

The Ol' Hoosier Farmer — December 14, 1977

By Jim Jones

Lou an' th' number one son an' me wandered up th' road to Pendleton a few days lookin' fer some ol' farm machinery to add t' our collection. Came back with an ol' Fairbanks-Morse 2 horse power one cylinder farm engine built back about 1915. Here's a real piece o' machinery which wuz built to give th' farmer one o' th' first reliefs frum early day drudgery. These engines powered th' water pump, washin' machine, cream separator, grindstone, corn sheller an' numerous other machines aroun' th' farm that wuz usually powered by hand th' hand bein' that o' th' farm kids er th' farm wife. A great step forward in modernization, sez th' early farm papers, give yer wife a break an' put an engine on th' washin' machine.

Early engines were huge things. This outfit weighs in at about three hundred pounds, all cast iron, with two massive flywheels an' a big cylinder 'bout five inches in diameter an' 'bout ten inches long. Has a single spark plug bout twice th' size as in yer car, a spark coil an' battery fer ignition an' a crank handle in one flywheel t' turn it over with t' start. Compression is tremendous an' it gives quite a kick. Coolin' is provided by a cast iron hopper sittin' on top o' th' cylinder which is filled with water. Th' water gits hot an' vaporizes thus removin' th' heat. Yes, th' ol' feller runs an' runs good. Got t' git it cleaned up an' repainted so we can mebbe take it to an ol' engine show somewhere.

Interestin' thing bout these ol' monsters is that they wuz nearly all made frum precision castings includin' gears. Practically no machine work wuz done on them. Yet th' parts run smoothly an' th' good workmanship is evident. After all, how many modern high speed engines will be aroun' in 60 or 70 years, runnin' jest like they did when new. These engines run at slow speeds, usually only 3 to 500 revolutions per minute. Some folks calls them hit er miss engines since they fire only when they slows down enough t' cause th' governor t' call fer another spark. Others calls them one lungers since they has only 1 cylinder.

So our winter's work is cut out in restorin' this ol' machine. Feller we got it frum has a pile o' ol' machinery includin' a bunch o' steam traction engines includin' a Gaar-Scott built in Richmond, Indiana back durin' th' Civil War--1863 to be exact. Almost 115 years old, still complete, an' will be runnin' agin fer too long. Lots' o' other engines, tractors an' good stuff like that--almost a museum o' ol' time farm machinery, all in good condition an' some lookin' like new. Sum folks sez why you want t' fool with ol' stuff like that--it don't run fast an' don't give much excitement. But we sez, where do you find workmanship like that today, an' where do you fin' machines that are open so all th' parts kin be seen operatin'? Each to his own I suppose. We finds it fascinatin' to help preserve a part o' th' past. Might want t' look int' it yerself. Lots o' fun.