

# This Thresherman At Home With Steam Power

by Bonnie Szymanski

Titus Brubaker, 98-year-old resident of Moravian Manor, Lititz recently fell from a steam traction engine.

Some people might wonder what a 98-year-old man would be doing on top of a steam traction engine in the first place.

Those people obviously don't know who Titus Brubaker is.

He's the man who has spent the last 38 years helping to maintain steam traction engines displayed at the Rough and Tumble Museum, located on Route 30 in Kinzers and dedicated to preserving and demonstrating the steam-powered and gasoline-powered machines used during the early part of the 20th century.

Titus Brubaker is "probably one of the last remaining steam threshermen," according to a report from the museum.

And according to Guy Stauffer of East Petersburg, who drives Brubaker to the museum "two or three times a week" to work on the steam traction engines, "Titus was a thresherman for 42 years."

For the uninformed, threshermen were an indispensable part of the agricultural community around the turn-of-the-century, providing farmers with the power to pull threshing machines and bailers.

Unlike the combines of today

that harvest grain "right off the stalk," said Stauffer, the threshing machines would separate the grain from the straw and the bailer would form the straw or hay into - what else? - bails, of course.

Brubaker's steam traction engine also provided power for saw mills and silo fillers.

Come fall, Brubaker would saw railroad ties for firewood to be used in winter.

Brubaker saw his first steam traction engine in 1903. Eighteen years later, in 1921, he bought that same engine - a RR Peerless - from the owner's estate.

About five years ago, reported Stauffer, Brubaker donated it to the Rough and Tumble Museum, where it has undergone restoration and is on display.

Brubaker has owned six steam traction engines "in his time," said Stauffer.

He now owns a 50 HP Peerless, which, according to Stauffer, is the next to last one made in Waynesboro in 1928, the final year they were manufactured.

He is also part-owner with Stauffer of a 60 HP Frick steam traction engine.

Brubaker spent time this spring working on the museum's steam traction engines, doing pipe-fitting and installing two injectors, said his partner.

And despite a leg injury from the



Titus Brubaker Sr., a resident of Moravian Manor, stands beside one of several steam traction engines he owns. Brubaker is actively involved with the Rough and Tumble museum on Route 30 in Kinzers, which displays and demonstrates early steam-powered and gasoline-powered engines and machines.

fall, Brubaker intends to man a shovel at the June 21 groundbreaking ceremonies for the newest building on the 33-acre museum site.

The new building, to be dedicated to Brubaker and his wife, Irma, 94, also a resident of Moravian Manor, is scheduled to be completed in time for use at the August Threshermen's Reunion.

The couple is being honored for their long association with the historical organization. Brubaker also has made generous donations to the association's trust fund, said Stauffer.

The groundbreaking and new building construction is being called a milestone in the 38-year history of the Rough and Tumble Engineers Historical Association,

as all of the other buildings at the museum site were either already on the property when purchased by the association or were built by Rough and Tumble volunteers.

The new building, a 60-by-150-foot steel structure for housing and displaying steam traction engines when they are not being demonstrated, will be built by the Fetersville Sales Co.

Contributions for the construction have come from private sources as well as from the organization.

The historical association is made up of more than 1000 members from 39 states as well as Canada, England, Australia and Germany.

It is a non-profit organization with a board of directors, headed by a slate of elected officers.

The public is invited to attend the June 21 groundbreaking, during which time the ladies auxiliary will provide refreshments. No admission will be charged.

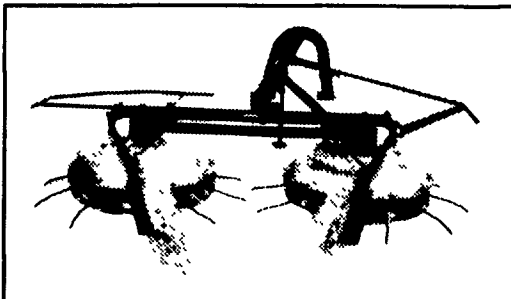
During the Aug. 13-16 Threshermen's Reunion, exhibits will include stationary steam engines, gasoline tractors, gasoline engines, antique cars and trucks, saw mills and shingle mills.

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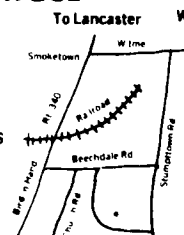


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