

RAMBLINGS

By Bill Klein

Having agreed to write a regular column for the club newsletter in which the topic will vary over time, I have chosen the above title. My intent will be to highlight various club exhibits; talk about various systems such as fuel, electrical and hydraulic as they pertain to our old engines and tractors; and pass along some interesting stories from the oil fields, factories and farms of days gone by.

In this inaugural column our club's 35 horse power Bessemer engine will be in the spotlight along with the mill it powered.

Bessemer model GED with serial # 33196 was sent from the factory in Grove City Pa. on August 12 1925 as verified by the factory records.

Robert Jamieson lived in Stoneboro, Pennsylvania when he and his wife Jennie Lee purchased the flour mill in Fredonia in 1903. Soon after the purchase, the family moved to Fredonia. There they raised 4 children, William, John, Almira, and Martha.

The original mill was renovated several times and the early flour they produced was named Almira's choice and Martha's Marvel. Later the name was changed to Red Circle and was a hard winter wheat pastry flour. The mill also served as a grist mill for the local farmers.

When the two sons completed high school, William joined his father in the management of the mill. John attended college to become an engineer and to play football. During his college years he would return home in the spring to help his father with the road building business. The family was instrumental in building many of the Mercer County roads. After college, John continued to help with the road building, but also traveled to other constructions jobs which took him to Aruba and Liberia, West Africa. After the invasion of Pearl Harbor, John and his wife Donna returned from Africa and settled in Fredonia so he could join his father and brother in the family business. Thus it became known as Robert Jamieson & Sons, Flour, Feed, and Lumber Supplies.

In 1950, Robert and Jennie were killed in an automobile accident, and William and John became the sole proprietors of the mill. They expanded the mill to include wheat drying capabilities and storage tanks. In the summer, the main street of Fredonia could be seen lined with trucks filled with wheat. The loads would be dried, stored in the tanks, and then transferred into railroad cars to be sold and shipped. Fredonia became very well known as the Buckwheat Capital. The flour mill located in the original building continued to produce flour and to grind other grains used by the farmers.

In the late 50's and early 60's it became necessary to build another flour mill since the old building and machinery were outdated. A new mill was constructed adjacent to the grain elevator and flour was milled until about the middle 60's. When the new mill was built, the engine on display was removed from the original structure and sold. (more info below)

William and John retired and sold some of the land. The mill building that was purchased in 1903 stood until it burned in December of 1971. Today the new cement flour mill and the bases of the six metal storage tanks are the only remains of Robert Jamieson & Sons Flour, Feed and Lumber Supplies.

The information above was provided by Barbara Jamieson Brown, daughter of John and Donna Jamieson and granddaughter of Robert and Jennie Jamieson. Barbara is pictured here with the engine.

George Nicholas, who was one of the original founding members of our ACAEC, purchased and removed the engine (which had been out of service since 1960) from the basement of the feed mill in 1964 with the help of his son Charlie who was only 10 years old at the time and provided the following details about the extraction. Charlie says it is likely that his uncle Randall also helped George that day.

The engine was mounted on a concrete foundation and the flywheels extended up past the floor joists above, nearly touching the floor planks. The floor was covered in about 6" of water adding an additional challenge to the daunting mission. When the air start supply pipe was disconnected

the air pressure in the holding tank discharged after having been contained for several years! The flywheels had to be removed so the engine could be slid sideways off its foundation so a come-along was used to support and lower the clutch pulley then it was attached to each flywheel in turn. After loosening the clamping bolts on the flywheel hub a chain was wrapped around the root of opposite spokes and looped over a jack which was placed against the end of the crankshaft to act as a puller. There was just enough side clearance at the floor joists for the flywheels to come off the crankshaft. With the big flywheels out of the way the engine could be jacked up enough for the studs securing it to the foundation to be cut off. The adjacent cement block wall was partially knocked out and a ramp was dug in the dirt to ground level. The dirt and the wall rubble were thrown inside to form the lower part of the ramp. A railroad car sat on the tracks 20 feet away and was used as an anchoring point for a chain hoist allowing the first flywheel to be slid out. The engine was then slid off the foundation and pulled out with the chain hoist followed by the second flywheel and finally the clutch pulley. A makeshift ramp was fashioned from materials on site to get it all onto the triaxle lowboy trailer owned by Jim Van Gorder attached to his single axle R model Mack truck.

Once back at the Nicholas place the flywheels were put back on so the engine could be wheeled off the trailer using George's John Deere model H tractor to tow it. The Bessemer sat patiently in storage for nearly thirty years waiting for attention until George donated it to our club in 1992 where it was restored by club members, including Ivan Simmons, and has run at every show since. It is proudly displayed in the Simmons Engine Building where it is attended by Ivan's son David and grandson Greg.