Issue #37

## **THE PLOWSHARE** News for John Deere Collectors





### John Deere Tractor & Engine Museum Now Open

#### John Deere never saw a green tractor

From the time he revolutionized the plow in 1837, John Deere continually looked for ways to improve equipment to make life easier for farmers. While steam engine tractors began to appear in the 1880s, when Deere died in 1886, the world was still using the walking plow as its main means of turning the soil.

#### Things were about to change

In 1918, after years of considering entering the tractor design and production business, the company bought the Waterloo Gasoline Engine Company in Waterloo, Iowa, for \$2.25 million. The decision to enter the tractor market paved the way for Deere & Company to eventually become the world's leading provider of agricultural equipment.

Over seven years ago, the idea came about to commemorate the tractors and engines that helped make John Deere the well-known brand it is today by building a museum on the original site of the Waterloo Tractor Works. Researchers and workers meticulously constructed exhibits that tell the history of tractors and engines in the Waterloo area. Then following much anticipation, the John Deere Tractor & Engine Museum opened its doors to the public on December 2, 2014.

"The exhibit begins in the late 1800s and ends in the late 1970s, helping visitors really understand the John Deere Waterloo story and why this company is 178-years-strong," explained Dawn Hendershot, manager, John Deere Tractor & Engine Museum and Visitor Services.

The museum has something for everyone. There are interactive displays, historical timelines, vintage film footage, and more. Current exhibits include:

 Working the Land – Trace the evolution of work from people power to the early days of tractors and engines.

- Storyline Discover the story behind
  John Deere's arrival and growth in Waterloo.
- Manufacturing Follow the production of a historic John Deere tractor from design to assembly.
- Into the World Experience how
  John Deere tractors and engines help
  people do their work today.

Of course, there are interesting rare tractors and engines on display as well. Among the treasures in the building is the oldest known Waterloo Boy, one of the first production Model "D"s built in January 1924, and the first Model 3010 produced, serial number 1000.

#### Celebrate the Grand Opening

Saturday, June 13, from 10 a.m.–6 p.m., including additional displays and demonstrations outside of the museum.

## Take a Walk on the Long Green Line

Walk into the John Deere Tractor & Engine Museum, and the first thing you'll see is an unstyled Model "D," also known as a Spoker "D." There begins a long green line on the floor that runs through the lobby into the exhibit space, where a replica of John Deere's 1837 plow marks the beginning of it all. Stand on the line and look through the opening in the wall, and glimpse a tractor evolution that spanned nearly 60 years.

Here are three of the unique tractors you'll find along that green line, along with their story.



#### The Waterloo Boy

After the Spoker "D," the first tractor on the line is one of the oldest known Waterloo Boy Model "R"s in existence today. Travis and Shirley Jorde of Rochester, Minnesota, own the tractor, built in 1914. They bought the frame, wheels, fenders, and part of the transmission in the mid-1980s. Travis had to remake the fenders, and the engine he already had wouldn't fit in the frame.

Jorde started what he calls "Deere hunting." He found a specific engine that fit into the narrower frame and other parts to restore the tractor. Jorde said the engine, frame, and wheels are specific to this model.

Travis Jorde grew up with John Deere tractors. Because of that Deere upbringing, the Jorde's are happy to see their Waterloo Boy in the John Deere Tractor & Engine Museum.

"Every room you go into (in the museum) has something different ... so you see all kinds of things that you haven't seen before. It's something special," Jorde said.

#### Waterloo Boy "R" and "N" 1914–1924

In early 1914, Waterloo sold a few different model tractors, including the "L," "LA," and "C," but by summer 1914 they introduced the Model "R," and in 1918 the two-speed Model "N." Deere & Company purchased the Waterloo Gasoline Engine Company in March of 1918 and began to focus on plans to develop a new enclosed-gear tractor. Introduced in 1923, the Model "D" became the replacement for the "Waterloo Boy."

#### The Unstyled "GP"

Jack Beck, of Omaha, Nebraska, grew up with John Deere tractors. He was interested in owning a "GP" because a favorite photo of his mother shows her sitting on his grandfather's "GP" in front of the barn that was built the year she was born in 1919.

Beck heard a friend of a friend had a 1928 unstyled "GP." The owner didn't think he'd get around to restoring it, so Beck talked with him and made a deal. According to Beck's research, Deere built this particular tractor about two months into the "GP" production run.

Beck discovered that the front axle of this tractor is different from other "GP"s. It's one of an estimated 25 tractors built with these front axles that John Deere developed while experimenting with beet and bean implements on early "GP"s. It may not be the original axle, but as far as Beck knows, it may be the earliest one that exists on a John Deere Model "GP" tractor at this time.

