

The Years to 1960

The Old Settlers and Threshers Association held its second meeting at Mount Pleasant on September 25, 26, 27, 1951. The additional day clearly indicated that the directors had determined their annual meetings should not be limited in time.

A varied bill of fare greeted visitors in 1951. Music was rendered by the Fife and Drum Corps, and the Old Fiddlers Contest evoked spirited competition. Pictures of the 1950 Reunion won a goodly attendance, and square dancing offered fun and relaxation for those participating.

On Wednesday Dean Martin A. Tollefson of the Drake University Law School addressed the audience on "The Pioneers and Us." The following day Attorney General Robert Larson was the featured speaker. The presence of Mr. and Mrs. F. J. Wood won widespread acclaim. Mr. Wood, owner of Wood Bros. Thresher Company of Des Moines, was named the "Old Thresher" of 1951.

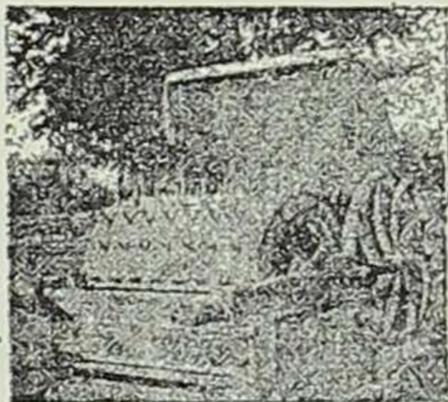
Meanwhile, the basic reason for the gathering was not overlooked as the crowd witnessed a saw-mill in operation and saw all the engines that had been assembled operate under their own steam. The evolution of threshing was demonstrated on Wednesday by means of the flail, ground hog,

You Are Invited To Attend

Second Annual Reunion

**Midwest Old Settlers and Threshers
Reunion {Inc.}**

**Mt. Pleasant,
Iowa**



**Sept. 25, 26,
and 27, 1951**

AT LEAST 20 STEAM ENGINES IN OPERATION

MINATURE MODELS, ENGINES AND SEPERATORS IN ACTUAL OPERATION.

SAW MILL IN OPERATION. THRESHING WITH FLAIL; GROUND HOGS; CHAFF PILER; HAND FED AND SELF FEEDER. POWERED BY HORSE POWER TREAD POWER; STEAM ENGINES. CRADEL, SELF RAKE AND BINDERS.

Large Display Old Settlers Implements

INDIAN RELICS

ANCIENT FIRE ARMS

DISHES

SPINNING WHEELS

CARDING MACHINES



Mt. Pleasant is 26 miles West of Burlington, Iowa, on U. S. Highway 34, and about 50 miles North of Keokuk, Iowa, on U. S. Highway 218. Both highways pass within 2 blocks of McMILLAN PARK where the reunion is held—Plenty of shade, pure water and conveniences.

Pictures at Nite - Square Dancing

MUSIC AND OTHER ENTERTAINMENT

3 MODERN HOTELS — 2 MODERN MOTELS — TOURIST CABINS
AND PRIVATE HOMES

LUNCH SERVED ON GROUNDS

HOTEL RESERVATIONS MADE ON REQUEST

Write for Further Particulars

FAY H. ERNST, President

HERMAN E. ELGAR, Secretary

chaff piler, hand-fed separator, and self-feeder. On Thursday attention was riveted on a new feature—the testing of the horsepower of the various steam engines on the ground with the Prony Brake—the first time this unique invention was shown anywhere in the Midwest.

Mr. and Mrs. Milo Mathews and Mr. and Mrs. Frank Johnson, who had charge of the Old Settlers exhibits reported:

Both ends of the shelter house at McMillan Park in Mount Pleasant, Iowa, were literally filled with Old Settlers' articles—implements, dishes, cut glassware, linen, bedsteads, tools, firearms, Indian relics, and furniture of the olden days. We dare say that there never was such a collection of fine old articles shown, consisting of antiques and heirlooms, as was on display the three days of the reunion here this year.

It is almost unbelievable the number of fine old heirlooms and family keepsakes there are in the homes of Southeast Iowa that have been handed down from generation to generation and it is certainly gratifying to note the willingness of our loyal friends to bring out these old treasures and allowing us to use them for the reunion and share their beauty and history with our visitors who came from 18 different states and two provinces of Canada.

The Second Annual Reunion was such a success that the directors set four days aside for their next Reunion to be held in mid-September of 1952. After noting that seven states were represented at McMillan Park on the first day, *The Mt. Pleasant News* enthusiastically declared on

September 17, 1952, that the town's "biggest fall show" was proving it was justly called a "MID-WEST" attraction. The following day the *News* reported cars from at least 14 states had been registered—Iowa, Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Kansas, Oklahoma, Missouri, Ohio, Nebraska, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Utah, Texas, and Washington. While most visitors from a distance were attending the Midwest Old Settlers and Threshers Reunion for the first time, a goodly number were registering for the third year in a row.

A number of factors combined to provoke such interest. The primary magnet was the large collection of old farm machinery assembled, each in complete working order. Coupled with this, one might include the warm friendship that had sprung up between the exhibitors at their first and second Reunions.

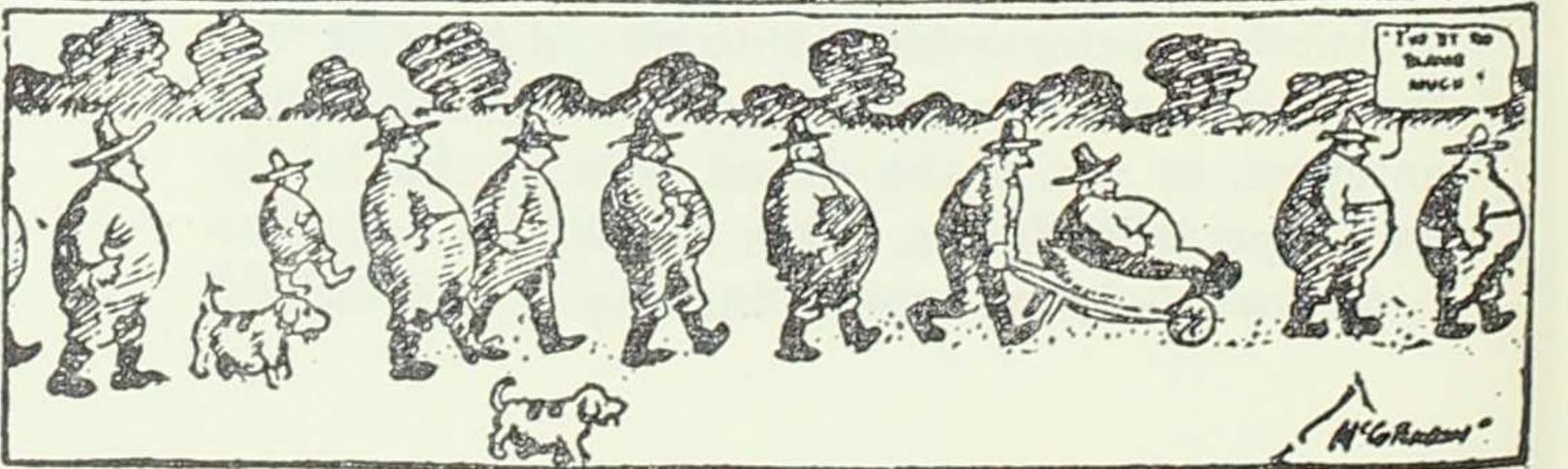
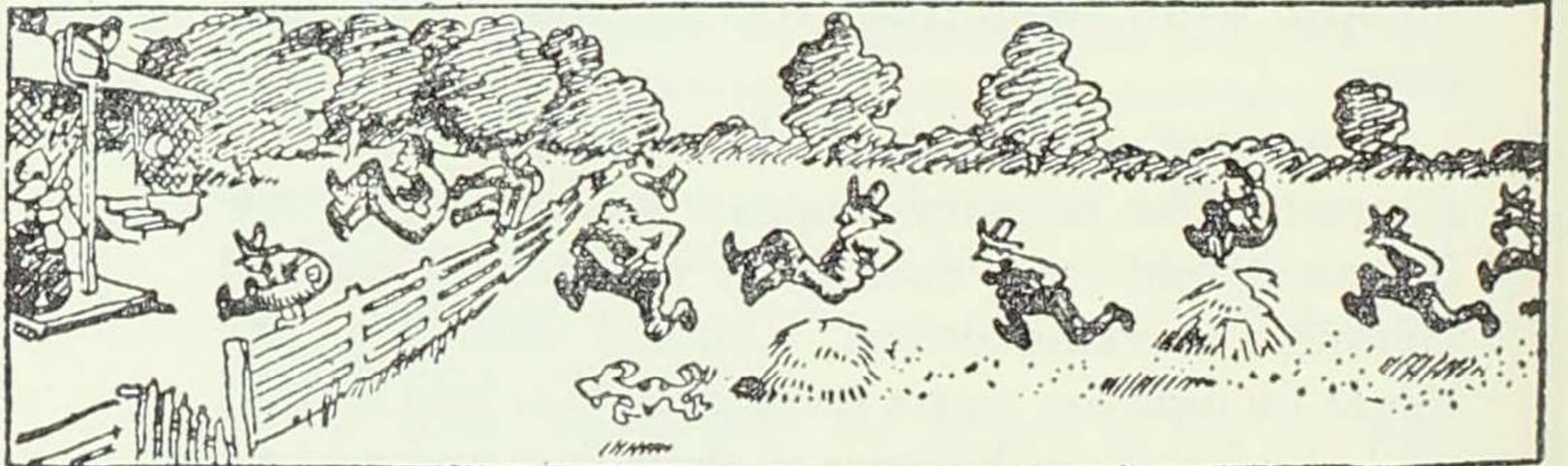
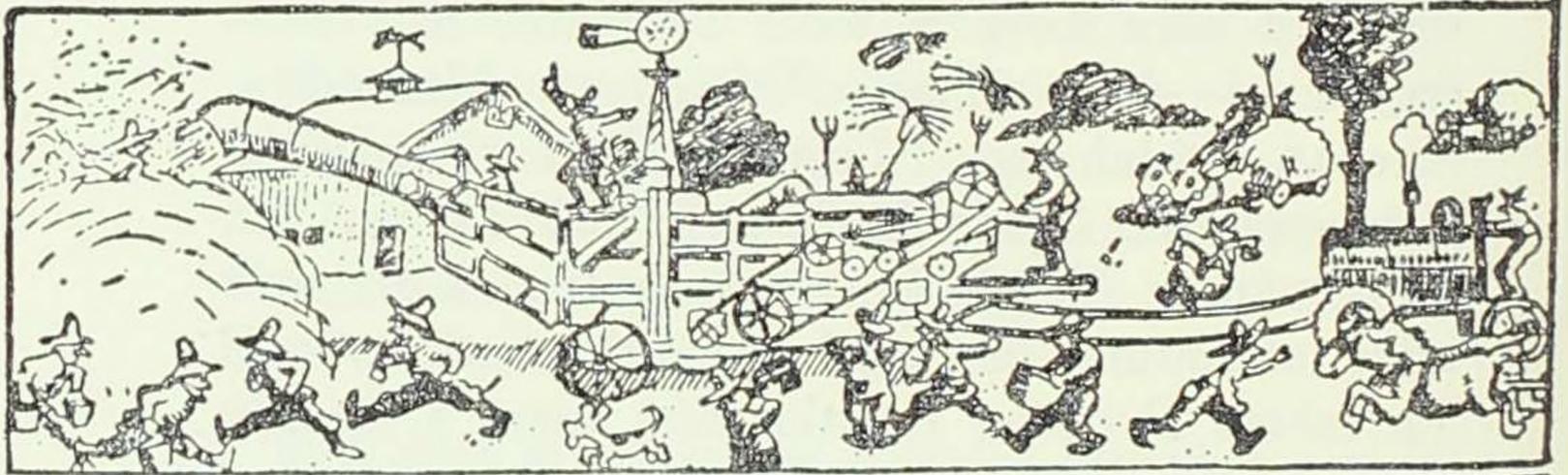
In addition to these, the directors had the happy faculty of providing annually some attractive innovation that always pleased the crowd. In 1952, for example, antique cars were exhibited for the first time, a feature that has grown in importance and popularity with each passing year.

Another factor gaining widespread interest was the quality and variety of exhibits, particularly antiques, to which the distaff side of the family was especially drawn. One should not overlook horsehoe pitching, square dancing, Old Fiddlers

Old Settlers & Threshers Association, Inc.

"THRASHIN' TIME."

[BY McCUTCHEON, IN CHICAGO DAILY TRIBUNE.]

