



Some of the 12 restored windmills at Ralph Wiebusch's Zumbro Falls, Minn., farm.

12 GIANT WINDMILLS STAND IN HIS YARD

He Restores "Wooden Blade" Windmills

By Bonnie Heidtke

Ralph Wiebusch enjoys poring over a photo album containing photos of several wooden blade windmills that he has restored over the years. But it's even more of a thrill for the Zumbro Falls, Minn., resident to look outside in his yard and see 12 restored windmills turning in the wind.

Some of the windmills have white wooden blades with colorful red tips. The wheels on all the various models range from 12 to 20 ft. in diameter. The largest windmill, a Fairbanks-Morse Eclipse, is also his favorite. At one time it was used to pump water to fill a railroad water tank at Edgewater, Wis.

"It was still standing but the wood blades were all gone when I picked it up," he says. "I had to almost completely rebuild it."

To rebuild the windmills he uses Cyprus wood which he gets from Florida because it's lightweight and weather resistant. "I could use something else like redwood, but it's softer and won't stand up in a severe storm," he says.

After restoring the windmills, he anchors them to cement pads, much the same as they were originally anchored. He has restored a few metal wheeled windmills but prefers the wooden-blade ones. When he needs parts he has them made at a foundry.

Wiebusch estimates that in the 1800s there were more than 500 windmill manufacturers. He has more than 20 different windmills on his place ready to be worked on. Restoring five per year is a realistic goal, he says. Last winter he restored a 12-ft. Monitor and a metal wheeled Imperial which he says is quite rare. The Imperial was probably manufactured in the early 1900's.

He says his Halladay model, manufactured by U.S. Wind Engineering and Pump Co., Batavia, Ill., is not only rare but one of the oldest windmills in his collection. John Halladay built the first self-regulating windmills in the 1850's. There were many sold in the 1900's but only a few still exist.

He owns a Hummer made from the early 1900's to the 1930's. His three Clemens windmills are also rare finds. They were made by P. Clemens at his small shop near Dane, Wis. When Wiebusch found the windmills, the second generation of Clemens had a sale and a relative bought all the patterns. After the sale, there was a shed fire and all the information about the Clemens model was destroyed.



There were more than 500 windmill manufacturers around in the 1800's, Wiebusch says.

He's hoping to add a Power windmill to his collection. It was used to grind feed and run machinery. Unfortunately most were destroyed during World War I and II because of the need for scrap metal.

Besides restoring his own windmills, Wiebusch will also work on windmills for others. For example, he recently sold a 10-ft. wide Raymond model, which he picked up in South Dakota, to someone in Texas where it will be used to pump water.

Whenever Wiebusch requires more information on windmills, he consults "A Field Guide To American Windmills" by T. Lindsay Baker, Texas. The book lists the model, manufacturer, and approximate dates and gives a description of the windmill.

Trade shows are another way to get and share information and patterns. Wiebusch belongs to the International Windmillers Association which holds a convention each year in June. He also knows of a man who can provide patterns. "He won't part with his iron, but I have the foundry source and I can get a part made," he said. "It works good for both of us."

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Combines do their best to demolish each other at the annual derby.

THEY LOVE SEEING COMBINES DEMOLISHED

Yearly Combine Derby Attracts Big Crowds

By Bob Loeffelbein

Combine demolition derbies have been held occasionally across North America.

But perhaps no place relishes smashing up old combines as much as the small farming community of Lind, Wash., population 800. Nearly everyone in town turns out each year for the final heat of the town's annual combine demolition derby. The derby is a warm-up for an even bigger event - the annual rodeo.

"The town's wide open this weekend," says one farmer about Lind's cafe, bar, billiard parlor, and City Park, all deserted in favor of the community's rodeo grounds a mile outside of town.

The object of the derby is simple: do as much damage as possible to opponents' machines.

The rules are simple. The combines must remain basically stock, although engines can be souped up. And braces and bars may be added to protect hydraulic lines, gas tanks, radiators, and drive belts (on some really ancient models). Headers must be welded stationary 14 to 18 in. off the ground to protect the drivers who sit above them.

Drivers are required to wear seat belts and safety helmets.

Each heat includes four combines and takes 15 to 30 minutes, depending on the skill of the contestants and speed of the machines. A short recess is held after each heat to clean up sheared off parts and remove vehicles unable to leave under their own power. Losers in early rounds can repair their machines and compete in later heats.

A few of the more eye-catching contestants: Captain Hook - an International 453 painted in a red, white and black color scheme reminiscent of the Disney character; "Crazy" Rod Melcher's Lemco combine that looks like an airplane with stubby wings and propeller; Bauermeister Brothers Massey 510 and International 151 which are painted lavender and blue, respectively; and the "Chicken Cowboy" which has a painted chicken head on front with four plumes sticking up.

The winner? Ritzville-area farmer and state representative Mark Schoesler with his "Green Turtle" combine.

First, second and third prizes are \$750, \$250, and \$100, respectively.

Derby proceeds go to support the city's Little League and other programs.

One Of The First Combines Ever

Ben Hausler, Wichita Falls, Texas, recently sent along a photo of one of the first "combines" ever used in the U.S. It shows an Avery tractor pulling a stationary threshing machine that's double-hitched to a push binder. The push binder cut the grain which was then delivered up a rubber conveyor to the top of the threshing machine. The thresher had been fitted with its own gas engine.

"My dad came up with this system in the early 1900's. It allowed him to cut and thresh grain at the same time just like the combines of today, but before they were widely available on the market. He was more than just a little ahead of his time," says Hausler. "The photo was taken some time between 1905 and 1910. My dad died in 1925 when I was four years old so I never saw his setup. I'm 78 and retired now. The photo is from the book "Trails Through Archer", a history written by Jack Loftin of some of the events that took place in Archer County, Texas, around the turn of the century.



Hausler created an early combine by hitching a stationary threshing machine and a push binder to an Avery tractor.

"By the time I was 12 or 14 years old we were using a Case P pull-type combine. We used a binder to cut the grain, then shocked it and let it cure. Three or four weeks later a threshing crew consisting of 8 wagons and four shock 'pitchers' came in to thresh the grain."

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