



ROBSTOWN HARDWARE COMPANY CELEBRATES ITS 100th ANNIVERSARY.

It's not often that a local community-owned and operated business gets the chance to celebrate 100 years of success. When a company does, it's a tribute to the strong commitment of a supportive community.

Robstown Hardware Company was founded in 1913. The business has received exceptional support from farmers and ranchers throughout the Coastal Bend. Today the company offers a wide range of products – from hedge clippers to combines. Offering a variety of products is something of a tradition for the business. Robstown Hardware Company was founded by Edwin Flato in February 1913 and was managed by company president Harry Nichols. Not only was it a John Deere dealership from the beginning, it also included a hardware business, an appliance and furniture business, and an ambulance service. The company, and its three employees, had its primary location at 516 E. Main Ave., in the heart of downtown Robstown. The company also operated a funeral home at a second location on Avenue C.

Throughout the 20th Century the business grew, and by 1974 moved to its present 12-acre location on U.S. Highway 77. Shortly thereafter, the company sold off many of its side businesses and turned its focus to operating as a John Deere dealership. Robstown Hardware offers sales, service and parts for a full line of John Deere products, including lawn and garden equipment, commercial mowing equipment, compact utility tractors and equipment, mid-size farm and ranch tractors, row crop tractors, large horsepower tractors, sprayers, harvest equipment, planting equipment, hay equipment, tillage equipment, and even small construction equipment such as skid steers and mini excavators.

In January of 1981, after serving as company president for 68 years, Harry Nichols retired and the John Deere dealership was purchased by King Ranch Inc.

In 1995, Robstown Hardware expanded its product and service offering to customers by becoming a Goodyear tire dealer, with emphasis on farm tire sales and service in the field. Presently, Robstown Hardware Company is the largest stocking farm tire dealership in South Texas, representing all major farm tire brands including Michelin, Firestone, Goodyear and Titan. The dealership is also the largest Camoplast Rubber Track Dealer in South Texas, providing sales and field service for all size track tractors.

The company has survived a depression, numerous recessions, world wars, hurricanes, floods, droughts and competition, which proves it will be a lasting presence in the business community. In that time, it has come a long way from walking plows and livestock drawn equipment to the huge diesel powered equipment of today.

In 1937, a John Deere Model "A" tractor offered a 24 horsepower engine with a four row planting attachment, three row bedder and four row cultivator. Today, farmers can purchase a 560 horsepower tractor that will handle plows with greater than 60 feet working widths and handle 48 row planters 120 feet wide. And with modern GPS technology, that 560 horsepower tractor will guide itself in the field, raise and lower the plow automatically.

While keeping up with technology is increasingly important, good customer service never goes out of style. Robstown Hardware Company has a commitment to customer service that can be seen from the moment someone brings a piece of equipment to the shop for repair. But customer service doesn't stop at the door. An important part of the service business is the field technicians. And while "field" may mean something else in other industries, in the case of Robstown Hardware Company it typically means just that – a technician in a farmer's field, working on a combine or tractor to get it up and running. The field technician is equipped with a

self contained service truck with lifting crane and air compressor, as well as a laptop computer with field Internet capability and cell phones to diagnose problems with direct link capabilities to John Deere centers for support and assistance. Nowadays, a field technician must be trained and certified by John Deere not only on the machines, but also be proficient in computer usage for diagnostics and extensive testing. A knowledgeable parts person is also a must nowadays because the equipment is so complex and technical. Customers want you to have the parts on hand so they don't experience downtime with their machines. When it's time to run their equipment, they want to run and not be delayed, especially since these machines are so expensive and farmers own fewer units. Customers have the same expectations for farm tires. They want you to have their tire on hand and have service people to install the tire in the field. Today the business also carries a number of other name brand products, such as Stihl handheld power products, Honda handheld power equipment and generators, Bush Hog cutters, Unverferth grain carts, R & R ripper plows and Fast Fertilizer applicators.

From its humble beginnings, the company has grown to a widely diversified business that includes 30 full-time and three part-time employees offering equipment sales, tires, parts and service.

But the company is about more than just selling products to customers. For years Robstown Hardware Company has been involved in the community supporting local county extension crop and field programs, farm and ranch shows, offering annual customer appreciation events, participating in various local county junior livestock shows, funding scholarships, joining in youth agriculture awareness events, sponsoring youth 4H tractor driving and safety events, and supporting local Relay for Life Cancer fundraising events.

The equipment may have changed significantly over the past 100 years, but the company's goal has remained the same – to provide the best sales, service and support to the farmers, ranchers and consumers of the Coastal Bend area and to be a major leader and supporter of agriculture and the local community. With the

resources provided by ownership, the hard work of loyal, dedicated employees, and the support of the community, the outlook for the next 100 years is very positive.



Tools of the trade from Robstown Hardware Company at work on the world famous King Ranch. Note the Running W formation.