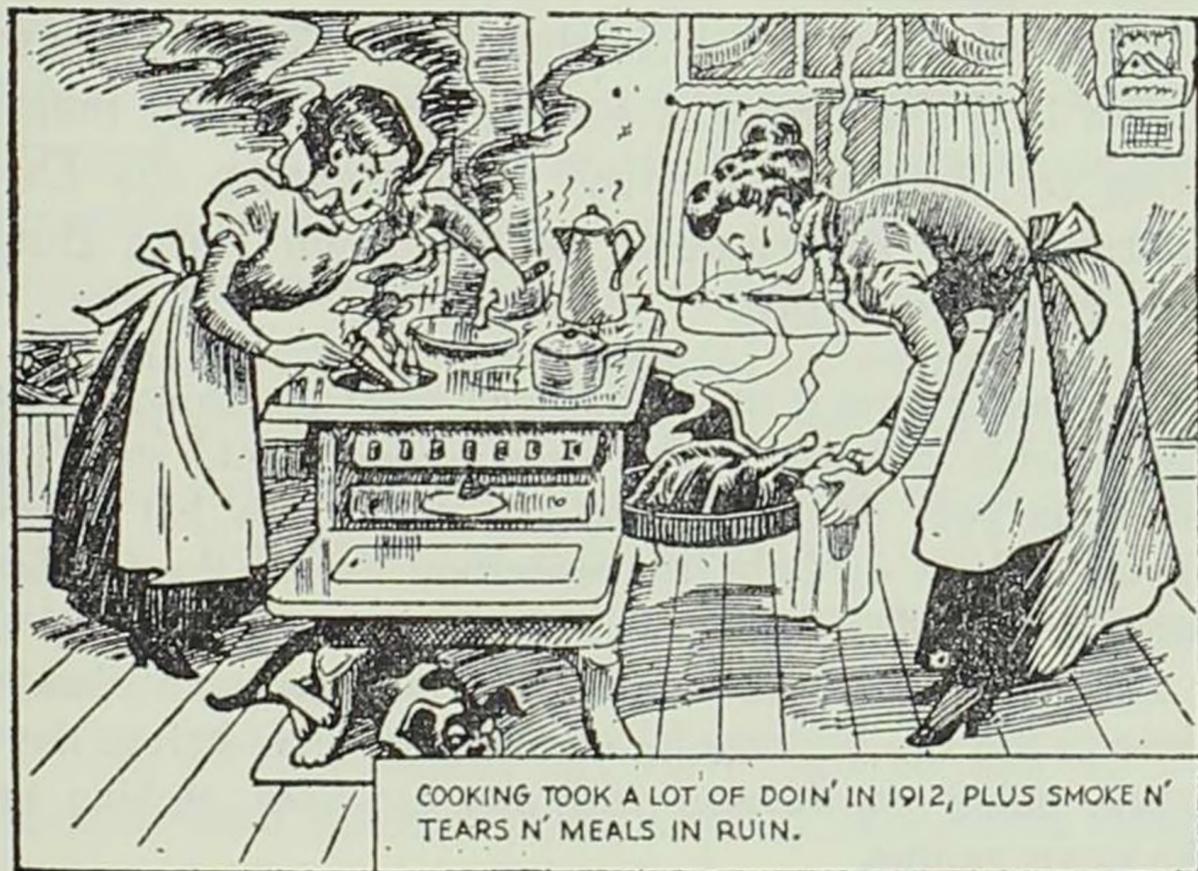


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Contests, and the Fife and Drum Corps music, each of which had its own devotees. Pearl Cochran reported one other feature in *The Mt. Pleasant News* that attracted people to McMillan Park and held them on the ground.

Amid the whistles, no two alike, the coal smoke, the coughing and sputtering of . . . old threshing engines . . . four church groups in true "old style" thresher's fashion began satisfying the hunger needs of those attending the third annual Midwest Old Settlers and Threshers show.

Busy Kitchens During Old Threshers Week



Set up in four big tents, the four church groups were bustling with the customary preparations for an old time threshing dinner. Their fare was the kind that mother and grandmother used to provide for the crew which

often called up on short notice to say that the neighbor's job had been completed and that they would be on hand for the noon meal.

On the menu of the Methodist W.S.C.S. first day at the Midwest show one found: creamed chicken, meat loaf, mashed potatoes, gravy, creamed corn, sliced tomatoes, baked beans, applesauce, cole slaw, wieners, beefburgers, potato salad, pie, ice cream.

Three other groups, all of which had served meals since the first Reunion, were the Methodist Circuits; Finley Chapel, a country church located northeast of Mount Pleasant; and the Presbyterian Mariners.

The Midwest Old Settlers and Threshers Reunion in 1952 brought back many pleasant memories to Dan B. Murphy. Representing the Department of Information of the Iowa Farm Bureau, Murphy wrote:

Remember how it was when you went threshing? How you always had to be alert or someone would steal the pin from your doubletree, or nail your straw hat to the haymow door, or bribe the waterboy to salt the jug before he went off to the field?

And how you wondered if the machine man always slept in the rig, because he was always there before daybreak, oiling up, fussing with the concaves, stoking up the steam engine.

Of all the jobs I can remember on the farm, the old threshing ring cooks up the most pleasant batch of memories. Just thinking about the kind of meals Mom and Aunt Lizzie and Mrs. Bashore cooked makes my mouth water, a good 20 years later

You remember that it was work, harvesting with pitchforks and horses. Nobody envied the man who went into the barn and moved back the hay, nor does anyone today particularly seek to go back to pitching bundles and scooping oats. But we did the hard job the easy way, by trading help and having fun while we worked.

That's why so many of us have these good memories, and it's no doubt a big reason for the huge success of the old Settlers and Threshers Reunion It's fun. A lot more fun than the "combine association" will have 50 years from now.

The Third Annual Reunion may have provided pleasant memories and fun for Dan Murphy, but the directors faced a bit less fun in December when the treasurer, in his annual financial report, showed "the association failed to make expenses by quite a margin this year." Fortunately, Good Samaritans stood ready to make up the deficit.

Undeterred by the financial showing of the 1952 Reunion, plans were promptly made for the Fourth Annual Reunion to run four days in September. By this time the event had taken a firm grip on the entire community—both city and county.

The 1953 Annual Reunion turned out to be "bigger and better" than ever. There were more big engines on the ground than ever before, and the same was true of the miniatures, whose ability to run, *The Mt. Pleasant News* declared, "fascinates the spectators almost as much as the larger ones."

The usual history of threshing was shown again to an appreciative audience. The power contest, where a big engine was hitched on to the Prony Brake to demonstrate its power, had become so popular by 1953 that seats were provided for the first time so that at least some of the people could be seated instead of having to stand around the power demonstration arena.

The last day's attendance in 1953 reached an all-time high of 18,000, while the total attendance for the four days was believed to have come close to 60,000. There were fifteen more big engines at the 1953 Reunion than at any previous meeting while a total of 25 miniatures were brought in by thresher hobbyists. In writing *finis* to the 1953 meeting, *The Mt. Pleasant News* declared:

Just how many people visited the grounds during the week is a matter of guesswork, but they came from near and far by the thousands, each day seemingly drawing more and still more . . . The week was from every standpoint a success—weather, attendance, exhibits and particularly the good natured attitude of the thousands here.

These factors, coupled with the resourcefulness of the founding fathers and the whole-hearted support of all Henry County, have played a dominant role in the success of the Midwest Old Settlers and Threshers Reunion during its first four years. In 1954 a Women's Auxiliary was inaugurated and quickly proved its worth. It sponsors the free tent show daily.

During the next seven years of its existence—from 1953 to 1960—the Midwest Old Settlers and Threshers Reunion grew apace, expanding old programs and adding new ones to the delight of visitors. The addition of the game of checkers to the several contests already held was eclipsed by the acquisition of railroad engines, which in turn was followed by the laying of tracks. According to *The Mt. Pleasant News* of September 12, 1960:

The success of the 1960 reunion gave those who bring the steam engines to the show new interest. One owner, who had anticipated that he might withdraw after this year, was so pleased with the success of the event that he remained over another day and was out scouting for another steam engine to bring here

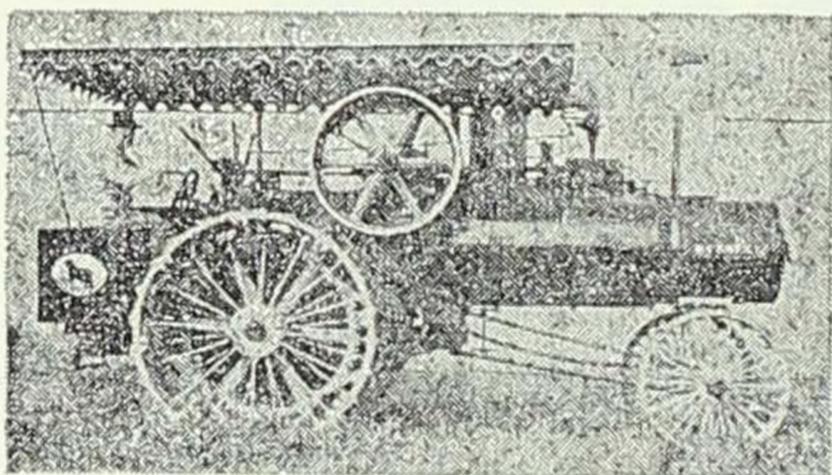
Preliminary figures showed that 18,729 memberships were sold at the gate. Added to this will be the memberships sold at numerous business places. The total will exceed \$20,000, President William Sater estimated

While estimates varied it was generally agreed that Saturday's attendance in 1960 broke all records and was a "whistle-tooting success." Even more gratifying, perhaps, was the universal praise heaped on the Reunion by persons paying their first visit to the colorful show. The variety of the program is attested by the following Saturday night activities. According to the *Mt. Pleasant News*:

Antique cars joined in the Cavalcade Saturday eve-

Sixth Annual Reunion
Mid-West Old Settlers & Threshers Ass'n Inc.

McMillan Park, Mt. Pleasant, Iowa-The "Home of Hospitality"



SEPT. 7-8-9-10
1955

NO ADMISSION CHARGE

All Entertainment Free
Miniature Models, All in Operation

At Least 35 Steam Engines Under Steam In Operation

All Tested By Cold Water Test Prior To Entering The Grounds

MINIATURE SAW MILL IN OPERATION; THRESHING WITH FLAIL; GROUND HOG; CHAFF PILER; HAND FED AND SELF FEEDER; CRADLE, SELF RAKE AND BINDERS

Large Display Of Antique Cars

PRONY BRAKE TO TEST HORSE POWER OF ENGINES - ALSO BAKER FAN

SEE PETER BUCHER BALANCE LARGE STEAM ENGINE ON A TEETER BOARD

All Engines, Old Tractors And Antique Autos Are In Giant Calvacade Each Afternoon, Also Thurs. & Sat. Nights

LARGE DISPLAY OF OLD SETTLERS IMPLEMENTS

Our Display of INDIAN RELICS Fire Arms, Dishes, Glassware and Spinning Wheels, Carding Machines and Old Settlers Implements Is The Finest Ever Displayed Any Where at a Meeting of This Type

Special Program For The Ladies

MUSIC - STEAM CALLIOPE - OTHER ENTERTAINMENT

Pictures & Square Dancing -- Wed. & Fri. Nights

Mt. Pleasant is 26 Miles West of Burlington, Iowa, on U. S. Hiway 34 and about 50 Miles North of Keokuk, Iowa or 75 Miles South of Cedar Rapids on U. S. Hiway 218. Both Hiways pass within 2 blocks of McMILLAN PARK where the Reunion is held. Plenty of Shade, PURE Water and Conveniences!

Horse Shoe Tournament

Preliminaries Wednesday, Thursday, Friday - Finals Saturday!

3 MODERN HOTELS - 3 MODERN MOTELS - TOURIST CABINS - PRIVATE HOMES

Lunch On Grounds By Church Groups - Hotel Reservations By Request

Bring Old Items To Our Steam Fans Trading Post For Trade Or Sale

William O. Sater, President
Lyle Burroughs
A. M. Wettach
Francis Glanzman
Earl Miner
Dave Ross

DIRECTORS

Mrs. Peter Bucher, Secretary
RR1, Fairfield, Iowa
Elmer Ritzman, Chaplain

Milo Mathews
Ray Vorhies
Harold Anderson
Dale McLain
Warren Coonrod
J. J. Hingtgen

ANYONE DESIRING A MEMBERSHIP SEND \$1.00 TO THE SECRETARY



Old No. 6 pulls away from the station for one-mile trip around the grounds.



Firehouse, blacksmith shop, and log cabin form nucleus of evolving Pioneer Village.

