

Allis-Chalmers notes 70 years of tractor manufacturing

Tractor horsepower unhitched the horses and mules

MILWAUKEE, Wis. — Millions of people around the globe envy the astonishing productivity of the American farmer. This is not due to happenstance and good luck.

Much credit goes to the 70-year saga of tractor horsepower replacing millions of horses and mules, as well as backbreaking days of endless toil in the fields.

Today, a farmer can cover as many acres of ground in an hour as he used to cover in a dawn-to-dark day behind a pair of mules. But this amazing use of the technology of mechanization benefits consumers, too.

"Every time you sit down at a dinner table or pull on a pair of designer denim jeans, you're reaping the benefits of this bountiful harvest," says Robert H. Tweedy, manager of strategic business planning with Allis-Chalmers. "A plentiful supply of food and fiber products at reasonable prices is taken for granted by many consumers."

Tweedy, a former president of the American Society of Agricultural Engineers, points out that tractor designers have not retired. "Machines of the future will be more exciting than those of today," he says.

"They'll be more sophisticated, have on-board computers, do less tillage, will promote conservation farming and have even more operator comfort than today's models."

To commemorate the 70th anniversary of tractor manufacturing by Allis-Chalmers, Tweedy recently noted some of the milestones in tractor engineering.

Tractor Firsts

The first model 10-18 rolled off the assembly lines in West Allis, Wisc., in 1914 with a 10 drawbar hp., two-cylinder engine that burned gasoline for starting and cheaper kerosene for running the machine.

The three-wheeled model featured a simple transmission with only one forward and one reverse gear.

Just prior to and during World War I, a flurry of innovations in tractor design whetted the appetites of farmers who were eager to put these new machines to use in place of their horses and mules.

After World War I, new models and manufacturers sprouted nearly as fast as grass in the spring. Among the innovations of that era that survived were the power takeoff, the diesel engine for larger models, electric starting and lights.

Farmers in the late 1920's were energy conscious, too. That year, Harry C. Merritt, manager of the Allis-Chalmers tractor department stripped the Model 20-35 down to its essentials to produce a tractor which would get more work done with less labor and fuel.

The 20-35 offered a motor that was sealed against dirt and grit with oil and gas filters as standard equipment. It was also the last Allis-Chalmers model to be painted green because the next new model captured the eye of farmers and townspeople alike with its "Persian Orange". This came about when an engineer saw acres of blaze orange wild poppies growing in California and convinced his

boses to paint the new models bright orange.

First with rubber tires. As tractors became more popular, the public sentiment against them increased for a simple reason. The machines with their steel lugs and

steel tires created havoc with the many newly paved roads across the U.S.

The steel wheels, too, did little to contribute to operator comfort.

It was a big day for comfort and power efficiency in 1932 when Allis-

Chalmers rolled out the Model U with low pressure rubber air tires. Because of the improved tractive efficiency, this model increased field performance by 25 percent and changed the course of the

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Allis-Chalmers celebrates a 70-year saga of tractor horsepower.

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