

2023 Tri-State Antique Tractor and Engine Show



**A special section in The Commercial Review,
The News-Gazette, The News Times and The News and Sun
Tuesday, August 22, 2023**

Show regular cherishes friends met over decades

By BAILEY CLINE

The Graphic Printing Company

Regulars at the annual Tri-State Antique Engine and Tractor Show may recognize Leroy Clark from operating the saw mill.

They may know him for his 1913 Bessemer engine, which is located just west of the new restrooms on Jay County Fairgrounds during the show.

Or maybe they've commandeered his help with an engine or two over the years.

Clark, 65, is one of the annual attendees to the Tri-State Antique Engine and Tractor Show, which runs from Wednesday through Saturday. The northwestern Ohio resident has been a regular participant in the show for at least 35 years.

His collection currently sits at about 40 engines, which includes some Spartas, Root and Vandervoorts, Fairbanks, Hercules and Maytags.

He's also got a couple Lerois, which were made in France. Clark pointed out a few of those machines were on the Titanic during its maiden voyage.

Clark's 1913 Bessemer engine has never been converted, meaning it still runs on propane or natu-

ral gas. (Clark uses propane for demonstrations.) The 10-horsepower gas engine built in Pennsylvania would have been the smallest model used in oil fields.

The 1913 Bessemer was shipped to Clarksburg, West Virginia, in October 1913. At that time, it was used as an air compressor. (Clark has the original build sheet for the engine order that correlates with the serial number bolted onto the machine. It was later made into an engine, which required a few different parts.)

Clark purchased the engine from a Michigan resident. At that time, it was in rough shape. He tried his hand at repairing it before sending it to a friend in Arkansas who specializes in larger engine repairs.

Purchasing engines in need of repair is how he's been able to amass his collection. Over time, he parts ways with some of his engines — he's hoping to sell a few New Ways and Galloways soon.

"You know, you can only play with so many toys," he said. "And it's not the one that has the most toys, it's how much fun you have with them. Well, I've had a lot of fun with some of them, so let somebody else have them. Enjoy them for a while. There's other things I want to look at getting."

He's also built 35 functioning toy engine models, although he admitted he hasn't built one in several years. Depending on the model, they run off different resources, such as air or steam.

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Northwest Ohio native has been visiting for at least 35 years

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'Sheriff' brings a vast collection

By RAY COONEY

The Graphic Printing Company

The sheriff is back in town.

This "lawman," though, doesn't arrive with a nightstick or guns. (Collecting firearms was his father's hobby.)

Instead, Wayne Walker rode into Portland hauling well pumps.

Wayne has four exhibitor spaces in the northeast area of the Tri-State Antique Engine and Tractor Show where he and his wife, Rose, display and sell well pumps, hog oilers, signs, some small engines and tractor-themed children's clothing.

"We homestead this spot every year," Wayne said with a chuckle.

"Everybody's got gas engines," he added, "so if you bring something different then you've got kind of a niche market."

Fellow visitors to the show, which runs Wednesday through Saturday at Jay County Fairgrounds and the adjacent Tri-State properties, call him "The Sheriff."

"Yeah, he's got a badge that he's been wearing for ..."

"40 years," Wayne chimes in while retrieving it from his truck.

"Yeah, a long time," Rose continues. "Because we've been married 33 and he was wearing it before that."

He bought the old sheriff's badge and modified it to read "Junk Sheriff" and "Walker, Flywheel Ranger," a play on his name and the 1990s TV show "Walker, Texas Ranger" that starred Chuck Norris. (That name is also his eBay handle as he sells items there and at forgotteniron.com.)

Wayne, a farmer in rural Onaga, Kansas — about 100 miles west of Kansas City in the northeast corner of the state — caught the collecting bug in his youth when he would attend farm sales with his father, a gun collector. He'd end up digging through the \$1 boxes of miscellaneous items and eventually got his first hit-and-miss engine in 1970 when he was still in high school.

See 'Sheriff' page 10

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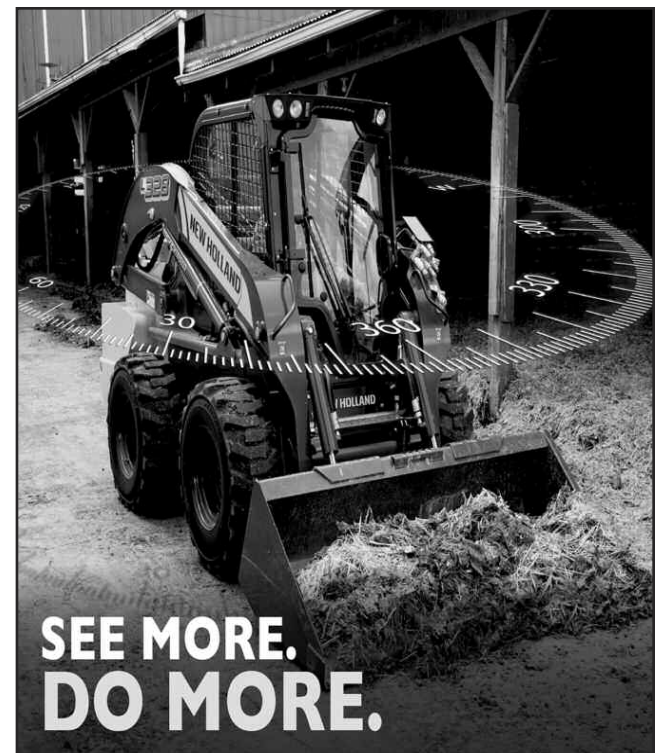
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Regular ...

