

# 10-Ton Holt Track Tractor Returned To Family

After sitting on display for the past 20 years, Scott Vouk's 10-ton Holt track tractor was sawing logs this past Memorial Day. For Vouk, it was a dream come true. Built in 1919, the gas tractor spent 63 years with the Vouk family before being auctioned off. When Vouk saw it in a photo from the 2018 Antique Caterpillar Machinery Owners Club show in Houston, Texas, he knew it was the family tractor.

"I recognized the canopy my grandfather John built for it after his brother Bill bought it in 1938," says Vouk. "There was also a belt pulley on the back and a bracket for headlights on the radiator that my grandfather and great uncle had made."

In 2001 his great uncle sold the tractor to Benjamin Holt III. Holt's namesake had started what became the Holt Manufacturing Company. It merged with the C.L. Best Gas Traction Company to form the Caterpillar Tractor Company.

Vouk contacted CEO Peter Holt and asked what the plans were for the old tractor. When Holt learned Vouk's family connection to

the tractor, he and his sister Corinna Holt Richter decided to gift it back to the Vouks. In exchange, Vouk and his father Tom agreed to donate to an area technical college they and his sister had attended.

This past January, Vouk went to Texas to retrieve the tractor. After making initial repairs, he fired it up and belted it up to the family sawmill at a small gathering of family and friends.

"We ran it on the sawmill for a few hours and plan to use it on the threshing machine this summer," says Vouk.

While initial work got the tractor running, he says there is much yet to be done. The family used it hard for 12 to 15 years and then periodically from 1965 until 2001 at Vouk Steam Shows.

"It was very worn out when the Holts bought it," says Vouk. "We are currently collecting parts, which is not the easiest thing to do with a tractor this old. We replaced the exhaust manifold with one from California."

If FARM SHOW readers know of parts from 10-ton Holts, Vouk would appreciate



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hearing from them.

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Veerkamp collects vintage Caterpillar equipment. He found an experimental 20 with the number EXP 0000-L.

## Caterpillar Collector Hit The Jackpot

With 125 pieces of vintage Caterpillar equipment in his collection, Matt Veerkamp struck gold. He was looking for a parts tractor when he found a Caterpillar 20 with a serial number that read EXP 0000-L.

"When I got home with the tractor, I confirmed in the archives that it was what I thought it was," says Veerkamp.

What made this 4-cylinder, gas tractor special was that it was the first new tractor design from Caterpillar. In 1925 C.L. Best Gas Traction Company and Holt Manufacturing Company consolidated under the new Caterpillar name. The experimental 20 made its debut a year later at fairs, trade shows and other expositions. "Ag was the biggest market at the time," says Veerkamp. "The 20 was designed for use in the groves and orchards to get into tighter areas. It was used for everything and had winches and pumps hung on it. It even had military applications."

Eventually the 20 ended up at a ranch owned by a descendent of C.L. Best. Along the way, the once white tractor was painted Caterpillar yellow, its history forgotten. It became simply one of the 8,568 Caterpillar 20s built in San Leandro, Calif. and Peoria, Ill. from 1927 to 1931.

As Veerkamp and his father Doug began restoring the tractor, they faced several

challenges. One was that as an experimental model, good specifications did not exist. Plus, although it looked like other Caterpillar 20s in the Veerkamp collection, there were differences.

"A lot of internal parts in the experimental 20 were one-off prototypes," says Veerkamp. "They were more primitive than what went

into the production 20s."

It was during restoration that Veerkamp discovered the novel white color. Caterpillar colors originally were gray and red. Caterpillar yellow had not yet been adopted. They also found nickel and brass plating used to dress it up.

Hard use over the decades since it was a showpiece had also taken its toll. "The axles, transmission and clutch were worn out and had to be fabricated," says Veerkamp. "Restoring the engine was fairly easy. We were testing it before we finished the rest of the tractor."

Restoration took 4 mos. The tractor was taken apart completely, down to every nut and bolt. The father and son team restored or rebuilt virtually every part. Today it runs

like new.

The Veerkamps have other experimental and unique tractors in their collection. These include the experimental prototype of the 1929 Caterpillar 15. Finding them is what Veerkamp refers to as the hunt. He has been hunting since he was 15, adding to the collection his father started a dozen years or so earlier.

"You need to look for the slight variations," says Veerkamp. "You also need to learn the story, where the tractor worked and who owned it. Finding the story adds value."

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Restored Caterpillar tractors from Veerkamp's collection.

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