

## Perfectly Restored Massey Harris 222 Combine

Len Holo has been attracted to combines since 1948 when he was 10 and his neighbor let him drive his brand new Massey Harris 222 combine. Now retired from the trucking industry, the Eau Claire, Wis., man still gets a thrill every time he takes his restored 222 combine to shows and events.

Most folks wouldn't have attempted the restoration, he admits, because of the extent of parts that needed replacing or fixing. But only 475 of the Massey Harris 222 combines were built in 1948, and between its rarity and nostalgia, he felt it was worth the effort. It took him a long time to find the machine, which had been parked in a field for more than 35 years by the original owner in Patricia, Alta.

Holo had an idea what he was getting into. He had previously restored a Massey Harris 21-A combine and an old Dodge farm truck so that he could retrace the route of the "Great Harvest Brigade" harvesting wheat on farms from Oklahoma to the Dakotas ([www.customharvesttribute.com](http://www.customharvesttribute.com)). The Brigade refers to Massey Harris's proposal to the government during WWII (in 1944) to let them have enough steel over their quota to produce self-propelled combines for 500 farmers who each pledged to combine at least 2,000 acres of grain. Many of the combine owners followed the harvest north as the crops ripened.

After a collector purchased Holo's 21-A combine, he decided to find and restore a 222.

"One of the selling points of the 222 was that Massey Harris was in the process of changing the drives," he says. "The old 21-A's had stick transmissions without much variable speed. The 222 has variable speed, and is very maneuverable. It's easy to operate in tight corners."

Holo also liked its size—just 8 ft. wide and easy to haul on a trailer. The shiny, working combine he hauls to shows is a far cry from

the rusted piece of metal delivered to him in 2007.

All the bolts were so rusted they had to be ground off, and many parts of the combine had rusted through and needed to be rebuilt—the grain elevators, augers, the straw walker housings, the bottom of the grain tank, reel bats, air intake and exhaust pipes, etc. The old sicklebar was salvaged, but fitted with new knife sections. New wooden reel arms were stained cherry red.

As Holo tore down the combine, he realized it wasn't an ordinary 222.

"I have a parts book for the 222 model and every part on this machine is identical except for the engine and drive chain. That makes it unique," he explains. The 222 model had a 4-cylinder, flathead F-162 Continental engine and a single roller chain. Holo's combine has a 6-cylinder 217 Chrysler engine and a double roller chain like the Model 26, the 222's successor. A former Massey Harris employee said the combine was likely a test machine, which is how Holo labeled the finished combine with decals.

The only modification he made was on the unloading auger so that he could lower it by himself from a support rod to transport it on a trailer.

Holo had the combine on the road soon after completing it last summer. He took it to events in Baraboo, Wis., Le Sueur, Minn., and more recently to the U.S. Custom Harvesters Convention in Kansas City. But his most memorable moment occurred at the Farm Progress Show in Illinois.

"The man who I sold the first combine to was there, and we ran both combines together," Holo says.

"Combines are just fascinating to me. I could get on one and stay on there all day," he adds. They bring back good memories for him—riding that new combine, working with his dad and running his own harvesting



Len Holo restored this 1948 Massey Harris 222 combine to working condition and often takes it to shows and events.



It took him a long time to find the machine, which had been parked in a field for more than 35 years by the original owner in Alberta.

business for a few years.

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## Rare Holt Combine Restored To Working Condition

Bob Grimm of Rapid City, S. Dak., recently called FARM SHOW to tell us about the 1919 Holt self-propelled combine he rebuilt. It's one of only 3 Holt self-propelled combines in existence that's still in working condition.

The combine rides on tracks and is powered by a 4-cyl. gas engine mounted on front. It has a 28-ft. header and is made almost entirely out of wood except for the engine, gears, chains and frame.

"The Holt combine was the first practical self-propelled combine ever made. Some other self-propelled combines were built in the late 1800's, but they were only prototypes and were never put into production," says the 84-year-old Grimm.

"As far as I know, there are only six Holt combines in existence—one in Washington, two in Iowa, one in Kansas, one in Saskatoon, Canada, and mine. When these combines got to be nonfunctional, farmers stored them outside and they rotted down. The one in Washington and the one in Kansas and mine are the only ones still in working condition.

"It's a big piece of equipment—the combine weighs about 10 tons and the header another 2 tons. The only parts that aren't wood are the engine, gears, chains and frame. I've displayed the combine at fairsgrounds and have cut grain with it in local fields."

"Ben Holt was a man of big ideas. He engineered and built some massive steam tractors for use in road construction farming and for hauling freight," says Grimm. "His factory was located in Stockton, Calif., and apparently heavy wheeled tractors in his area had difficulty getting bogged down and stuck in the fields.

"Holt didn't invent the 'track-type' tread

design as we know it today, but realized it would make tractors much more functional if they had a track layer system rather than round wheels. So, he put tracks on his combine. In later years the Holt Manufacturing Co. moved to Peoria, Ill., and the Holt name was changed to Caterpillar."

Grimm says his combine was originally purchased in 1919 by Olie Olson of Harrisberg, Neb. "Olson was a big operator for his day. When most farmers were tilling and planting 250 to 300 acres, Olie was farming 2,000 or more acres. So he needed big harvesting equipment," says Grimm.

The combine was built in Stockton, Calif., and shipped on a flat car by rail and by steam locomotion to Bushnel, Neb., where it was unloaded. "A man named Jim Snyder drove the combine across the country 19 miles from Bushnel to where the Olson fields were as there was no way to haul it," says Grimm. "The traveling speed of the combine is 29/10 mph in high gear and 1 3/4 mph in low gear. The combine had only 2 forward speeds and a reverse gear."

Grimm bought the combine from Arch Dougherty in 1985. "Arch was an antique farm machinery collector from Alliance, Neb., and had a large collection of single cylinder gas engines which my father and I were interested in," says Grimm. "He said the combine wasn't all there. The combine body was fairly complete but the header was missing. He had taken all the iron parts—chains, gear, shafts, etc—to the salvage yard as the header had all rotted away. He said the only thing left from the header was the sickle and guards, the big wheel that carries the platform, and the center pipe for the reel.



Bob Grimm's rebuilt 1919 Holt self-propelled combine is one of only 3 in existence that's still in working condition. It's made almost entirely out of wood.

I decided to get the combine anyway because it was so rare.

"I made a trip to Bard City, Kan., to an antique club that had a similar combine in working condition that had been donated to them. I took photos and some measurements and used them to build the new header and refinish what was necessary on the main combine. I spent one winter building the header and another winter rebuilding the combine. The engine was still in good shape but a lot of the interior of the combine had rotted out. I had to rebuild the radiator.

"The 28-ft. header is very unusual. I've never found another one listed anywhere. I can see there was a 4-ft. addition on the header that was factory-installed as on all the other Holt combines had 24-ft. heads or shorter. I think Mr. Olson must have made a special request at the time he ordered the combine because he was such a big operator."

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