

Home-Built Self-Propelled, 4-Row Picker-Sheller Was World's First

By Jan Shellhouse

Back in 1947, John Eyestone of Upper Sandusky, Ohio, put two new Minneapolis Moline pull-type corn pickers together on the frame of a World War II, 6-WD amphibious vehicle. He added a new Minneapolis Moline sheller to the frame and put a home-built 320 bu. bin on back.

Today, John's son, Czerny, still owns the self-propelled, 4-row picker-sheller and often displays it at local shows.

"As far as I know it was the world's first 4-row self-propelled picker-sheller," says Czerny. "I don't operate the machine any more, but almost every year I drive it five miles back and forth to a local corn husking festival."

The machine was used from 1947 to 1964 and is designed to harvest 40-in. rows. Stories on it were published in the late 1940's and early 1950's in nationwide farm magazines.

"At the time there were 2-row self-propelled picker-shellers on the market, and some farmer in Nebraska had mounted a 4-row picker head on front of a Cat D-4. But

no one had made a self-propelled 4-row picker-sheller. Dad built it for use on his own farm and to do custom work. He didn't have an engineering degree but he really knew how to build machinery.

"He had been using a Minneapolis Moline pull-type picker behind a Case DC tractor, pulling a sheller and 150 bu. bin alongside. But the sheller was too heavy and caused problems. Also, he wanted something bigger. Back in those days farmers picked a lot of corn in the mud. They tried to get the corn reasonably dry before they picked it, so hardly anyone started picking corn before November, and picking often went into January or even February.

"I kept the machine because it's one-of-a-kind and has a lot of historic value. Many of the people who see it nowadays are too young to understand anything about picker shellers. Deere put a 4-row picker on a combine in 1963, but the combine wasn't big enough so it didn't catch on. Finally, in 1965, Deere came out with its model 105 combine and that caught on."



Back in 1947 John Eyestone built this self-propelled, 4-row picker-sheller. Today, John's son, Czerny, still owns the machine and often displays it at local shows.

According to Czerny, his dad's machine could pick corn as fast as a commercial dryer could handle it, at about 300 bu. per hour. "In 1947, the best corn you could expect to pick yielded 28 bu. per acre. But hybrid corn was just coming into its own and yields were starting to go up. By the mid to late 1950's corn yields were high enough that the picker often harvested more corn than the sheller

could handle and some of it ended up on the ground."

By 1964 the machine was pretty well worn out, so Czerny and his dad built a bigger picker-sheller which Czerny used for 22 years."

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Old-Style Barn Lights Catch On

Bryan Scott has collected antique lights for years, but when he and his wife moved onto a property with a barn, he realized he didn't have old-style barn lights. But he had a lot of miscellaneous parts, so he decided to make his own lights. Before long a hobby became a business.

"Friends and family asked me for similar lights, and then a friend suggested I try to sell them on the internet," recalls Scott. "I soon was spending all my spare time making lights. My wife and I decided to quit our full-time jobs and develop the business."

Barn Light Electric Company specializes in barn lights and other high quality fixtures. "We found a manufacturer in California," says Scott. "Everything we sell is American

made; nothing is imported."

Scott sells lights to the commercial market, where they are seen in restaurants, malls and other retail outlets. Fixtures include goosenecks, sconce wall lights, chandeliers, post mounts and restaurant lighting. He says word of mouth is his best marketing.

"People see them in a public space and start looking for them for personal use," he says. "Our most popular seller is called the Original. It mounts on the wall with a gooseneck arm and a 16-in. reflecting shade."

Because the Scotts build for the commercial market, all their arms and goosenecks are commercial grade thickness and strength. "We've never had one returned because of a quality issue," he says. "We have had them



Bryan Scott specializes in making old-style barn lights. Fixtures include goosenecks, sconce wall lights, chandeliers, and post mounts.

returned due to size constraints. The Original projects out 22 1/2 in. from the wall. Add the shade and the total projection is 30 in. You definitely need to measure before ordering."

Scott's "Original" starts at \$198 with 20 some finishes, seven of which are standard with no mark up.

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Volunteers Create Free Shooting Range

Folks near Franklin County, Iowa, have a place to target practice for free, thanks to a community of volunteers who transformed a former landfill site into a first-class shooting range.

Just a couple of miles from Hansell, Iowa, the North Hansell Shooting Complex has shooting benches and pistol, rifle and shotgun ranges in a safe, fenced area that is supervised by volunteers. Locals started the project in January 2008 and welcomed shooters by September.

"We built it, and they're coming," says Ray Baltes, a former shooting competitor who initiated the project. A native of the area, he was away for many years, moving back in 2000 to work as editor of the Hampton Chronicle newspaper. He remembered target shooting on his family's farm property as a youth. His son's town-dwelling friends didn't have the same opportunity to practice.

"This last winter, I took it on as my mission," Baltes says. "I'm a big advocate of shooting sports and getting kids into hunting. We have lots of public hunting grounds and opportunities here, but no place to practice shooting."

He talked to the Franklin County Conservation Board, who offered their support if he could find an appropriate location. Baltes scouted the county and found an old landfill closed by the Department of Natural Resources in 1996. Next to the 45-acre landfill mound was 23 acres in the valley that had

never been used. The entire site was surrounded by an 8-ft. steel fence. The conservation board, the county engineer and county supervisors agreed it would be a suitable location. The county even offered to cover liability insurance, but it was up to Baltes and his growing group of volunteers to take care of everything else.

Baltes's first job was to talk to the dozen neighbors in a 1 1/2-mile radius. They unanimously supported the idea. After a site plan was approved by the DNR, he used the power of the pen at his newspaper to explain the project. He was overwhelmed with the response - even non-shooters donated.

"We have not had anyone say no to a donation request," Baltes says.

A local drainage contractor spent a month moving dirt to build berms and target backstops - for free. A retired businessman offered the use of his tractor, loader, blade and snowblower. Businessmen donated a commercial lawnmower. Woodworkers built furniture-quality shooting benches. A rural electric company - that doesn't even serve that area - installed floodlights. Volunteer farmers and town dwellers raked and packed shooting lanes. Thanks to a widow's donation, the Larry Windelow Memorial Outhouse provides luxury outhouse accommodations.

Even the targets were donated. Sukup Manufacturing, which manufactures grain bins and drying equipment, donated 3/4-in. steel scraps. Volunteers cut the steel into tar-



Volunteers transformed a former landfill site into a first-class shooting range near Hansell, Iowa. There are separate pistol, rifle and shotgun ranges.

gets ranging from playing card size up to 2 by 2-ft. With steel rings welded on the back, they are held up by solid steel rods run through the holes of old grader blades pounded into the ground. With the targets at a slight angle to the ground, bullets deflect slightly downward.

The pistol range has targets at 15, 25, 50 and 95 yards. The rifle range has targets at 100, 200, 225, 250, 300 and 325 yards. There's also a shotgun range with a sporting clays launcher that can shoot four clays simultaneously. Rules are posted, and the range is only open specified hours with volunteers

on hand.

"It's a good thing for the county, bringing people in from outside the county," Baltes says. A4-H club and local school plan to add shooting teams. Law enforcement tactical teams use it for practice. Shooting clubs plan to host competitions. Baltes hopes to bring in top-ranked national competitors for an event. Many women are interested in classes.

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