An early photo of the Waterloo Gasoline Engine Company in Waterloo, Iowa.



From left to right: Jack Beck stands next to his unstyled "GP"; his mother on his grandfather's "GP"; a "GP" tractor on his family farm.



This unstyled "GP" only has traces of paint. Beck explains that the tractor is easy to live with like this, as he doesn't have to worry about scratching the finish. When it isn't in the museum, Beck uses it to plant corn in the spring with a three-row planter and for plowing and other jobs.

"To me these tractors have their own character.... You can always change your mind and paint it, but they only look this way once."

#### GP "General Purpose" 1927–1935

The Model "GP," or "General Purpose," started its development shortly after the introduction of the famous Model "D."

The "GP" was traditionally a standard tread tractor, but in 1929 the company introduced its first production row-crop tractor with the "GPWT" for General Purpose Wide Tread.

The following year, two specialized versions of the "GP" platform were introduced with the Model "GPO" for orchard use, which was made from a standard platform, and the "P" for potato use, a modification to a "GPWT."

By 1932, the "GPWT" saw major changes to its appearance and steering. The Model "D"-inspired system was abandoned for a pedestal-style with a shaft running over the top of the hood, giving these models the nickname "Top-Steer" until the end of production in 1933 when it was replaced by the Model "A." The "GP" and "GPO" models would remain in the John Deere line until they were replaced by Models "AR" and "AO."

#### The Model "B"

Today, a 28-horsepower Model "B" Tractor doesn't sound very big, but when Matt Thelen brought one home to his Iowa farm in 1951, it was literally a 26-horsepower upgrade. Until then, the family was pulling implements with two draft horses.

The farm is still in the Thelen family 63 years later, and so is the tractor. The fully restored antique came to Tony Thelen, vice president for credit operations, Deere & Company, when his uncle retired from farming and



moved into town. Tony, who helped his uncle with restoration on the Model "B," saw an opportunity to share a piece of his family history with others at the John Deere Tractor & Engine Museum.

"It feels good to have a piece of family farming history at the museum, and to return the tractor to the very site it was produced for others to enjoy," Thelen said.

#### "B," "BR," "BO," and "BI" 1935–1952

The Model "B" is one of the most popular tractors in John Deere's history. Advertised as "General Purpose" row-crop tractors in 1935, the first models introduced were the "B," "BN," the "N" for narrow single front wheel, and the "BW" with the "W" for wide front.

In 1936, Deere introduced the standardtread "BR" for regular, "BO" for orchard, and "BI" for industrial use. Specialized models introduced during the production run included the "BO Lindeman," "BNH," "BWH," and "BWH-40."

The row-crop versions redesigned for the 1939 model year were "styled" tractors with sleek sheet metal and options, like lights and electric start. The "early styled" models manufactured into 1947 were available in the same row-crop configurations as the "unstyled" models. The standard models remained "unstyled," with the "BI" discontinued in 1941 and the "BO" and "BR" in 1947.

The last change in the row-crop line came in late 1947 with the "late styled" versions, which included a cushioned seat with a battery box and the option of a gasolineburning engine. The Model "50" line of tractors replaced the row-crop Model "B" in 1953.

#### John Deere Tractor & Engine Museum

Open to visitors Tuesdays through Saturdays from 10 a.m.–6 p.m. Admission is \$8 for ages 13–61 and \$4 for seniors, active-duty military, John Deere employees, and retirees. Children ages 12 and under accompanied by an adult can enjoy the museum for free. For more information, either email *WaterlooTractor&EngineMuseum@JohnDeere.com* or call 319-292-6126.



### The Check that Changed a Company

The Deere & Company Archives contain thousands of artifacts from the company's 178-year history. There are advertising trinkets, newspaper clippings, and even a vintage time clock from John Deere Harvester Works, but a piece of paper dating to 1918 may be the most historically significant item of them all.

It's a yellowed check, dated March 14, 1918, made out for \$2.1 million, and it's the check that changed the direction of Deere & Company.

Before 1918, Deere was dabbling in the manufacture of tractors, but even William Butterworth, president of Deere & Company at the time, had misgivings about manufacturing tractors.

Founded in 1895 in Waterloo, Iowa, the Waterloo Gasoline Engine Company was a manufacturer of stationary gasoline engines and a two-cylinder kerosene tractor. The Deere & Company board of directors sent a representative to gather information about the Waterloo manufacturer, and on March 13, 1918, a board resolution unanimously passed to purchase the company for the sum of \$2.25 million. Secretary J. J. Wharton signed the check for the \$2.1 million balance remaining after the down payment and fees.

