########## PLEASE NOTE ##########

These three David Bradley History articles were published in the Sept/Oct - Nov/Dec 1999 and Jan/Feb 2000 issues of the now defunct Belt Pulley Magazine.
In 2009 Belt Pulley Magazine was purchased by Brandon Pfeiffer of Indiana who renamed it Vintage Tractor Digest.

Brenda Stant of Outrage Farm Publications Inc. of Bethlehem, Maryland now publishes Vintage Tractor Digest. Used back copies of Belt Pulley Magazine can only be purchased Online, eBay, etc. There is no new-old stock.

THIS INFORMATION IS IMPORTANT because this David Bradley history is 25 years old.
Many of the collectors listed in these articles have, very unfortunately, passed on.
Others no longer collect David Bradley equipment or have moved.
So, names and addresses listed may not be correct.
Even listed paint manufacturers color numbers may not be current.

Mail Order Farm Machinery

History of the DAVID BRADLEY CO. (PART I)

By: Brian W. Wells

The story of John Deere crossing the Allegheny Mountains in 1836 from Rutland, Vermont, to settle in Grand Detour, Illinois, to develop the first steel-bottom plow is well-known. Likewise, the story of James Oliver developing the chilled steel process for plow bottom manufacturing in 1855 is also well-known. The stories of these two men have been widely disseminated as part of the folklore of farm equipment companies which would later bear their names. Somewhat less well known, however, is the story of David Bradley and his plow.

Long before James Oliver developed the first chilled steel plow in 1855--and even before John Deere invented the steel-bottomed plow in 1836--a young pioneer and foundryman in Chicago by the name of David Bradley invented the first cast iron plow which would scour the soils of the Midwest. It was David Bradley who first answered the need for a plow which would turn its own furrow and scour the sticky, heavy, virgin prairie of the Middle West with the invention of his chilled cast iron plow in 1832. David Bradley was the first man ever to bring pig iron west of the Allegheny Mountains for use in making his famous chilled cast iron plow.

David Bradley was born on November 8, 1811, in Groton, New York. He worked for a while at a plow business in Syracuse, New York. In 1832, he left the east to traveled over the Allegheny Mountains, eventually settling in Chicago in 1835. Operating out of a foundry and machine shop, he perfected the chilled cast iron plow called the "Garden City Clipper." In the late 1830s, together with Conrad Furst, he incorporated the business as *Furst and Bradley Manufacturing Company*. The company produced plows and other agricultural implements. Over the years, David Bradley's son, J. Harley Bradley, gradually took over operations of the company from his father. Under the leadership of J. Harley, the company began a period of expansion. During this period, the Bradley family also bought out the stock owned by Conrad Furst and the company became the *David Bradley Manufacturing Company*, hereinafter known as the *David Bradley Company*. From its plant facilities at Des Plaines and Fulton Streets in Chicago, the company answered the growing need for agricultural equipment in the Midwest and enjoyed success from the very beginning, producing plows, horse-drawn corn planters, cultivators and other farm implements. This success in the 1890s was spurred by two factors: location and favorable publicity.

Being located in the Chicago area, the *David Bradley Company* could take full advantage of the boom in railroad transportation that was occurring there. The 1848 arrival of the railroads in Chicago touched off a tremendous population growth in the

city. In 1850, Chicago was a sleepy little backwater town with a population of 29,963. By 1860, Chicago had become a booming metropolis of 112,172. By 1890, Chicago had grown to 1,099,850–the nation's second largest city.

In 1893, the *David Bradley Company* was given another boost by the favorable publicity obtained at the Columbian Exposition held that year in Chicago (better known as the Chicago World's Fair of 1893). The *David Bradley Company* by this time was manufacturing a number of farm implements, and the company exhibited its entire line, including the Garden City Clipper plow, at the Exposition. Several *David Bradley* implements won blue ribbons at the Exposition. The advertising value of these awards and the Exposition itself were immediately used by the *David Bradley Company* to increase sales of its implements and to grow the company. However, as the City of Chicago grew, the company found itself increasingly choked off from all possibility for expansion of its plant facilities. Thus, the company began to look around for another site.

In North Kankakee, Illinois, 55 miles to the south of Chicago, there was an active and eager civic population that became aware of *David Bradley's* desire to relocate. They became intent on having the company settle in their town. North Kankakee was a very new town, having only been organized and settled in 1892. However, on March 14, 1893, the sudden bankruptcy of the *Philadelphia and Reading Railroad* set off shock waves that would cause a collapse in the *New York Stock Exchange* in what became known as the Panic of 1893. The shock waves created by the crash of the stock market soon swamped many good, but overextended companies, and they began to fall in succession like a row of dominos. On May 5, the *National Cordage Company* failed, followed by the *Erie Railroad* in July, the *Northern Pacific Railroad* in August, the *Union Pacific Railroad* in October, and the *Atchison Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad* in December. The Panic of 1893 developed into the worst economic depression that the United States had suffered up to that time. The devastation caused by the crash threw many people out of work and reduced farm prices drastically. Even privately-held companies, whose stocks were not publicly traded, were affected by the sudden contraction of the national economy, and many of these companies also failed. The furniture factory in North Kankakee, which had provided the major source of employment to its people, was one such casualty.

The lost of its premier employer caused the citizens of North Kankakee a great deal of anxiety. Unless help was found soon, the town would surely die. Consequently, when J. Herman Hardebeck, the town's founder and leading citizen, heard that the *David Bradley Company* was looking for a new site for its manufacturing facilities, he did not waste any time in buying a railroad ticket north to Chicago to see J. Harley Bradley, in person, to encourage the *David Bradley Company* to relocate in North Kankakee. It took many trips to Chicago and $100,000.00 raised on the part of the City of North Kankakee to pay the moving expenses of the company, but Herman Hardebeck finally persuaded the *David Bradley Company* to settle in North Kankakee, Illinois. When the telegram arrived in North Kankakee from Herman Hardebeck in Chicago relating the news of the consummation of the deal, the relieved citizens went wild in celebration, and started a large bonfire on the Court Street viaduct with wooden barrels and boxes piled twenty feet high to celebrate the good news that their town had been saved. As the *Illinois Central* train approached North Kankakee from the north, the engineer became concerned about the enormous orange glow and smoke he saw coming from the town. He suspected that there must be a terrible fire in the middle of town. When he arrived at the station, he was assured that the fire was harmless. The next morning a huge crowd of the town's grateful citizens turned out at the train station to welcome the 10:30 a.m. train carrying Herman Hardebeck and J. Harley Bradley to town. On July 13, 1895, North Kankakee officially changed its name to Bradley City, Illinois. In 1896, the name of the town was shortened to Bradley, which is what it has remained ever since.

Accordingly, in 1895, the *David Bradley Company* moved its facilities to the abandoned furniture factory in North Kankakee, Illinois, where they had plenty of room for future expansion. The fact that North Kankakee was only 55 miles south of Chicago and was served by the *Illinois Central Railroad* meant that the *David Bradley Company*

could still derive full advantage of the benefits of its close proximity to the transportation hub of Chicago. Furthermore, a junction of the north-south tracks of the *Illinois Central Railroad* with the east-west tracks of the *New York Central Railroad* was located just three miles south in the town of Kankakee. (Kankakee was an older town and separate from the city of North Kankakee.) This provided the *David Bradley Company* with an east-west connection which would by-pass Chicago altogether.

Over the years as the business expanded, the *David Bradley Company* built many buildings on the site, including two three-story buildings and a five-story building. One of the three-story buildings still stands. Robert P. Simpson, a collector of and expert on *David Bradley* products, advertising and memorabilia, currently lives within view of this building. Robert Simpson is working together with George Bingley, of Kankakee, Illinois, to initiate a *David Bradley* museum to be located in Bradley, Illinois.

Parallel to the development of the *David Bradley Company*, a series of events were occurring which would have a very significant impact on the company. In 1887, a 22-year-old young man by the name of Richard W. Sears moved from North Redwood, Minnesota, to Chicago to seek his fortune. Richard Sears had been the breadwinner in his family since he was fifteen years old and had shown an early inclination toward the sale of merchandise. He had a hobby of answering all advertising for mail order goods and then selling these goods to other boys in his childhood home of Spring Valley, Minnesota.

