1-1-1993

Tractors Acquired for a Museum

Tractor Museum
University of Nebraska-Lincoln, TractorMuseumArchives@unl.edu

maybe add Pictures

TRACTORS ACQUIRED TO DATE

The University has acquired over 42 Antique tractors each showing the development of power farming equipment. Only a few major developments are mentioned in this report. This was started between the period of 1960 and 1970. The biggest push followed the period of 1975. All the units assembled have been donations from farmers and dealers. More are available if storage space can be provided. It is hoped that a museum can be developed on campus to house and show all the developments in the Tractor Museum for future generations to see, appreciate and study.

For ages the hoe was the main agricultural tool. This is still true in many parts of the world today. This truly is an example of muscle power still being used. Oxen have been used, then horses, but it was still "muscle power."

In 1892, John Froelich had rebuilt his threshing engine into a self-propelled power plant which was later called the Granddaddy of the modern tractor. In 1902, Charles Hart and Charles Parr, two engineers who had been building gas engines - decided to build a tractor at Charles City, Iowa. This was one of the first successful Gasoline Traction Engines. In 1906, they coined the name Tractor. More tractors were built - historians all agree that these two men founded the tractor industry in America. The Froelich unit was later turned into the Waterloo Tractor Co. In 1918, the John Deere Tractor Company took over the Company. The Waterloo Boy tractor is on display in our present Museum. We hope to have an earlier Hart-Parr Tractor in the future. We do have a 1931 Hart Parr.

In 1911, the Heider Company in Carroll, Iowa, started to build the Heider tractor and later this was taken over by the Rock Island Plow Company and continued to sell the Heider tractor until 1926. This unusual tractor had friction drive and seven travel speeds while most tractors at that time had only one or two forward travel speeds of about 2 - 2 1/2 miles per hour. Our Museum has a Heider tractor on display donated by the LeFever family at Strang, NE.

1909 - The Minneapolis Steel and Machinery Co. built a tractor. Later, about 1915, was taken over by the Ford Tractor Co. This Company had hired a man by the name of Ford so the management could capitalize on the name Ford. This Company soon went into receivership. Unfortunately, Mr. Crosier bought one of these tractors and found it to be very unsatisfactory. He later purchased another make of tractor which was much better. In discussing this with other farmers, with Mr. Chase and Crozier and others decided to prepare a Tractor Testing bill in the legislature. The bill was introduced in 1919 and was passed in record time. Thus, the Ford tractor was responsible in triggering the Nebraska Tractor Test in 1919. We hope to acquire such a tractor in the future.

In 1918, Henry Ford introduced the Fordson tractor. He could not use his own name as it was being used by another tractor company. The Fordson tractor came into production at an opportune time. World War I had caused a shortage of horses and manpower for the USA. Ford had dealers all over the USA and sales for the tractor were very good. In fact, during 1923 to 1925 there were more Ford tractors sold than all other others put together - there were over 100 manufacturers of tractors at that time.

The Fordson was cheap ($395) and gave good service. It was radically different than other tractors. It was compact, cast iron unit construction and all gears ran in oil, water bath air cleaner. It was the first tractor constructed on an assembly line. Despite many problems, this tractor was very popular and responsible in setting a pattern of design that was followed by other manufacturing. Two such tractors are on display in our Museum. Donation by Bern Brothers!

In 1918, the Moline Universal Model "D" provided the first attempt at making a Universal tractor that could be used for cultivation as well as plowing, disking, etc. This tractor was equipped with a self-starter; lights, high-speed engine -1800 RPM, off-set engine for better visability, storage battery and electric governor, turning brakes, differential lock, oil gauge and adjustable drive, so the tractor could operate level, but the main feature was that it could be used for cultivating corn. We have this tractor on a loan basis.

1916 - During this time many manufacturing companies as IHC, A-C, Parrett, Indiana, Ballor, Avery, and Emerson Brantingham and perhaps others were attempting to make cultivating tractors for row crop purposes. However, IHC continued in dogged determination, and finally came up with the Farmall idea by trying to utilize the cultivator in many different ways after eight years of trial and error.

1924 - The Farmall created a new era in power farming by developing the first successful all purpose tractor. We have two such tractors donated by Senator Jerome Warner and Mrs. Gladys Stout of Wayne, Nebraska.

1929 - This was the year that the J. I. Case Company came out with their first row crop tractor (the Model "CC"). This tractor was donated to our Museum by Alex Nagel family, Raymond, NE. This was one of the first tractors restored, cleaned, repainted and delivered to our Museum!!

1932 - Firestone and Goodyear were trying to promote pneumatic rubber tires for tractors with little success among the tractor companies. In the absence of anything better, Allis-Chalmers suggested let us try a good cooperating farmer and let him try a set of rubber tires for a year. Then we may all learn something.

The farmer (Albert Schroeder) at Wakesha, Wisconsin, was given the experiment, and he liked what he experienced. It seemed that his tractor used less fuel, even seemed like he could get much more work done. It rode easier, raised less dust, and he could even drive on hard surface road. We have a replica of the original Model "U" AC tractor which was equipped with rubber tires as a courtesy of Allis-Chalmers Co.

1934 - The Nebraska Tractor Test Board had noticed the publicity of a farmer in Wisconsin using pnuematic rubber tires on his tractor and who seemed happy with this conversion. This suggested to the Tractor Test Board that maybe we should invite the three first companies bringing tractors for test in the spring of 1934, to bring a set of tractor tires with them and then after the official test on steel, we could run another test (free of charge), so we will all learn something. A-C was the only company that would accept the challenge to cooperate. The results were fantastic - 25% more power and 25% better fuel economy. This was truly a milestone in tractor development. This was confirmed later in many tests.

1939 - This was the year that the first Ford Ferguson tractor was tested at Nebraska. This new concept of mounting the implement directly on the tractor 3-point hitch with draft control. This was not accepted by other manufacturers. Soon other ideas were tried, such as A-C Traction Booster. Some tried mechanical draft control systems but eventually all tractors have been adopting draft control systems similar to the Ferguson System. We have two Ford Ferguson tractors - one donated by a former County Agent, Cyril Bish.

1958 - The first cab built in Nebraska was donated to the Museum by the Egging Company, Gurley, Nebraska. The Egging Co. received a presidential citation for promoting safety in tractors in 1973.

The first NE tractor upset was made ~~here~~ at the Tractor Test Lab by tipping a Case LA tractor with an egging cab. The tractor front end was raised by a fork lift tipping the tractor backwards over a bank. Later a series of instant pictures were taken of a tractor rolled off a bank and into a deep canyon. Little damage was made on the cab. If a man had been in the cab, he would have been severely shook up but not killed!