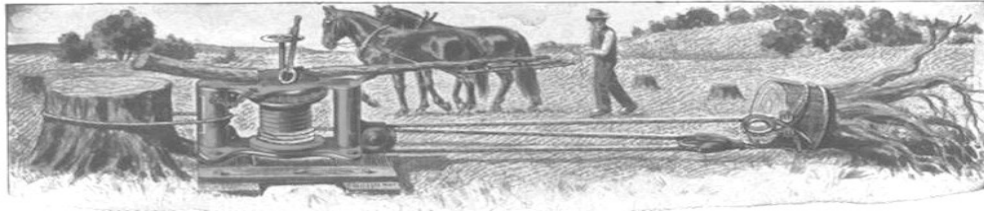


Hercules Stump Puller



Most of us have not had reason to even wonder how farmers in the 1800s managed to clear their land. We may have heard of laborious efforts to ring trees to kill them or of hand-chopping the copious stands of virgin timber across America. The most ingenious invention was a man-operated or horse-powered stump puller. Many styles came into being through the inventive efforts of individuals over a period of many years.

Mr. Deryl Powers of Springdale, Arkansas, graciously gave Tired Iron one of these unusual implements. It is a horse-powered Hercules Stump Puller made in Centerville, Iowa. Tired Iron club member Harold Gooden, who is a friend Mr. Powers, arranged for the club to have possession of the puller. This was the second Hercules Stump Puller Mr. Powers donated to an area organization. Some years earlier, he gave a puller to Shiloh Museum in Springdale, where it is currently displayed. Mr. Powers' father used a puller in his construction business in the 1930s and earlier. The effectiveness of the puller is proven by the fact that Mr. Powers remembers watching his father move a house from the southeast corner of Lafayette and College streets in Fayetteville, Arkansas.

Stump pullers usually came with skids or a four-wheel cart for transport to the field or to a construction site. The puller would be placed on the ground and anchored to a tree or stump and to the ground with stakes and then to the stump to be removed. If you have ever seen a solitary tree in the middle of a field, the chances are that tree was an anchor tree. For power, horses were harnessed to a horizontal log secured to the top of the puller. The horses were driven in a circle to provide the power to drive the cable drum. The cables were positioned low enough to allow the horses to step over them. A winching action pulled the stump up by its roots. A small portion of an original log, which was used as a fulcrum, is still attached to the donated unit. The smaller donated pulley, made by Gus V. Brecht of St. Louis, Missouri, was used for other purposes.

The Hercules Stump Puller came about by 1899 through the genius of a Centerville, Iowa, inventor by the name of Miles Bateman. After he had started and stopped his efforts a time or two, he joined with another entrepreneur named B. A. Fuller. The two men worked at the Goss Foundry in Centerville and were able to use the facilities there to place their stump puller on the market. It was an immediate success. By 1904 the puller was in most states of the Union, and in that year orders were taken for delivery to South Africa. When a government report noted that the cast-iron Hercules was subject to frequent breakage, Bateman and Fuller devised a method to make the pullers out of steel. This improved version plus marketing techniques made the Hercules Stump Puller a top seller. Soon the market extended into most parts of the world of the early 1900s. By 1909 units were being sold in Canada, Mexico, Russia, China, Japan, and many other countries.

The coming of larger tractors, including bulldozers, and winch trucks, eventually made the stump puller obsolete. Many thanks go to Mr. Powers for his donation to Tired Iron. Our club is fortunate to be the recipient of such a valuable relic from our nation's farming experience.

Sources:

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2. Herald, John, Smokstak Chat Room on the Internet (2000)
3. Heusinkveld, Bill, "The Fuller Manufacturing Company, " Ad-Express and Daily Iowegian, Centerville, IA, May 22, 2008



Brecht Winch



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