In 1886, while living in North Redwood, Richard Sears was employed as a freight agent for the *St. Paul Railroad*. He also sold watches, while traveling on the railroads, to the passengers and railroad employees. It was these railroads which attracted Richard Sears to Chicago in 1887. Upon arriving in Chicago, he established a watch shop on Dearborn Street. Right from the start, the watch shop was a poor prospect for success because Richard Sears had a rather limited knowledge of the internal workings of a watch. Fortunately for Richard Sears, he stumbled across a watch repairman who really did know about watches and was willing to come to work for the new watch shop. The watch repairman was Alvah C. Roebuck, who started working at the watch shop in 1888. In 1893, Sears made Roebuck a full partner and formed the *Sears, Roebuck and Company*.

By then, the company was selling other products to the public besides watches. To advertise the company's products, Richard Sears produced the first *Sears* catalogue in 1888. Soon the company was involved in a mail order business designed to bring the latest of consumer products to the public.

The mail order business, as a whole, received a tremendous boost in 1896 when the United States Post Office began the free delivery of mail to rural consumers. Suddenly, the most isolated of rural consumers would not only receive the *Sears and Roebuck* catalogue, but they could order the products and later have those products delivered straight to their farm through the parcel post. Farm families could shop and keep abreast with the latest in consumer products without ever leaving the farm. Not only did *Sears and Roebuck* experience tremendous growth, but so too *Sears'* main competitor--*Montgomery Ward*. Great numbers of customers in rural areas across the nation began to eagerly anticipate the February delivery of the Spring/Summer *Sears* catalogue as a rite of spring, signalling an end to the winter season; likewise, the August/September delivery of the Fall/Winter catalogue which would start families thinking of Christmas.

Sears soon realized the possibility of offering farm machinery for sale through the catalogue and began looking around for a means to do just that. In 1910, the *Sears, Roebuck and Company* purchased the *David Bradley Company* in an attempt to take advantage of the growing market for modern farm machinery and they changed the name of the *David Bradley Manufacturing Company* to the *David Bradley Manufacturing Works*. *David Bradley* became the name of the farm equipment product line offered by *Sears*. Included in that line were the improved successors to the famous "Clipper" plow, the horse-drawn "Conquest" riding cultivator, a hay press, and a horse-drawn manure spreader.

David Bradley horse-drawn plows were advertised in the *Sears* catalogue each year. Later, tractor plows were added to the line of implements. The Spring 1936 *Sears* catalogue shows a No. 36 2-

bottom plow with 12" bottoms which could be purchased for $69.95 ($71.85 for the 14" bottom version). Additionally, a 3-bottom plow with 14" bottoms could be purchased for $105.00. The advertisement also shows that *Sears* offered the same attractive terms for financing the purchase of these plows as they did on all their products. Only $6.00 Down! Although the customers were instructed to send their order to the *Sears* headquarters at 925 South Holman Avenue in Chicago, they were informed that the plow would be shipped straight from the plow factory at Bradley, Illinois. Delivery of the merchandise could be taken though the mail (up to the weight restrictions of the Post Office) or by rail freight. The customer could pick up a rail freight delivery at the local railroad station or pay the local freight agent to have the product delivered to the family farm. Later, *Sears* developed their own chain of retail outlets. In rural areas, these outlets could usually be found in the county seat of nearly every county.

With the coming of the Second World War, production of all farm machinery was tightly controlled by the United States government, and *Sears*, like most other companies, was required to convert the *David Bradley* facilities in Bradley, Illinois, to the production of war materials. Thus, all farm machinery production at the Bradley facility was suspended, and the plant was commissioned by the government to make artillery shells for the war effort.

However, once the wartime restrictions were lifted, *Sears* re-tooled the Bradley factory to produce modern farm equipment for the post-war farm market. Once again, farm machinery rolled out of the *Bradley Works* bearing the distinctive *David Bradley* colors of red frames and bodies and light green wheels. C.H. Wendel, in his collection of paint numbers published in a booklet called *Wendel's Notebook*, identifies the *David Bradley* green as *Martin Senour* 90R-3724 or PPG - 41780. This green paint is cross-referenced as *Martin-Senour* 21944 or *DuPont* 43073. *David Bradley* red is identified as *Martin Senour* or 90R-3725 or *PPG* - 72155. However, some collectors have found that these paints can be hard to find. To solve this problem, an exact match to the *David Bradley* green can be made by a mixture of 50% *John Deere* green and 50% *John Deere* yellow. As to *David Bradley* red, opinions vary. Some collectors report that *International Harvester* red (*Martin-Senour* 99L-4115) is indistinguishable from the color of paint found on the protected areas of some tractors. Other collectors, however, have found that *Massey-Ferguson* red (*Martin-Senour* 99N 10743, *DuPont* numbers M1017, or 018, or 6491 or 24118; or *Ditzler* 70837) is an exact match with paint found on their tractors. Actually, both of these findings may be accurate. The reason for the discrepancy in the color is that *David Bradley*, like many companies, did not buy paint from the same company, They bought paint from the lowest bidder over the years which resulted in variations in the shade of red on the *David Bradley* equipment.

By the early 1950s, the *David Bradley* line of farm machinery had become quite large, and included wagons, wagon boxes, grain elevators, hammermills, hay mowers, side delivery hay rakes, and even loaders for farm tractors. In 1951, the *Sears* Fall catalogue even advertised a *David Bradley* 1-row semi-mounted corn picker. As noted previously, *David Bradley* did not make all of these implements; rather, *Sears* bought the implements from other manufacturers and put the *David Bradley* name on them.

In 1962, *David Bradley* was spun off by *Sears* into a relatively independent operation. In 1964, *David Bradley* was merged into the *Roper Corporation*, and *Sears* was reduced to a minority owner in *David Bradley* equipment. Still, *Sears* remained the largest single customer of the *Bradley Division* of the *George D. Roper Corporation*. Currently, information can be obtained about *David Bradley* equipment from *American Yard Products* at P.O. Box 1687, Orangeburg, SC 29116-1687, Tel. (803) 533-4851. The author found Barbara Kuck and John Coffman, both employed in the Customer Relations Department of *American Yard Products*, to be extremely helpful in obtaining information on *David Bradley* implements. Parts books for the *David Bradley* garden tractor are available from this source and from *Surplus Tractor Parts*, 3215 W. Main Avenue, P.O. Box 2125, Fargo, ND 58107-2125, Tel. 1-800-859-2045. Parts numbers in this parts book are still carried in the *Sears and Roebuck* parts database. Parts availability, however, is

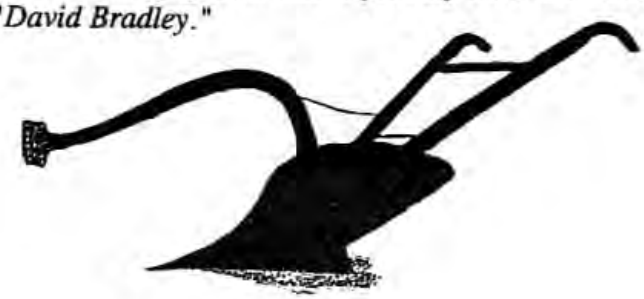
another question. The parts can still be ordered from *Sears and Roebuck* based on current stock in the *Sears* inventory. As with most antique machines, no new parts are currently being made for the *David Bradley* garden tractor.