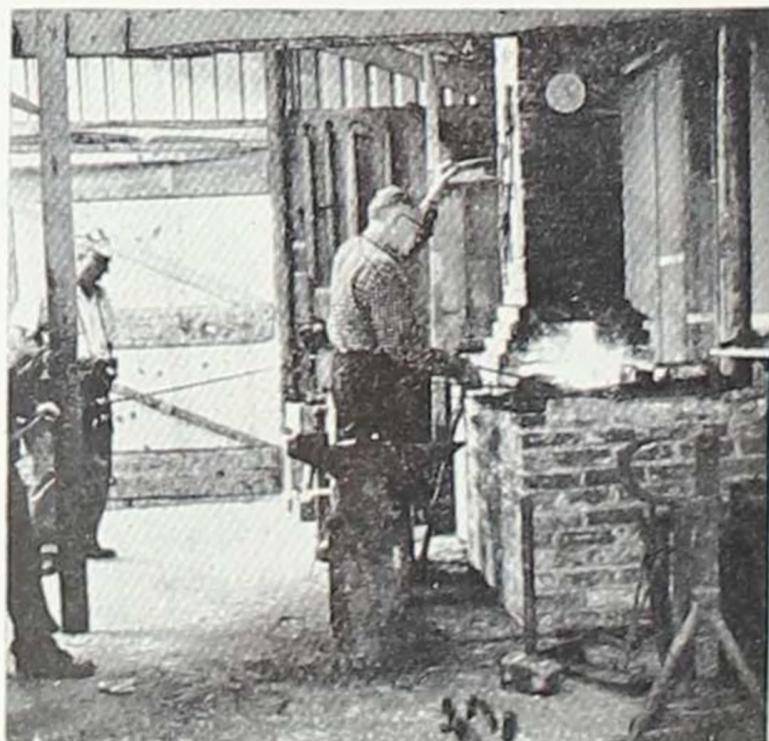
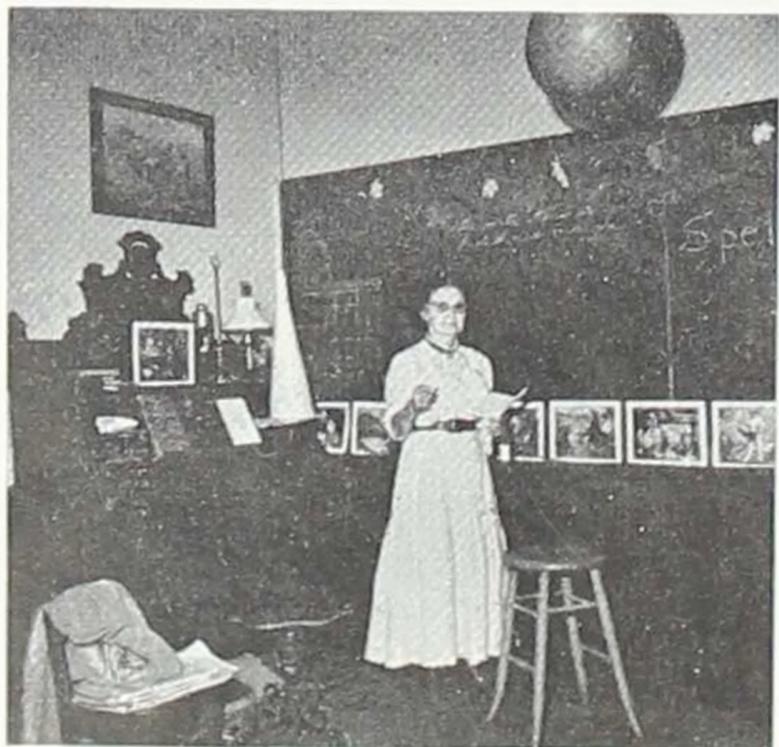
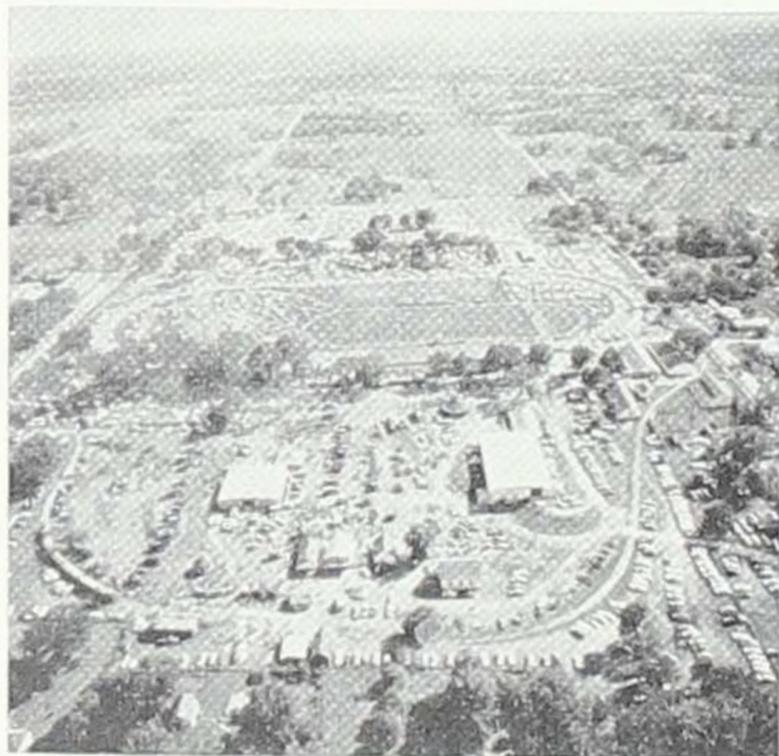


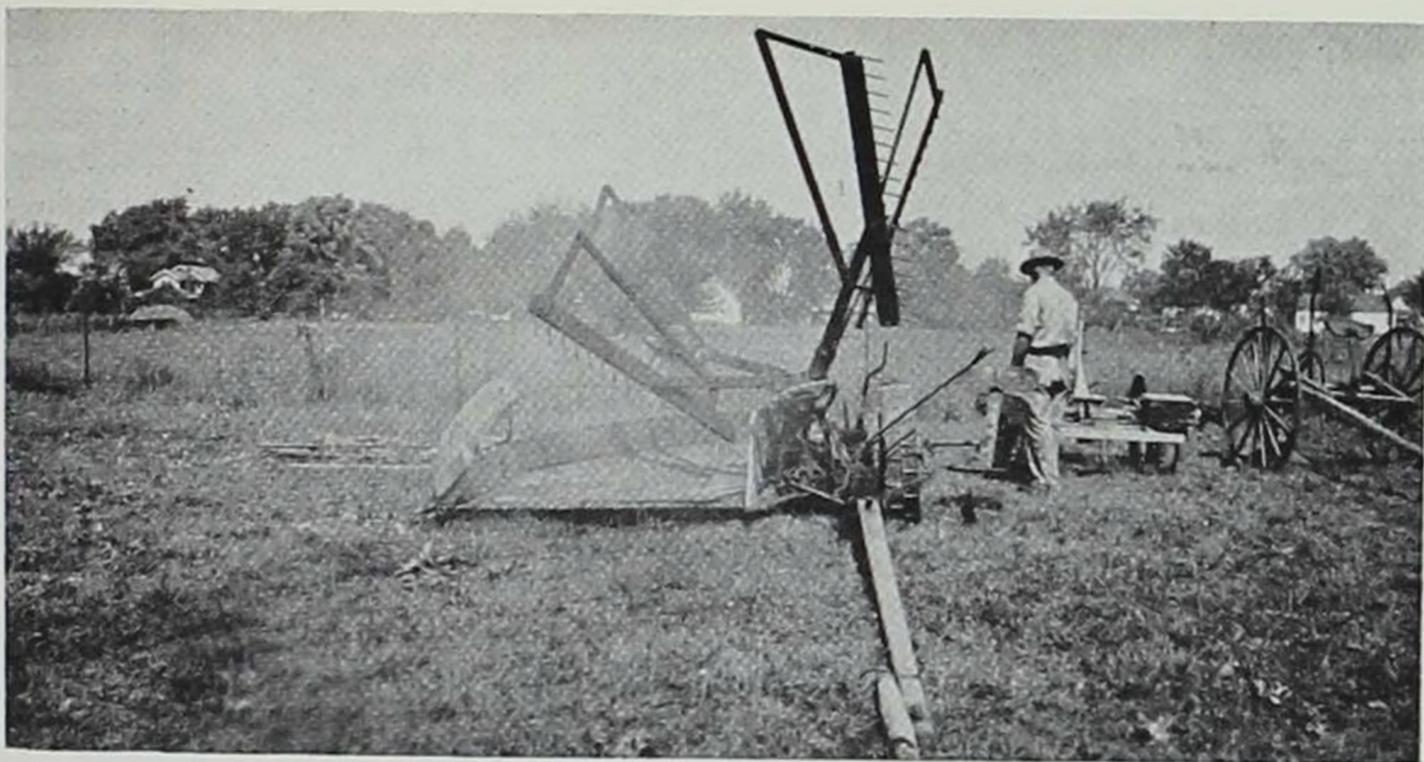
There is always a lot of walking, gawking, talking, visiting, and eating at the Midwest Old Settlers and Threshers Reunion at Mount Pleasant.

Clementine Paddleford (extreme left) author of *How America Eats*, watches as a college president serves a congressman thresher style.

Middle row, left to right:
Aerial view of reunion grounds.
The General Store.

Bottom row, left to right:
The Country School.
The Blacksmith Shop.

