

Spring 2018 | Issue #48

# THE PLOWSHARE

History for John Deere Collectors



JOHN DEERE



## OUT OF THE VAULT: JOHN DEERE TRACTORS AT 100 – THE LEGEND RUNS ON

John Deere purchased the Waterloo Gasoline Engine Company 100 years ago this month, forever changing the course of history for the company with the addition of tractors to the product line. Take a look at some key milestones in John Deere tractor history.



# Welcome to the Spring 2018 Issue

It's with mixed emotions that we welcome you to the final issue of The Plowshare. Ten years ago, we created this publication to share information about John Deere's rich heritage with its biggest fans. Since then, we've featured dozens of articles, and hundreds of photos and videos on everything from stationary engines to toy tractors to collector spotlights to events and milestones. During that time, the way we deliver The Plowshare has also changed.

It's an end of an era in some ways, but we consider it not so much an ending as it is yet another beginning, as any John Deere loyalist would understand. It's the New Generation of Power replacing Johnny Popper. It's the all new Power Steering over manual steer, or a Float-Ride seat versus the steel pan seat. It's different, yet familiar. And in the end, we hope that when you test drive our new home on the [John Deere Journal](#) for yourself, you'll enjoy the ride.

So while this indeed is the last issue of The Plowshare, we are excited about the historical content we will continue to deliver to you through the Journal. Until then, we hope you enjoy this special issue as we celebrate John Deere Tractors at 100, and usher in a new era in John Deere history.

And as always, if you have questions about the transition or other topics, please contact us at [history@johndeere.com](mailto:history@johndeere.com).

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# LEGEND, MADE LEGACY

## GATHERING OF THE GREEN MARCH 21-24

**It's almost time to Talk Tractor!** The tenth "Gathering of the Green," a biennial conference for John Deere tractor, implement, and collectible enthusiasts is planned for March 21-24, 2018. This popular conference is a must-do for John Deere fans of all ages. Every other year, thousands of visitors travel to the Quad Cities area from all corners of the U.S., as well as other countries, to be a part of the event.

This year's theme is "Legend, Made Legacy" and pays tribute to the 100th anniversary of John Deere's acquisition of the Waterloo Gasoline Engine Company.



### HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE:

- **60+ workshops** covering a variety of historical and technical topics, including 2-cylinder & New Gen/Gen II tractors and implements
- **More than 70 vendors** with all things green and yellow – parts (new, used, and reproduction), restoration and repair services, signs, toys, clothing, manuals, literature, tires, art decals, and other memorabilia
- **Spectacular displays** celebrating 100 years of John Deere tractors, including such iconic tractors as the All-Wheel Drive (aka Dain), Waterloo Boys, experimental Model "A," 4th Model "D," a working Aermotor windmill, early farm house, machine shed, lawn and garden tractors, and snowmobiles
- **Toy auction, factory tours, merchandise, and more!**

Featured evening speaker Neil Dahlstrom, manager of corporate archives and history, will share his extensive research on the company's early tractor years with "John Deere's Second Tractor, the All-Wheel Drive," on Thursday evening. Graham Thompson, director of global tractor portfolio development and strategic growth planning speaks on "What Got Us Here Will Get Us There," at the Saturday evening banquet.

For more details, and to register, go to [www.gatheringofthegreen.com](http://www.gatheringofthegreen.com), or email [info@gatheringofthegreen.com](mailto:info@gatheringofthegreen.com).

# Waterloo Boy



## A GOOD TRACTOR BACKED BY A PERMANENT ORGANIZATION

When John Deere started tractor manufacturing with the acquisition of the Waterloo Gasoline Engine Company in 1918, the longevity of the tractor as an agricultural tool was still in question. Recent growth was reason for optimism though, as industry tractor sales had grown from 14,000 units in 1914 to over 200,000 in 1920.

John Deere had designed and built a variety of tractor models from 1912-1917, ranging from Charles Melvin's first experimental tractor, to the Sklovksy A-2, B-2, the never-built D-2, and a variety of Dain models. The Tractivator, a motor cultivator of which 25 were built and tested, was recalled and never put on the market. In November 1917, the company's board of directors approved production of "up to 100" Dain (All-Wheel Drive) tractors. In April 1918, the first All-Wheel Drive tractor was produced.

