

The Hackney One Man Auto Plow Tractor

by Lynne Belluscio

I never know what I'll find on e-bay. It's usually fun. Sometimes frustrating, and often surprising. I usually search "LeRoy New York." A couple of weeks ago, I saw a letterhead from John A. McPherson and A.H. Olmsted of LeRoy, agents for the Hackney One Man Auto Plow Tractor. I had never seen such a machine, so I Googled it and discovered that it was manufactured in Minneapolis. The Hackney brothers had made money in North Dakota buying and selling railroad land. They soon went into business making agricultural equipment in St. Paul, Minnesota.

By 1909, the Hackney Company was manufacturing the One Man Plow. The demand for the plow was primarily in the Dakotas and Minnesota, but apparently they had agents - like McPherson and Olmsted - selling the Hackney Plow in many different states. It's unclear whether McPherson and Olmsted actually had one of these machines in LeRoy.

It would have caught any farmer's attention. Unlike other plows at that time, which were usually painted in drab colors, the Hackney Plow was bright red with yellow striping and wheels. The Hackney Plow had seats facing each other, so it could be operated in either the forward or backward direction. It was powered by a 40 hp engine. It could be

equipped with either three or four plow blades and was maneuverable into the corners of fields near fences.

Automobiles and tractors at that time, were started by a crank, but the Hackney had a wheel on the front which was used to turn the motor. (If you look closely, you can see the wheel just in front of the large wheel.) The company was sold to the Standard Motor Company of Mason City, Iowa, but Standard went bankrupt and the Hackney brothers took over the company again.

There were some problems with the machine, and sales declined. Never the less, in 1917, Hackney advertised that it had five different models of the One Man Plow. In 1918, the factory was destroyed by fire, and it appears that the One Man Plow was not manufactured after that.

The letter was written to Markam & Puffer in Avon On May 11, 1914: "Gentlemen: When I wrote you before, I thought Mr. A.H. Olmsted would be done with Grand Jury work, but not yet, so he can't go to see you so I wrote I would. Grippe prevents my going, but Please phone me at my expense if you would like a plow and want one as soon as possible. Yours Truly, John W. McPherson"

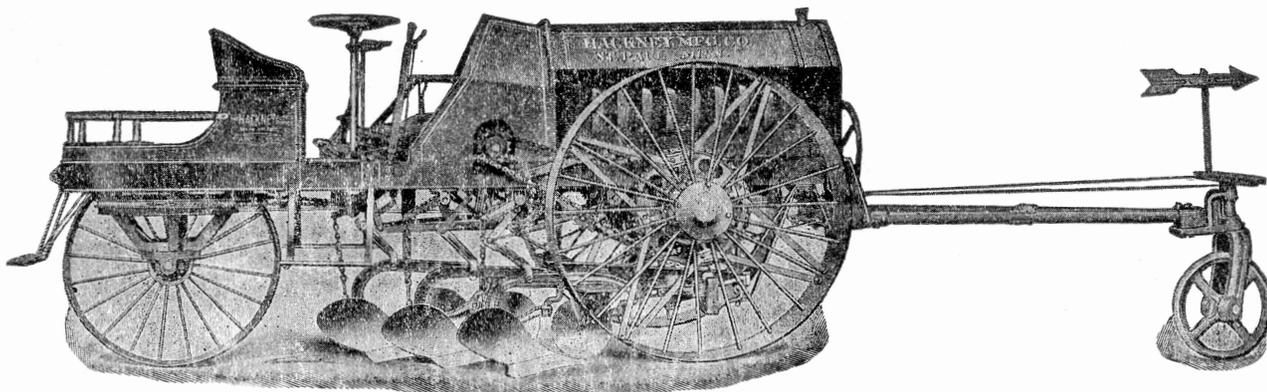


Photo taken at the Dale and Martha Hawk Museum in North Dakota.

John McPherson was a farmer on Oatka Creek Road. (David Frost's Great Grandfather). A.H. Olmsted was from Pavilion and had a farm south of LeRoy. Both men apparently thought that this new Auto Plow Tractor would be of interest to local farmers. More than likely, since the Hackney Factory burned in 1918, McPherson and Olmsted did not remain agents for the plow for very long. The only record we have of their business is this unusual letterhead.

I discovered that there is a working Hackney Plow in North Dakota at the Dale and Martha Hawk Museum in Wolford. Each year in June they host a large Antique Farm Show which draws a large crowd. The Museum also has a farmhouse,

church, school and a variety of other historic buildings as well as several large barns full of agricultural equipment. If you've ever in North Dakota stop by and take pictures. Which brings me to North Dakota - - For several years, the Jell-O Museum has had visitors from every state. Last year, the hold out was Alaska and finally in October we had visitors from Alaska, but this year, it's North Dakota. We figure that folks in North Dakota are so busy working, they don't have the chance to take a few days off for vacation. So if you have friends or family from North Dakota who might be stopping by - - send them over to the Jell-O Gallery. We have a special gift basket for them.



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JOHN A. MCPHERSON AND A. H. OLMSTED
AGENTS

Le Roy, N. Y., *May 11* 1914