



Our Old Bookcase, June 29, 2017 Allis Chalmers Tractors & Old Fashioned Farmers Days, Van Wert

Photo caption: Allis Chalmers Tractors will be featured at Old Fashioned Farmers Days at Van Wert County Fairgrounds, June 29 – July 2, 2017.

OUR OLD BOOK CASE

By Joyce L. Alig, President, Mercer County Historical Society

The Allis Chalmers Tractors, Equipment, and Hit & Miss Engines will be featured at the 41st Van Wert County Old Fashioned Farmers Days, at Van Wert County Fairgrounds, U.S. 127, June 29 – July 2, 2017.

The Book shown above includes photographs by Andrew Morland and the text by C.H. Wendel, by Motorbooks International, 1992. The antique tractor enthusiasts know very well that at the turn of the century, 1900, several tractors were becoming available for farmers. By 1901, four large companies merged together as Allis-Chalmers. The company advertised itself as the “*Company of the Four Powers- Steam, Gas, Water, and Electricity.*” Allis Chalmers not only built some of the largest steam engines in the world, but also built some of the largest internal combustion engines in the world.

The 1901 merger presented problems that the four combined firms were able to produce more products than were necessary. As a result, some factories were closed, and some lines were cut out. Within a decade, the A.C. Company was in financial trouble and went into receivership. A.C. did not have the

established dealer network which some companies had. Under the new leadership of General Otto Falk, the Company returned to being successful. Falk phased out some products and combined other products.

By 1910, smaller tractors were being purchased by American Farmers. International Harvester, J.I. Case, and Allis Chalmers were attracted to this market. The A.C. 10-18 tractor was manufactured at West Allis, Wisconsin works in 1914. The 10-18 had a single gear forward and a single reverse, and was introduced in November, in hopes of 1915 spring sales. This A.C. Tractor was marketed as *“The only tractor that has a one-piece steel heat-treated frame- no rivets to work loose, and will not sag under the heaviest strains.”* Other companies copied A.C.’s new tractor. Meanwhile, Henry Ford was dreaming of a smaller tractor which was affordable for the small farmers, and created the Fordson Model F, in 1917. By 1923, the entire production of Allis-Chalmers originated from two A.C. plants, instead of the six previous plants. In 1928, A.C. took over the Monarch Tractor Corporation.

In the 1929 difficult economic times, at least 32 tractor and farm equipment making companies merged and formed the *“The United Tractor and Equipment Corporation,”* with headquarters in Chicago, Illinois. One success they had was that they contracted to build a new tractor, powered by a Continental Engine, known as the *“United,”* which was introduced at a 1929 agricultural show, in Wichita. Allis Chalmers made the break-through in 1932 with its introduction of *“pneumatic tyres,”* on a production tractor for the first time, which made Allis Chalmers famous. The tires cost \$150 extra, but the benefits were so outstanding, that other tractor companies followed in A.C.’s footsteps. A.C. continued to acquire new companies, of which the Gleaner Corporation was an important purchase in 1955, which put A.C. as a major American combine builder. By 1974, A.C. merged with the Italian Company Fiat; they built crawler tractors and construction machinery as the Fiat-Allis. With economic challenges, under the decline of the agricultural economy in the 1980’s, Allis-Chalmers fell victim to this era. As of March 29, 1985, Allis-Chalmers sold the farm equipment line to Klockner-Humboldt-Deutz AG, in Germany.

You are invited to see the old Allis Chalmers Tractors at the Van Wert Old Fashioned Farmers Days at the Fairground, this weekend, June 29 – July 2. Take your family. The many attractions include Antique Tractors & Machines, Quilt & Needle Art Show, Threshing, Gas Engines, Sawmill, Car Show, Antique Tractor Pull, Trading Post, Crafts, Flea Market, Garden Tractor Display, Truck display, Animal Land, Free Barrel Rides, Pedal Tractor Pulls for Kids & Adults, Barney Fife Look-A-like, Tractor Games, Chain Saw Sculpturing, Tug-A-Truck, and Food Vendors. Have a good old-fashioned time!

[Mercer County Historical Society President Joyce Alig, may be contacted at 3054 Burk-St. Henry Road, Saint Henry, OH 45883, or hystalig@bright.net or 419-678-2614]