*But something happened in between...*

JOHN DEERE

MOLINE, ILLINOIS

The gasoline tractor can be traced to a town in central Iowa in 1892, where 43-year-old John Froelich, a veteran leader of a travelling wheat thresher crew, debuted his experimental machine—a gasoline-powered, vertical, single cylinder engine mounted on the running gear of a steam traction engine. The unnamed machine, which would come to be called a tractor, successfully moved both forward and backward.

As a John Deere advertisement later noted, Froelich's tractor provided the "dormant seed that later sprouted and brought forth the 'Waterloo Boy' line."

The Waterloo Gasoline Engine Company's Waterloo Boy brand was created in the early 1900s to sell a wide portfolio of products including manure spreaders, cream separators, stationary engines, and after 1912, tractors. The company (which had re-incorporated several times) even spent a brief time trying to build

an automobile. The common product during this period was the engine, and then, the tractor. The Model "R" tractor began production in 1914, followed by the Model "N" in December 1917. By then, the company's workforce in Waterloo had grown to more than 1,000.

Despite having given approval to build as many as 100 All-Wheel Drive tractors (and with the first one completed in the spring of 1918), some company board members thought the production was too small, and the tractor too advanced and expensive. Willard Velie, a long-time advocate for aggressively entering the tractor business, reminded President William Butterworth of the unanimous resolution passed in 1912 to build a tractor plow, observing that "five years and ten months have elapsed" and "our position as either tractor or plow manufacturers, is not as strong today as when we started."

After the company spent seven years developing experimental tractors, leaders including Willard Velie, W.E. Taylor, and William Butterworth made the transformative decision to purchase Waterloo Gasoline Engine Company.



Velie argued that Deere could not profit from 100 tractors, and in the process would become direct competitors to former allies who were building tractors.

"I cannot refrain from remarking that we should build tractors largely and whole-heartedly, or dismiss the tractor matter as inconsequential and immaterial. Our present course is prejudicial and impotent," Velie wrote. "I desire to go on record as believing firmly the future of Deere & Company, imperatively and insistently requires immediate action," he added.

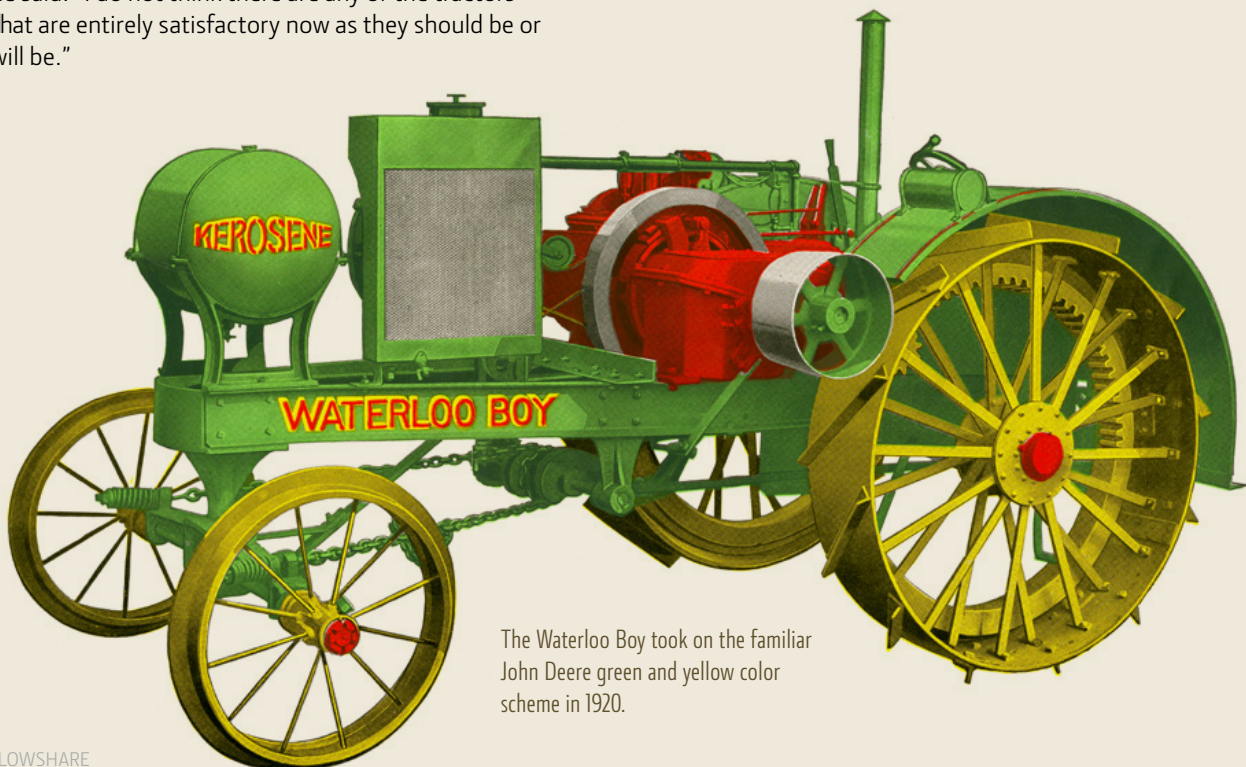
In January, Deere's vice president of sales Frank Silloway shared a letter with the board, informing them that the Waterloo Gasoline Engine Company might be available for purchase. He added that Deere salesmen and dealers thought their implement sales were now at risk. William Morgan, manager of the John Deere Harvester Works, proposed letting the sales force decide "whether they want a tractor, what kind of a tractor, and then let the factory put it in shape to manufacture." Furthermore, Morgan thought they shouldn't waste any more time figuring out what type of tractor to build. "It is going to be a sort of evolution until we reach a standard," he said. "I do not think there are any of the tractors that are entirely satisfactory now as they should be or will be."

