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Antique Braid Makers Attract Showgoers

By Cindy Ladage

Al Kamminga, DeMotte, Ind., makes colorful braids with a pair of antique braiding machines that he operates with a small electric motor.

The 2 machines ride on wheels and at shows stand side by side, belt-driven by the same motor using a double pulley. One machine produces round braids, and the other flat. Both machines were built back in the 1890's by New England Butt Co. of Providence, Rhode Island.

"I often demonstrate my braiding machines at local antique tractor shows, where they're a big hit," says Kamminga. "Kids like to use the flat braids as shoelaces. Adults use the round braids for lanyards or as decorative items. At shows I set out a table to show examples of the different kinds and colors of braids that I can make. Braids that match a student's school colors are quite popular."

Each braiding machine uses a series of 16 "bobbins" that work by means of a circular weaving process. The bobbins magically create a braid that rises from the machine, goes through a series of rollers, and then lowers into a bucket as the spindles continue to spin and make more.

"With the machine that makes round braids, half the bobbins go clockwise and the other half counter clockwise," says Kamminga. "With the machine that makes flat braids, all the bobbins go almost all the way around but then reverse their direction and go back the other way. It's a very ingenious design."

The braiding machines were originally



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used in factories, and the braid was put on huge spools. "Each machine could produce up to 800 yards of braids per day," says Kamminga. "Such machines are now quite rare in the U.S. There used to be thousands of them on the East Coast before they were eventually moved overseas."

He got his machines in a roundabout way. "Someone in Pennsylvania had salvaged braiding machines from a factory that was scheduled to be demolished, and then sold a few to different people. The guy I bought my machines from had set them up on wheeled carts so they could be easily moved around."

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How To Train A Bull To Buck

Ever wonder how they train rodeo bulls to buck? While there might be some young cowboys out there willing to do it the old-fashioned way, most bucking bull raisers use dummies to do the body-snapping training.

"Buck 'Em All Dummies" are easy to use, kind to animals, and effective, says Buddy Reynolds who worked with Bob Wilfong on the design.

Reynolds, explains that a bull bred to be a bucking bull bucks naturally when something is on his back. The dummy is placed on the bull in the chute and turned on. After the bull is released and has made the desired kicks and twists, the trainer hits the button on the remote and the dummy releases and flies off the bull.

"It has an electronic circuit board and works similar to a garage door opener, with a range of about 150 ft.," Reynolds says.



Dummy is placed on bull in chute and turned on or off remotely.

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Photos courtesy Lynden Tribune

An antique tractor club restored this century-old barn in the Lynden, Wash., city park, at a fraction of the cost estimated by engineers. "The city agreed to give us storage space in the barn whenever we need it," says club president Larry McPhail.

Tractor Club Saves City Barn

When the city of Lynden, Wash., said it couldn't afford to restore a century-old barn in the city park, the Puget Sound Antique Tractor & Machinery Association took on the job. And they did it for a fraction of the cost estimated by engineers.

"The estimate for the work was \$300,000," recalls Larry McPhail, club president at the time. "With community donations and volunteer help, we did it for \$15,000, not counting a new roof."

The barn was part of a 236-acre bequest to the city by farmer Hans Berthusen, more than 70 years ago. The club has a long history of leasing park space for member's collections of steam engines, sawmills and tractors. The club also sponsors an annual 4-day show in the park.

The barn design has a "broken hip" roof with a drive-in basement on one side and a drive-in, second story hayloft on the other. More common in the East and Midwest, it is considered quite rare in the Puget Sound region. Part of it was built in 1887 with a larger section completed in 1901. The roof stands 50 ft. tall, and the barn measures 125 ft. long and 60 ft. wide.

"The city agreed to give us storage space in the barn when we needed it," says McPhail. "We said if you give us the supplies, we'll supply the labor, so the city budgeted \$50,000, three times what we ended up needing."

The entire project took 5 years, starting with a concrete foundation for the south end of the barn, something it had never had. After raising the barn and clearing room, club members used a big loader to push 3,800-lb. concrete blocks in place.

"It was sitting on nothing," recalls McPhail. "It was rotting and settling into the ground. The engineer's plans called for 20 tons of concrete, but we used 100 tons for the 8-ft. high, 2-ft. wide and 60-ft. long foundation."

Upper levels were straightened and tightened up with the help of cables. Perhaps the biggest challenge was replacing supports for

the oldest portion. It faced east and west at the end of the larger and newer barn, which ran north and south.

"The posts that held up the main ridge pole had rotted away," says McPhail. "We were going to replace them with 5 telephone poles. The engineer's plans were to cut them in half to bring them in and then splice them back together."

Club members had a better, more adventuresome idea. They figured out a way to raise the poles up and bring them in through the old hay door under the roof end.

"We took part of the old roof out and bolted the peak to the poles," says McPhail. "We finished by helping to put on a new roof and painting the barn."

When the project was finished, the city park board chairman suggested information on the project be retained. The publisher of the Lynden Tribune did it one better. With the help of club members, he gathered all available articles, including a history of the Berthusens, photos, and other documents into a book.

The 72-page Hans Berthusen's Barn book costs \$25 and is available from McPhail. Normally mail orders require \$3 shipping.

"We still have copies, and FARM SHOW readers who order it will get free shipping," says McPhail. "Proceeds are going to help pay for a community building in the park."

The restored barn is an antique machinery buff's paradise. As planned, the club has storage space in the lower level of the barn for wagons and other equipment. The hayloft is filled with the original owner's antique farm equipment and other donated equipment.

"When the barn was restored, local Boy Scouts identified every piece of equipment, mostly horse-drawn, and built and attached signs to them," says McPhail. "It is all very informative."

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The entire project took 5 years, starting with a concrete foundation at one end of the barn where members used a big loader to push 3,800-lb. concrete blocks into place.