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These Tractors Square Dance

Darrel Holsopple admits he didn't know a Do Si Do from an Allemande Left, but he did know how to drive a tractor when he was convinced to join the Roof Garden Tractor Buddies square dancers. Now in his sixth year, he's president of the Pennsylvania club, which has booked 10 performances for 2023, mostly in their home county of Somerset, often referred to as the Roof Garden of Pennsylvania.

Tractor Buddies was formed in 2002. Many founders also square danced and were inspired by another tractor square dancing group. Using tractors to square dance can be traced back to the Ohio State Fair in 1939 when four girls and four boys were trained to "square dance" with Model B Allis Chalmers tractors to market the tractor's agility.

"We currently have 38 members and 12 active drivers plus the caller," Holsopple says. Drivers' ages range from 17 to 80, and there are a couple of grandfather/grandson pairs.

Learning to dance with tractors takes practice, and members meet weekly from May to September at retired driver John Zehner's farm. Practices start at 7 p.m. to accommodate the farmers' schedules, and the evening ends with food and family time.

Tractors are stored at the farm and cover the gamut of models from a 1940 Massey Harris and 1942 Farmalls to 1962 John Deere

and Minneapolis Moline tractors. Narrow front ends are the only requirement.

For performances, a 120-ft. dia. circle is drawn on grass or a hard surface. Drivers take their places and have a little fun wearing hats, wigs, and outfits or putting something on their tractors to depict male and female dancers.

Holsopple credits Edith Rhoads' calling for keeping the drivers' timing right. She has two microphones, one that the audience can hear and one to talk to drivers wearing earbuds.

Thanks to the help from sponsors (especially Allied Milk Producers) and performance fees, the nonprofit Tractor Buddies have purchased trailers to haul tractors and sound equipment. Audiences range from nursing home residents to farm show attendees to fairgoers.

"Going to the Pennsylvania Farm Show (in Harrisburg) is a highlight for us because there are a lot of people there," Holsopple says. Public television often covers the tractor square dancing.

Being part of the club is a lot of work and a commitment of time and money, Holsopple says. But the Tractor Buddies have become family, and with five drivers under the age of 25, the club has a bright future.

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Antique apple peelers are collector's items and can sell for as much as \$1,200.



Photo courtesy of Mike Viney, www.appleparermuseum.com

Rare Antique Apple Peeler

Since the first orchards were planted in the early 17th century, apples have been an important crop in the United States. They quickly gained prominence in settlers' diets and became the most widely-grown American fruit.

Unfortunately for homemakers, paring, coring, and cutting apples by hand is tedious and inefficient. The first apple peeler patent was granted to Moses Coates in 1803. Approximately 250 other patents were filed in the US over the next century. The most popular designs were made from interchangeable cast iron parts, making them both repairable and affordable for the growing middle class.

One notable style is the Thompson parer. Designed by George R. Thompson and

manufactured in Rhode Island, the parer has a distinctive arc-shaped rack. Once the apple is pared, it goes into the segmenter, at which point the core is pushed down through a hole for easy disposal. While most patented peelers work with gears and cranks, the Thompson requires you to lift an arm, load it, and swing it down to peel an apple fast. Excellent condition Thompson parers have sold for over \$1,200.

The style you might most recognize today is the "lightning apple parer," invented by David Goodell in 1864 in New England. It's a lathe-type peeler initially sold through door-to-door sales.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, (www.appleparermuseum.com).



Seth Eberhardt has won several national awards for his scale model farm displays.

He Won The National Farm Toy Display Contest

The 45th annual National Farm Toy Display Contest took place in November 2022. Scale model enthusiast Seth Eberhardt left the event with first place in the large-scale division for his silage harvesting scene.

Making models of agricultural scenes has long been a hobby for Eberhardt. "I've collected and played with farm toys for as long as I can remember," he says. "Whenever we'd go to the National Farm Toy Show in Dyersville, my favorite part was always the display contest." Twenty years ago, he decided to build a 1/16th-scale barn. That was the beginning of a hobby that has since led him to create numerous farm buildings and displays in the decades since. Recently, he's been devoting more of his time to scratch-building machinery.

Eberhardt finds inspiration for his scale models in many places. "I mainly like to build something unique, different from what most people do," he says. "Several of my building projects are modeled off of real buildings, and others are ones I just designed on my own. With the machinery, some are based on machinery that I operate, and other pieces are ones that I think are unique to build."

To date, Eberhardt has fulfilled a commission for a man who wanted a model of the grain elevator in his hometown and has sold numerous pieces of scale model farm equipment. "Every time I build a new piece for myself, I usually build a few extra to sell, because there's so much demand for

them among collectors," he explains. "I could probably sell a couple of dozen of each piece, but I've found that building items repetitively takes the enjoyment out of it."

Don't let the size of the final product convince you that making models is a cheap hobby. Says Eberhardt, "For many of the pieces I build, whether it's a wood building or a metal machine, the cost of materials can easily be hundreds of dollars, and even more for some of the bigger projects."

But even so, he's enthusiastic about others discovering a love for making scale models. "With any hobby, the biggest thing is to have the passion and desire to do it," he explains. "I started with a bit of construction knowledge, but mostly just learned as I went along and continued to improve. The internet is a huge resource, whether for finding and buying materials, meeting and keeping in touch with other hobbyists who'll share their knowledge, or just for getting ideas. I always tell people that nothing I do is a secret, and I'll always be happy to share anything to help someone get into or expand with the hobby."

You can connect with him through his Facebook page and at competitions such as the National Farm Toy Show in Dyersville, the Gateway Toy Show in St Louis, and the Iowa State Fair.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Seth Eberhardt (Facebook: Seth Eberhardt Scale Models).

Campfire Rack Holds Roasting Sticks

Richard Naish does a lot of campfire cooking and never had a good place to put hot roasting sticks once the food was cooked. His Roasting Stick Rack means he no longer has to worry about placing hot sticks on tables or chairs or putting them on the ground where they'd get covered in dirt and grass.

He just pushes the rack into the ground near the campfire and hangs hot sticks on the rack. The rack also makes for handy storage when the sticks are not in use.

Naish's rack is made of 3/8-in. square rod with one end sharpened to a point. He welded an 8-in. long, 2 1/4 by 1/2-in. flat bar across the top of the rod with keeper pins at either end for roasting rods to hang on.

About 8 in. from the bottom, he bent a piece of the 3/8 rod to form a step to help push it into the ground. He added a chain just above the step to fasten around the roasting rods for transport and storage.

The total length is about 56 in. and will hold six roasting rods.

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Stick rack keeps hot roasting sticks off the ground and tables when not in use.