With nearly seven years of research and development behind them, Deere & Company moved quickly, resolving to investigate the Waterloo opportunity further.

Silloway headed to Waterloo, followed by chief engineer Max Sklovsky a few days later. Silloway found a "good factory" with room for expansion and "up-to-date machinery." Tractor sales were reported at 2,762 in 1916 and 4,558 in 1917, though stationary engine sales were in the midst of a three-year slump. Sales contracts with distributors (called jobbers) were in place until December 31, 1918.

The Waterloo Boy tractor was familiar already to Deere, having appeared in a number of John Deere field reports over the previous years. Those reports included discussion of many of the features that Deere found critical to a successful tractor. It burned kerosene, which Deere thought was preferable due to unstable gas prices during the war. William Butterworth feared that expected increased gas prices after the war would further hurt customers who bought gasoline tractors. Butterworth told the Boston News Bureau that he thought all purchasing would be done "in hand-in-mouth fashion" and that dealers and farmers would wait for cheaper prices due to overproduction.

Minimizing customer input costs was crucial. The Waterloo Boy had a two-cylinder engine, which could be built less expensively, was durable, and used fewer parts than four-cylinder machines. It was also economical, serviceable, and was purpose-built to "pull hard all the time," according to advertisements. Silloway left Waterloo impressed: "I believe that quality and price considered, it is the best commercial tractor on the market today," he said. The Waterloo Boy would give Deere "a satisfactory tractor at a popular price, and not a high-priced tractor built for the few," Silloway added.



The Waterloo Boy took on the familiar John Deere green and yellow color scheme in 1920.



JOHN DEERE  
HE GAVE TO THE WORLD THE STEEL PLOW.

COLUMBIAN BANK NOTE CO. CHICAGO

Deere & Company Voucher No. 3163

Pay to Moline, Ill. March 14 1918 No. 66905  
Waterloo Savings Bank or order \$2,100,000.00

Two Million, One Hundred Thousand 00/100 Dollars

To the First National Bank, Deere & Company.  
Chicago, Ill. By J. F. Wharton Cashier

Silloway thought the implement business would stay steady in 1918 and 1919, and “by 1920 the war (World War I) should be drawing to a close, the period of transition would be upon us, and I believe that none of us know what it will bring.” To that end, Deere could wait to get into the tractor business. “All it would require is money for a plant and machinery,” he said. But “this Waterloo proposition presents the subject in a new light,” Silloway noted, and as a result, Deere had “an opportunity to, over night [sic], step into practically first place in the tractor business.”

