

Thresher Show is July 31 - Aug. 3



TRI-STATE ANTIQUE ENGINE and Thresher Show is scheduled for July 31 through Aug. 3 in Bird City. This is the 50th year for the show. Rides are available on the antique engines.

Bird City thresher show celebrates 50th

The Tri-State Antique Engine and Thresher Show will be celebrating its 50th year when the show opens July 31 at the thresher show grounds east of Bird City on U.S. 36.

Ken Beougher, Association president, reported that they are expecting a large crowd as he has received calls from all over including Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma and Colorado.

"There seems to be more than usual interest this year," he said.

50 years ago

In the early 1950s, a group of farmers and businessmen from the tri-state area of Nebraska, Colorado and Kansas decided that the heritage of farming in the high plains should be preserved. By that time, tractors had replaced the huge steam engines and combines had eliminated the need for the threshing machines and separators.

A group of preservationists began forming the Tri-State Antique Engine and Thresher Association which was headquartered in Bird City. It took several years of restoration, cleaning and painting before the first show was held at the Roy Kite farm 2 1/2 miles northeast of Bird City.

A Case Implement dealer as well as a farmer, Mr. Kite had taken in many old tractors and vintage equipment as trade-ins and stored them. He was able to spearhead the restoration project.

The first show in 1953 offered

only a tent for protection. Out-houses served as bathrooms. Conditions were crude but everyone had a good time. Ladies and children were admitted free and the men were charged 50 cents daily. Because of the enthusiasm, another show was held.

There were no facilities for storing the steam engines, tractors and threshing equipment at the Kite farm so an annual parade of equipment would make the journey to the farm from Bird City. When they crossed U.S. 36, traffic was stopped both ways and rubber tires were put down on the surface to protect the oil.

The show continued to grow. Articles of Incorporation were adopted and a 501 C3 status was received from the Internal Revenue Service. Chet Sawyer served as the first president and Melvin Write was the secretary and treasurer. Both served those offices for many years.

The show continued at the Kite farm through 1974 and then the Association purchased 20 acres from Ralph and Ruth Leach at the northeast corner of Bird City. In this new location, permanent buildings were soon erected. The first buildings were the Anderson building, built with funds from Ivan Anderson, Kanorado, the main building with the fold-out sides, and the Country Kitchen. These buildings are still in use today and 12 other buildings have been added.

Land was also acquired from Bob Sager, Bob and Laurie Jones, Ralph and Ruth Leach and Jim and Cindy Leach. Today, the Association has 45.7 acres where they grow wheat for binding. The wheat is shocked and placed inside until show time. During the show, the bundles are threshed and the wheat is then sold at the local elevators.

Thresher Queen

There is now a Thresher Queen selected each year. The queen is selected from the tri-state area and is recognized the first day of the show. Her name is known only by the Association president Ken Beougher and for two weeks, her picture, taken in her younger years, is published in *The St. Francis Herald* and *Bird City Times* which brings more interest as people try to guess her identity.

President Beougher said that by selecting a queen, the Association honor the women who were instrumental during the threshing season, spending long hours cooking. On the show grounds is the cook shack and people are invited to come by and see just how these women worked. This year's queen would have been 50 years younger when the first show was held.

Engines, tractors and vehicles

Last year, there were 12 operational steam engines at the show. These steamers are available for

rides. The huge engines are inspected and registered safe by a certified boiler inspector.

There are close to 200 classic tractors at the show and they participate daily in the parade. There is also a parade of classic cars operated by members of the Tri-State Antique Auto Club which operates closely with the Association.

There are also vehicles in the car museum. The museum was built with funds from Dee and Peg Thompson in memory of their son.

Starts with a blast!

Each day, the show kicks off with the blast of the steam engine whistle at 9:30 a.m.

Throughout the four-day show, there will be grain threshing, plowing, Prony brake and Baker fan testing for steam and gas engines, steam engine races, steam engine pyramid stunts, the displays of operating stationary engines (both steam and gas), the operation of the sawmill, parades of all antique equipment and the special parade of the early-day harvest equipment.

