

Thresher show is filled with friendly people, faces

Every time I go to the Tri-State Antique Engine and Threshers show grounds, I am amazed that there are things I haven't seen. To begin with, it is like a step back in the past, and there are hundreds of things to see. They are arranged and displayed with the style of a well-paid decorator. Often, there are different things featured, so a display may be moved or, maybe there just isn't enough time to see it all.

In the Eggers Building, there is "stuff" everywhere — in the corners, hanging on the walls and from the ceiling, and down the aisles — everywhere, there are pieces of history.

This year, Norm Dorsch opened the building beforehand to show his collection of toys. Most are John Deere tractors and equipment. There are miniature John Deeres, bigger John Deeres and pedal John Deeres for kids. The same goes for combines, little, bigger and pedal. The pedal combine even has an auger.

He has been collecting for years. When asked how many he had, he said, "my wife says too many." He may have slowed down a little on collecting his toys, which also include miniature wooden wagons being pulled by teams of horses (there are other things too) but, when he sees something new, maybe unique, he can't wait to add it to his collection.

The Association members are dwindling but they still take time to give tours of the sod house, church and old schoolhouse. During the school year, the Cheylin fourth graders have a day of school in the old building and find out what it was like to go to country school.

Volunteers work for weeks before the show, making sure the grounds are mowed and cleaned up and it takes days to get the buildings ready.

Then there is the food. The women of the Bird City churches come together to run the Country Kitchen. There is always a waiting line for good, home cookin' topped off with homemade pie.

Keeping the tractors, steam engines and other pieces of equipment in tip-top shape is a job. There are certain types of equipment which are old and the parts are hard to come by, as Mr. Dorsch says, they "baby." When they restore a piece of equipment, it is "old hand" as they worked on similar pieces years ago. And, when they are done, it will look like it just rolled off the manufacturing line.

This year a Special Thresher Show section has been produced. It is going in every *Bird City Times* and *The Saint Francis Herald*, reaching across the United States. This section would not be possible if it were not for the advertisers listed. —Karen Krien

Show's history told

In 1952, Roy Kite held the first antique engine show at his place northeast of Bird City. According to the Cheyenne County History Book, in an article written by Melvin Wright, Mr. Kite was always interested in working and operating all types of machinery. His father, John Kite, and an uncle, George Kite, owned and operated two steam engine threshing outfits. The big machines fascinated him. Mr. Wright wrote.

After college, Mr. Kite became an implement dealer but, in the back of his mind, he wanted to find a steam engine and a separator. Engines were hard to find as they had been taken to salvage yards during World War I and cut up for metal.

As Norm Dorsch said, we were supporting our country!

The Bird City show sparked some interest and pretty soon, there were other men who had owned and operated threshing rigs becoming involved. They purchased antique steam engines and other fuel-burning tractors.

The Tri-State Antique Engine and Thresher's Association was organized in 1954 with the first show being held Aug. 5 and 6.

Mr. Kite died in 1959 at the age of 55. He had loved the old machinery and the idea of the show but did not live to see how it grew and developed over the years. The show continued to be held at the Kite farm until 1974 when it was moved to the location east of Bird City on U.S. 36.

In the spring of 1957, members began thinking about the preservation and a possible museum. A corporation was formed and their

capital stock of \$50,000 was divided into \$100 per share. However, the plan failed and the money was returned. They abandoned the idea of a museum and continued to hold the show at the Kite farm.

As the show grew, the members realized that a new location was needed. The association could not put a building on someone else's land. Several members loaned money to purchase 30 acres in the northeast part of Bird City. Later, Bob Jones donated 12 acres adjoining the first plot.

Several years later, the loans could be repaid but only one person (who had moved away) received any money. The rest of the investors donated their money to the association.

The show is supported by donations, dues, donated labor and gate receipts. Through the years, more buildings have been added, special features such as the rail car and cook shack are there, and items, anywhere from big and small tractors to antique kitchen ware have been donated, loaned or borrowed for the show.

The show used to last four days but today, the members have cut the time back to three days but note they are still there on Sundays but there is not the usual activity.

A pass can be purchased at the gate and the person carrying this pass can spend the entire time looking, reminiscing and showing their children what it was like when they, or their parents or grandparents lived in that time. It is a learning experience that may never be forgotten.

TRI-STATE ANTIQUE ENGINE & THRESHER SHOW

Wednesday Evening, July 29

Community Potluck Meal at 6 p.m.
in the Dining Hall

Thursday, July 30

Old Fashioned Literary at 7 p.m. in the
Country Schoolhouse

Friday, July 31

Food

followed by Live Entertainment at 7 p.m.

Saturday, August 1

Food & Entertainment

McDonald Lions Club BBQ from 5 to 7 p.m.

Antique Tractor Pull at 6:30 p.m.

Tri-State Antique Auto Club

Antique Vehicle Display

Daily parade of Antique Vehicles

Swap Meet all 3 days

From 10:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

**Tri-State Antique Engine &
Threshers Show Association**

www.threshershow.org