Deere’s board deliberated overnight, and set to reconvene at 10:00 a.m. on March 13. In the meantime, Silloway was notified by the majority stockholder of the Waterloo Gasoline Engine Company, President George Miller, that unless the deal was exercised by the next day his stock would not be available. Silloway pushed for approval, and the Deere & Company Board of Directors unanimously approved the purchase in the amount of \$2.25 million.

Deere wired \$100,000 to Waterloo, paid broker Otto Borchert \$50,000, and on March 14, 1918, wrote a check for the remaining \$2.1 million. Deere was now firmly invested in the future of the tractor.

Internally, Deere employees were introduced to the new company through a new employee publication, simply named The John Deere Magazine. “Waterloo is a good fit,” the magazine article noted, because of Deere’s “well-known adherence to the highest quality of its output,” and how the “products of the Waterloo Gasoline Engine Company will add new lustre [sic] to it.”

John Deere dealers had to wait to sell the new line. Deere chose to honor the existing sales contracts already in place, which did not expire until December 31. Deere issued a bulletin to its branch houses in April 1918 to clarify, giving direction that if dealers were asked about the sale of Waterloo Boy tractors or engines, “the only thing for you to tell them is that you have not taken over the sale of the tractors or gasoline engines as yet.”

Deere debuted the John Deere Waterloo Boy tractor at the National Tractor Demonstration in Salina, Kansas.

When the existing Waterloo contracts expired at the end of 1918, Deere began to advertise the John Deere Waterloo Boy tractor, promoting the kerosene-burning engine, dependability, and the merits of a “good tractor backed by a permanent organization.”

**One hundred years later, one can only wonder what lies in store for the next one hundred years.**

This cancelled check was written for the balance due on the \$2.25 million acquisition of the Waterloo Gasoline Engine Company.

## RECENT ARTICLES IN THE JOHN DEERE JOURNAL

Check out the [John Deere Tractors At 100 portal](#) on the John Deere Journal. Just a few of the featured articles include:

### **PRESERVING 100 YEARS OF TRACTOR HISTORY >**

Take a look inside the John Deere Archives to learn about the research process and management of 100 years of tractor history.

### **THE 73-YEAR MYSTERY OF THE “BATHTUB D” >**

Discover how the “Bathtub D” reemerged to fill its important place in the lineage of the John Deere tractor.

### **WATERLOO BOY TRACTOR PROVES TO BE RIGHT FIT FOR DEERE >**

Journey back to August 1918, when the John Deere Waterloo Boy tractor debuted at the National Tractor Demonstration in Salina, Kansas.

# DEERE EQUIPMENT SHOWCASED AT XIII OLYMPIC WINTER GAMES

The machines, delivered in one long parade by a local dealer, traveled through the Adirondack Mountains between Plattsburgh, New York, and Lake Placid.

The 1980 Winter Olympic Games at Lake Placid, New York, were a dazzling display of athleticism, ingenuity, and national pride. The event brought in half a million spectators and 1,000 athletes representing 37 nations. But the unsung heroes of the 13th Olympic Winter Games were 101 pieces of John Deere equipment responsible for keeping parking lots and roads clear of snow for the event's 40,000 daily visitors.

John Deere provided 31 industrial and utility machines, including five motor graders and fifteen 4-wheel-drive front-end loaders, for snow removal and road maintenance during the games which were played February 13-24. Also included in the \$1.75 million fleet of Deere equipment were snow blowers, snowmobiles, wheel tractors for cleaning ice at the speed skating oval, and skid-steer loaders for clearing snow at the Olympic Village.

Deere machinery also played a major role in preparing for the 1980 games when construction began in Lake Placid in early 1977. Two JD380 Forklifts were used to erect the flag poles at the site of the opening ceremonies. A JD690 Series Excavator, a JD510 Backhoe, two John Deere crawlers, a JD24-A Loader and a JD740 Skidder helped build the Olympic Village. John Deere equipment helped make Lake Placid one of the top-tier winter sports centers in the world for years to come.