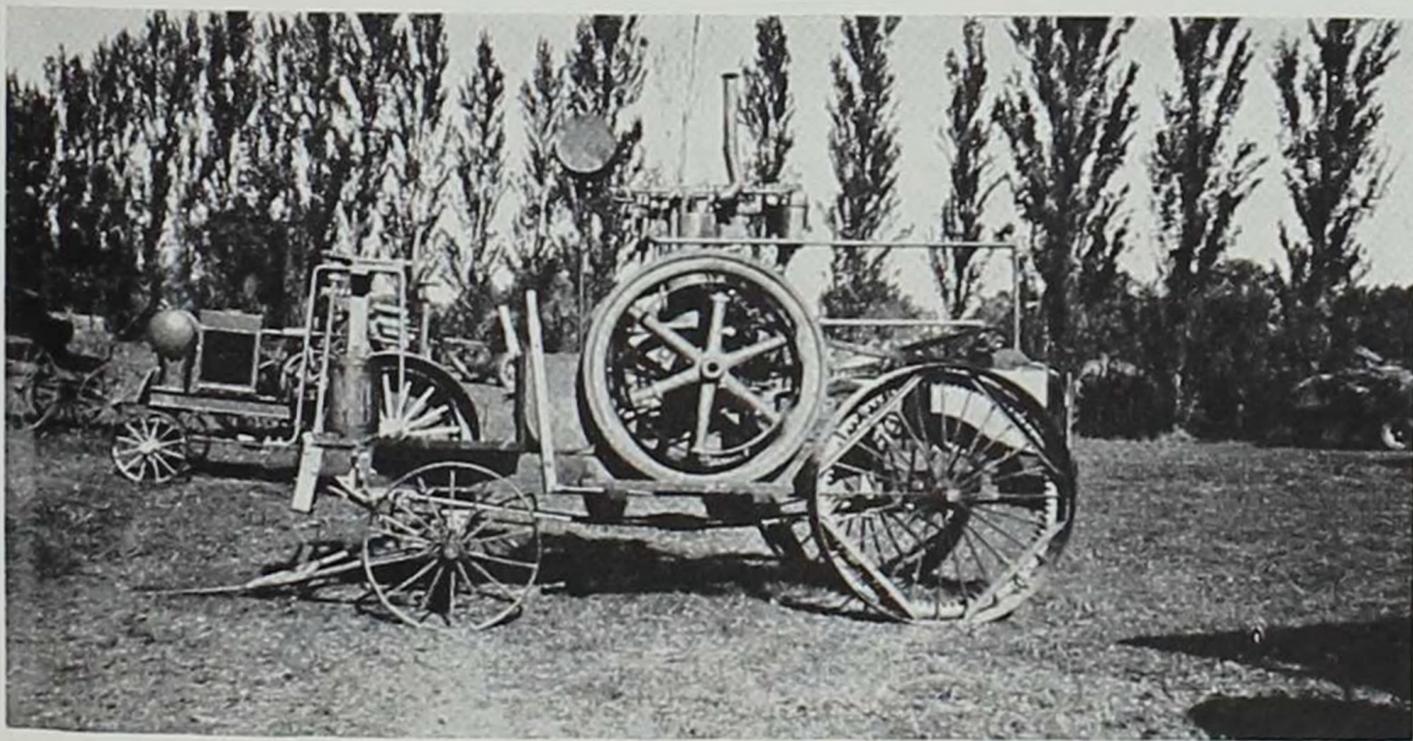




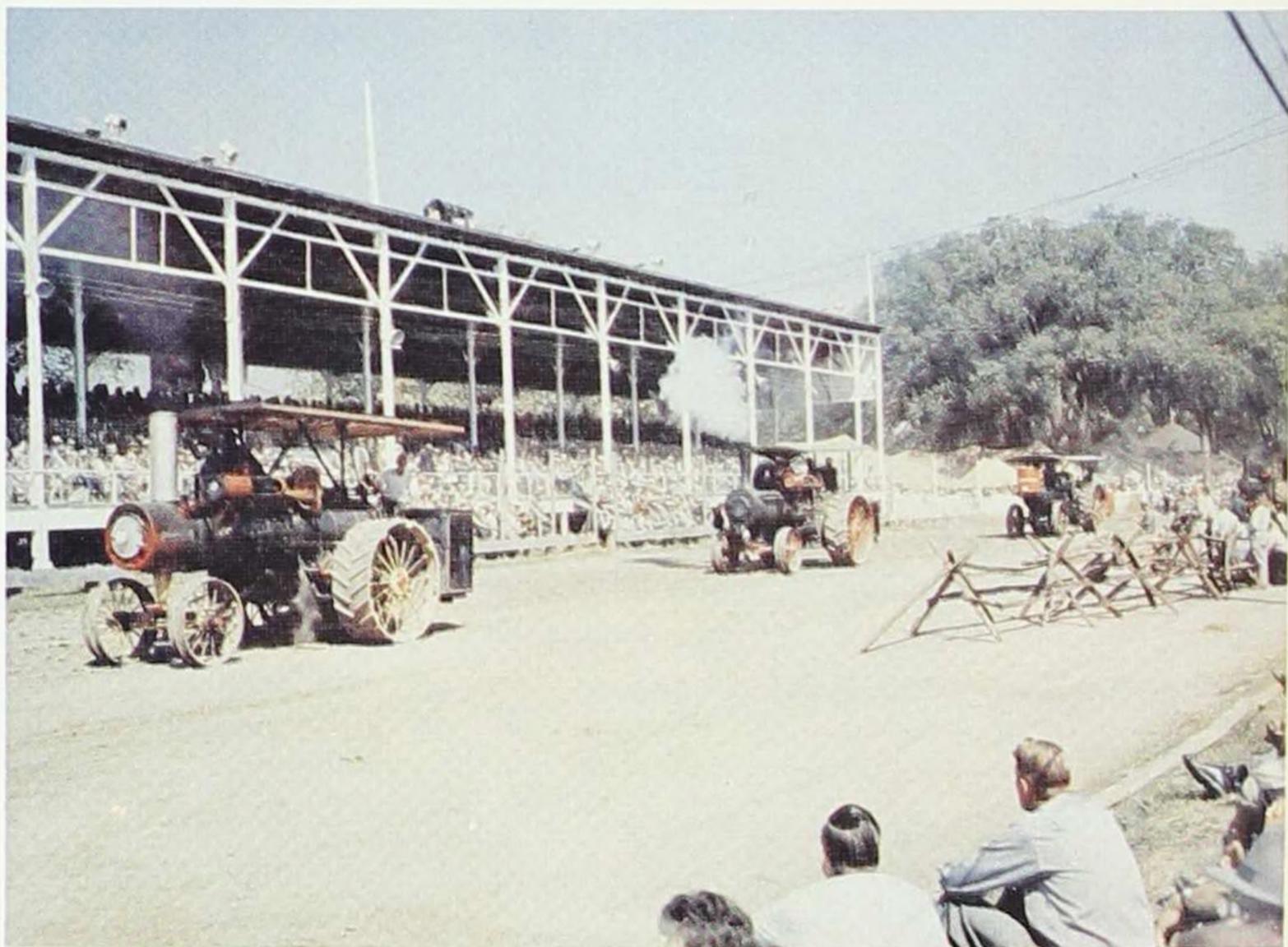
A McCormick Self Rake, built in 1865, still works.



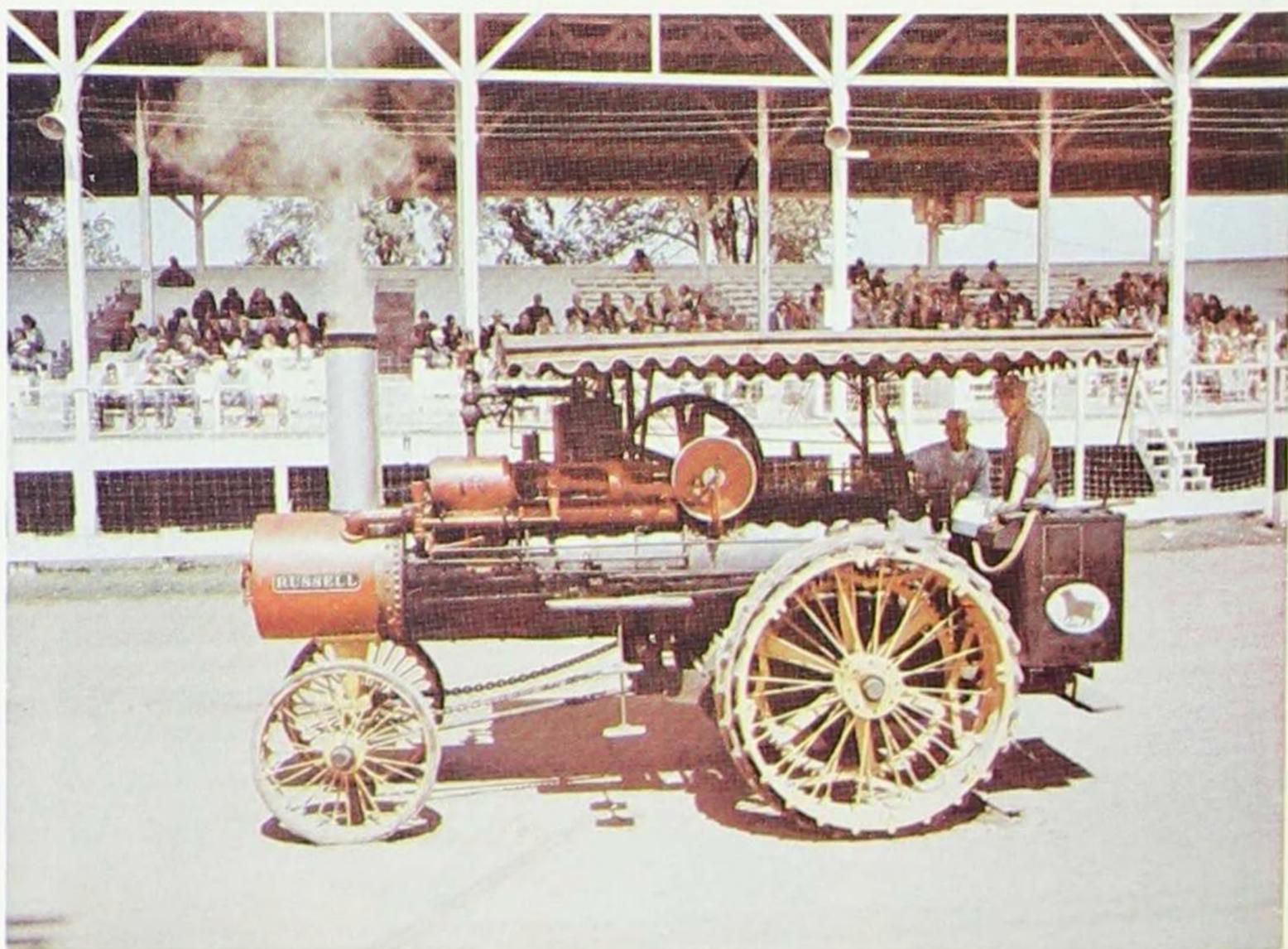
A 70-year-old Westinghouse Separator.



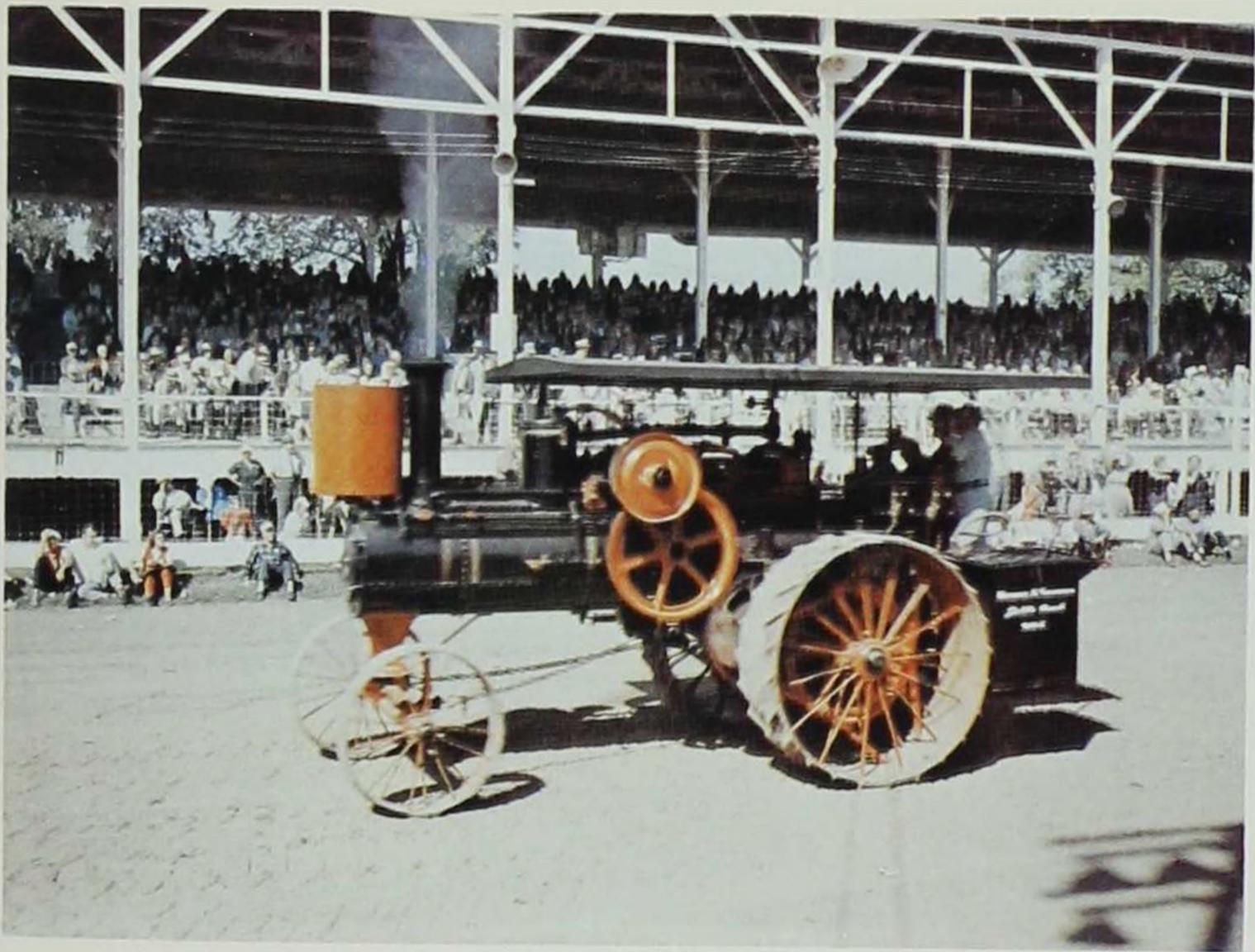
Old Froelich Tractor—First gasoline tractor that propelled itself backward as well as forward. It was built in Iowa!



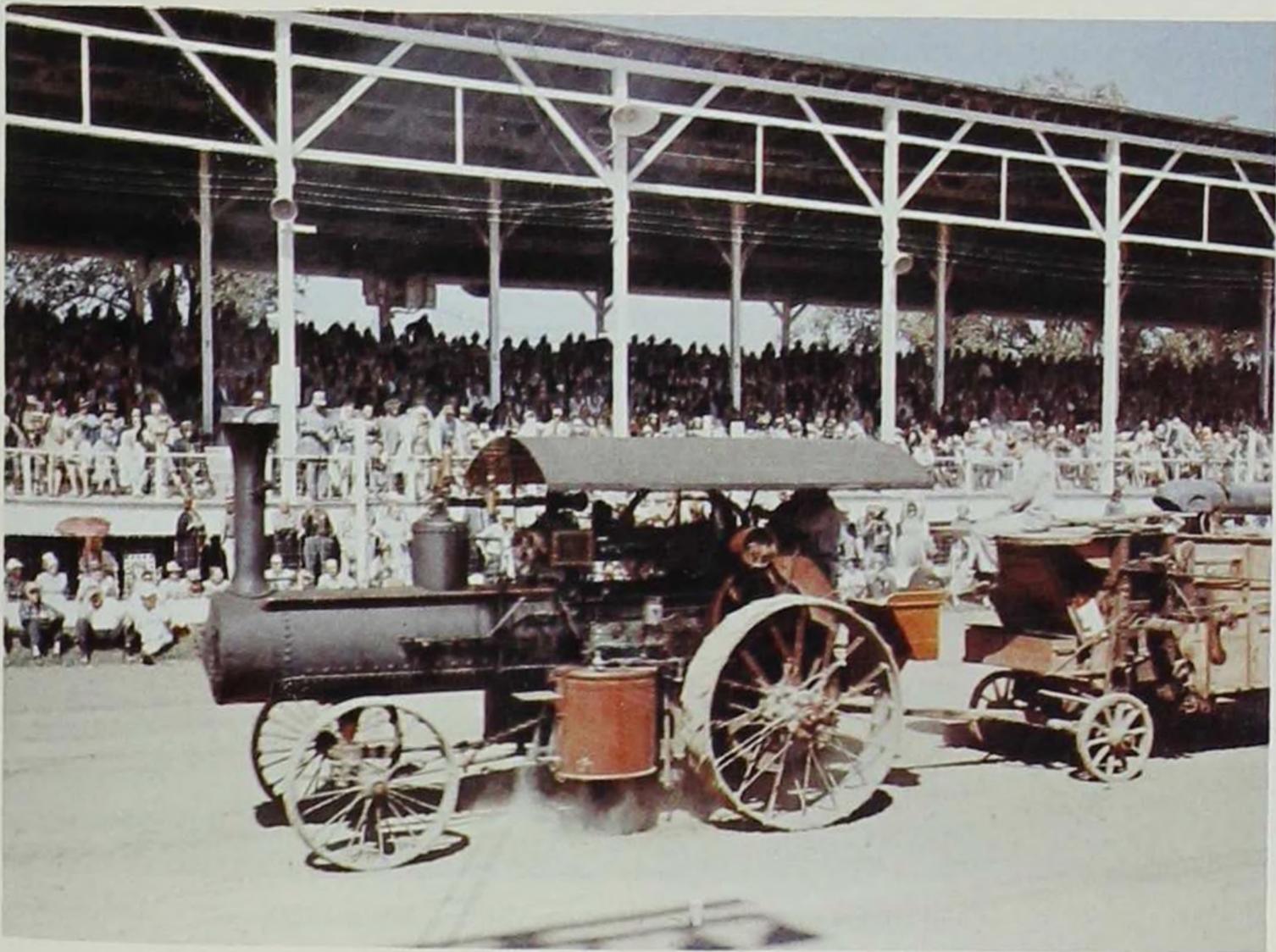
Fricke Bros. 25 hp Russell leads the parade.



