

Fantastic Collection Of Rare Antique Tractors



Add-On Axle Turned Car Into "Auto Tractor"

In about 1914, the Auto Tractor Company in Niles, Mich., came up with the "Auto Tractor" add-on axle that would turn any car into a field tractor.

According to a story in the "Weekly Implement Trade Journal" on March 28, 1914, you could attach the Auto Tractor to a car in 5 min. and detach it in 2 min. and go back on the road. It would fit any car from 20 to 90 hp. Once attached, the rear wheels of the car would be raised off the ground. Power was transmitted by pinions from ring gears on the auto hubs to large, open gears on the tractor wheels.

The gear ratio was such that with the car running at a speed of about 25 mph, the tractor would be geared down to 2 mph. The company stated in its sales literature that a 20 hp. Auto Tractor would do the work of 4 to 6 horses.

An auxiliary cooling system was provided since the car would run at the slower speed.



Self-Propelled Allis Chalmers Rotary Tiller

Allis-Chalmers promoted this 3-wheeled self-propelled rotary tiller as an alternative to mold-board plows in 1915. It had two large steel wheels in back and a single small wheel in front with an operator platform on top of it. The gear-driven tiller was controlled by a couple of clutch levers next to the operator. The tiller was apparently raised out of the ground by a mechanical lift.



Heider Tractor Featured Sliding Engine

To change gears on the Heider tractor, the operator would slide the engine up and down on tracks above a cone, according to information that accompanied this photo. Otherwise, it didn't look all that different from a tractor of today. Here it's shown pulling a road grader being controlled by its own operator.

Veteran FARM SHOW correspondent C.F. Marley of Nokomis, Ill., was recently browsing through the archives at the University of Illinois library when he made an amazing discovery. Tucked away in a "lost" file that had not been looked at for more than 70 years, he found photos and information on some of the rarest farm tractors ever built.

The photo collection was assembled in the early 1900's by an ag engineer named J.T. Ekblaw. The tractors in the file spanned a period from the early 1900's to about 1920.

"What amazed me was that according to library records, no one has checked out that file since 1920. In the early 1900's there were hundreds of small tractor manufacturers that sold tractors on a local basis all over North America. Documented information on them is rare. In many cases, there may be no one alive who has ever even seen these tractors," says Marley.

Featured here are photos of the most unusual tractors in the file along with as much background information as we could find. If you have more information on any of the tractors shown here - or photos of other such rare tractors - please contact us at: FARM SHOW Magazine, P.O. Box 1029, Lakeville, Minn. 55044 (ph 800 834-9665).

Photos courtesy of the University of Illinois Archives



Dakota Tractor Had Wide Open Drive Wheel

The wide drive wheel on this Dakota tractor looks a little like a paddle wheel on a steamboat. The tractor was built by G.W. Elliott & Co. in De Smet, S. Dak. One advantage of the design, according to a brief writeup that accompanied the photos, is that the wide drivewheel rolled down all vegetation ahead of the tillage equipment, making the work easier. Photo at right shows tractor chassis without engine or transmission.



3-Wheeled Andrews Tractor

Built in Minneapolis, Minn., the Andrews Tractor had a single drive wheel in back and a 2-wheel steering axle in front. It was chain-driven by a chain that wrapped around a large gear on the rear wheel. A coil spring can be seen on the front axle.

With only a single wheel in back, stability may have been a problem. And would a single traction wheel have been more likely to dig itself into soft ground?

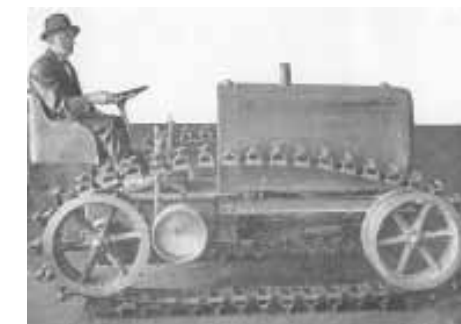


Self-Propelled Manure Spreader

Not much information is available about this "mystery" manure spreader which has a power unit up front. The power unit appears to have a hitch arm that reaches back under the spreader. The operator rides on a buggy seat at the front of the formerly horse-drawn unit. Engine and steering controls extend back from the add-on front power unit.

Early Tracked Tractors

Years before Caterpillar came out with its Challenger farm tractor, there were many other manufacturers on the market with tractors sporting tracks instead of wheels. Here are photos of some we found and a few details.



Tom Thumb Tractor

A Minneapolis, Minn., tractor maker came up with a unique twist on tracks when it designed a machine with a single drive track at the center of the tractor. There was a regular 2-wheel axle in front. It had 12 hp. at the drawbar and 20 hp. at its drive belt.

"Gearless" Tractor

Company literature claimed that the new "gearless" transmission in this tractor was comparable in importance to the invention of the internal combustion engine, but we could find no explanation of how it worked. It may have simply driven the tracks directly off the engine at one speed, which could be controlled by the engine throttle. When the "Gearless Tractor Company" introduced the tractor on the Boardwalk in Atlantic City, New Jersey, it claimed to have done away with the "constant problems farmers have faced with tractor transmissions".



Buckeye Tractor

A tracked tractor built by the Buckeye Mfg. Co. of Anderson, Ind., was equipped with "high wheel" tracks.

Independent Tracks Follow Ground Contour

We're not sure of the make of this tractor, but apparently its claim to fame was the independent suspension on its tracks which allowed it to better follow the ground contour. Photo shows one track riding over a concrete block while the other track remains planted firmly on the ground.



Holt Tractor

This big Holt tractor had a single steering wheel up front and a set of large steel tracks in back. Here it's shown pulling a large road grader.