# JOHN DEERE TRACTOR MILESTONES

1918

Deere begins selling the well-known Waterloo Boy tractor, alongside the John Deere All-Wheel Drive (of which 90 were built).

1924

Model "D" tractor replaces the Waterloo Boy. It will remain in production for the next 30 years.

1934

Model "A" tractor offered adjustable rear axles for various row crops, as well as optional hydraulic Power Lift for raising and lowering mounted implements while the tractor is in motion or sitting still.

1945

Quick-Tatch equipment and Touch-O-Matic offered one-touch, hydraulic control for drawn implements.

1947

Roll-O-Matic provided a smoother ride and easier steering on narrow front-end tractors. When one wheel went up, it forced the other down so the tractor could "walk" over obstacles.

1954

Deere offers industry-first power steering on tractors.

1960

The New Generation of Power is introduced. Industry firsts in the lineup include hydraulic power brakes, closed-center hydraulics for instant power, and the industry's first wheel tractor with over 100 PTO and drawbar horsepower.

1966

Roll-Gard™, also known as ROPS (Roll-Over Protective Structure), is introduced as a safety feature, and later released for adoption by the entire industry.

1973

The 125-hp Model 4430 tractor offers an optional Sound-Gard cab, an industry first dust-free, temperature controlled operator station that provided "freedom from the elements."

1983

Building on the success of the optional 8-speed power shift transmission introduced on John Deere tractors in 1964, the 15-speed PowerShift transmission, as well as mechanical front wheel drive on the 50 Series tractor, became options.

1992

16-speed PowrQuad transmission offered as part of the "New Breed of Power" line, the biggest tractor design change since 1960.

1997

Deere introduces its first rubber tracked tractor on the 8000 Series chassis, including speed sensitive steering that automatically adjusted based on ground speed and terrain.

2002

Autotrac, part of the Greenstar precision agriculture management system, provides assisted steering, accurate to within 4-inches pass to pass, and guides the tractor in a straight line down rows.

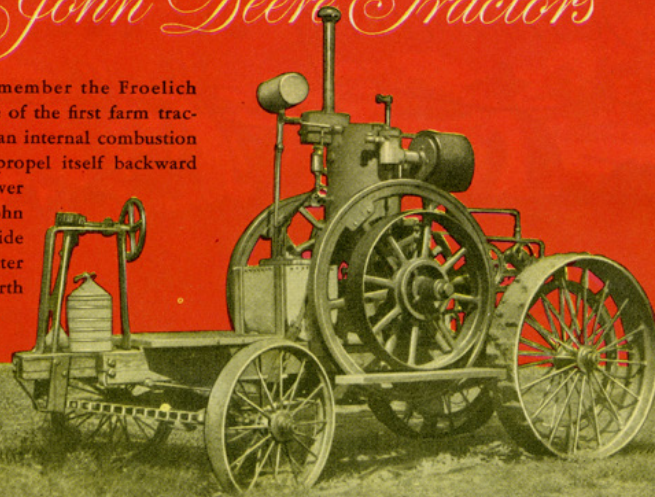


# FROM THE ARCHIVES

This 50-year anniversary issue of The Furrow celebrates the lineage of the John Deere tractor line, beginning with the Froelich in 1892.

## Forerunner of the Modern Line *of John Deere Tractors*

**F**EW farmers will remember the Froelich tractor of 1892—one of the first farm tractors to be powered with an internal combustion engine and the first to propel itself backward as well as forward. Never produced in volume, John Froelich's tractor did provide the dormant seed that later sprouted and brought forth the "Waterloo Boy" line.



## **TODAY** *Leaders in the Features You Want*

The Waterloo, Iowa, factory in which the "Waterloo Boy" was built, purchased by John Deere in 1918, saw the development of the first John Deere Tractor—the Model "D," a two-cylinder tractor, famous for its simplicity, durability, ease of operation, and low operating costs. Today, the greatly expanded line of

modern John Deere Tractors includes seven power sizes and twenty models to meet the exacting requirements on farms everywhere. Today, in every agricultural section of our country, John Deere Tractors are known among farmers for their dependable and economical performance.

