



Victory Horticultural LibrarySM

Fostering Historical Research

Seedsmen Hall of Fame
Honoring Horticulturalists

SaveSeeds.org

[[MAIN PAGE](#)] [[HALL OF FAME](#)] [[LIBRARY](#)] [[CONTACT](#)] [[SEEDS](#)]

[[GET INVOLVED](#)] [[PROJECTS](#)] [[FINANCIAL STATEMENT](#)] [[DONOR RECOGNITION](#)]

A. W. Livingston & Company **A Business Timeline**

[[Bio](#)] [[Business History](#)] [[Livingston Tomatoes](#)]

-
- 1821** - Alexander Wilmer Livingston is born in Reynoldsburg, Ohio.
- 1842** - Begins working for a local seed grower.
- 1844** - Marries and leases land to begin farming.
- 1852** - Saves enough money to purchase land.
- 1856** - Purchases four hundred consignment boxes of the Buckeye Garden Seed Company from Robert Robertson who was moving to Iowa. During the late 1850s and early 1860s, business does well and Livingston is able to expand his farming and seed operations.
- 1864-65** - Builds a home and consolidates seed and farming operations in one location.
- 1875-76** - The Buckeye Garden Seed Company went bankrupt in the economic crash that affected many businesses in the nation. The business is dissolved and new entity formed by son Robert and named, "A. W. Livingston's Sons". Marketing was expanded using seed catalogs and advertising in newspapers and magazines.
- 1880** - The company moves from Reynoldsburg to Columbus, Ohio. Alexander moves to Des Moines, Iowa after purchasing the farm of his friend Robert Robertson. Alexander's plan was to relocate the entire company to Iowa but the business was prospering in Columbus under his son's management.
- 1890** - After Alexander's wife passes away, he turned over the Iowa seed business to his son, Josiah. He returned to Ohio and began to work on his book, "Livingston and the Tomato". It was part autobiographical, part instructional, and part agricultural history. It combined information about Livingston's methods, the history of the tomato as a food crop, and even contained a large selection of compiled recipes.
- 1898** - The company is incorporated as the Livingston Seed Company. Founder, A. W. Livingston passes away.
- 1920** - The Livingstons were big players in the seed trade industry interacting with many major seed houses. They had their own grow outs as well as 'traded' stock. On April 1st, 1920, a fire broke out at one of their warehouses. It destroyed everything. The McCullough's Sons Seed Company from Cincinnati took the train up to Columbus the next day, gathered up what they could, and filled orders for the Livingstons. Even with their help, Livingstons still was forced to send out a form letter returning orders along with money. ¹

1930s - By the late 1930s, the seed industry had begun to change. The company survived by moving into field seeds, and had dropped tomatoes from their line.

1937 - The United States Department of Agriculture's "Yearbook of Agriculture" for the year 1937 published the following short history:

"The work of A. W. Livingston, of Columbus, Ohio, and his associates and successors in the Livingston Seed Co. has resulted in the introduction of more new varieties than that of any other private group. Most of the varieties introduced by the Livingstons were of their own finding or origination, but some were obtained from other growers. Paragon, from a chance seedling, was their first introduction (1870).

The famous old variety Acme was developed by A. W. Livingston from a single superior plant found in a field of mixed stock and introduced in 1875. Like the Trophy, this variety was the source or served as one parent of many subsequently introduced varieties. In 1880 Perfection, a chance variant in Acme, was introduced. Livingston next brought out Golden Queen in 1882, Favorite in 1883, Beauty in 1886, Potato Leaf in 1887, Stone in 1889, and Royal Red in 1892. This last was developed from seven similar plants found in a field of Dwarf Champion by M. M. Miesse. The others just named were chance seedlings occurring in varieties the names of which are not known. These were followed by Aristocrat and Buckeye State in 1893, Honor Bright in 1897, and Magnus in 1900, as chance seedlings in varieties not recorded. In 1903 Dwarf Stone was introduced; it was a chance seedling found in Stone. Globe is from a cross between Stone and Ponderosa made about 1899 by Robert Livingston and was introduced in 1905. Hummer, another introduction, was selected out of Paragon.

Of this impressive list introduced by the Livingstons, Stone and Globe are among the most important varieties grown today. Acme, Beauty, Buckeye State, Dwarf Stone, Golden Queen, and Perfection are still listed by some seed producers although they are not extensively grown."

"With all due credit to the important contributions of other growers, seedsmen, and investigators, it is not out of place to call attention again to the great contribution of the Livingston Seed Co. to tomato improvement. Of about 40 varieties that had attained a distinct status prior to 1910, a third were productions or introductions by the Livingston company. If we add those varieties derived directly from Livingston productions and introductions, it appears that half of the major varieties were due to the abilities of the Livingstons to evaluate and perpetuate superior material in the tomato."

1947 - The last wholesale catalog is produced.

1979 - After working at and ultimately running the company over a period of thirty four years, the late Great-grandson [Alan Livingston](#) (1920-2008), retaining Livingston, Ltd. for his other business dealings, sells the seed business operations to Forest Randolph who operated it under the name of Superior Seed Company. But this ownership was short-lived and it passed to a Mr. Robert Johnston.

2014 - The wholesale only, packet seed company operating using the name, Livingston Seed Company was operated by Robert Johnston, along with his son and daughter, until they sold the company in 2014 to [Plantation Products, LLC](#). [Click here](#) for the press release of the sale.

**Please support this resource by supporting our sponsors.
This tribute to great pioneers in agriculture is sponsored by:**

The Victory Seed Company



"Preserving the past, one seed at a time"

Copyright © 1998 - 2017 -- Victory Horticultural Group, LLC -- All rights reserved
Victory Seeds® and VictorySeeds.com™ are the property of Victory Seed Company

Sponsor's Links