The growing enthusiasm for collecting *David Bradley* tractors and equipment led to the establishment of the *David Bradley Newsletter* by William G. Humphrey of Vine Grove, Kentucky, in 1992. William Humphrey is a collector of *David Bradley* walk-behind tractors and has several of these tractors. He also has a large supply of research materials on the *David Bradley Company*. Subscriptions to the newsletter are $3.00. Their address is:

David Bradley Newsletter
William G. Humphrey, Editor
936 Clarkson Rd.
Vine Grove, KY 40175-6015
Telephone: (502) 828-8328

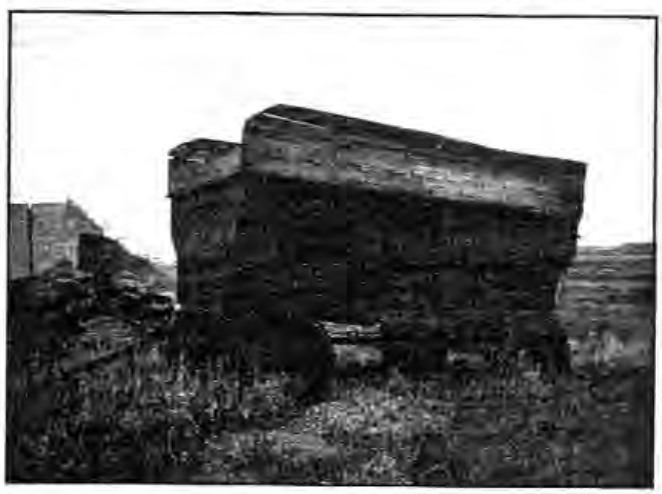
The *David Bradley* name became a common fixture on many farms because of its link with the *Sears and Roebuck* catalogue. For many decades, a large section of the main Spring/Summer and Fall/Winter catalogues remained devoted to farm equipment. However, as a sign of the times, after 1955, the farm equipment section of the main *Sears* catalogue began to emphasize lawn and garden equipment rather than farm equipment. In this way, the *Sears* catalogue reflected the transition of the United States from a farm economy to an overwhelmingly urban-based economy.

The world surely has changed since the days of David Bradley, and even since the *Sears* catalogue first made "David Bradley" a household name. However, seeing restored *David Bradley* equipment with its characteristic red and green colors still brings back memories for a great number of people who used the wagons, plows, garden tractors and other farm equipment which proudly bore the name "*David Bradley*."



Don't Miss Part II of the David Bradley Co. in the November/December issue

Tractors & Wagons



History of the David Bradley Company

(Part II)

Tractors & Wagons

By: Brian W. Wells

By the time *Sears Roebuck* bought out the *David Bradley Manufacturing Company* in 1910, the "David Bradley" name was already associated with a wide range of different farm machinery products manufactured at its site in Bradley, Illinois. Nonetheless, the company remained small and relatively unknown outside its local market. Its connection with the *Sears* mail-order system, however, changed all that. Once *David Bradley* farm implements were offered to the public through *Sears* catalogue, *David Bradley* became a household name across the nation.

After *Sears* purchased the company, it added a great number of farm implements to the *David Bradley* line of equipment. Many of these implements were manufactured by other companies and merely sold under the *David Bradley* name. Soon these implements out-numbered products actually manufactured by the *David Bradley* Works. Nevertheless, whether made by the *David Bradley* Works or by someone else and merely sold under the *David Bradley* name, some products became very popular with farmers. Two examples were the very popular *David Bradley* garden tractor and the *David Bradley* farm wagon gear and wagon box. The garden tractor was a product manufactured at the *David Bradley* Works in Bradley, while the widely-sold *David Bradley* wagon was an example of one of the products made by another company and sold under the *David Bradley* name.

In 1938, *Sears* attempted to add a farm tractor to the *David Bradley* line. This tractor, called the *Graham Bradley*, was manufactured by the *Graham Paige Motors Corporation* and sold exclusively through the *Sears* catalogue or through *Sears* retail outlets. In 1946, however, all tractor production by the *Graham Paige Company* ceased when the company became part of *Kaiser-Frazier Corporation*. Despite the fact that the tractor was marketed in the *Sears* farm equipment line, the name "Bradley" on the *Graham Bradley* tractor appears to have had no connection with the *David Bradley Manufacturing Works*.

Sears also marketed two tractor kits for the farmer to assemble himself. These tractors, known as the *Sears Economy* and the *Sears Thrifty*, were powered by Chevrolet or Ford Model T or Ford Model A engines. It was the farmers' choice! The tractors had a 3-speed transmission and a choice of flat steel wheels or tip-toe steel wheels (copied from *Oliver*).

David Bradley may not have had outstanding success manufacturing a full-sized tractor, but following the Second World War, the *David Bradley* name once again became associated with tractors. These tractors, however, were intended for use in the garden rather than for use in the field. In 1949, the *Sears* catalogue advertised the new *David Bradley* 1-3/4 hp. garden tractor. This garden tractor was streamlined with a sheet-metal hood and soon became a very common sight across the nation. The name "David Bradley" became so closely

identified with this garden tractor that the public forgot that the name had been applied to a whole line of farm field equipment. Tests of the garden tractor at the University of Nebraska in 1951 revealed that the little tractor with its single-cylinder *Briggs and Stratton* engine developed 1.41 hp. on the belt and 1.25 hp. at the drawbar.

Production of a two-wheeled, 1½ horsepower "walk behind" tractor started in the late 1930s. That tractor was not much more than a frame, wheels and an exposed engine. Production of the tractor was suspended with the coming of the war, but with the end of the war, *David Bradley* fitted its pre-war garden tractor with a "streamlined" modern-looking hood over the engine and made a few other improvements. *Sears* and *David Bradley* soon found that it had a very popular item on their hands. While sales of the little garden tractor were slow before the Second World War, sales boomed in the late 1940s. Particularly, it was the streamlined garden tractor of the post-World War II period that became the single most popular item of machinery to bear the name *"David Bradley"*. There was no uniformity in the engines which were installed on the garden tractor at the factory: *Continental* engines were interspersed with a wide variety of engines from other companies. In 1951, the 311-pound tractor, fitted with a *Briggs and Stratton* engine, was tested at the University of Nebraska. Tests revealed that the tractor turned out a maximum of 1.56 hp. at the belt and 1.18 on the drawbar.

Restored David Bradley garden tractors from the collection of Robert Simpson of Bradley, IL.

With sales still strong, three new models of the garden tractor were tested again in 1959. The 375-pound Super 575 *David Bradley* delivered 3.88 hp. to the belt and 2.64 hp. to the drawbar. The 486-pound Super 300 *David Bradley* delivered 1.77 hp. to the belt and 1.38 hp to the drawbar. The 175-pound Bradley "Handiman" tractor delivered 2.19 hp. to the belt and .69 hp. to the drawbar. As a sign of urbanization (and suburbanization) of the United States in the 1950s, a more modern four-wheel riding tractor called the "Suburban" was also tested in 1959. Fitted with a 12-volt electrical system, the Suburban delivered 3.90 hp. to the belt and 2.80 hp. to the drawbar. All of the tractors tested in 1959 were fitted with *Briggs and Stratton* engines.

David Bradley garden tractors were offered with a wide assortment of implements specifically fitted to the tractor. These implements included a cultivator, a plow, a disc, and a drag harrow for use in the garden; and a sickle bar mower, a power reel-type lawn mower, a lawn roller, and a utility cart for use on the lawn. Additionally, there was a bulldozer blade, a buzz saw, an air-compressor with spraying attachment, and a 1000-watt electrical generator for all those special needs that might arise. One particularly uncommon attachment was the sulky which allowed the walk-behind tractor to become a riding tractor. The sulky could only be used in a limited number of operations, however, because the sulky attached to the same part of the tractor as did nearly all the other rear mounted equipment. One exception was the dump rake which attached to the rear of the sulky itself.

The characteristic red and green color scheme was used on the garden tractor. The hood was red, with green "*David Bradley*" lettering on both sides. The wheel rims on the tractor were light green. All of the accompanying yard and garden implements for the garden tractor were red. This color scheme, used for the entire *David Bradley* line of equipment, identifies the *David Bradley* light green as *Martin Senour* 90R-3724 or PPG - 41780. This light green paint is cross-referenced as *Martin-Senour* 21944 or *DuPont* 43073. *David Bradley* red is identified as *Martin Senour* 90R-3725 or PPG - 72155. However, collectors have found that these paints can be hard to find. To solve this problem, an exact match to the *David Bradley* green can be made by a mixture of 50% *John Deere* green and 50% *John*

Deere yellow. The exact shade of green is a "Signal Green," which is available from *NAPA Stores* under *Martin-Senour* paint number 21944. The Ditzler number is #41780 and the DuPont number is #43073. C.H. Wendel, in his collection of paint numbers published in a booklet called *Wendel's Notebook*, is of great assistance to the restorer of farm machinery by identifying many different paint colors by their paint number. Some collectors report that *International Harvester* red is indistinguishable from the color on paint found on the protected areas of some tractors. Other collectors, however, have found that *Massey-Ferguson* red is an exact match with paint found on their tractors. Actually, both of these findings may be accurate. The reason for the discrepancy in the red color is that *David Bradley*, like many companies, did not buy paint from the same company. They bought paint from the lowest bidder over the years which resulted in variations in the shade of red on the *David Bradley* equipment. The lettering on the side of the garden tractor is a darker shade of green than the "signal green" used for the wheel rims. The shade of this green appears to be the same as the "Meadow green" used on *Oliver* farm tractors. *Wendel's Notebook* says this is *Martin-Senour* 3751.