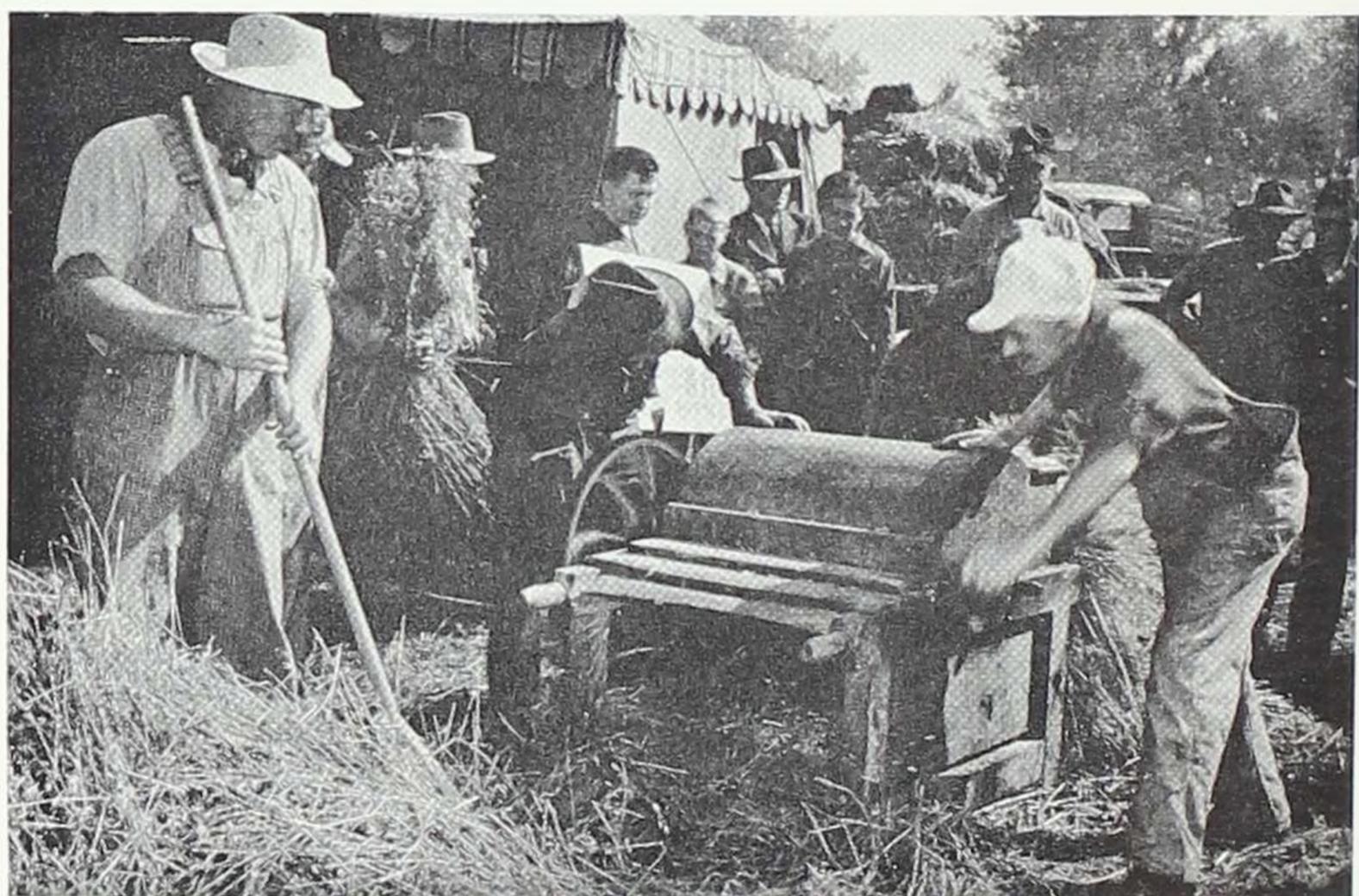
Shellabarger Bros. run their 20 hp Russell before the grandstand.



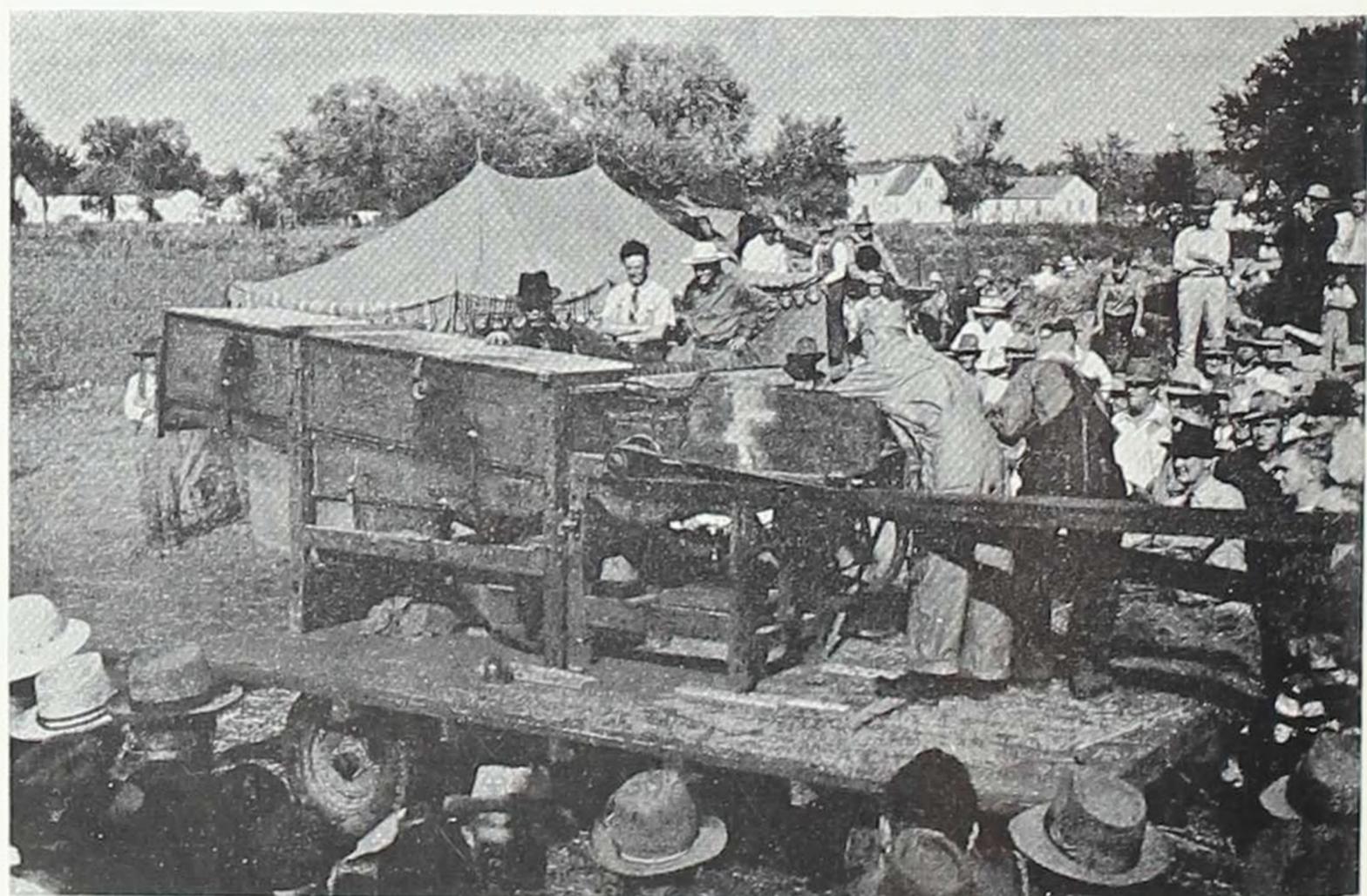
16 hp Nichols & Shepard double cylinder engine shown by Milo Mathews.



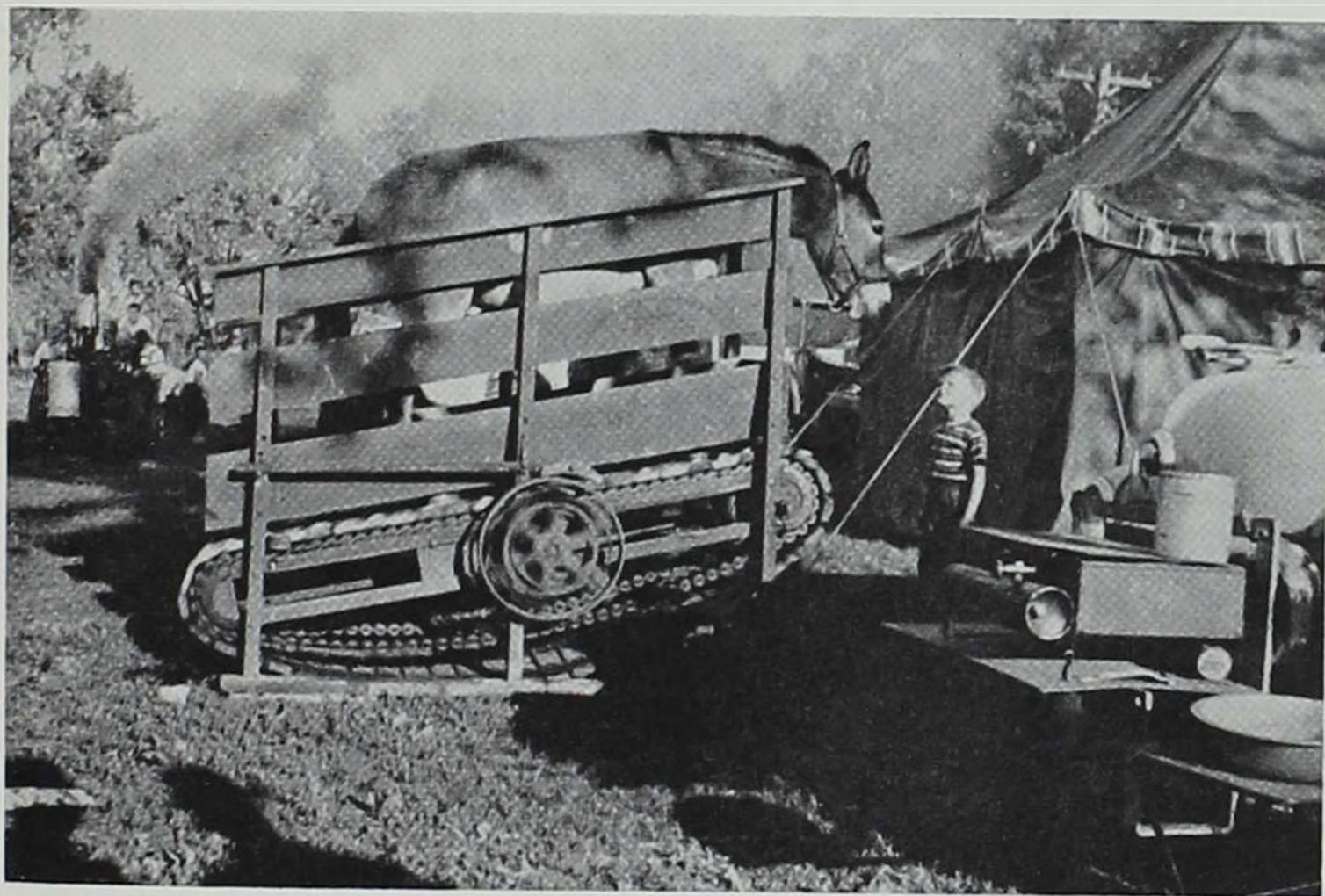
The 16 hp Reeves and Reeves Clover Huller owned by Lyle Hoffmaster.