Continued from page 2

The hobby runs in the family. Clark's father, Vernon, also spent a portion of every summer in Jay County with their engines. (He died a few weeks after his last time at the show in 2020.)

Clark can usually be found at the circular saw mill on the fairgrounds in the mornings through noon.

"(Those) things will kill you. They're dangerous," he warned. "It's a big blade spinning, you know, 150 revolutions per minute. That'll hurt you. As long as you do everything the safe way and you do the right stuff, you're OK with it."

His experience with mills dates back to his childhood. At 12 years old, he helped with a bandsaw mill. His brother, Ed, now owns the Clark Saw Mill in Blanchard, Ohio, and repurposes old telephone poles into timbers.

A native to the Mount Blanchard, Ohio, area, Leroy Clark grew up on 3 acres of land. Although his family didn't farm, he often helped local farmers as a child.

After graduating from high school, Clark worked for WBUK radio (106.3) in Ottawa, Ohio. His friend and second-time visitor to the show, Ken Reed, recalled how the radio station sent a snow plow to pick up Clark at the beginning of the blizzard of 1978. Clark and another radio host shared the air throughout the storm.

Clark has been married to his wife,

'That's all I ever ask for, is just one more show. I love it. I've met so many friends and so many people in this great community ... I've made friends all over the world from this show.'

—Leroy Clark

Jenny, for about 45 years. They have three children and nine grandchildren. Someday he plans to give each grandson one of his Maytag engines.

He retired Aug. 1 from his maintenance mold repair position at a factory in Carey, Ohio. With more time on his hands, Clark has already started investing more time into his hobby. He recently purchased a 15-horsepower Evans engine in need of repair.

One aspect he enjoys most about the show — it's not competitive. Folks openly share information and knowledge about engines and repairs without a need to withhold trade secrets, he explained.

"I don't know anything compared to some of them," he said. "But one

of the good things about the hobby is, I don't know anything, but I'll share what little bit of knowledge I've got because it's a hobby ... if I can help anybody in any way, I try to do it."

Clark referenced various friends with different antique engines. He said he's probably put in 150 hours so far into working on a friend's 20-horsepower Franklin engine. On Friday evening, Clark could be seen driving another friend's 1955 McCormick tractor through the western portion of Tri-State grounds.

"That's all I ever ask for, is just one more show," said Clark. "I love it. I've met so many friends and so many people in this great community ... I've made friends all over the world from this show."

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Leroy Clark adjusts the gas line on his 1913 Bessemer engine Saturday morning at Jay County Fairgrounds. Clark, 65, has amassed about 40 engines over the years, bringing at least one to the Tri-State Antique Engine and Tractor Show every year.

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'Sheriff' ...

Continued from page 5
His collection now includes more than 250 engines. He started on the well pumps because the early job of those small engines in Kansas was to run pumps to provide water for cattle. He has pumps of all kinds with various stamps of locations (Evansville, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Mansfield, Ohio) and brands (Red Jacket, The Deming Company, Dempster Mill Manufacturing Company) along the shafts.

Some of the pieces feature stars, eagles or latticework and date from as far back as the early 1800s.

"They're just neat," said Wayne, who has made yard art out of the devices. "They're art, especially the real early stuff that's got latticework and stuff."

His massive collection — it also includes more than 20 World War II-era vehicles and some airplane parts — is stored mostly in 13 53-foot semi trailers at his property southwest of Onaga.

Wayne sets up at the Tri-State show nearby another pump collector, Bobby Lawson of Garrettsville, Ohio. And the trip to Jay County



The Graphic Printing Company/Ray Cooney

Wayne Walker's well pumps are just part of the vast collection he brings from Kansas each year.

Fairgrounds started Saturday morning with about 12 hours on the road ending at the home of Glen and Rebecca Lawson, two more show exhibitors, in Wingate. He and Rose

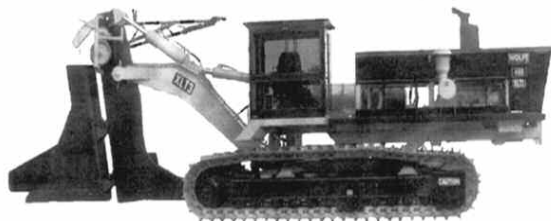
camped there for the night before the two couples made the drive to Portland on Sunday morning.

"It's just a fun hobby," Wayne said. "We've met a lot of good people."

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