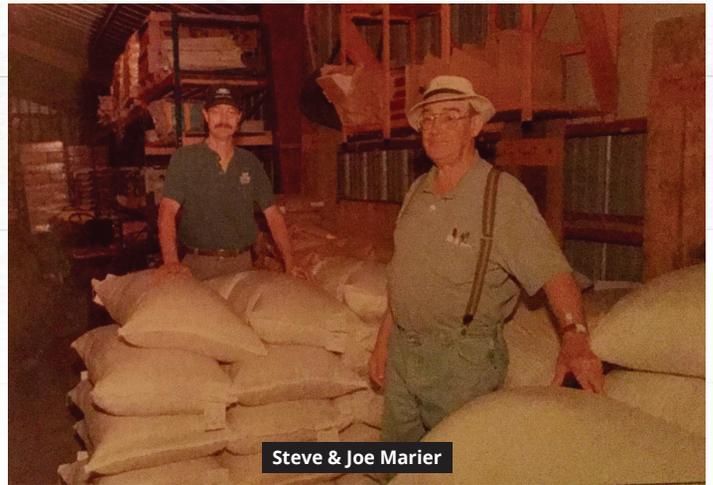




Hugo Feed Mill in the 1940's



Blacksmith addition in the 1970's



Steve & Joe Marier



Hugo Feed Mill 1974

"I garden more than the average person," said Steve. "I'm also known as Dr. Pepper because I've earned a reputation for growing unusual and unique pepper and tomato plants." He grows new plants every year and makes 20 gallons of salsa a year, on average along with cold pack tomatoes, hot pepper jam, pickled peppers and powdered pepper. He even has a custom spice rack his friend built for his dining room wall displaying his 600 plus, labeled pepper powders in alphabetical order.

Steve's love for gardening has also intrigued his grandkids interest in gardening. "Grandpa Pepper," as his two grandchildren, Ayla (7) and Dylan (5), refer to him, visits his daughter, Jessica and her husband, Brendon, and his grandkids every Sunday. Ayla and Dylan especially enjoy planting 'magic beans' - purple beans that turn green when cooked, and picking plants. Steve also enjoys playing golf and visiting Arizona and California to see cousins and friends. One of his favorite vacations was to the British Virgin Islands where he went sailing.

Steve is proud to have fulfilled his father's wish for the business to remodel the hardware store. The hardware building, once, Hugo Mill Outdoor Power was used as a storage space and now provides more room than the grain elevator building could. He anticipates 400 pepper and 180 tomato varieties in the greenhouse this spring. "People come from all over to get the best selection in the upper midwest without a doubt," said Steve. "Nobody has what we have!" The business has also hosted an annual pepper and tomato tasting in September for the past 12 years.

"I enjoy the customers I've helped over the years and the relationships I've built," said Steve. "I have helped multiple generations with their home and garden projects." He also has fun chatting and joking with customers and staff at work. He appreciates his long time customers and new customers for shopping locally. "It gives us great satisfaction having a product for you, using it right, and getting results," said Steve. "Our reputation is built on your results"

Hugo Feed Mill and Hardware's 100 year celebration is scheduled for August 11th and 12th, 2023. The two day celebration is still in the planning stages but will include door prizes, a bouncy house, a petting zoo along with Katie K-9 as a guest speaker, and more. Steve looks forward to sharing the milestone with the community, "It's been our family's pleasure helping the people in Hugo all of these years!"