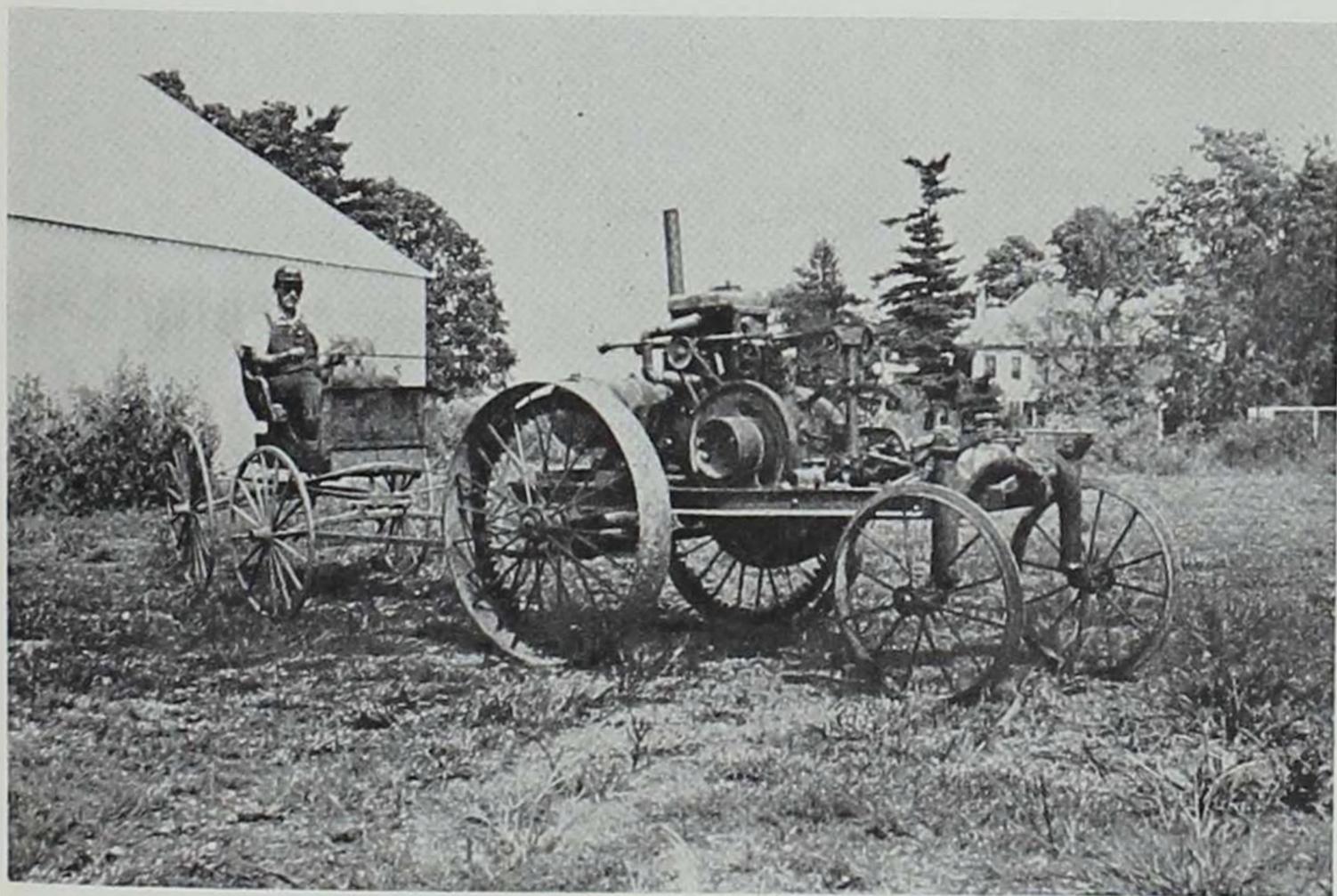
The Ground Hog, built in 1831, was a step in the threshing cycle.



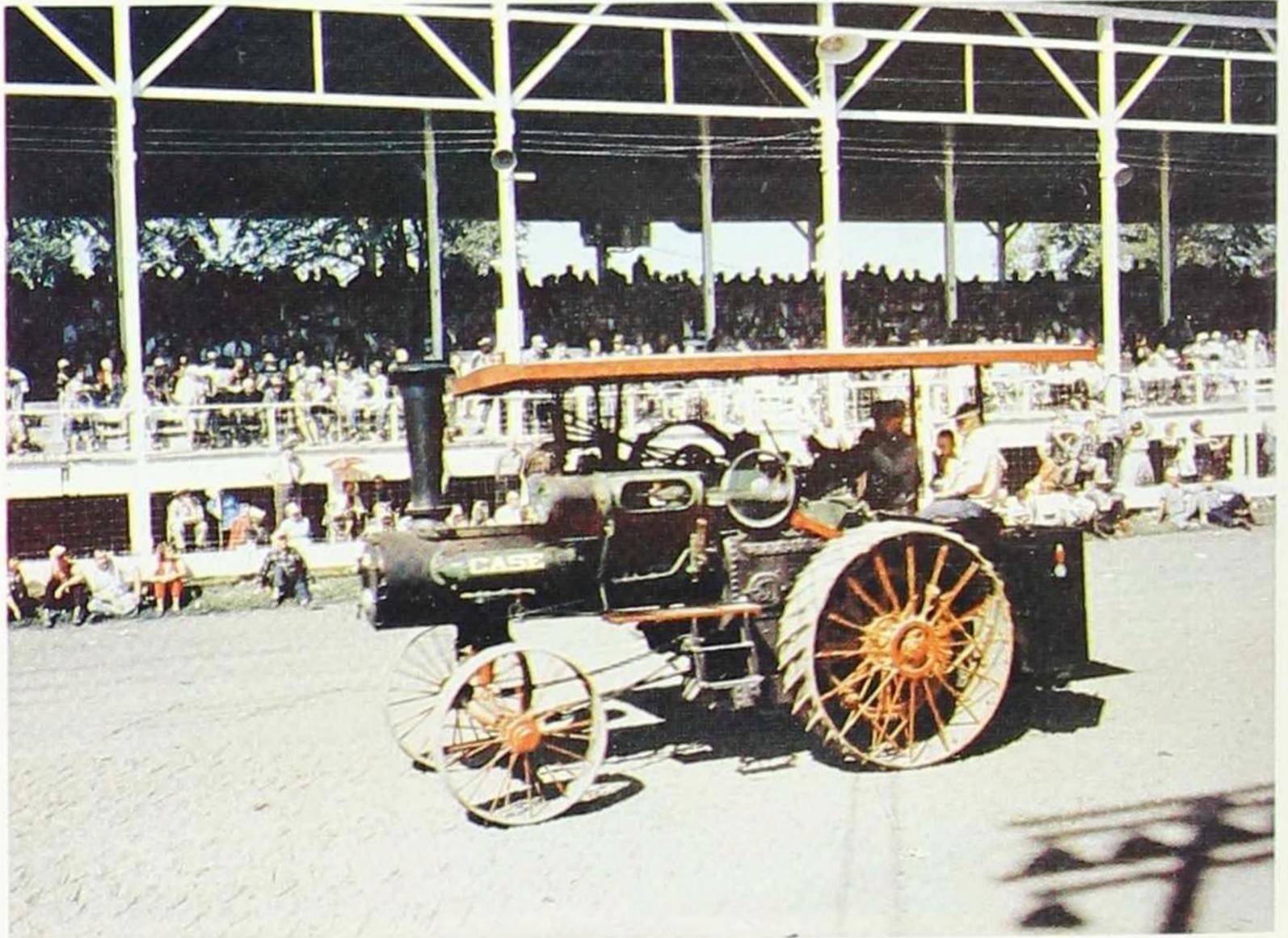
This Keystone Chaff Piler was built about 1870.



Old treadmill operated by mule power.



This old LaCrosse Tractor was steered with lines from a buggy.



Everett Ramey's 50 hp Case in the Cavalcade of Power.



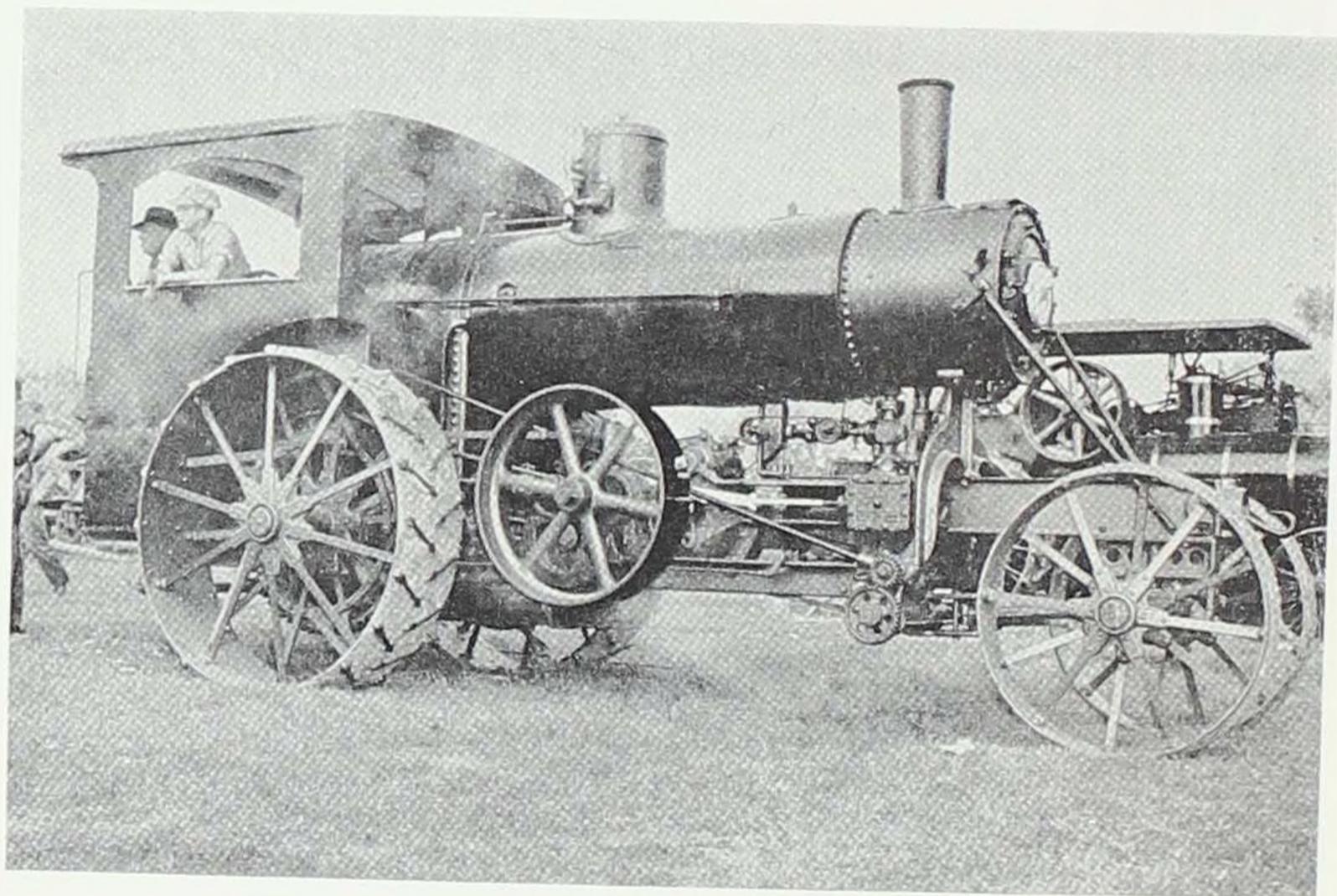
Engines lined up waiting for the noon blast.



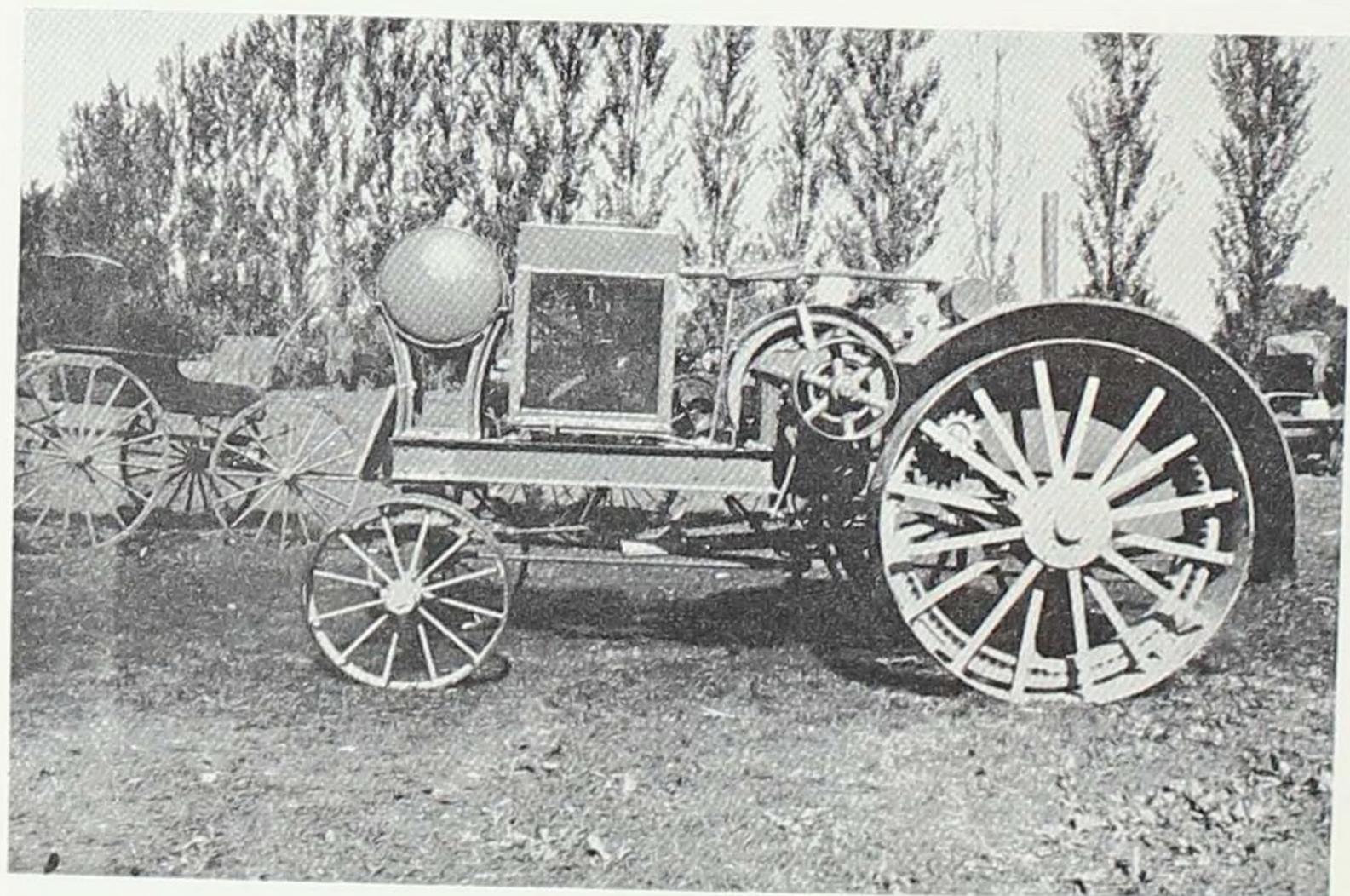
Three threshing machines and a hay baler in operation.



