

1888 Self-Propelled Combine Had A 40-Ft. Header

When it comes to big headers, few modern combines could match the 1888 Berry self-propelled. It sported a 40-ft. header and harvested 100 acres in a 24-hour day.

The combine was also ahead of its day with its biomass fuel source. Forget about biodiesel or ethanol. The steam engine that powered it was fired with straw gathered as the wheat was harvested.

George Stockton Berry, Lindsay, Calif., designed and built six of the big machines. His first in 1886 had a 22-ft. header. None of the machines still exists today.

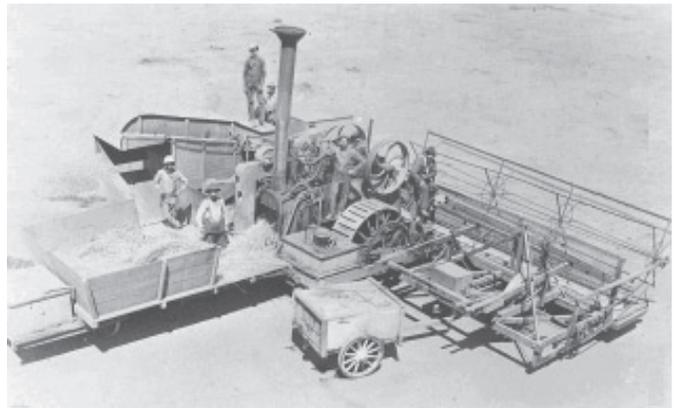
The straw-fired steam tractor served a dual purpose. It traveled in reverse as motive power to push the harvester components. It could also be used as a plow. The traction engine used differential gears instead of

wheel clutches for turning.

The Berry even had power transfer, a steam version of a pto. Steam from the traction engine was piped to a second engine that drove the harvesting mechanism.

In recognition of the role the Berry combine played in later combine designs, the American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineers recently designated it a historic landmark. A plaque commemorating the Berry has been placed at the Tulare County Museum, Visalia, Calif.

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The 1888 Berry self-propelled combine was powered by a steam engine, which was fired with straw gathered as the wheat was harvested.

Deere B Fitted With Rare “Cable Lift Loader”

One of the showstoppers at a recent tractor show was this 1937 Deere “B” tractor equipped with a model 25 “cable lift loader”. It’s owned by Dave Badger of Polk, Ohio.

“The seller’s father bought the tractor new in 1937 and it had always been owned by the same family. The tractor had little wear in the fan drive and steering gears. The owner thought the engine valves had been ground once - when he was just a ‘little fellow’. The tractor is on its third set of rear tires.”

Badger says the tractor is in amazingly good shape for being 69 years old. “So far I’ve only done cosmetic work on the tractor such as painting the rear wheels, freeing up the radiator shutter, and installing a new seal for the fuel control valve.”

The loader itself was built in 1946. “This was Deere’s first version of a front-end loader,” says Badger. “The loader is raised with wire cable that’s wound around a windlass under the tractor’s rear axle. The windlass is driven directly from the engine fly-

wheel through a clutch/brake. A single foot pedal on the left side operates the clutch/brake to raise and lower the loader bucket. I took the bucket to our neighborhood welder and had some straightening done and then painted it.”

Included with the tractor was a pto-driven “mechanical power lift” that fits on back of the tractor to raise or lower implements. “Apparently only a small number were ever made. I’ve called various people but the history on this power lift is scant. Previously, I had only seen two of these power lifts - at the big Deere Expo in Iowa.”

Badger says he’d like to know if any readers know about other No. 25 cable lift loaders and/or mechanical power lifts. “I’d like to make a list of known preserved or workable units,” he says.

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Owned by Dave Badger of Polk, Ohio, this 1937 Deere “B” tractor is equipped with a model 25 “cable lift loader”. It was Deere’s first version of a front-end loader.



From the flywheel, a belt-driven clutch brake operates a windlass that mounts under tractor’s rear axle. It winds the cables to lift or lower the loader.



Power lift system is designed to raise and lower a cultivator or a two-way plow and operates independently of the loader. It makes use of two mechanical clutches.

Couple Turns Rocks Into Art

Ben and Carolyn Britton have given their neighbors in Zeating, Iowa, a new perspective on something most area farmers despise - rocks. While rocks create problems out in the field, they’ve been turned into artwork in the Brittons’ back yard.

“Farmers have been dragging them out of the field for 100 years, and for the last 15 years I’ve been dragging them to our yard,” Ben says.

Ever since the couple moved from a farm to town, they’ve been landscaping a 150 by 180-ft. lot across from their home. The unique rock garden is a blend of rocks, flowers, plants, and ponds, but it’s the stacked rocks that makes it different from any other.

“Carolyn started stacking the rocks,” Ben says. Later she found other people on the internet who love to stack and balance rocks in unbelievable positions so the couple started to work harder at it.

“It’s taken a life of its own. It’s fun to take a rock and turn it around from the normal way you’d think it should be,” says Ben.

Long rocks, for example, are placed on end to create vertical lines. Rocks of various shapes are stacked on top of each other and sometimes resemble little people.

Though the couple didn’t have a master plan when Ben first borrowed a skidsteer to move dirt and shape the lot, the evolving design shows thought.

“We’re both artists,” Carolyn says. “We bounce ideas off each other.” More than half the rocks came from rock piles on a friend’s field half a mile away. Others are delivered to their yard by local farmers.

“One of the owners of the grain elevator, who is also a farmer, drove in one day and asked if I wanted a 12,780-lb. boulder,” Ben recalls. “He had the rock in the bucket of a huge dirt loader.”

Carolyn also works with smaller rocks. A couple of times a year, an 80-year-old friend brings a load of rocks as small as walnuts. Carolyn sorts them by color and creates designs with them in paths.

If you start your own rock garden, put plastic down first, Carolyn suggests, so weeds don’t come through. Ben uses a propane weed burner to keep things clean.

Ben adds a couple of safety concerns. If rocks are stacked, make sure young visitors are supervised so they don’t try to climb them.

The Brittons’ rock work, gardens, metal sculptures and art work can be viewed on their website. They invite people to contact them to set up a time to view their garden or for advice on creating rock gardens and stacking rocks.

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Ever since Ben and Carolyn Britton moved from a farm to town, they’ve been landscaping a 150 by 180-ft. lot across from their home (above). More than half the rocks came from rock piles on a friend’s field half a mile away. Others are delivered to their yard by local farmers. “It’s fun to take a rock and turn it around from the normal way you’d think it should be,” says Ben.

