

# 1912 Hackney Auto Plow Tractor

We saw a photo of this rare 1912 Hackney One Man Auto Plow in a recent issue of *Engineers & Engines* magazine. The strange-looking tractor was photographed where it's kept on the grounds of the Dale and Martha Hawk Museum near Wolford, North Dakota.

The front wheel drive tractor is powered by a 40 hp. engine, which chain-drives a pair of lugged steel wheels on front. There's a single steel wheel on back. A 3 or 4-bottom moldboard plow is mounted underneath.

FARM SHOW called the museum to find out more about the tractor and spoke to Gordon Phingvold. "As far as we know there are only two or three Hackney Auto Plows still in existence, and ours is the only one known to be in working condition," says Phingvold. "Otherwise, we don't have a lot of information on the tractor's history."

So we went on the internet and, from various sources, here's what we learned.

The tractor appears to have had only one purpose - plowing. It could be equipped with either 3 or 4 moldboard plow bottoms. The moldboards hung on chains and cables and were manually raised or lowered. Because the plow was self-propelled, it could be

maneuvered into the corners of fields near fences. The tractor also had a ring hitch on back.

According to a story in the *Le Roy Pennsaver & News*: "Unlike other plows at the time, which were usually painted in drab colors, the Hackney Auto Plow was finished in bright red with yellow striping and wheels. It had a fully upholstered seat, similar to luxury automobiles of the day, and could be operated in either the forward or backward direction.

"Automobiles and tractors at that time were started by a crank, but the Hackney had a wheel on front that was used to turn the engine."

A unique seat and steering wheel arrangement permitted the tractor's operator to face in either direction.

"The tractor has a horizontal steering wheel, with a bench seat on one side of it and a single seat on the other side," says Phingvold. "To plow, the driver sat on one seat and faced forward toward the front wheels. To drive on the road, he sat on the other seat and faced backward toward the single steering wheel."



**Rare 1912 Hackney One Man Auto Plow has a pair of lugged steel wheels on front and a single steel wheel on back. A 3 or 4-bottom moldboard plow mounts underneath.**

According to various sources, the Hackney Auto Plow was first marketed in 1911 in St. Paul, Minn. The Hackney brothers had made money in North Dakota buying and selling railroad land. They soon went into business making agricultural equipment in St. Paul.

By 1909 the Hackney Co. was manufacturing the One Man Plow. The demand for the plow was primarily in the Dakotas and Minnesota. Hackney Manufacturing Company continued until 1914 when it was sold to Standard Motor Co.,

Mason City, Iowa. That company failed after only a short time. Subsequently, the Hackney company was reorganized in 1917 but a fire wiped out the factory the following year. Within another year or so the Hackney Auto Plow disappeared from the market.

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**Hand-cranked Stewart cattle clipper was made in the early 1900's and is the oldest piece in Les Schmidt's collection. By the 1920's Stewart was making electric clippers.**

## Clipper Collection Includes Rare Hand-Crank Model

Clipping cattle for show was a two-man job using a hand-crank Stewart clipper that was made in the early 1900's. Les Schmidt of Greenleaf, Wis., purchased one at a farm auction. He doesn't use it, but it's the oldest piece in his cattle clipper collection.

As a fitter who trims, feeds and cares for show and pre-sale dairy cattle, he has used a variety of electric clippers in his business.

"The blades used in the early 1900's are fairly similar to the ones used today," Schmidt says. "The hand-crank clippers cost \$8.75 in 1917, and blade sets were \$2.50."

The inventor, John K. Stewart, had 80 patents including a speedometer used in the first Model T cars. He and Thomas J. Clark founded Chicago Flexible Shaft Co. in the early 1890s, manufacturing mechanical clippers and sheep shears. They expanded into home appliances, starting with an electric iron in 1910. By 1946 they renamed the company, Sunbeam Corporation.

"I have the first electric clippers Stewart made from the 1920's. Also, during WW II, because of the shortage of aluminum, the clipper heads were made of a cast iron alloy. I have two of them and there is a significant weight difference," Schmidt notes.

As a fitter and photographer for clients at the World Dairy Expo and other dairy shows around the world, Schmidt picks up old clippers, blades, boxes and printed material at sales and from farmers. Last year he built a Blade Box display with 30 sets of blades. His collection includes a box of 100-year-old blades that have never been used.



**Schmidt started fitting animals professionally after he graduated from high school.**

Despite new clippers available, the "bovine beautician" admits he often uses his Stewart Brown clippers made in the 1940's.

"They are quieter and easier to handle," he says. He also likes the modern German-made Aesculap clippers.

Schmidt, who started fitting cattle professionally when he graduated from high school, has had 30 years of experience using various clippers. Mixed with photography at dairy shows and other events, it has been an interesting career. He looks forward to more opportunities to share clipper history with displays at dairy expos.

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## Collecting Barbed Wire

"Barbed wire and the six gun won the West," says Bob Spencer, editor of *The Barbed Wire Collector* magazine. A fascination for the history of how the West was settled is one reason he and about 200 others collect barbed wire and belong to the Antique Barbed Wire Society. They also support the Kansas Barbed Wire Museum in La Crosse, Kan., complete with a library of documents and books on barbed wire.

So, how much information could there possibly be about barbed wire?

Plenty, Spencer says. "There are just over 500 patents," he says. "But there were variations among those patents, plus other styles were never patented. Bob Campbell had the largest collection ever, and he had 8,000 different kinds of wire."

Each style of wire was promoted by salesmen in different regions.

"Texas was open country, and they seem to have lots of ribbon-type wire because it is very durable," Spencer notes. "The ribbon is wide and thin and had barbs made in or on the ribbon."

He adds that up through 1900, barbed wire was designed only for farming and livestock. The first U.S. patent was given to Lucien Smith of Kent, Ohio, in 1867.

"The Smith wire was not feasibly designed for manufacturing," Spencer adds. "The first wire heavily produced was by Michael Kelly of New York in 1868, even though Joseph Glidden is considered the 'Father of Barbed Wire.' His patent was not granted until 1874 but the wire is still being produced today."

After 1900, different styles of barbed wire were designed for security to contain people, and for use in wars.

Collectors display barbed wire in various ways, but 18-in. long strands are standard, Spencer says. Besides wire, tools, advertising and fence posts are part of many collections.

"There are collections of liniments that were used to treat animals with barbed wire cuts," Spencer adds.

A favorite museum display for many guests is a real crow's nest made of short pieces of wire and twigs. The Kansas museum also includes interesting art pieces made from barbed wire.

While barbed wire may seem to be a strange item to collect, Spencer says members of the society want to use barbed wire to



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**There are just over 500 different patents on barbed wire, and many other styles that were never patented.**

educate people about the history of how the West was settled. He finds plenty of stories to tell in the society's bimonthly magazine - from patent info to collectors' interesting finds.

Anyone interested in barbed wire appraisals or information about joining can contact the society, Spencer says.

Folks who are just curious about the topic can visit the museum, which is open daily Memorial Day through Labor Day (www.rushcounty.org; ph 785 222-2808). The museum hosts an annual festival in May.

Spencer adds that the society also supports the Devil's Rope Museum in McLean, Texas, which is open March 1 to Nov. 1 (www.barbwiremuseum.com).

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