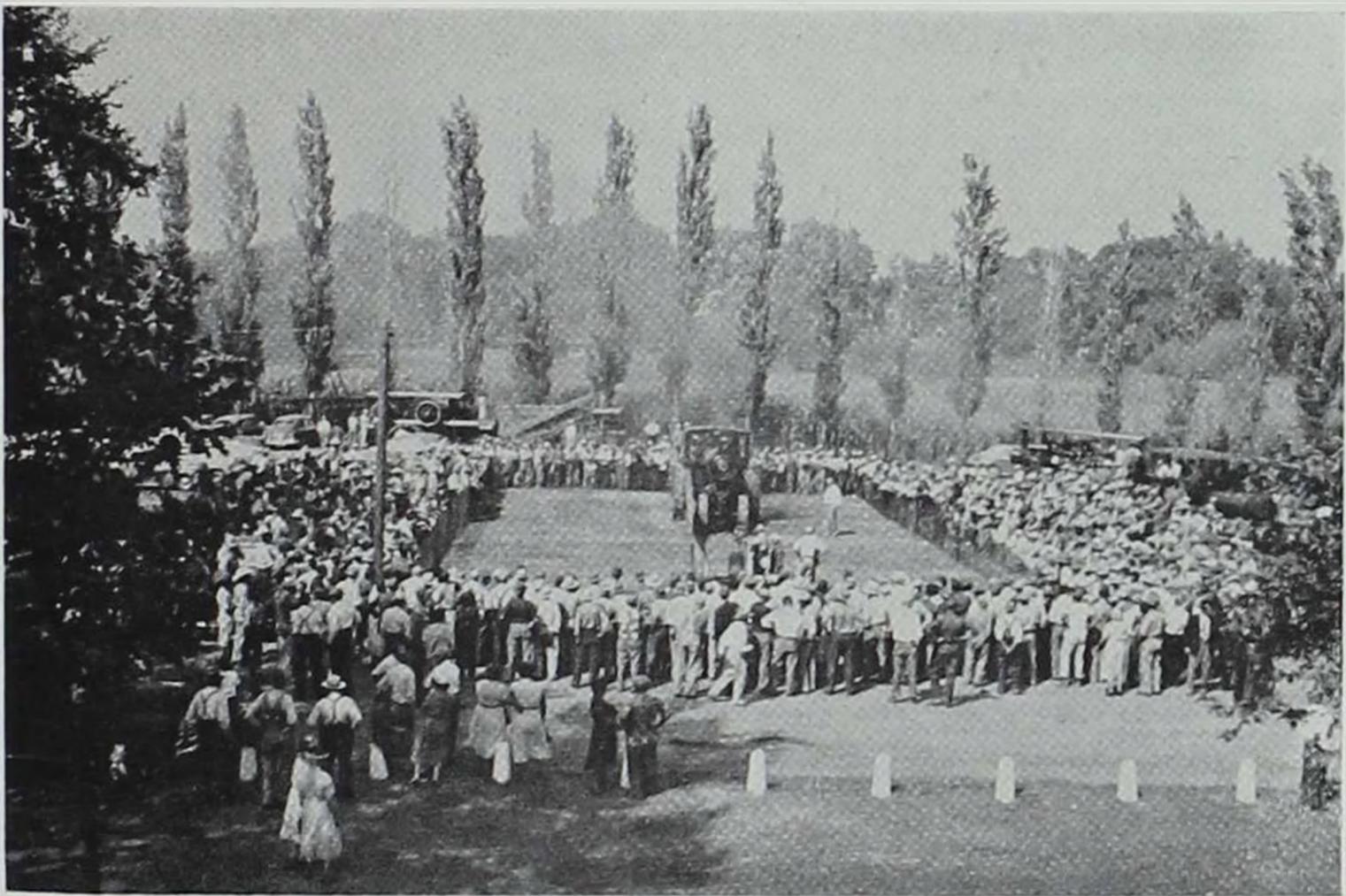
Bill Sater's 16 hp Nichols & Shepard single cylinder engine.



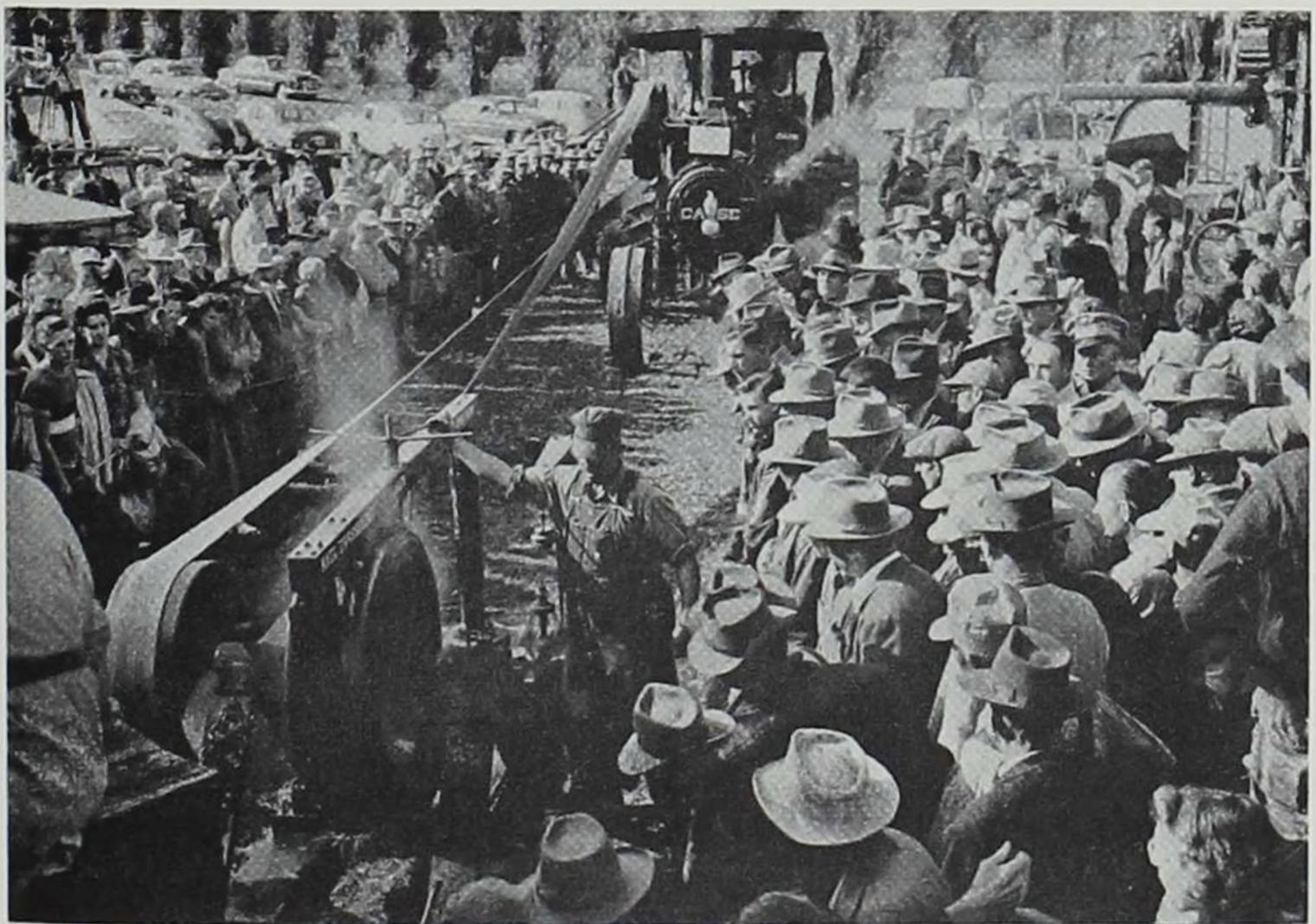
Waterloo Boy built in Iowa in 1922.



The under-mounted Avery brought many a second look.



The Avery being tested on the Prony Brake.



A 75 hp Case, built about 1922, on the Prony Brake.



A 1911 Brush was a star at the Antique Auto Show.



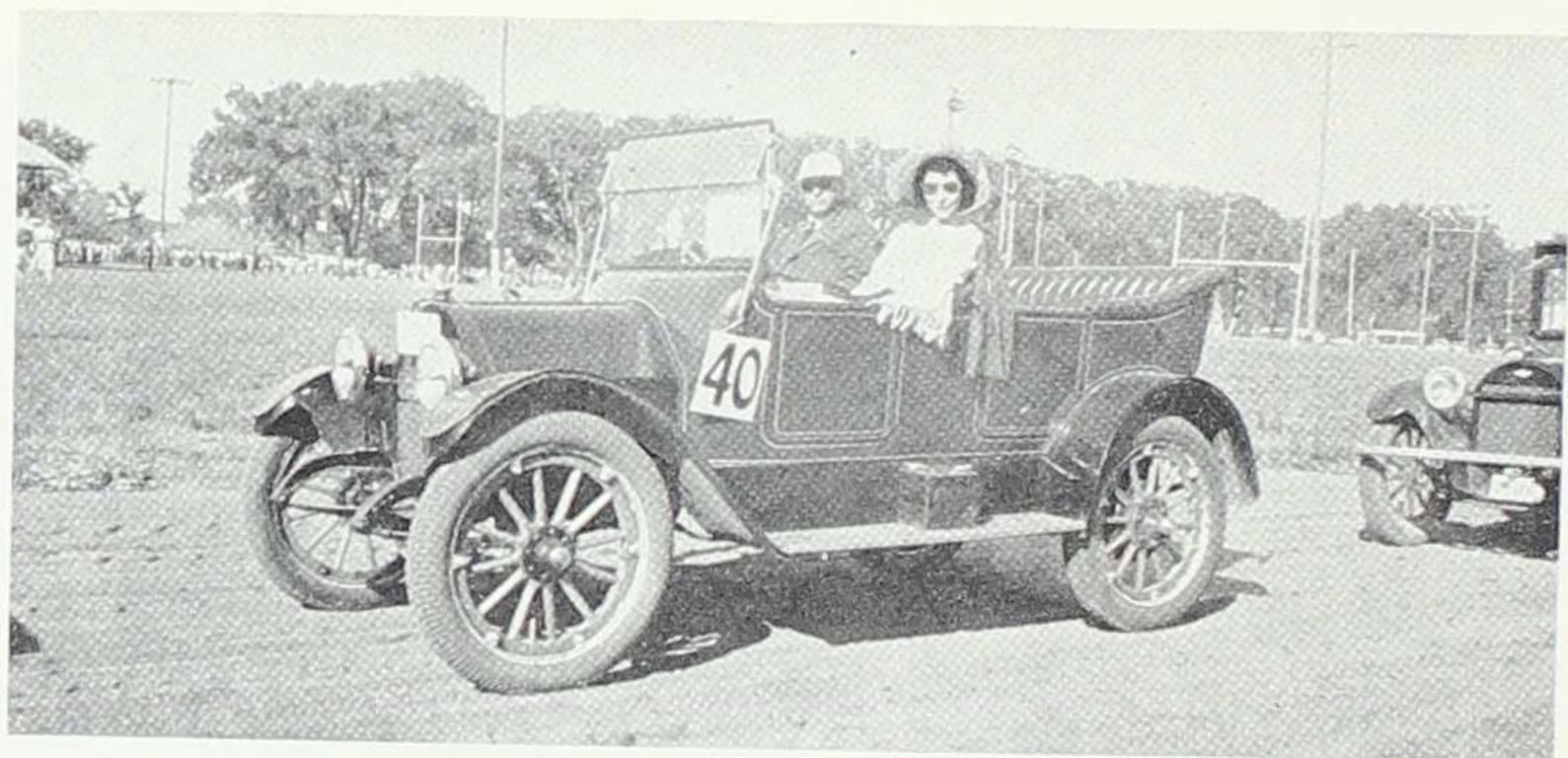
This 1916 Oldsmobile V-8 made a hit with viewers.



