

GIBSON MODEL "A" GARDEN TRACTOR

Much of this story comes from a compilation of information gathered by Dave Baas of Broomfield, Colorado. He has done extensive studies on the history of The Gibson Manufacturing Company. In this story we concentrate on only the Model "A", the first production tractor for Gibson.

The original Gibson company had been formed by Wilber's father, Harry Gibson, at Seattle, Washington. The Seattle plant had made specially built rail cars and had begun experimentation with tractors. The date when the tractor production was started is so far undocumented. (Some engines mounted on Gibson "A"'s date to 1939 with their serial number...but was the engine original?) The Gibson Manufacturing Corporation, Longmont, Colorado, was founded in March, 1946 by Wilber Gibson. The decision to produce tractors at Longmont was, at least, partially motivated by the desire to escape a setting where pressure to unionize was great. Longmont, located 40 miles northwest of Denver, was a small agricultural community with little or no industry at the time. The millions of dollars invested in the land, plants, and equipment coupled with the job opportunities for hundreds of local residents meant that the company was welcomed with open arms.

The first production tractor was a Model "A". It was powered with a six horsepower Wisconsin air cooled Model AEH engine. (Gibson "A"'s have turned up with AHH Wisconsin engines on a modified mounting plate. There is no literature to show the AHH was an option that we know of, however) The "A" had 7.50 x 16 rear tires and 4.00 x 12 front tires. It came with a three speed transmission and had two independent rear wheel brakes. It's wheelbase was 42" and it weighed 875 pounds. It came with a full range of implements and was touted as being able to operate a 13 1/2" plow and handle two to three acres per 10 hour day. Under maximum load, the fuel consumption was one and one half quarts per hour.



The early "A"s had Plymouth/Chrysler rear axles that seem to have been in production until the end of 1945. The rear axle marked as Gibson-Seattle Wash or Longmont Colorado seems to come into use in 1946 according to parts lists. (This is according to Douglas Kephart-Gibson Group-Facebook, because of serial number records)

The Model "A" was steered with a lever. Mounted on the right side of the frame, by pushing it forward, the tractor turned left. Pulling it back was necessary to turn right. This design was probably chosen for a combination of reasons including, uniqueness, simplicity, quickness, and cost effective production rates.

Serial numbers were located on the frame rail, usually on the right side. They were stamped into the metal and started with the model letter, followed by production sequence numbers which were assumed to start with number one.

Model "A"'s were painted yellow or Ford tractor gray. "(Dave Baas, The Gas Engine Magazine) According to ox1addler@yahoo.com the early "A"'s were Wisconsin Gray and the later ones were Ford Gray."

An ad from Oxford Motors Limited includes info indicating "it has a standard gear shift with 3 speeds forward and reverse. It will haul a trailer or wagon 10-12 miles per hour. It will plow with 10-12" plow bottoms. It comes with a dozer blade for leveling, overall length is 6'. It has a compact 4 cycle L head motor with Wico magneto, governor controlled carburetion, oil bath air filter, force feed oil pump lubrication to Timken roller Bearings on the crankshaft. War time records of this unit warrant the utmost of economy and reliability."

The Model "A", had 3 speeds forward, 2,4,7 MPH, and a reverse of 2.5 MPH making it versatile in the field.

Additions or corrections with verification are welcome. Just email us at briggsplanet@qol.com