The author takes the 1962 gold hood David Bradley garden tractor out for a spin. The rare David Bradley sulky is attached to the rear while the bulldozer blade is mounted on the front of the tractor.

Following the color scheme of all *David Bradley* farm equipment, the walk-behind tractor was painted red with light green wheels. However, in its final year of production--1963--while all the implements remained with the traditional color scheme, the tractor was painted gold with royal blue wheels. One of these 1963 model tractors together with a complete set of implements--including a cultivator, plow, disc, drag harrow, sickle mower, bulldozer blade, sulky and dump rake--is owned by Marilyn (Hanks) Wells of LeSueur, Minnesota, and is exhibited at the LeSueur County Pioneer Power Show each year.

The author shows the features of the David Bradley tractor.

Spurred by fond memories of *David Bradley* tractors, many people across the nation have begun to collect *David Bradley* tractors. Marilyn Wells bought the 1963 *David Bradley* garden tractor because it reminded her of an earlier version of the garden tractor that the family had formerly owned and used in their farm garden. In 1956, the author's family purchased a used *David Bradley* garden tractor for use in the family's garden. This garden tractor had the "nobby" tires which appear on the tractor in the Spring 1949 *Sears* catalogue rather than the diagonal lug tires which appear in the 1950 and 1951 catalogues; therefore, this particular tractor must have been a 1949 model garden tractor. The

1949 tractor was accompanied by the *David Bradley* bulldozer snow removal blade and the rear-mounted cultivator. The tractor was used extensively in the Wayne and Marilyn Wells family garden through 1965. The author had a garden project in 4-H and so appreciated the garden tractor from an early age. This tractor was eventually sold to Marilyn Wells' brother, Fred Hanks, of LeRoy, Minnesota, where it is to this day.

Another such tractor, purchased because of childhood memories of a *David Bradley* garden tractor, is a 1953 *David Bradley* tractor currently owned by E.A. Schreiber of Farmington, Minnesota. This tractor is outfitted with a *Continental* Red Seal engine, another engine that is sometimes found on these tractors.

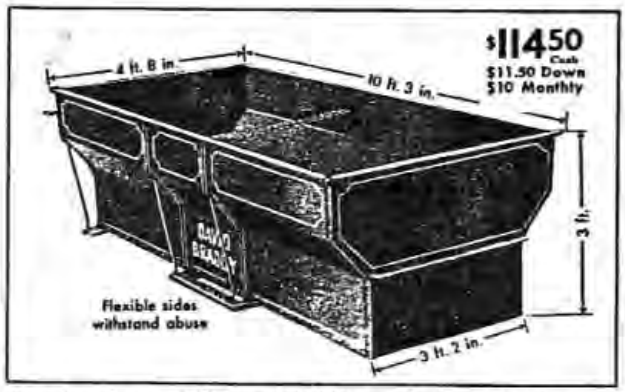
Sears also had great success selling its *David Bradley* farm wagon gear and wagon boxes. However, nearly all of the wagon gear and virtually all of the rims for all *David Bradley* farm equipment were purchased from the *Electric Wheel Company* of Quincy, Illinois. As noted earlier, United States auto makers began moving away from installing 16" tires on their cars in the late 1940s and early 1950s. By the mid 1950s, the 15" tire was universal on all cars.Since, *Sears* often sold *David Bradley* equipment with only rims, thereby allowing the farmer to mount old car tires on new *David Bradley* equipment, in recognition of the complete shift by automakers from the 16" tire to the 15" tire as the universal tire of choice, *Sears* began offering 15" rims on its wagon gear as optional equipment. By 1955, the 15" rim was standard equipment and the 16" rim was optional. By 1957, only the 15" rim was available.

In 1951, the Howard Hanks family placed an order for a new *David Bradley* running gear for a wagon. As expected, the running gear arrived without tires, so the family mounted old tires on the gear. Howard Hanks, who had inherited his grandfather's skill in woodworking, made a barge box for the wagon with sides that were removable. Following the custom for wagon boxes and hayracks, he painted the wagon box green. (This shade of green also appears to be the "Meadow green" used by Oliver.) With the sides of the box removed, the wagon could be used for hay and straw baling, thereby allowing the same wagon to be used all year around. The running gear, with its rocking bolster in the front, allowed the wagon to move over rough ground without unduly tipping the load. The rocking bolster was a feature not often found on competitive wagons of the same era; specifically, it was not found on the wagon gear offered by *Montgomery Ward*. The rocking bolster was one of the features of the 7000-lb. wagon on which *Sears* placed special emphasis in its catalogue advertisements. The Hanks family found the *David Bradley* wagon and barge box to be a great success, and in 1957, the family ordered another identical 7000-lb. wagon gear. This wagon too was outfitted with another homemade green-painted barge box. The two wagons were nearly indistinguishable, except that the running gear on the newer wagon had longer hubs on the wheels. This may have been an indication that the wagons were manufactured by two different companies, thereby implying that *Sears* had turned to a different wholesaler of wagons sometime around 1953. The two wagons continued to be used on the Hanks farm until the mid-1970s when they were replaced by heavier *John Deere* wagons.

In 1958, Wayne Wells, also of LeRoy, Minnesota, in an attempt to modernize his farming operation, purchased a hydraulic hoist from the *Big Bear* farm equipment store in nearby Austin, Minnesota. The hoist, which had been manufactured by the *Midwest Company* and was sold under the *Big Bear* name, was intended for installation under the big barge-style home-made wooden grain box on the Wells farm. However, the hoist could not be mounted on the light-duty *Montgomery Ward* wagon gear which the family owned, so Wayne also purchased a *David Bradley* 5-ton capacity wagon gear. The heavy duty construction of the 5-ton wagon with its rocking bolster was ideally suited for the new hydraulic hoist, and it continued to render good service on the Wells farm until the family left farming in 1964.

As for wagon boxes, the *Sears* catalogue originally offered kits to farmers which would aid them in building their own wooden barge-style grain boxes: wooden, straight-sided double boxes for grain; and later, in the 1930s, 100-bushel, wooden flare-sided grain boxes. Starting in 1946, following the Second World War, *Sears* began offering two new steel flare boxes--a 100-bushel model and a 126-

bushel model. The 100-bushel flare box was an all-steel flare box manufactured by the *Horn Manufacturing Company* of Fort Dodge, Iowa. The 126-bushel flare-sided grain box was manufactured for *Sears* by the *Electric Wheel Company*. The 126-bushel flare-style wagon box was not an all-steel box; it had a wooden floor made of 2" tongue and groove lumber.



An advertisement from a 1949 Sears, Roebuck & Co. catalog.

As previously stated, custom and/or tradition dictated that all wagon boxes of whatever manufacture should be painted green, if they were painted at all, and since before 1900, this tradition had been upheld uniformly by all manufacturers of wagon boxes. In the first year of production after the war--1946--*Sears* also adhered to this tradition. Both the new all-steel 100-bushel flare-box and the 126-bushel flare box were traditional "meadow green" in color. In 1947, for the second year of production of the flare-sided wagon boxes, *Sears* broke with tradition and offered all its wagon boxes in *David Bradley* red. Red remained the color of *Sears* flare boxes as long as they were sold by *Sears*. Consequently, there are many more red *David Bradley* wagon boxes than there are green boxes. Nonetheless, there are still a few of the original green wagon boxes which can be seen around the country.