The purchase of Waterloo Gasoline Engine Company represented a fundamental shift in the direction of Deere & Company. This check signifies what catapulted John Deere from being a regional farm equipment company to eventually becoming the leading agriculture equipment manufacturer in the world.

From 1964 to 2014, the check was on display at World Headquarters, installed in Reflections of an Era, the historical mural on the display floor.

"It spent some time under glass on William Hewitt's desk, and then nearly 50 years in the exhibit on the display floor, exposed to all of the things you don't want paper exposed to," said Nathan Augustine, collections manager, Deere & Company. Augustine said that in the display case it was mounted with rubber cement on a steel plate, with a steel rod attached to the back of the steel plate, and exposed to sunlight.

Augustine and Neil Dahlstrom, manager of corporate history and records management services at Deere & Company, contacted The Conservation Center in Chicago to see if they could restore the check. The Conservation Center mainly restores fine art, but also performs restoration work on antique papers. The conservation company agreed, and Dahlstrom and Augustine drove to Chicago to present it for restoration.

Nine months later, the restoration of the check was complete. The Conservation Center delivered it to the John Deere Archives, and Augustine delivered it to Waterloo. The John Deere Tractor & Engine Museum then took over the stewardship of this important piece of John Deere history.

"This check represents the watershed event when John Deere purchased the Waterloo Gasoline Engine Company, and the start of John Deere in Waterloo," said Rosa Grant, assistant manager of the museum. "It's an important part of the museum because it helps tell the story of John Deere's entrance into the tractor market."

As a company artifact, the check is now displayed in a humidity-controlled and UV-protected glass case in the museum, which should help extend the life of the fragile paper.

"It's the 'Mona Lisa' of the John Deere Archives collection," said Augustine, of the paper – the only check that the company has preserved.

# JUNE JAN

#### **JUNE 21, 2015** 12 P.M. – 5 P.M.

#### ON THE GROUNDS OF THE JOHN DEERE HISTORIC SITE

Featuring local artist with a diverse musical flare. For all ages. Come relax and enjoy!

Admission is \$5 or one canned food item to be donated to the local food bank. Bring your lawn chairs and picnic lunch. No alcohol please.

8334 SOUTH CLINTON ST. GRAND DETOUR DIXON, ILLINOIS 61021 www.johndeerehistoricsite.com 815-652-4551





## The John Deere Tractor & Engine Museum in Waterloo brings back fond memories



Growing up on a dairy farm in eastern lowa gave me a love of agriculture. From early memories of riding on tractors with my dad to my first chores feeding the livestock, each experience greatly influenced my drive and work ethic.

There were times when the farm felt more like an obstacle, keeping me from going to a buddy's house to ride bicycles, or baling hay when I'd rather go swimming with the gang. But looking back, I wouldn't change any of it. Being raised on a farm is part of who I am and why I'm so passionate about farming today. I guess the old saying "You can take the boy off the farm, but you can't take the farm out of the boy" applies to me.

Despite all the work that needed to be done on the farm, there were occasional fun day trips. It was one of those cherished trips that started my love for early farm history. In the mornings, we couldn't leave home until all the chores were done, and we had to return in the afternoon to milk the cows. That didn't leave much free time. But when I was about five years old, my parents made a special effort to squeeze in a trip to an antique farm show a few hours away. Watching those enormous steam engines and early gas tractors parade by one after the other, listening to those engines growl and clatter ... let's just say I was hooked.

I think the new John Deere Tractor & Engine Museum will spark that same interest in our youth or re-ignite memories for the young-at-heart. The folks in Waterloo have done a great job telling the story of the early years of John Deere tractors and engines. There are many interactive displays, artifacts, tractors, and details of Deere history laid out for visitors. Plan a trip to Waterloo to bring back memories or create new ones at the new John Deere Tractor & Engine Museum.

Keep your hand on the throttle and your plow in the ground...

#### Brian Holst Manager, John Deere Heritage Marketing

## THE PLOWSHARE

### JOHN DEERE

One John Deere Place Moline, Illinois 61265

HeritageMarketing@JohnDeere.com www.JohnDeere.com

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## Want to learn more about the John Deere Tractor & Engine Museum?

Get more *Plowshare* content online! Watch a video clip of Deere Day in Dallas in 1960, when the New Generation of Power was introduced. The original film can be seen in its entirety at the museum.

Watch interviews with Travis Jorde and Jack Beck, who talk about their tractors on display at the museum, or Bob Wood, a third-generation Deere retiree and current docent at the museum whose father was an engineer who helped designed the New Generation of Power tractors. Visit the John Deere YouTube channel and go to the John Deere Attractions playlist.





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DEERE DAY IN DALLAS: www.youtube.com/watch?v=iVQoz58mh7I