



Cummings' fully restored 1937 Ford tractor, equipped with a 100 hp V-8 engine.

UNUSUAL PROTOTYPE NEVER WENT INTO PRODUCTION

Rare 1937 Ford Tractor Is "The Only One Left"

When he bought a dilapidated old Ford tractor at an auction in 1982, Richard Cummings had no idea what he'd just purchased. But the Rochester Hills, Mich., collector soon learned he had a one-of-kind tractor on his hands.

"It's the only remaining 1937 Ford prototype in existence. These tractors were scheduled for production in 1938 and were slated to sell for \$250," Cummings says. "However, Harry Ferguson sued Henry Ford over the tractor's hydraulic system and it was never produced. Only three prototypes were built. The two that were powered with 'straight six' engines were scrapped out. The third was powered by a 100 hp V-8 Ford engine. That's the one I ended up with."

Cummings' tractor was donated to Greenfield Village, the Henry Ford museum in Michigan, where it was used daily as a working tractor until it went on display from 1954 to '58. It was removed from the display floor in 1958 and sat outside until it went on the auction block in 1982.

There was a lot of restoration work to do because of the years it spent exposed to the elements. Cummings did 95 percent of the work himself.

"It was a lot of work because all the replacement parts had to be fabricated from scratch," he says. "For example, I had to rebuild the engine out of parts from five different 1930's era Ford truck engines.

"Ford used parts that were already in production for other trucks and cars to build the prototypes. The tractor had 600 by 16 in. front tires off a 1935 Ford car or pickup and the grille shell and radiator out of a 1 1/2-ton Ford truck. The radiator had a lot of weird angles, which makes it tough to replace."

He worked on the restoration for more than 10 years before finishing it in 1993.

Meantime, the tractor has become a favorite at the annual Tri-State Gas Engine and Tractor Show held over Labor Day weekends in Portland, Ind.

Cummings says he doesn't know what the tractor's worth - and he doesn't really care.

"I've had some extremely excessive offers for it but it's not for sale at any price," he says.

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Two stained glass windows, doors, light fixtures, furnace, water heater and much of the woodwork were salvaged from the old house. New house stands just behind it.

THE OLD ONE WAS TOO FAR GONE TO REMODEL

New House Looks Just Like The Old One

There's only one noticeable difference between Freneva and Bob Brimacomb's new house and the old one standing next to it. The roof on the new house isn't pitched as steeply as the roof on the older house.

Otherwise, the new house is nearly identical to the old house Freneva grew up in. Both are four-square, two-story homes of approximately the same size. The interior layout and finish were also designed to match the original house, which will be torn down next spring.

"We were flying by the seat of our pants, but we're really quite pleased with the way it turned out," says Freneva, adding that there were a lot of challenges in designing the house and finding materials to build it with.

But why build a new house just like the old one?

When the couple retired from their Waterloo, Iowa, jobs and returned to the Decorah-area of Iowa to be closer to family, they entertained the notion of restoring Freneva's old family home.

But the house was in bad shape and restoration presented many problems.

"I told Bob that if I couldn't have the old house and fix it up, I wanted one that looked just like it and had as many of the things from the old house as possible," Freneva said.

Features moved included two stained

glass windows, doors, light fixtures, furnace, water heater, and as much of the woodwork as could be salvaged.

"Matching the woodwork was the biggest challenge," says Freneva. "Southern Yellow Pine was used in the original house and that's very hard to find anymore. We finally found a woodworker who could match it, although we used as much of the old wood as possible."

The main floor of the house includes a kitchen, library, bathroom and laundry room. It also has a staircase in the center, instead of on the side like the old house, to let them move furniture upstairs. Relocating the staircase accounts for the slightly bigger dimensions of the new house, Freneva explains.

The Brimacombs broke ground for their house in September of 1996 and moved in the following April. Since then, they've added two porches and a deck so they can enjoy summer evenings.

They say they couldn't have successfully completed the project without the help of local contractors, plumbers and appliance suppliers.

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This photo show the tractor as Cummings bought it. Restoration took 10 years.



Except for its less steeply sloped roof, the new house is nearly identical to the old one.