The blacksmith and printing press will be operating and activities will be held in the different buildings including the old schoolhouse, sod house and church. It will take at least a day to tour the buildings and see the activities. Also, each evening, different activities are held.

Thresher Show activities planned

Four days filled with activities is planned for the 50th Tri-State Antique Engine and Thresher Show, July 31-Aug. 3 held in Bird City. Activities begin at 9:30 a.m. Thursday through Saturday. On Sunday, church services are held at 9 a.m., 9:30 a.m. and 10 a.m. at the Country Church on the grounds. Throughout the show, there is a swap meet and flea market.

Throughout the four day event, there is a variety of food including homemade pies served at the Country Kitchen, the Shriner's Candy Wagon is open with snow cones and cotton candy; and there are a variety of booths selling fresh lemonade and other drinks and snacks.

However, one the main attractions are the buildings which include the Egger's Building which houses an outstanding museum. There are individual rooms set up to depict life in the early days. Demonstrations and programs are held daily.

As visitors arrive, they are greeted by the "putt, putt" of the many stationary engines lined up under the cottonwood trees. These stationary engines made life easier for pioneers and sound much like the old Maytag washing machines. These engines helped Grandma wash the clothes and Grandpa pump water for livestock.

The quilt building has over 30 quilts on display. The Association owns nine quilts, received as gifts plus other quilts in the area. This year, the Sawyer family quilt will be on display. Sue Lamb donated an embroidered signature blocks from her parents, Treva Henry pieced them together and the Methodist Ladies have

been quilting the quilt. These blocks were from the 1930s and most of the names are people from the Bird City area. The fabric used is 1930s reproduction.

Thursday

Thursday evening, the literary is held at the Highland Country School located on the grounds. As people enter the school, they experience memories of being a kid sitting in the old-time desks.

Friday

Friday evening is the popular antique tractor pull. This is not a juried event — it's just a fun event. The show starts around 6 or 6:30 p.m. so the show can end with the steamers pulling in the evening at dusk. It is a special sight to see the embers from boilers against the darkening horizon.

Saturday

Saturday after a full day on the grounds, a barbecue is prepared and served by the McDonald Lions will be held from 5 to 7 p.m. They have sweet corn that is cooked with the heated water from the steam engine boiler.

The Saturday evening's entertainment, which begins at 7 p.m., is the 4th Artillery Regimental Brass Band from Denver. The players dress in Civil War attire and they involve the audience in the performance. They will be teaching the audience the Virginia reel and other folk dances plus their concert.

Sunday

Sunday starts with church services being held in the morning and demonstrations going on until around 5 p.m. but there are no evening activities.

Show to offer book

The 50th annual show of the Tri-State Antique Engine and Thresher Association will soon be underway in Bird City. In honor and celebration of its 50th year, the Association is publishing a coffee-table history book of the organization.

"The book is really an effort to preserve some of our history," Association president Ken Beougher said. "And to celebrate and enjoy this wonderful thing we call the steam engine show."

The book will be a full-color "coffee-table" style book filled with pictures of the equipment and people who make the show. A professional photographer will be on-site in July to record the 50th show, but the Association needs contributions from the community members and others to provide photographs of shows in years past.

"We're especially interested in finding photographs of the "old-timers" who helped start the show, Bird City folks in action at the show and past thresher queens," said Jennifer (Dorsch) Erickson, editor of the book. "If someone in your family was involved in the show, we'd love to have

their picture. The only way their picture can be in the book is if you loan us the photo."

Ms. Erickson says to clearly mark photos if the owners want them returned. A good way to do this is to put an adhesive mailing label on the back of the photo with the owner's name on it.

"We'll return everything after we have met our printing requirements," she said.

Submissions may be brought to the Association office in building number 2 during the show July 31, August 1, 2, and 3 or mailed to P.O. Box 9, Bird City, KS 67731. Please make all submissions before Sept. 15.

In addition to photographs, the Association would like to include "memories" or "commentaries" about the show from community members. Written submissions can be e-mailed to: thresherbook@mchsi.com or mailed to Box 9, Bird City, KS 67731.

The books will be available to purchase in May 2004. The project is being financed in part by a grant from the Century II Foundation of Bird City.



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