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MODELS DATE BACK TO 1858

Big Collection Of Hand Held Planters

Did you know that more than 400 patents were granted for various styles of hand corn planters in their heyday?

Ted Sommer can tell you that and a lot more about these planters. The Pekin, Ill., seedsman may have the largest collection of hand corn planters anywhere.

"I started collecting them 10 or 12 years ago," Sommer says. "I used one when I was a boy and my dad and brother used them to plant the family business's check plots in the early 1900's. They were ideal for that because rows were short."

Sommer's collection includes 106 hand planters from seven or eight states.

Most hand planters have a strip of wood or metal that holds several kernels of corn. When handles on the planter were moved, seed would be released to drop into the hole the planter had jabbed in the soil.

"It's really interesting to see how ideas on how to get a corn kernel into the ground varied between regions," he says. "There are so many different kinds, you wouldn't recognize any of the brand names. Sears made one commercially, but every little town had somebody who made their own. So the actual number of hand corn planters made far exceeded the 400 patents that were granted

between 1852 and 1940."

For example, some hand corn planters had two hoppers, one for seed and one for fertilizer, Sommer notes. One in his collection even has three handles. Most are made of wood or a combination of wood and metal. One of his planters, dating back to 1882, is made of forged steel.

Sommer's oldest corn planter is an H.F. Batcheller made in Sterling, Ill., and patented in 1858. It's one handled and holds about a quart of corn. The handle operates a wooden wheel at the bottom of the hopper that picks up kernels from the supply tank and drops them in the boot of the planter.

His most unusual and rarest planter dates back to 1870. The wooden two-row planter has two handles with a slide control between them for varying row spacing from 36 to 40 in. "There aren't very many of them around," he notes.

Sommer finds his planters at antique stores, farm auctions, and from other collectors. Prices range from \$20 to over \$200, he says.

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IOWAN CARVED 30 DIFFERENT TRACTORS, ALL ORIGINALLY BUILT IN IOWA

"Made In Iowa" Wooden Toy Tractor Collection

Leo Franzen of West Union, Iowa, recently completed an ambitious project. He carved a toy-sized wood model of every tractor ever built in Iowa before 1950 of which a record still exists.

Franzen has 30 tractors in the collection. At least 18 more were manufactured in Iowa but he could not find photos or details on any of the other 18.

Each tractor model is about 12 in. long. Many of them have working parts, but none contain any metal fittings, screws, or nails. All parts are wood pieces glued together.

"As far as I know there's not another collection like it in the world. People stop in from all over North America to see it," says Franzen, who shows his collection off at toy shows, community celebrations, livestock conventions, etc. "It took me two years

to make all of them. I don't work from any blueprints or plans but instead use photos that I find in the Encyclopedia of American Farm Tractors as my guide. I just look at the photos, read the description, and make the parts to fit. I don't build them to scale."

His oldest tractor is the Froelich, made in the town of the same name in the late 1800's. The newest is the Thieman built in Albert City, Iowa, up until the first years of World War II. Other tractors include the Waterloo Boy, built from 1914 to 1916, and the Hart-Parr G, built from 1926 to 1927. There isn't a single John Deere in his collection. "The John Deere company started in Illinois, not Iowa, although thousands of the tractors have been built in Iowa since 1950."

He made two sets of each of his first ten

MODELED AFTER OLD DEERE 50 AND 60 2-CYL. TRACTORS

Deere Baby Stroller

One of the most unusual baby strollers you'll ever see is the one built by Dan and Kathryn Dolence, Grey Eagle, Minn., for their son, Ryan, 2. It's 34 in. long, 21 in. wide at the back, and 18 in. high. The seat frame and push handle on back are off an old bus seat frame. The 12-in. high rear wheels and 5-in. high twin front caster wheels and the steering wheel were bought new and were designed for an Ertl pedal tractor.

"It gets a lot of attention wherever we go," says Dolence, who brought the stroller with him to the recent Farm Fest show near Redwood Falls, Minn. "Ryan is very active but once he's in the stroller he'll stay there. I got the idea when I saw some scrap metal in our junkpile that looked like the right shape for the hood. The big tires make it fairly easy to push. It doesn't have a seat belt but it would probably be a good idea. However, the steering wheel prevents Ryan from getting out too fast."

Dolence used two pieces of steel from the cob carrier off an old Allis-Chalmers corn picker to form the sides of the hood and between them welded in a length of 2 1/2-in. wide, 1/4-in. thick, L-shaped flat metal to form the top and front part of the hood. He mounted the steering wheel on one end of a steel rod and inserted the other end through a hole drilled into the top of the hood. "The steering wheel and rod spin freely and are not used to steer the stroller," notes Dolence.

He tack welded expanded metal into a square frame made from 3/4-in. angle iron to make foot rests on each side of the tractor. The two caster wheels are held together by a long 3/4-in. dia. bolt that runs through a steel bracket attached to the bottom of the tractor frame.

He used sections of foam and vinyl to make the seat cushion and back, stretching the vinyl over the foam and wrapping it around pieces of plywood before stapling it



Dan, Kathryn and Ryan Dolence with stroller.



Steering wheel prevents Ryan from getting out too fast.

on. He screwed the back to the frame from an old bus seat which he shortened up and welded back together. The handlebar was also part of the bus seat frame but is separate from the seat. It's held secure at the bottom on each side by steel pins that fit inside brackets. By pulling the pins Dolence can swing the handle forward over the steering wheel, allowing him to fit the stroller inside his van for transport. A bungee cord is used to keep the handlebar secure.

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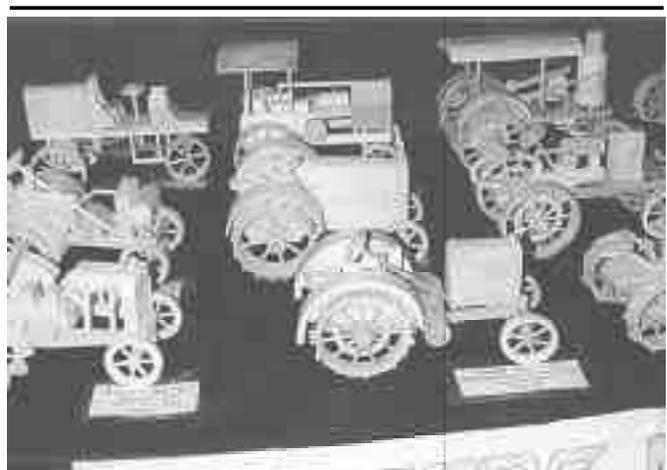


Photo shows a portion of farmer's Iowa-built tractors carved out of wood.

models, then started making three sets of each model. "I keep one set in my van for going to shows and one set in the shop next to my barbershop. I keep the rest at home."

In addition to tractors, Franzen has also built wooden wagons (complete with functioning running gears), threshing machines, corn pickers, grain elevators, hay loaders, self-unloading forage wagons, modern 4-

WD tractors, a pair of buffalo, and even an old-fashioned barnyard set. The threshing machine is made up of 169 different pieces.

He says he'd be willing to sell one set of his toy tractors for the right price.

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