

GROWING UP DRIVING TRACTORS

BY LARRY COX

Dear Gary,

I was excited by the cover of the July Quarterly. I have the Massey Harris 20 my father bought new when I was 11 years old in February of 1948. The serial # is 3387. He said the idea was for me to be able to help cultivate. It has a power lift which allowed me to lift the cultivator. It is not restored. Just fixed up so that it runs well and looks good. Since 2006, I have run it on 4,500 miles of tractor rides. This is the second set of rear tires.

Looking back on the situation, I'm pretty sure dad bought the Massey-Harris 20 with the idea of getting more help from me in the farming operation. The first tractor I ever drove was our Farmall F-20. When I was five-years-old, I drove ahead a few feet at a time while dad picked three rows of corn by hand so that when the guy with the pull-type picker came, those rows would be picked before being



run over. My dad bought the Massey-Harris 20 from a dealer in Millersburg, Iowa whose name was Alfred E. Shaul. That dealership was sold to Jim Elwood in 1977. Jim Elwood no longer sells Massey Ferguson tractors.

Basically, dad was a livestock man—he especially liked raising hogs. When he was a boy he showed hogs at the local fair and even at the Iowa State Fair. Driving a tractor was what you did to get the work done. On the other hand, I really enjoyed driving a tractor and I still do.

The first year we had the Massey 20, I basically was just learning. I drove it around the farm, pulled a feed wagon and drove it on the hay rope.

The following summer the real work began. I was taught how to plow and cultivate. A 2-14 plow and a two-row cultivator was bought from the dealer when we purchased the '20'. I still have the check. The total purchase price was about \$865.

As the years went by, I drove the F-20 a lot more. The Massey couldn't pull the 8 foot tandem disk in plowed ground nor the 20 foot, 4-section drag. As a result I prepared ground for planting with the F-20 and dad planted with the Massey.

He was still planting with an old McCormick-Dearing horse-drawn check planter, so we had to get off the tractor at each end and re-set the planter wire stakes. He was very good at it. You could hoe his corn as well cross ways as the long ways. That was a tremendous help when it came to crossing the corn with a cultivator.

I still drove the Massey 20 a lot. Besides cultivating there was hay to rake, bales to haul in, oats to transport as well as corn in the fall. When I graduated from high school,



hogs were bringing fifteen cents a pound so I decided against farming. Besides that the best part of farming was driving the tractor. After college my only association with the farm was some tractor driving on weekends.

Later in life, when I was the high school principal in McGregor, Iowa, a group of people decided to start a tractor club and I got involved with that. It happened to be a two-cylinder club. When I was growing up there was one John Deere B that I was aware for miles around. So I was really starting from scratch. There was a time when I owned five two-bangers, all B's. One was rare, 1936 BO. I ran my 1952 B on the WMT Great Eastern Iowa Tractorcade for three years. About that time, another group decided to start a tractor ride club. The two-cylinder group was

dwindling so I got involved with the tractor ride club. That has been a joy. I was on the board of directors here until last year when my health began to slip.

During this time, I realized that a lot of people like having 'Dad's' tractor. By chance, I discovered the old Massey-Harris 20 I grew up with. I was able to buy it for \$150. I'm not a mechanic and as a result have spent over \$4,000 to get it in the shape it is now. Since 2006, when I got it running again, it has been on something in the neighborhood of 4,500 miles of tractor rides. It is a great tractor ride tractor. Easy to load, easy to haul and it runs sixteen miles / hour when it is necessary to catch up with the group.

The modifications for tractor rides are not permanent. The

umbrella is clamped to the axle housing. The rearview mirror is on a bracket that bolts on to a place where the cultivator used to go. A former student of mine who farms nearby and does welding as a sideline made the rear platform that attaches where the rear cultivator sweeps bolted on. A platform is a must-have necessity for tractor rides. You need a lot of stuff to take along. This includes a cooler, a lunch box and a tight-fitting box for rain gear and basic tools.

The black and white picture is of me the first summer on our new Massey-Harris 20, ready to do some serious cultivating. My love of tractor driving begins here!

—Larry Cox
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Well Larry, after reading your letter, I realized that we have never done an article on the Massey-Harris Model 20. After doing a little digging, I found some information and a couple of other guys that owned some of the several variations of that model. So, I guess this all began with Bob Lynn's excellent photo on the cover of the July issue!



THE MASSEY-HARRIS MODEL 20

BY GARY HEFFNER

The year 1947, was a major milestone for the Massey-Harris Company. It marked the one-hundredth anniversary and found the company at the pinnacle of success. Five sizes of tractors were in the lineup along with a forage harvester and a self-propelled corn picker. Massey-Harris was still a small company compared to the output of John Deere and International Harvester but their fleet of self-propelled combine models were state-of-the-art and superior to any other brand.

