

More than 130 rare and unusual tractors are on display at the American Tractor Museum in Perryville, Mo.



Missouri Museum Features Rare Tractors

"If you're looking for a large collection of amazing 100-plus-year-old tractors, you definitely need to make a trip to Southeast Missouri and visit us," says American Tractor Museum Director Lori Heberlie. "Our Perryville Museum is home to more than 130 tractors, some of them one-of-a-kind and many of them 'orphans' because the companies that built them no longer exist."

The museum houses well-known brands such as Rumely, Waterloo Boy, Avery, International and John Deere. It also features many obscure tractors from Samson, Rock Island, Mogul, Garford, Plymouth, Greyhound, Indiana, Toro and Illinois, among others. More than 65 manufacturers are represented.

"Touring our museum is really a learning experience to soak up nostalgia," Heberlie says. "Visitors enjoy interactive listening devices to hear and read the history of each tractor they're viewing. They'll see and hear about our one-of-a-kind Coop and Avery tractors, an Uncle Sam, and a Stihl tractor made in Germany."

Each tractor is marked with a plaque listing specifications, when and where it was built, and who owned it. Some tractors have videos in which the owner explains the tractor's history, how it was used, and how it was restored. More than 170 additional tractors are shown and described on the museum's website under the Tractor Club tab.

Before the museum opened, many of the tractors were part of a private collection assembled by good friends Kenny Buchheit and Arley Berkbugler.

"We probably traveled more than 100,000 miles all across the country, looking at, buying and picking up tractors and tractor parts," Buchheit says.



Many of the tractors on display are from companies no longer in operation.

During their 20 years of collecting, Berkbugler restored many of the tractors.

Buchheit says of Berkbugler, "One thing you had to know about him was that when he was a baby, they didn't give him a bottle or a toy; they gave him a wrench, and he's worked on tractors ever since."

The good friends and tractor lovers consolidated their collections in 2020 and purchased a building in Perryville to open the museum. Buchheit's advertising manager designed many of the interior displays, and Heberlie became the museum's director. The original 12,000-sq ft building was recently doubled in size.

"All of the tractors on display were running when we brought them into the museum," Heberlie says. "After they were set in place, we drained the fluids and put 'bed pans' under them to catch any errant fluids. They're all in retirement now for the enjoyment of all our visitors."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, American Tractor Museum, 508 N. Main St., Perryville, Mo. 63775 (ph 573-250-2219; info@americantractormuseum.com; www.americantractormuseum.com).

Route 66 Museum Preserves Blacksmithing Heritage

By Cindy Ladage

This year, Route 66 celebrates its 100th anniversary. A great place to visit is Oklahoma's Elk City Museum Complex, which features the National Route 66 Museum, covering all eight states along the route, as well as the Farm and Ranch Museum and the Blacksmith Museum.

The museums cover the people who lived, worked and traveled along the route. The Farm and Ranch Museum's barn, shed and office were donated by the Western Oklahoma Historical Society.

The museum is filled with old iron that covers many of the crops once grown in the area, such as broom corn and cotton. Along with the beauty of the vintage farm equipment outside the museum, there's a stunning blacksmith shop founded by the late Bob Kennemer.

After retiring in 1992, Kennemer established the Route 66 Blacksmith Shop. He contributed his collection of antique tools, anvils and forging equipment.

Outside the blacksmith shop, you'll find stunning examples of blacksmith work



Photo courtesy of Mitchell County Historical Society, Osage, Iowa

Engines were double-cylinder with a return flue and operated from the side but fired from the front end. They were straight gear with no clutch.

First Steam Engine Of The West Still Runs

In 1878, Joe Blumentritt's steam engines were the first built west of the Mississippi. Only two remain. At 20, he built 6-hp portable steam engines, one of which was used to hoist stone blocks for the Washington Monument. That engine is in storage at the Smithsonian Museum.

The other remaining Blumentritt is a 12-hp steam tractor that runs every August at the Mitchell County Historical Society Steam and Power Show in Osage, Iowa. It's the last of 22 6, 12 and 24-hp steam tractors he built on his farm near New Hartford, Minn.

According to a family history written in 1928 by a nephew, Blumentritt didn't just build the steam engines. He built a dam on Pine Creek, which flowed through his property. The dam provided 14 ft of head to a water turbine pit. The turbine drove a shaft to the 30 by 30-ft shop he built 100 ft away. The line shaft powered turning lathes for wood and metal, a drill press, a band saw, a power trip hammer, and a hacksaw he built himself. It also supplied air to his forge.

He bought boilers in La Crosse, Wis., and had other parts cast there using wood patterns he made. After hauling all the components 12 miles to his shop, he machined and assembled them.

The engines were double-cylinder with a return flue and operated from the side but fired from the front end. They were straight gear with no clutch. The pinion moved when a square key was inserted.

The only one known to have survived was found by Jim Sylling near Spring Grove, Minn., in the early 1950s. It was just one of many that the co-founder of the Hesper-Mabel Steam Engine Days restored, according to his son, Don.

"He would go to a farm auction and buy them for a few dollars each," says Sylling.

He recalls his dad taking the fully restored



Remains of Blumentritt's shop.

Blumentritt to a steam engine show in Mount Pleasant, Iowa.

"He sold it to Orin Krogstad at the show, something he later regretted."

Eventually, it was resold to Ed and Ray Smolik, collectors of rare and unique agricultural equipment. Ed, Ray and Evelyn Smolik later donated it to the Mitchell County Historical Society.

This writer lives only a few miles downstream from the site of the Blumentritt shop. My friend, the late Don Heintz (Vol. 41, No. 1), recalled visiting the abandoned shop with its intact line drive. A contributor to the online group Smokestack Antique Engine Community suggested that Blumentritt's tools are in a private collection.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Jim Ruen, 33750 Forster Rd., La Crescent, Minn. 55947 (ph 507-895-2229; farmshowjim@gmail.com) or Mitchell County Historical Society, 18791 Hwy 9, Osage, Iowa 50461 (ph 641-832-2574; mchsosage@gmail.com; www.mitchellcountyhistoricalsociety.org/cedar-valley-memories/1878-blumentritt).



Christmas tree sculpture made from old horseshoes.