In April of 1951, the *Horn Company* was sold to the *AVCO\New Idea Corporation*, and shortly thereafter, all *Horn Company* wagon boxes were sold under the *New Idea* name. *Sears* was then required to turn to the *Elecric Wheel Company* as a source for both the 100-bushel flare-sided grain wagon box as well as the 126-bushel flare box. However, the *Electric Company's* 100-bushel wagon box was not of all-steel construction; it came with a choice of a 1" or a 2" wooden floor.

Perhaps for the sake of old farm memories, Wayne Wells, in the spring of 1995, purchased a *David Bradley* hydraulic hoist at one of the regularly scheduled Fahey auctions near Belle Plaine, Minnesota. It was a post-1957 hydraulic hoist which contained the new-style "db" *David Bradley* logo. A year later, in the spring of 1996, Wayne saw a green flare-sided wagon box for sale in Dodge Center, Minnesota. The wagon box had a *David Bradley* decal on it and was owned by John Beder. As an employee of the *McNeilus Corporation* in Dodge Center, John was often directed by his employer to purchase old farm wagons for use on the *McNeilus* grounds. However, since *McNeilus* was only interested in using the wagon gear for hauling long lengths of pipe and other iron, John was to dispose of any wagon boxes which accompany the wagon gear. Therefore, this particular 126-bushel wagon box had been removed from a *David Bradley* wagon gear.

The 126-bushel flare box was green in color and, accordingly, was a 1946 model wagon box. John Beder had purchased the wagon and flare box from *Suess Auction and Consignment House* in Racine, Minnesota. *Suess Auction House* records indicated that the wagon and wagon box had come from Montana. However, the exact history of the wagon is uncertain. Perhaps it was used in the wheat growing areas of eastern Montana. The *David Bradley* wagon box purchased by Wayne Wells was intended for use on the grounds of the LeSueur Pioneer Power Association during the field demonstrations at its annual threshing show held each year in August. However, the 2" wooden floor was rotted through and needed to be replaced. Furthermore, since McNeilus Corporation was keeping the wagon gear that John Beder had purchased with the wagon box, another wagon gear needed to be found for the 126-bushel flare box. Coincidentally, in the spring of 1996, during the same time that the flare box was obtained, Dave Preuhs of rural LeCenter, Minnesota (also a member of the LeSueur County Pioneer Power Association) purchased a pre-1953 *David Bradley* wagon gear with short hubs. Dave had purchased the wagon

gear at another auction held at the Fahey farm. Thus, it was decided to remove the barge box that came with this *David Bradley* 7,000 lbs. wagon gear and install the *David Bradley* hoist and the 1946 Model 126-bushel flare box, thereby having an all-*David Bradley* restoration project. Once restored, the wagon would be put to use collecting grain from one of the threshers during the field demonstrations. Since the *David Bradley* 7000 lbs. wagon gear had the short hubs described above, the wagon gear dated from prior to 1953. In fact, it could be a 1946 wagon gear. Accordingly, the wagon gear and flare box make an appropriate fit; only the post-1957 *David Bradley* hydraulic hoist is out of place. When fully restored, the wagon would appear on the Pioneer Power Showgrounds as if it might have been purchased by a farmer in 1946 with a 126-bushel flare box, and that later (after 1957) the same farmer might have updated his wagon with a *David Bradley* hydraulic hoist.

Before replacing the 2" tongue and groove floor, the 126-bushel wagon box was painted the shade of green noted above. It also had an unusual *David Bradley* decal located on the front-end of the box. Therefore, before painting the box, pictures and measurements of this decal were taken and an exact copy was made by *Sign Pro*. As with all decals made by *Sign Pro*, a digital record was placed in *Sign Pro's* computer database for future reference.

The pre-1953 wagon gear was also painted the proper color of red with black hubs and "lime" or "signal green" wheel rims. Additionally, two decals were obtained from *Sign Pro* for the wagon gear: one was the typical black-lettered *David Bradley* decal found on the rear axle of all *David Bradley* running gear of that period of time; the second showed the lot number of this particular wagon (No. 751) and was located on one of the front diagonal tubular braces of the wagon gear. Both decals were also obtained from *Sign Pro* and are currently a part of their computer database.

In addition to the wagon boxes and wagon gears, *Sears* offered other wagon-related items under the *David Bradley* name. One of these was the electric powered wagon unloader. One of these wagon unloaders was used by Earl Jacobson of LeRoy, Minnesota, for the silage wagons that he used in his custom silo filling business. Following the Second World War, Earl began his custom forage harvesting operation from his farm located northeast of the village of LeRoy. He owned all the equipment necessary for filling the silos of the neighborhood; e.g., a *John Deere* forage harvester and later a *Papec* forage harvester, a *New Holland* blower, and three forage wagons. His three forage wagons had homemade wooden boxes. Two boxes were mounted on a *John Deere* running gear and the third box was mounted on a *Montgomery Ward* running gear. In the early 1950s, all forage wagons were unloaded from the rear by men with forks pulling the ensilage out of the wagon into the blower hopper at the rear of the wagon. After the ensilage at the rear of the wagon had been removed, the men would have to crawl up into the wagon to pull out the ensilage at the front of the wagon. To make the job of unloading wagons easier, faster, and safer, *David Bradley*, along with other manufacturers, began producing power unloading systems for forage wagons. The *David Bradley* power unloading system involved a canvas on the floor of the wagon box which was connected to a roller at the rear of the wagon. The roller was rotated by a portable power unit which rolled up the canvas on the roller and effectively pulled the whole load of ensilage to the rear of the wagon where the men merely raked the ensilage down into the blower hopper.

Earl Jacobson installed the *David Bradley* power unloading system on all three of his forage wagons. The only trouble encountered with the *David Bradley* power unloading system was that vigorous raking by the men with forks unloading the wagon produced tears and holes in the canvas conveyor. Therefore, Earl Jacobson replaced the canvas conveyor in all three wagons by a sled inside the wagon box. The sled was connected to the roller at the rear of the wagon by means of two cables. As the roller was turned, the cables would roll up and the sled would pull the load of ensilage to the rear of the wagon. This modified version of the *David Bradley* wagon unloading system worked well for Earl Jacobson until he retired from the custom forage business in 1958. Of all the products sold by *Sears* under the *David Bradley* line which were intended to make life easier for the farmer, the garden tractors and wagons were the most popular sellers. It is fitting that restorers are now working

on *David Bradley* projects for use at various shows around the nation. These restorations will ensure that *David Bradley*, which played so large a role in North American agriculture, will remain a household name and will not be forgotten.

The decal shown is the post 1953 style of decal.

MAIL ORDER FARM MACHINERY

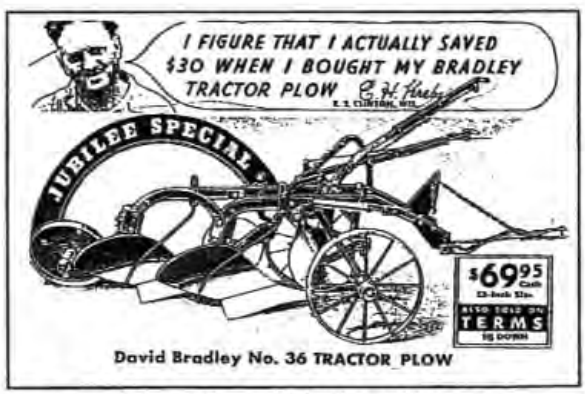
The David Bradley Company (Part III)

By: Brian W. Wells

In the second article on *David Bradley* farm machinery, two of the most popular and recognizable products were discussed--the farm wagon and the garden tractor. However, the *David Bradley* line, as advertised in the Spring and Fall issues of the *Sears and Roebuck* catalogue every year, included tractor loaders, field tillage equipment, and even harvesting equipment such as its one-row, semi-mounted corn picker. This installment will feature two lesser known, but still popular, items--the tractor plow and the manure spreader.

