

Tires

The Rusty Acres Approach

By Dan Peterson

Tires are one of the major things that people look at first when silently “judging” what they think of a tractor, and they are also among the most frequently overlooked by the owner. Perhaps the owner is physically or financially exhausted as the restoration approaches completion, and new tires can always be added later. Or perhaps there is frustration in not being able to locate what is needed — those trips to the three local tire stores came up empty, and at that last one the clerk was too busy trying to sell a refrigerator. Whatever happened to the *real* tire stores?

Don't lose faith... there are two vintage-style tire suppliers (my apologies to any others that I don't know about) that have been a real boon to owners and restorers intent on finishing off their tractor with tires of the proper size and look. While not all sizes and tread (lug) types are available, in most instances these suppliers can come close. Listed alphabetically (I'm trying to avoid showing any preference here), they are:

M.E. Miller Tire
17386 State Highway 2
Wauseon, Ohio 43567-9486
Phone: 1 800 621-1955 extension 4
www.millertire.com

Wilson Tire
5861 SR 656
Marengo, Ohio 43334
Phone: 1 740 625-6894
e-mail: wilsontire@bright.net

Vintage-style tires, as I understand it, are not in regular continued production. The various sizes and types are available from time to time, rather than consistently. A run of a certain size and style is made, and then it sells out quickly to an eager crowd of customers who have been waiting. The next production run could be months away, so your needs and orders must be anticipated. You need to communicate ahead with the suppliers.

Most vintage John Deere Tractors left the factory with Firestone or Goodyear tires (sometimes having

one brand on the front and the other on the rear), with BF Goodrich handling the rest. Tires sizes and designations have changed over the years, as have the lug designs and angles. It's simply not possible to match everything of the past, nor is it reasonable to expect the manufacturers of vintage-type tires to tool up and supply every style and size. It's important to take the time to find out what is available, and then choose what is the *most* appropriate for your tractor. Recognizing the tire dilemma, the Two-Cylinder Club does not fuss over the details of tires on tractors accepted for exhibit at the annual Expo, preferring instead to leave this to the discretion of the owner.

Today, despite their being in third place as OEM tires on tractors years ago, I use a lot of BF Goodrich tires on restorations. They are good looking, and have a good lug (or bar) angle of about 45 degrees. I only hope that BF Goodrich continues to produce them, despite the long-running rumors that they won't.

Be aware of some foreign-made tires, checking first as to their reputation. At least one variety has had problems with cracking, but perhaps they now have a handle on this.

While this discussion has probably brought up the vision of rear tires, fronts are just as important. Most ag fronts have three ribs, and they are certainly the most popular, but the three-ribbers don't look right on industrial models that had four or more.

Old-style three-rib tires often had “notches” on the outside rib. Such tires are available from suppliers; and, like the desirable old-style rears, the fronts are not available on a regular basis. Production of them is intermittent.

I use new tubes when I install new tires. If you plan to use your original tires, you still need to dismount them, paint the rims inside and out, and use new tubes. New tires are expensive. If the old tires can still be used (matching, with decent tread and minimal cracking), you can save some money by doing so. Keep in mind, detailed cleaning and the application of a protective coating will be needed to make them look presentable.

In a few cases, very old and rare tires have made their appearance on tractors at the Expo. They're worn and cracked, but are now cared for properly by the owners and make fine displays that are at the peak of authenticity.

The way I see it, at least half of the old tractors with rubber rear tires have had calcium chloride

in them. From a restorer's perspective, that's a terrible thing. The chemical slowly devours the rim and leaves a weakened and rusty disaster. If still present, I suggest having it sucked out by a tire service store and then dismounting the tire. Sandblast the rims, spray on rust-killer/sealer, install *new* tubes, and reinstall the tires after a *thorough* scrubbing — inside and out.

Old tires can be freshened up by using some of the several good tire products available today, and new tires can be kept looking that way for many years with the use of protectant. Some people use tire foam, while others think it tends to leave a tacky coating that attracts dust and dirt. Some use Armor All®, while others prefer other brands of protectant. Whatever, there is one tire cleaner that seems to stand alone. Westley's® Bleche-Wite® gets tires back to looking like new, even stripping off film and oxidation. After cleaning with Westley's®, a protectant is needed. *Read the spray bottle instructions*, and keep the Westley's® off the paint. *Don't* use it in windy conditions, and try it on your pickup tires first.

So now we've talked about tires. There aren't any hard and fast rules, because there aren't any ongoing supplies of the *exact* style and size of *any* of the old-type originals. But, you can come close to having an ideal replacement for most tractors. There may be a half-inch difference in size, and different lugs set at different angles, but that's how it is. Take advantage of the excellent opportunities that suppliers have created for us, by convincing manufacturers to respond to the very small segment of the tire business made up of people like you and me.

Readers can check out Dan Peterman's website at: www.rustyacresrestoration.com 🌐

From Time To Time...

a letter or phone call is received at the office from someone inquiring about writing something for the magazine. Most people are unsure of whether or not we accept material from persons other than those regularly submitting articles, or if we solicit such work from certain people.

Fact is, anyone is welcome to give it a try. We do our best to handle the editing, including sentence structure, clarity, and punctuation. Don't let concerns about that stop you. If you have experience about anything that can be of benefit or of entertainment value to the general membership, it just needs to go on paper and head this way.

Of special importance is the knowledge held by senior readers, as there are generations of folks coming up behind them that will have no other way to attain it. Twenty-some thousand people can't knock on their door and pick their brain, but an evening or two spent by them, pen in hand, recollecting how this or that was engineered or manufactured, or how something was tested, sold, operated, or even repaired in the field, is invaluable. So, if these are enough words of encouragement to get you to write, please consider this to be an invitation.

John Deere Tractor Field Service Bulletins

Field Service Bulletin 172-S, dated September 15, 1950 (pages 74-76), answers three important questions of "when." When was foam-rubber padding adopted for seat cushions, when were oil-control rings added to gasoline-burning tractors, and when was the oil-slinger collar between the shaft and the bearing cover adopted on Model "A" Series Tractors to stop the transfer of transmission oil to the first reduction gear cover through the sliding gear shaft drive bearing area. Remarkably, every now and then a tractor is found that still has not had the update; and, not surprisingly, these tractors continue to have the transmission oil transfer problem. After more than half a century, you'd think the owner(s) might have looked into this!

A fourth page of the bulletin was not included, because it covered the parts list for a long obsolete type of magneto test stand and was considered non-pertinent information for readers.

YOUR TRACTOR WILL BE SEEN...

...on the two-Cylinder Club website @

www.two-cylinder.com

when you place a Photo Ad in

Two-Cylinder magazine!

Spend a minute or two looking over the information on the \$19.95 Photo Ad on page 112, and then turn to the Classified Ad section to see how these ads look. This is not the only place they appear. To get maximum coverage for you, the photo ads will also be placed on the Club website within a few days after the magazine is mailed. There is no additional charge for this service.