Antique Corn Pickers Becoming “Collectable”

With restored tractors selling for tens of thousands of dollars, more and more collectors are turning to restoring other farm machinery instead. One such area that’s growing fast in popularity is the corn picker.

“I sent my son to an auction of a no. 25 Deere two-row, mounted picker that had been stored inside with all the accessories,” says Bob Johnson, a confirmed corn picker collector. “It sold for $2,850. Two brothers who were restoring a house-drawn Deere picker told me they were recently offered $8,000 by a collector.”

Johnson admits it’s not just old corn pickers that are picking up in value. He cites a Deere manure spreader that was restored to perfection selling for $9,000 this past year and a working threshing machine selling for $7,000.

Dale Kepner has been restoring equipment since he retired as a truck driver. His brother Dave also restores tractors and implements and has two restored corn pickers. Dale sees growing interest in implements, too. He says individuals often specialize in one type of implement.

Some are interested in corn pickers, while others are interested in balers and still others in tillage equipment, he says. “I picked up a unique Oliver no. 83 picker set up for 30-in. rows for one collector. He already had an Oliver no. 88 mounted and an Oliver no. 88 pull-type picker, as well as other Oliver single row pickers.”

As popular as pickers are, Kepner says implement packages are the most sought after. “Allis and others used to sell packages of tractor disk, plow and planter to guys switching from horses,” he explains. “If you find a package like that with the paperwork to prove it, you’ve got better than gold.”

Johnson’s pickers may not be as valuable as an implement package, but that’s okay with him. He simply loves corn pickers. He has nearly 30, not all of them completely restored. Many were priced right.

“I’ve been offered two-row mounted pickers practically free,” he says. “People just want them to go to a good home, and they know I will either keep it or find somebody who wants it.”

Johnson collects mostly single-row Deere models. He has a website devoted to corn pickers and is working on a book. Each year he hosts a picker day at an 11-acre field on his farm. This past November, there were 11 corn pickers working the field along with one man picking by hand.

“I put out the word to friends, and it spreads by word of mouth,” says Johnson. “This year we even had a video crew there, and they produced a video about the pickers.”

Johnson has a few unusual pickers in his collection, including one called the Great American. It came out just after World War II. Instead of gathering chains it has three sets of paddles.

Johnson’s favorite is a one-row Deere 127, mounted on his favorite tractor, a Deere B. His most modern is a pull-type 300 with changeable heads for different row widths.

Johnson says he and his wife Phyllis are collecting recollections and photos from people for their book and for display on their website. “We are looking for stories, good and bad,” he says, admitting that he has heard his share of sad stories about losing a hand or arm or worse. Johnson is also looking for old sales literature and other information on pickers, with a goal to preserve as much information as possible.

Johnson is especially interested in corn pickers sold by lesser-known companies. “I could do an entire book about pickers that most people have never heard of,” says Johnson.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Bob Johnson, P.O. Box 525, Sycamore, Ill. 60178 (ph 815 761-3709; mocornpicker@aol.com; cornpickerbook.com) or Dale Kepner, 6606 Richfield Drive, Aurora, Ill. 60501 (ph 715 652-2084; dkeuner@tnz.net).

Squirrel Cage Treadmills Keep Dogs Healthy

“Healthy pets get plenty of exercise.”

That’s the motto of GoPet, an Ephrata, Penn., company that manufactures exercise equipment for dogs. They consider their newest dog-powered treadmill a breakthrough in the industry.

“One of the biggest problems with dog exercise equipment is that you have to force the dog to use it,” says Earl Kaufman, sales manager for GoPet. “Our products give dogs complete freedom of access. They can jump in or out without encumbrance. It’s totally voluntary.”

The gerbil wheel-like units come in two styles. The free-standing wheel mounts anywhere there’s a flat surface to place it. It’s 12 in. wide and comes in 36-in. and 48-in. diameters.

The kennel-mounted version is like adding an exercise room to a kennel or doghouse. The dog has free access to it anytime. The tread-wheel is 24 in. wide and comes in 36-in. and 48-in. diameters.

The wider model makes it possible for running to be a “social experience” for dogs. “I’ve seen up to seven little dogs run together,” Kaufman says. “It’s really interesting when there is more than one dog in a kennel. They jump in and out like they’re playing jump rope.”

Dogs should be allowed to figure out how to use the kennel-mounted tread-wheel on their own, he adds. Young dogs pick it up right away; older dogs may take a little longer. They set their own pace walking or running. It’s not uncommon for an active dog to tally 10 miles in one day.

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Eye-Catching “Boot Mirror”

Looking for a way to use old cowboy boots? Why not cut them up and put them around a mirror? That’s what Bree Poppe and Reon McBride did to make their cowboy “boot mirror.”

The 19-in. dia. circular mirror is lined with overlapping boot tops in many different colors and styles. It takes about eight pairs of boots to make a 19-in. dia. mirror.

The two friends grew up on ranches in Colorado and wanted a way to honor that lifestyle, so they started collecting old cowboy boots from friends and family members. To make a mirror, they cut off the boot top down to as far as the leather will lay flat. Then they glue and staple the boot tops in an overlapping fashion to a wooden frame and attach the mirror.

“It makes a nice gift. The different colors and styles and stitchings make each mirror unique,” says McBride. “We also can make square mirrors, hair orrs and styles.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Reon McBride, 7380 Maine Lane, Colorado Springs, Colo. 80923 (ph 719 391-6288 or 719 469-3057; poppelivestock@gmail.com).

Cowboy “boot mirror” is lined with overlapping boot tops in many different colors and styles.

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