As pointed out in the first article, the *David Bradley Company* began its plow production with the famous horse-drawn Clipper plow. With the dawn of the tractor era, however, *David Bradley* introduced tractor-drawn plows. In the Spring 1936 *Sears* catalogue, a 2-bottom plow with 12" bottoms was advertised for $69.95, another 2-bottom plow with 14" bottoms for $71.85, and a 3-bottom plow with 14" bottoms for $105.00. These steel-wheeled plows were painted *David Bradley* red with lime-green wheels to match the rest of the *David Bradley* line of farm machinery. During the 1930s, Ned Healy placed an order for a particular *David Bradley* 2-bottom plow; consequently, a steel-wheeled *David Bradley* 2-bottom plow with 14-inch bottoms was delivered to the *Sears* store in Mankato, Minnesota, the county seat of Blue Earth County. Ned Healy, who operated a farm south of Mapleton, Minnesota, farmed with a *Graham-Bradley* 32-hp tractor and, later, a *Massey-Harris* 101. Both of these tractors had very fast road speeds for their time (19.8 mph. and 17.85 mph., respectively). Ned not only farmed his own farm, he also helped his brother, Horace Healy, on another farm just down the road. Both the *Graham* and the *Massey Harris* tractors, with their rubber tires and very fast road speeds, were well-suited for the Healy farming operation which involved frequent transfers of machinery from farm to farm. Consequently, when the new *David-Bradley* plow arrived on the Ned Healy farm, its distinctive green colored steel wheels were soon cut down to be fitted with rims for rubber tires.

In the same Mapleton, Minnesota, neighborhood lived the Howard Hanks family. Now, in early 1944, the Hanks family began negotiations to purchase a farm of their own in



An Advertisement from the Spring, 1936 Sears Catalogue for the Model No. 36 Tractor Plow.

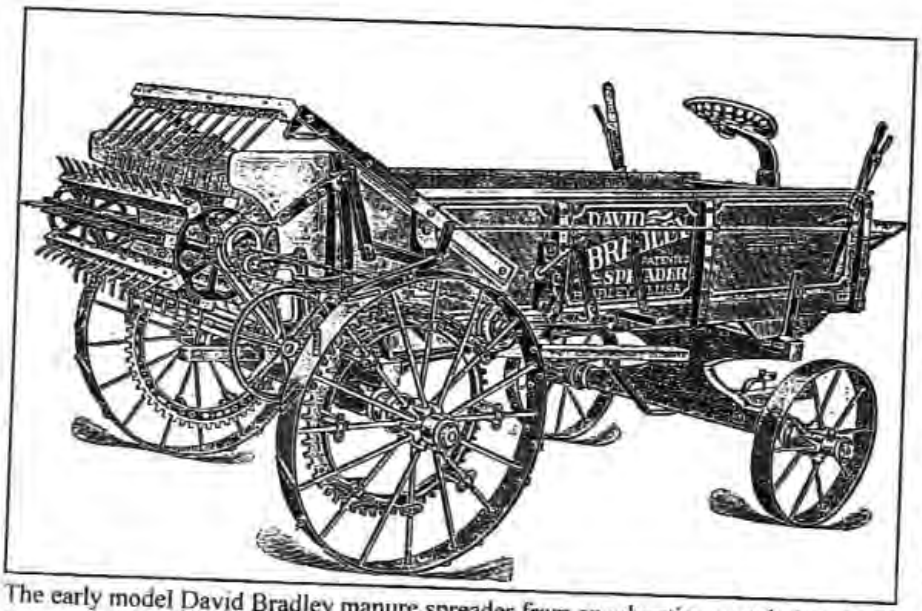
Beaver township, Fillmore County, near LeRoy, Minnesota. This 400-acre farm was owned by Albert E. Rehwaldt of Good Thunder, Minnesota, but had always been known as the Bagan farm. Included in the terms of the purchase was a 1942 *Farmall* H accompanied by a 2-row cultivator. This would be the Hanks family's first row crop tractor. The family was finally to be settling on their own land! Thus, in order to get an early start on the 1945 growing season, they drove the 100 miles to the Bagan farm in the late summer of 1944 to do some fall plowing, bringing with them their 1931 *John Deere* D and their 3-bottom *John Deere* No. 82 plow to do this. They also borrowed Ned Healy's *David Bradley* plow to pull behind the *Farmall* H which was already at the Bagan farm. Because the renter of the Bagan farm, Roy Green and his family, was still in the house, the Hanks family camped out in a small chicken brooder house. Nevertheless, during the ten days they were there, the family completed the fall plowing and did some work on the house before they had to return to the Goff farm for the soybean harvest. They left all of the machinery they had brought with them on the Bagan farm until the following spring, when they would return to plant the crop, and went back to the Goff farm with only Ned Healy's plow aboard the truck. The little *David Bradley* had performed well during the short time on the Bagan farm and had helped the Hanks family get a jump on the 1945 crop season.

Also during the 1930s, another *David Bradley* 2-bottom plow was delivered to the *Sears* store in Austin, Minnesota, the county seat of Mower County, for a customer by the name of Martin Hetletvedt. Martin farmed a 160-acre farm north of the "Old Town" area of LeRoy, Minnesota. (Most of his farm has now been merged into the Lake Louise State Park located in the Old Town area.)

LeRoy was originally settled at the site of a sawmill located next to a dam on the Upper Iowa River. The dam and sawmill were built in 1853. By 1855, a settlement had grown up around the sawmill, and by 1858, the town of LeRoy was platted there. However, as white pine from northern Minnesota became more readily available for building material, the sawing of local hardwoods became unprofitable and the sawmill was converted to a grits mill in 1858. In 1867, when the *Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad* (later the *Milwaukee Road*) came through the area, it by-passed the settlement of LeRoy, and the railroad station built by the railroad to serve the town was actually located about a mile southeast of LeRoy. Consequently, over the next several years, the people of whole town of LeRoy resettled to the area around the railroad station, and in 1874, LeRoy was incorporated at the new location. Gradually, the settlement around the grist mill declined and the area became known as "Old Town." The grist mill itself also closed up, as better methods of flour milling were developed.

The *David Bradley* plow arrived on the Martin Hetletvedt farm during a time of change. Martin's wife had died in 1934, and on March 17, 1935, he married Cora (Schwark) Utesch, a young widow in the LeRoy community whose husband, Paul Utesch, Sr., had died on December 15, 1931, after about two years of marriage. Cora had a son, Paul Charles (Paul C.) Utesch, Jr., who was only about 15 months old when his natural father died. Thus, Martin became the only father that young Paul C. ever knew. Paul C. remembers that while he did drive the family's un-styled 1938 *Allis Chalmers* WC a great deal helping his father with the field work on the farm, he never did any plowing. Martin, himself, did all the plowing on the family farm with the *David Bradley* plow. Just as with the Ned Healy plow, Martin Hetletvedt had the original steel wheels of his plow cut down and fitted with rims for rubber tires, but the wheels remained distinctively *David Bradley* green.

Coinciding with development of the *David Bradley* plow was production of the *David Bradley* manure spreader. Manure spreader production by the *David Bradley Company* had begun even before the merger with *Sears and Roebuck* in 1910. As early as the 1890s, according to the advertisements in the *Sears* catalogue, *David Bradley* spreaders were made at and delivered from the David Bradley Works in Bradley, Illinois. Early advertisements show a very crude manure spreader, with a single ground-driven beater, which was offered to the farming public as a box, without wheels, which could be mounted on any horse-drawn wagon gear (truck) that the farmer may already own. As an option, *Sears* also offered the farmer a wagon gear

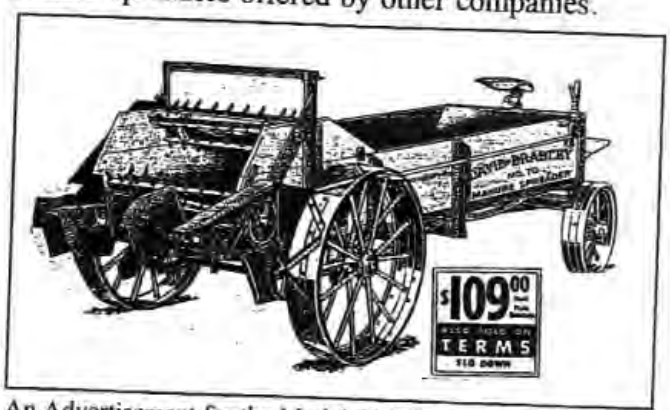


The early model David Bradley manure spreader from an advertisement dating about 1910.

or truck to be used with the spreader.