Midwest Threshers' own popcorn wagon.



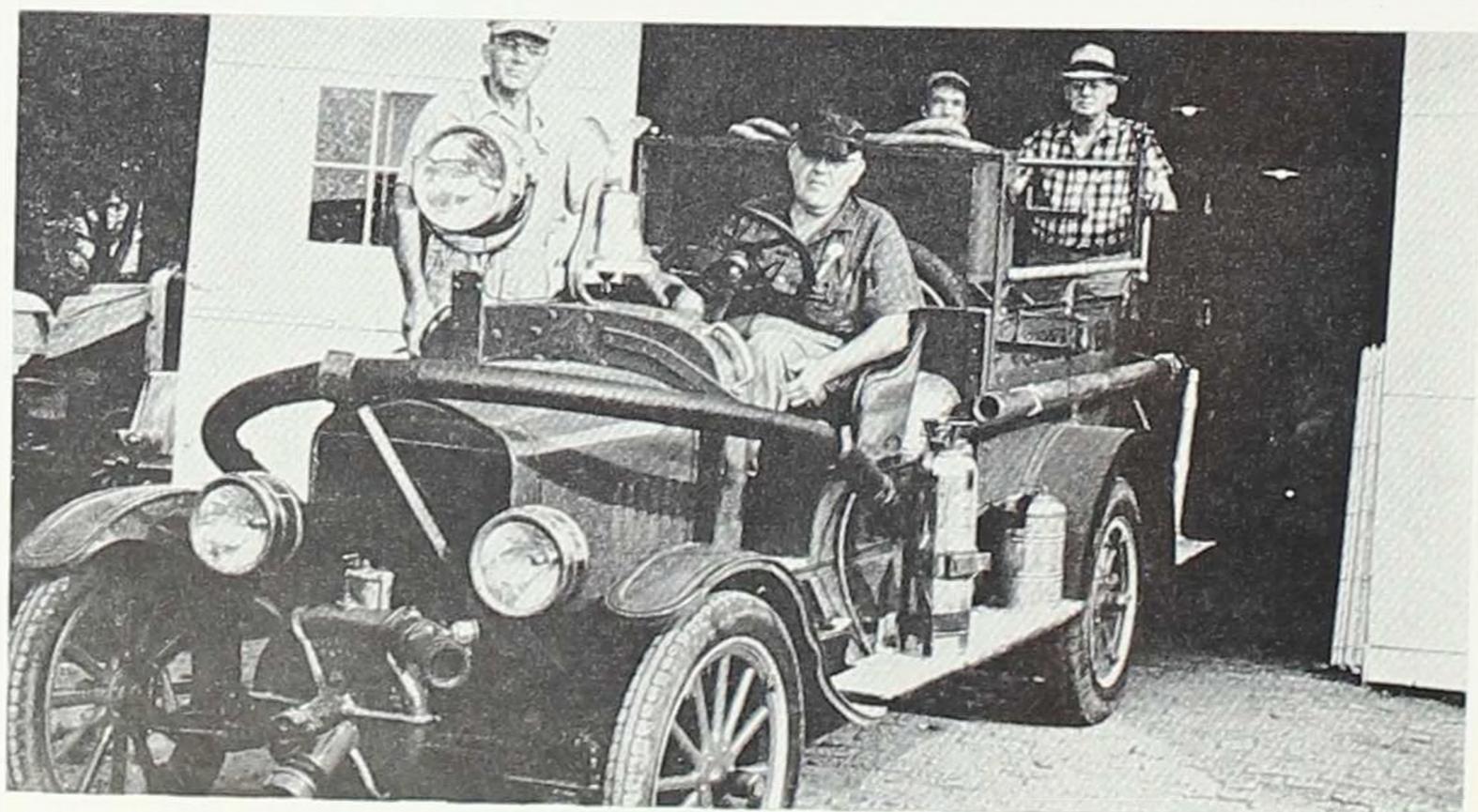
Antique cars include 1909 Maxwell, 1931 Model "A" Ford, 1907 Model "R" Ford, 1908 Sears, and 1915 Wescott.



The Burnell Haworths of Mount Pleasant in their 1912 Carter.



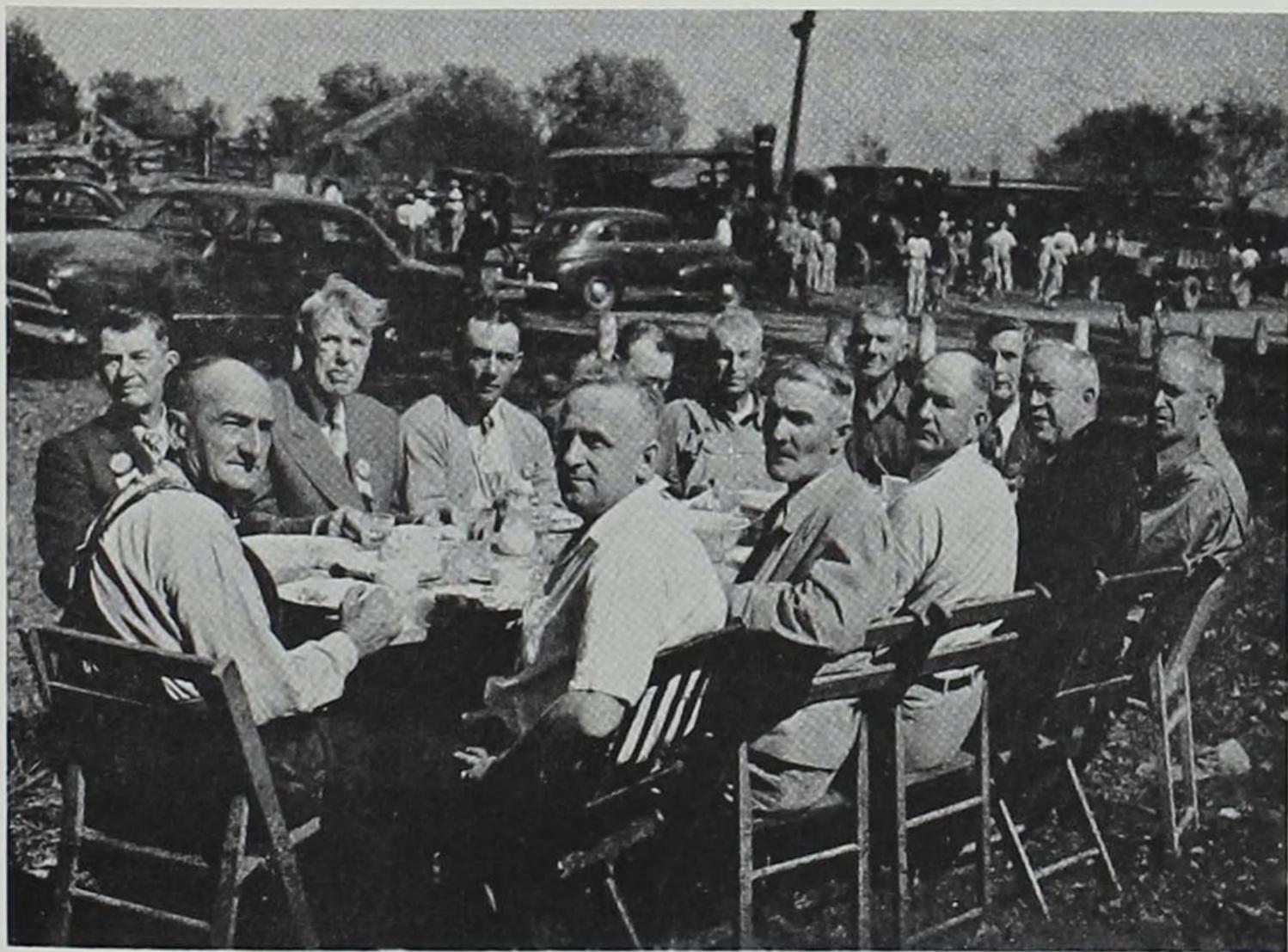
A 1906 Brush Runabout owned and driven by Don Wilson of Mount Pleasant.



Fire engine at door of fire station with "Bill" Sater as driver.



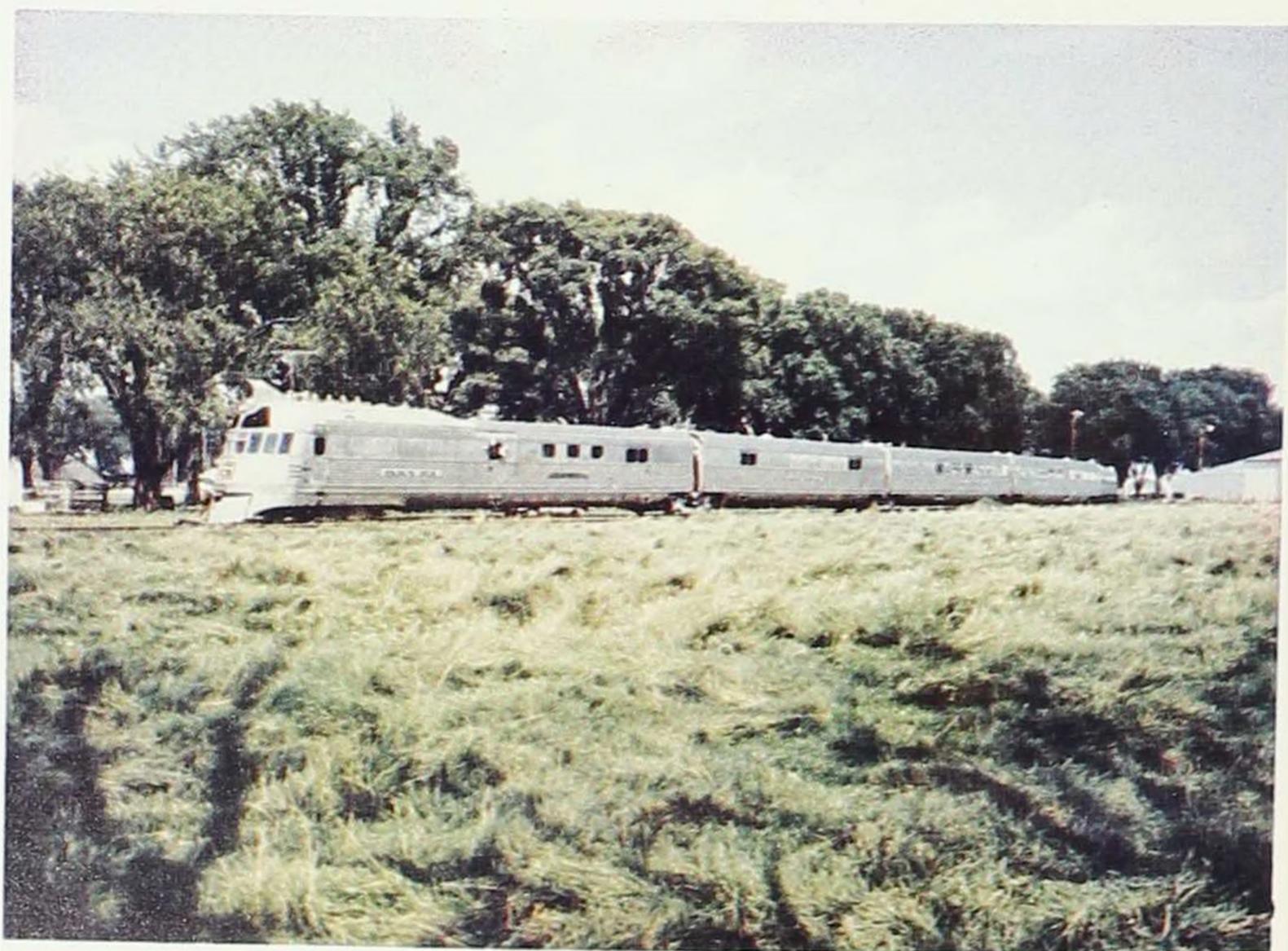
This model caliope was made in 1953 from leftover factory parts.



Dinner scene in the movie, "The March of Harvest Time." Most of the men serve as directors of the Old Threshers.



Old No. 6 at the signal tower which came from Washington.



Mark Twain Zephyr, sister of the CB & Q Pioneer Zephyr in a Chicago museum.

ning. The floats of old school and old church scenes were a hit again as were the cars and the old engines. Karin Renier, exchange student from Germany, spoke briefly. Mrs. Kate Monson, who has entertained at the reunions with her spinning demonstrations each year and apparently enjoys the demonstration aboard the float, read a poem.

Mrs. John Duggins was crowned queen of the antique show this year by Mrs. Ralph Shellabarger, last year's queen.

The Burlington Drum and Bugle Corps with James Woepking as the major entertained preceding the Saturday night parade.

Eating places did a big business again this year. There was continuous serving from around 10:30 until 8 in the evening.

The reunion has become a five-fold attraction. The steam engines and threshing machines are first and foremost. The reunion of these operators is another phase. The antique car show is a third important phase. The railroad is developing into a fourth. And the antiques and the offerings in the booths is a fifth. Enjoying threshers' meals might be added as a sixth.

While hewing to its fundamentals, the directors of the Midwest Old Settlers and Threshers Reunion have displayed rare good judgment in introducing a varied and attractive program to interest entire families.

WILLIAM J. PETERSEN