



Part of the massive collection of articulated tractors is one of the first Steiger commercial models.

World's Largest Collection Of Articulated, 4-WD Tractors

If you want to see really big articulated, 4-WD tractors, visit Chris Wathen. With 70 tractors in his collection, it's like nothing else anywhere in the world.

"I've had the collecting disease since I was a teenager," says Wathen. "I collected motorcycles and unstyled Farmall and McCormicks, pre-1939 stuff. I was wondering what to collect next, as I thought

I had all the Farmall stuff I could get."

Wathen was driving a Steiger 4-WD ST325 Panther at the time. "I thought, why not collect 4-WD articulated tractors?" recalls Wathen. "It quickly snowballed from there."

His first buy was pure luck. He couldn't find anything local, but he heard about a Steiger 2200 in Moosomin, Sask. He made the 1,800-mile drive, bought it, and brought

it home.

"I didn't even know what I had at the time," says Wathen. "It was a wide fender model, one of only two that were hand built on the farm by the Steiger brothers in Red Lake Falls."

Over the years, the collection has continued to grow. He specializes in component tractors, those (not including Versatile) where parts came from an auto parts store, salvage yard, or another piece of equipment.

While not all of his tractors can match the Steiger 2200 for history, a surprising number can come close, and some surpass it. He has several first or very low serial number tractors like the serial #1 IH 4366. Even more special is the Steiger 105 with serial #1. It was the first Steiger built for commercial sale. His oldest tractor is a 1956 Wagner TR6.

"Wagner tractors don't get the glory they deserve," says Wathen. "They were the granddaddy of all the big 4-WD tractors. They built for Deere, and Deere put them out of business. Wagners were the base that Steiger started their business from. Big Bud was built by former Wagner dealers. They were the true pioneers of 4-WD tractors."

At this point, he has an 80 by 180-ft. shed packed full of tractors, with some stored in a neighbor's barn and some smaller ones in another barn. Occasionally, they do come out to play for special events and tractor shows. Since 2016, they've all come out of storage for Wathen Farms Annual Farm Day. The exception was in 2020, and nothing is



1956 Wagner TR9.

planned for this year.

"It was the kids' idea," says Wathen. "It's been open to the public and a chance to get the tractors out, get them exercised, and their oil stirred up."

Although they have to switch batteries around to do it, Wathen has 55 Big Buds, Steigers, Romes, Versatiles, and more in running condition. He also has a fair number of other, old 4-WDs that aren't articulated and even some 2-WDs.

Even at 70 tractors, Wathen looks forward to his next buy. "My favorite tractor is the one I'm buying next," he says with a laugh.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Chris Wathen, 3101 S. Green River Rd., Evansville, Ind. 47715 (ph 812-475-9391).



Duane Helman's huge Fordson tractor collection was once lined up for a group photograph. Many he restored, and others were running and left unpainted.

50-Year Collection Includes Hundreds Of Fordsons

Duane Helman has been a Fordson aficionado for more than half a century. He began picking up a few repairables in the 1970's. "My dad worked at a junkyard when I was a kid, and I got interested in picking through old stuff and had a few Ford Model T's. I wanted to have more of them, but they got too darn expensive, so I settled into buying different Fordson models."

He owns serial number 3145 from 1918, a new 1925 model that's never been used, another with a mounted cultivator, one with a Bell City corn picker, and two that pull combines. He also bought a Fordson road roller, track models, and many others.

Many of the tractors Helman collected were from auctions, which he went to several weeks a year, often out of state. Some were through the Fordson collector's group, which he helped organize. His collection now numbers more than 100. Helman also has four Model Ts and a handful of old Ford trucks. He's restored many in his collection since retiring 10 years ago, and most of those unrestored are running. "Now that I'm over 80, I'm probably not restoring too many more," he says.

In addition to collecting, Helman has spent

hundreds of hours repairing carburetors for other Fordson owners. He learned that skill while running his tool-and-die business. "One collector told me I knew enough about Fordson carburetor repair to write a book, to which I quickly replied, 'God gave me the

gift of repairing carburetors, not writing about how to do it,'" he says with a laugh.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Duane Helman, 6675 N State Route 235, Conover, Ohio 45317.



1927 Fordson Trackson is part of Helman's collection.



Fordson roller tractor on display as part of the collection in Ohio.

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