MOVING IN NEW DIRECTIONS

Towards the end of World War II, Massey-Harris had created a Research and Development Department to explore new products and technologies. After briefly exploring a number of new concepts and equipment, most had been dropped by the end of the war. However, a large number of items—such as milking machines, refrigerators and freezers, washing machines, stationary engines, windmills, pressurized water systems, sprayers and farm chemicals—manufactured by subcontractors—were sold

Kerosene powered tractors are not commonly found in North America as most were exported to Europe. This sharp Massey-Harris 20 K is owned by Scott Fourney from Lancaster, Ontario. Scott's tractor still has the original manifold that enabled it to efficiently burn kerosene as fuel. The engine was started on gas and after reaching operating temperature, was switched over to gasoline.



through the dealership network.

While Massey-Harris combines were the company's main strength, its shortcoming in some ways were the line of tractors. Using off-the-shelf engines to power their tractors, produced by other companies such as Continental, had worked out fairly well. But purchasing power units from other manufacturers had proven quite costly. So, one of the long range goals was to produce their own engines. Also, other competing companies were offering new features on their tractors, such as diesel engines, LPG fuel options, live PTO, six-speed transmissions and most importantly, a weight-transferring 3-point hitch. The latter of these issues was solved in the typical Massey-Harris style by purchasing Harry Ferguson's holdings and creating the new Massey-Harris-Ferguson Company in 1953.

However, in 1947, the small offering of Massey-Harris tractors had an enviable reputation for ruggedness, power and reliability. Many farmers told stories about having to replace their John Deere or Allis Chalmers tractor with a Massey on a tough belt job such as filling a silo or running a thresher. Massey-Harris tractors outperformed other makes of tractors that were supposedly in the same power class. The company's small offering of tractors gained an excellent reputation for being over-designed.

THE ONE-HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY MODEL TRACTOR

The Model 20 was launched to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the Massey-Harris Company, however, the new tractor really wasn't new at all. In fact, the only thing new about it was the model number and the price. It was identical to the Model 81 that was built from 1941-1946. The Model 20

began rolling off the assembly line in late 1946 and introduced as a 1947 model. The price was increased by about \$500, which gave it a retail cost of \$1,296. It was available in row-crop and standard models with the option of gasoline or kerosene burning engines. The vast majority of the kerosene models were exported to Europe, where they were still in demand. So, a “K” model showing up in North America is a fairly rare tractor. With a total production run of only two years and only 7,931 tractors built, there are not a lot of these models still around. Collectors who grew up with these tractors speak very highly of them. Just ask Larry Cox!

The Model 20 was not tested at Nebraska as it was almost



The cover of the May, 1952 Farmer's Magazine, features a Massey-Harris 22 on the cover. The Model 22 was the updated version of the Model 20. The image was sent by Cody Todd from Millbrook, Ontario.



identical to the Massey-Harris 81, which was tested on September of 1941, in test #376. It was rated at 20.8 hp on the drawbar and 27 hp on the belt. It is safe to assume that the Model 20 would perform about the same.

In 1948, with the addition of hydraulics, increased engine displacement—124 to 140 ci—a rear PTO and Velvet-ride

seat, the Model 20 became the new Model 22. It proved to be a popular tractor, which remained in production through 1953, when Harry Ferguson's holdings became a part of the Massey-Harris Company. With 17,195 units of the Model 22 produced, it became the first Massey-Harris tractor to offer an optional three-point hitch. **LQ**

THE MASSEY-HARRIS MODEL 20

YEARS OF PRODUCTION	1946-48	
ENGINE	Continental 4-cylinder, 124 ci, rpm 1,500 drawbar, 1,800 belt.	
	Drawbar hp	20.8
	Belt hp	27
FUEL TANK	12 US gallons	
COOLING SYSTEM	2.5 USG	
ENGINE OIL	4 US Quarts	
TRANSMISSION	2 US Gallons	
DIFFERENTIAL CASE	4 US Gallons	
ROW-CROP WEIGHT	2,535 Pounds	
STANDARD WEIGHT	2,675 Pounds	
BELT PULLEY	9.5 inches in diameter	
NEBRASKA TEST	None	
OPTIONAL EQUIPMENT	PRICE	
Adjustable high-arch wide front	\$150	
Single front wheel	\$60	
Velvet ride seat	\$28	
Belt Pulley	\$33	
Power lift	\$112	
Lights	\$19	
SERIAL # RUN	PRODUCTION YEARS	SERIAL NO.'s
Model 20 RC	1946-1948	1,001-5,195
Model 20 Standard	1947-1948	1,002-2,661
Model 20 K Standard	1947-1948	1,001-2,431
Model 20 K RC	1947-1948	1,001-1,644
Model 20 "K" Standard	1947-1948	1,001-1,818
Model 20 "K" RC	1947-1948	1,354-1,644

* Data for the graph sourced from: *Massey Tractor Data Book*, © Keith Oldroyd, 1999.