Spring 2012

Nuts and Bolts: Newsletter 45 - Issue 1 - Spring 2012

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Many changes have taken place at the Larsen Tractor Museum. In February, 2012, Jeremy Steele resigned as the Manager of the Larsen Tractor Museum. Collections Specialist Luis Vasquez has been retained as a Consultant to assist with the operations of the Museum.

A major change in the operations of the Museum has occurred during the past year: The Museum has been under the management of the Friends of the Larsen Tractor Museum organization. During 2011, the management of the Museum was moved from the State Museum to the Department of Biological Systems Engineering of the University of Nebraska. This has been an excellent arrangement, which allows the Friends to focus on being supporters of the Museum. Our Friends role is to be supportive of the programs and operation of the Museum through financial and volunteer support.

To implement this transition, a new manager of the Museum will be hired. The position will be filled through the operations of the University and will soon be advertised. The current Board of Directors of the Friends is being asked to continue for one additional year to assist with the transition so that a refocus of the thrust of the Museum may occur. Friends will be called upon during this time and with the future programs of the Museum.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR:

Larsen Tractor Museum Open House
Saturday, April 14, 2012 from Noon to 5:00 p.m.

Friends of the Larsen Tractor Museum Annual Meeting
Tuesday, June 5, 2012 at 7:00 p.m.
Dinner, meeting & program; location to be determined
Details of the meeting will be sent out later

Our Chinese tractor: How it got here
by Lou Leviticus

How on earth did an old Chinese Tai-Shan end up here? I have been asked that enough times to think a little back-ground will be helpful.

Most of the tractors I saw on the roads and in the fields at the times when I visited China (between 1982 and 1990) were of the two-wheel type with a small diesel engine. In the field they were used for tillage operations and for pumping and similar operations that required a belt drive. Engine power was generally up to 5 HP. Bigger Tractors (90% IHC inspired crawlers) were used on larger operations. The two-wheelers were also extensively used, with an appropriately designed sulky-type trailer, in all sorts of transport activities on rural roads. Therefore, they had one high-speed road-gear.
From the situation room
by Lou Leviticus (an unplanned article)

They told me a dozen times that we were going to have a newsletter again and that I had to write something in it. Of course I forgot, but our editor, Julie Thomson, finally caught me.

Well, here is my best effort at the moment. As you may all be aware, we have had quite a momentous time at the museum with significant personnel changes, which have also caused us to reorganize, reorient and re-examine where we will be going with the museum in the future.

As of now, Dr. Milford Hanna is our Director. All transactions and info will flow to him. The FRIENDS will be reactivated and as a first step we have the current Newsletter. All day-to-day activities are in the capable hands of Luis Vasquez. Some of you will remember him from the early days of the museum. He did work here when he was a graduate student at Morrill Hall.

That said, here is my news. Since there have been a number of actions taken with the collections, which did not involve the staffers/volunteers, it is now incumbent upon us to try and get the collection back to where it tells the real story of Tractor Testing in a coherent manner and retrieve items that were removed to be lent to other museums. The library is being re-examined and, where necessary, will be culled and reorganized. We are investigating the possibility of digitizing our collection of research papers and other significant publications and catalogues. In my opinion, this is a task we can try to organize in a manner that will allow our volunteers and other temporary helpers to perform this job.

As far as expanding our collection of Agricultural Machinery and Agricultural History, I have been collecting materials and websites of interest and historical value. The aim is to make these available in hardcopy and as website URL’s for our members and the public.

Well, that’s as much as I have to tell you right now. Please do not hesitate to comment.

Chinese tractor from page 1

One day, Bruce Ribblett from Fresno, California decided to import Chinese tractors. He did not know too much about the technical requirements of developed agriculture, but he had heard about the Nebraska Tractor Test. He contacted me, as Director of the Nebraska Tractor Test Lab, about testing, and I went to see one of their larger models, a four-cylinder diesel. I found a number of problems, which, at my suggestion, deterred him from bringing them to the Test Lab for even an unofficial test. He didn’t have this small model, but he assured me that he’d instructed the Chinese manufacturer to modify the engine so it could be tested.

When the tractor arrived here it turned out that they had just used the engine from the two-wheel unit and replaced the open sump cooler with a radiator, but omitted to provide a rear PTO, leaving the poor thing with an inaccessible side PTO, which also was not standard size. There were a few other problems, such as cylinder-head studs that were placed too far apart so that the head gaskets would pop every time max power was required from the engine. So the tractor was not much use and a waste of money to test.

Ribblett’s company decided to leave the tractor here, and after our own Phil Dinges volunteered to fix it up (with quite some difficulty getting the head gasket from China), we have it now as part of our collection.

Chinese tractor able to ascertain.

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