

Huge Farm Collection Blows People Away



Renner's collection includes a Deere 1010, the only one of its kind.

Tom Renner is into horsepower and the equipment it powers, whether generated by his 40 Belgian draft horses or the 200 farm tractors he has collected. The tractors and the equipment for them and his horses are just the start. Thousands of other ag artifacts fill several buildings on his farm, including one that is 80 by 300 ft. with three floors.

Renner admits to collecting just about anything used on the farm. A lot of the older items dating back to the early 1800's were homemade or made by a local blacksmith. That includes hundreds of horse-drawn items, mostly tillage-related.

"Often a blacksmith would pick up on a farmer's idea and improve it and begin making it to sell," says Renner.

Many of those ideas have ended up in Renner's collection. The basis for the collection was things he remembers using as a boy or that his father or grandparents or even earlier generations used and kept.

Renner is the fifth generation to farm the land, a tradition followed by his son

Jake and grandson, Jonathan. Like Renner, they are very involved in the collection. All are hands-on and strive for authenticity and longevity of items restored. That includes wood as well as metal.

"We use linseed oil to keep the wood alive," says Renner. "We don't use clear varnish over the oil. It looks great at first, but then gets dark with age, and you can't bring it back."

Wooden items get washed with a wood cleaner and treated with linseed oil. "Anything that is wood gets three coats when we add it to the collection and more later," he says. "We have box wagons that have been treated three times in 10 years."

Metal items to be repainted or in need of substantial cleaning get a soda blast. Renner won't sandblast, concerned it will get into joints or under seals.

"About 75 percent of our metal equipment is totally repainted," he says. "If it has a decent coat of paint on it and it isn't rusty, we will use a clear coat. If there is rust, we

use from 600 to 1500-grade sandpaper to take the rust off and make it shiny. Then we put the clear coat on."

In addition to their farming operation, the Renners also operate a John Deere dealership started by Tom in 1973. He notes that people occasionally stop by the dealership with an item or to talk.

Tractors and equipment to go with them cover the gamut from early to more modern. A rare subset of the tractor collection is a group of around 10 where less than 100 were ever made. These include a Deere 2510 High Crop Diesel and a 3010 Diesel Orchard.

"We have a Deere 4230 low profile powershift, which is pretty rare, and a Deere 1010," says Renner's grandson Jonathan. "It is one of only one made."

One of Tom Renner's personal favorites is the WA-14, made by the Wagoner Tractor

Co. "There were only 26 of them made," he says. "It is a rare, big 4-WD. Most were sold in the West in the late 70's and 80's."

Everything in Renner's collection is in working order. Horses, tractors and more can be seen at the Renners's show, 100 Years of Horsepower, held every other year on the home farm.

One thing that isn't ending anytime soon is collecting and restoring. A December video posted to the Renner YouTube channel shows Tom walking through 4-WD tractors yet to be restored. They include a 1972 Versatile 700, an International 4100, an 1805 Massey Ferguson, a Steiger Bearcat 225, a White 4-180 and a dozen more.

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His Deere WA-14 is one of just 26 made.

Century-Old Truck Comes Full Circle

By **Lorn Manthey, Contributing Editor**

"As a kid back in the late 1940's, I learned how to drive in a 1919 All American truck that my dad got in trade from two neighbors for hay," says retired Ill. farmer Stewart Young. "When he sold the truck in 1959, I told him that someday I'd sure like to get it back. It took more than 50 years, but now it's in my shed."

Young's century-old piece of history was built in Chicago. The one-ton chassis has a channel iron frame and it's powered by the original Herschell Stillman engine, which was made in New York. "With solid rubber tires on wood wheels supported by a few leaf springs, it wasn't very comfortable to drive," Young says, "but it served its purpose on our farm."

Young's dad grew tomatoes, and he used the truck to haul them to market. "If the truck was loaded, the 45-hp. engine had a tough time making it up Pope Creek Hill into town," Young says with a laugh. "I used it to haul corn and feed to my 4-H pigs that we raised about a half-mile from our farm. As long as the road and field were dry, no problems. With a little moisture on the ground, the truck didn't go anywhere."

Young says the vehicle is basically in original condition, except for the battery and electric starter that he added recently. "My shoulder was too weak to crank the ring gear, so the electric starter is a nice addition."

The floorboards and running boards are still the original oak and Young says the hood has a few dents from kids who played on it at one time. The previous owner painted it original orange for the Viola, Ill. Centennial.

The bed has wooden flooring with a multipurpose 8-way box. Racks fold up halfway for hauling pigs or other small livestock and



Stewart Young bought a 1919 truck that was in his fathers more than 50 years ago.

full height for hauling cattle. It can also be used as a grain box. Young says the operator station is far from comfortable, with a lightly padded bench seat and a one position steering wheel. "Pushing a pedal on the floor moves a rod to engage the mechanical drum brakes on the rear wheels. The vacuum horn is activated by pulling a rope and a kill switch stops the engine." The headlights are kerosene lamps, and a dashboard sticker warns 'this warranty will be rescinded if the vehicle is overloaded, and you go over 20 mph'.

"I drive the truck in parades and people get a big kick out of seeing something this old," Young says. He's been fascinated with old trucks for years and has learned that 29 companies began building trucks in Chicago from 1900 to 1910 and another 40 started in the next decade. "By the end of 1920, nearly 50 of those companies had closed down.

Young says he's been told there are only



An original ad for the All American Truck Company.

five All Americans still running in the U.S. "So mine's quite valuable, especially to our family. My son and grandson think it's a really special vehicle because grandpa and great-grandpa owned it, so it'll definitely stay in our family."

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