Even as *David Bradley* brought out its first manure spreader, improvements were being made in manure spreader design by many companies. As each new improvement was made, it was generally adopted into the design of manure spreaders made by all companies. One of the most important improvements was the development of the wide-spread beater which would distribute manure over a wide area behind the manure spreader, rather than allowing all the manure to fall into a single 3-foot wide strip. This improvement was the invention of Joseph Oppenheimer, who later marketed his invention through his company--the *New Idea Company*--of Coldwater, Ohio. By 1912, *Sears* was also offering a 90-pound "widespread pulverizing" attachment for its *David Bradley* spreaders. Not only could purchasers of new *David Bradley* spreaders obtain this option, but also owners of old *David Bradley* spreaders could purchase this attachment separately and mount it on their spreaders. Also, in about 1912, *Sears* introduced the light-draft, auto-steer version of its spreader. Auto-steer created a manure spreader which was much easier to handle and allowed the design of the spreader to be much lower to the ground. With this improvement, *Sears* was actually ahead of the innovator company--*New Idea*. (*New Idea* was still using the goose-neck design with the fifth-wheel style steering on its spreaders and would not introduce auto-steer until the advent of the Model 8 manure spreader in 1924.)

When New Idea did come out with its new and revolutionary designed Model 8 manure spreader, other companies were quick to follow. *Sears*, for one, introduced in the mid-1930s its new *David Bradley* light-draft Model 70 manure spreader which incorporated many of the prior improvements in spreader designs which had become universalized. It had two beaters in addition to the widespread beater. The upper beater was smaller and mounted slightly ahead of the lower beater. This design reduced the load to the lower beater and was responsible for a great deal of the lighter draft of the Model 70. The Model 70 was made available to the public with steel wheels (24" diameter and 5" wide in the front and 36" diameter and 7" wide for the drive wheels in the rear) for a price of $109.00 with plain bearings. Options on the Model 70 included roller bearings on all the wheels for a price of $112.50, or roller bearings on all the wheels as well as on both beaters and the widespread for $119.50. A rubber-tired version of this spreader was also available for an additional $64.50. Just as with the steel-wheeled version, the rubber-tired Model 70 had large 6.00 x 22" wheels in the rear and 6.00 x 16" tires in the front. Later versions of the Model 70 had all four wheels fitted to 6.00 x 16" tires. This gave the David Bradley manure spreader a unique, distinctive appearance as opposed to manure spreaders offered by other companies.



An Advertisement for the Model 70 light draft Manure Spreader. (1930's)

Advertisements in the *Sears* catalogue, however, indicate that this new spreader was not manufactured in Bradley, Illinois. Although orders for the new manure spreader were to be directed to *Sears* in Chicago, advertisements from the 1930s indicated that the new Model 70 would be shipped from a factory near Indianapolis, Indiana--evidence that *Sears* had turned to some other third company, perhaps the *Peru Plow Company*, to produce the Model 70 for *David Bradley*.

One particular Model 70 rubber-tire horse-drawn spreader arrived at the Austin, Minnesota, *Sears* store in 1939 for delivery to the Martin Hetletvedt farm. Martin had found that he needed a new manure spreader and because he had favored *David Bradley* machinery in the past, it was only natural that now he would again turn to his *Sears* catalogue.

This particular spreader was one to the later models with 16" rims on all four wheels. Fitting its manure spreaders and other farm machinery with 16" rims at this particular time was a master stroke of timing on the part of *Sears*. A short time later, the United States became involved in the Second World War and civilian production of nearly every industrial product was curtailed. Cars, tires and all farm machinery became very difficult to obtain. During the war, it was extremely helpful to have all rubber tires on the farm to be the same size. Old car tires which were unsafe for continued use on the car could be nursed through on re-caps and vulcanization to repair tears. The *David Bradley* manure spreader had an advantage over rivals during the Second World War because of this simple design feature.

Like so many farmers, Martin ordered this manure spreader without tires, intending to outfit the manure spreader with old car tires from the family's 1937 *Ford*. *Ford* had made the switch to 16" tires in 1932 when the Model B and the V-8 Model *Fords* replaced the venerable old Model A *Ford*. Martin and Cora later traded the family car in on a new 1940 *Ford*, once again with 16" tires. Thus they were well supplied with proper sized tires for the duration of the Second World War. Additionally, Martin's decision to purchase a new car and the *David Bradley* manure spreader when they did was most timely. They would not be able to purchase any farm machinery or get a new car for the duration of the war.

Martin's manure spreader had originally been equipped with a long tongue for horses, and at first Martin used horses for the light duty task of hauling manure. However, soon he had the tongue cut down so he could pull the spreader behind his *Allis Chalmers* WC. In 1945, Martin and Cora retired from farming, sold the farm and all their farm machinery and to a house in the Old Town community with young Paul C. This was another fortunate decision on their part. Farm prices had been good during the war. Land prices were high at the end of the war. However, with the returning veterans there would soon be a surplus of farmers wanting to start farming. It seems that Martin and Cora picked a good time to retire. They recieved a good price for their land and for their used farm machinery.

The house in old town which Martin and Cora bought was more like a small horse farm, rather than a house in a urban, or even suburban, setting. The house sat near the front of a large lot. In the back was a horse barn--a hold-over from the days of horse-drawn transportation. The immediate area around the barn was fenced in to provide a small pasture. It was like living on a farm with out the actually farming. Young Paul C. continued to attend LeRoy High School until he graduated in the class of 1948. After Paul C. graduated and moved to Rochester to work, Martin and Cora were able to live comfortably in retirement on the fruits of their labor. They lived the life of "snow birds" in retirement, with frequent winter trips to Florida.

The success of the four-wheeled Model 70 gave encouragement to *Sears*. Thus, when the wartime manufacturing controls were lifted, they introduced a new manure spreader--the Model 75. In the Spring of 1947, the *Sears* catalogue introduced the new rubber-tired, two-wheeled, wooden-sided, tractor-drawn Model 75 manure spreader. Without rubber tires on 16" steel rims, the price was $265.00. A four-wheeled, rubber-tired version of the Model 75 was also introduced (in reality, it was a Model 70 under a new name). Advertisements for the new Model 75 manure spreader noted that the new spreader could carry 75 bushels of manure per load, with an apron speed that could be adjusted to spread from 4½ loads to 27 loads per acre and the

manure could be spread in 7-foot wide swaths behind the spreader.

The two-wheeled, tractor-drawn version was really nothing more than a four-wheeled, horse-drawn Model 75 with the front wheels removed. This was a simple shortcut in design which would allow the manufacturer to offer a modern tractor manure spreader to the public with a minimum of changes. However, this shortcut created at least one major problem with the Model 75. Having the wheels so far toward the rear created terrific down pressure on the tongue of the spreader. Consequently, a person hitching the Model 75 to the drawbar of a tractor even when the Model 75 was empty would have difficulty. If the Model 75 had been positioned near the window of a barn or hog house for a few days unhitched from the tractor in order to accumulate a load of manure, then the farmer may find it impossible to hitch the spreader to his tractor, especially in the soft ground of the cow yard or hog yard. *David Bradley* attempted to alleviate this problem by providing a simple stand-jack attached to the tongue of the two-wheeled Model 75. Still, the stand-jack would never hold the manure spreader exactly at the correct height for all tractor drawbars. (Incidentally, *David Bradley* was not the only manure spreader manufacturer to follow this design shortcut and, no doubt, to suffer the same problems. In 1940, *John Deere* replaced its four-wheeled Model E manure spreader with its Model HH manure spreader. That same year, *John Deere* offered the tractor-drawn Model H to the public. Once again, the Model H was nothing more than a Model HH with the front wheels removed.) However, even with its faults, the new *David Bradley* two-wheeled Model 75 proved to be a successful product for *Sears*--especially among the farmers that had traditionally ordered farm machines from the *Sears* catalogue.

Until 1950, advertisements in the *Sears* catalogue revealed that the "knobby tire" was favored by *Sears* as the optional tire for the Model 75 manure spreader. Although *Sears* then referred to these tires as studded tires, they are now referred to as "knobby tires" to avoid confusion with the tires that were fitted with metal studs which became popular in the late 1960s. Following 1950, *Sears* offered as its optional tire the claw-type lug tire, with 45 degree lugs.

Since 16" tires continued to be used universally on cars in the immediate post-World War II period, the manure spreader was advertised with 16" rims. However, just as with the *David Bradley* wagon gear described in Part II of this series, *Sears* recognized that, by the early 1950s, the 15" tire was gradually replacing the 16" tire on most new cars. Therefore, the *David Bradley* manure spreader was offered to the public with the option of 15" rims. By 1955, the 15" rim was offered as the standard rim on all *David Bradley* equipment, with the 16" rim as the optional sized rim. By 1957, only the 15" rim was available. (This progression from 16" to 15" tires is helpful to modern-day restorers of *David Bradley* equipment. Although each manure spreader had a serial number, records of these numbers have not been found. Therefore, knowing the size of tires will help the restorer determine the approximate age of his particular *David Bradley* implement.)

Also in that immediate post-war period, another particular Model 75 *David Bradley* two-wheeled, tractor-drawn manure spreader was sent out by railroad from the factory location near Indianapolis, Indiana, destined for a *Sears* store located in eastern Kentucky--perhaps in the Lexington, Kentucky, area, in the middle of horse racing country. Very little of the actual history of this Model 75 is known, but the spreader itself provides some tips. One tip is its very good condition, given its age. It must have been used on a farm that was large enough to have room to store it under cover, out of the rain and sun, in a shed, rather than a barn where the humidity would have been very high. This Model 75 must have been used on a farm where manure was carried to the field on a frequent basis and where the manure contained a large proportion of dry straw. As a result, the beaters retained patches of its original lime green paint throughout the years. Sometime in the mid-1970s, the tires of the manure spreader were replaced with 7.50 x 16" light truck tires. We know this probably occurred in the late 1970s, because one of the tires was a "studded tire." This tire was probably consigned to the manure spreader after studded tires became illegal for highway use in the early 1970s. The tires fitted onto the 16" rims had the effect of making the wheels appear larger than

the original 6.00 x 16" tires recommended by *Sears*. As a result, this manure spreader lost some of its distinctive appearance as compared to other modern manure spreaders which were generally fitted with 19" tires.

When the Model 75 was purchased at an auction in Kentucky by Jimmy Jenkins of Milton, West Virginia, in 1996, the "David Bradley" name and "75" logo were still clearly visible on both sides of the manure spreader. Although it looked as if the wooden floor of the manure spreader had been replaced, there were still flecks of lime-green paint on the beaters and the widespread. However, Jimmy Jenkins, who farmed north of Milton, West Virginia, decided not to use the Model 75 on his own farm; rather, he traded the *David Bradley* to *Stratton Tractor Sales* in Milton for a more modern manure spreader better suited to his farming operation. Shortly after the Model 75 manure spreader was placed on the lot at *Stratton Tractor Sales*, it was seen by the author, who, in the summer of 1997, purchased it together with a 1949 *New Idea* hay rack. The author had previously seen one other *David Bradley* Model 75 manure spreader at the *Stratton Tractor Sales* lot in October, 1995, during a visit to the West Virginia Pumpkin Festival. At that time, he had thought of purchasing that manure spreader for restoration; however, it had been sold before the author could make arrangements. It was probably just as well, as that Model 75 would have needed quite a bit of restoration work. For instance, the entire widespread was missing as was the metal strapping around the top of the sides. Nonetheless, the author felt a loss at having not purchased that manure spreader and felt that he might never see another one. Consequently, when the Jimmy Jenkins Model 75 appeared, the author did not waste any time in concluding a deal with Mike Stratton for the manure spreader. Restoration of this manure spreader involved only replacement of one of the side boards and replacement of the wooden boards in the front panel. The author also spread a great deal of waste oil on the floor of the spreader as a preservative. The over-sized 7.50 x 16" light truck tires were replaced with new 6.00 x 16" claw tread lug tires which were obtained from *Miller Tire Company*. Then the spreader was ready for painting and decaling. However, just before painting, the author took pictures and made careful measurements of the "David Bradley" name and the "75" logo on the sides of the spreader. He then took copies of the developed pictures to *FAST SIGNS* in South Charleston, West Virginia, to have them make decals.

The decals are of a darker shade of green than the lime green of the wheels, beaters, and widespread. *FAST SIGNS* identified the color as "bright green" but not as dark as their "forest green." The *David Bradley* "red" color of the manure spreader is indistinguishable from *Massey-Ferguson* red. The identifying numbers for this color are *DuPont* No. N1488, PPG 72155, and *Martin-Senour* No. 4763. Numbers of the "Signal Green" for the wheels, both beaters, and the widespread of the manure spreader are *Dupont* No. #43073, *Martin-Senour* No. 21944, and *Ditzler* No. 41780. Some collectors have found that the *David Bradley* lime green can be obtained from a mixture of 50% *John Deere* green and 50% *John Deere* yellow. (C.H. Wendel's booklet called *Wendel's Notebook* is of great assistance to restorers of farm machinery by identifying many different paint colors and their respective paint numbers. *Wendel's Notebook* is available for $8.50 from C.H. Wendel in Atkins, IA, Tel: [319] 446-7156.)

The Jimmy Jenkins *David Bradley* Model 75 manure spreader was displayed for the first time in its unrestored condition at the 1997 West Virginia Pumpkin Festival. One year later, at the 1998 Pumpkin Festival, the manure spreader was displayed in its restored condition. Furthermore, at the end of the Pumpkin Festival, the manure spreader was put to work hauling chaff from the threshing straw pile to the field, where the spreader worked just as it should in spreading the chaff.

A newly restored Model 75 Manure Spreader. (Helping unload is Brandon Howell.)

By the early 1950s, the *David Bradley* line of farm equipment had become quite large, and included wagons, wagon boxes, grain elevators, hammermills, hay mowers, hay rakes, and even loaders for farm tractors. In 1951, the *Sears* Spring/Summer catalogue even advertised a *David Bradley* 1-row, semi-mounted cornpicker. Generally, however, *David Bradley* did not make all of these implements; rather, *Sears* bought the implements from other manufacturers and put the *David Bradley* name on them.

Eventually, the *David Bradley* line was merged into the *Roper Corporation* and *Sears* was reduced to a minority owner. Currently, information can be obtained about *David Bradley* equipment from *American Yard Products* at P.O. Box 1687, Orangeburg, SC 29116-1687, Tel. (803) 533-4851. The author found Barbara Kuck and John Coffman, both employed in the Customer Relations Department of *American Yard Products*, to be extremely helpful in obtaining information on *David Bradley* implements.

Parts books for the *David Bradley* garden tractor are available from this source and from *Surplus Tractor Parts*, 3215 W. Main Avenue, P.O. Box 2125, Fargo, ND 58107-2125, Tel. 1-800-859-2045. Operator's manuals, set-up manuals and parts manuals for any number of the farm equipment products in the *David Bradley* line are now available through the *David Bradley Newsletter* (See address below). Parts numbers in these parts books can still be found in the *Sears and Roebuck* parts database. Parts availability, however, is another question. Just as with most antique machines, new parts are currently not being made for the *David Bradley* garden tractor.

The growing enthusiasm for collecting *David Bradley* tractors and equipment has led to the proposed establishment of a *David Bradley* museum in Bradley, Illinois. The main support for this plan comes from Robert Simpson, who lives within view of the old *David Bradley Works* plant and from George Bingley of Kankakee, Illinois. Gary Treible of York, Pennsylvania is another collector of *David Bradley* equipment. He also served as editor of the Newsletter for a time.(William Humphrey started the *David Bradley Newsletter* in 1992 and served as its editor for a number of years.) Currently, the editor of the newsletter, which has grown into a 20-page affair, is Terry Strasser of Hedgesville, West Virginia. Subscriptions to the newsletter are $16.00 per year and the address is: *David Bradley Newsletter* ,Terry Strasser, Editor, R.R. 1, Box 280, Hedgesville, WV 25427-9754. Telephone: (304) 274-1725. Any of these sources will supply abundant information to the restorer of any *David Bradley* equipment.

Through the proposed museum and the active newsletter, it is certain that the name *David Bradley*--the mail order equipment company--will continue to excite great memories for many people who remember using the wagons, plows, and garden tractors that proudly bore the characteristic red and lime green colors.