

The Hercules Engine News

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The other day a man called and said that he had a gas engine out in his corn crib. After some discussion with him, it was determined that it was likely a 1¼ HP model XK engine built by Hercules. I told him that I would come by one day soon and look it over and advise him about it.

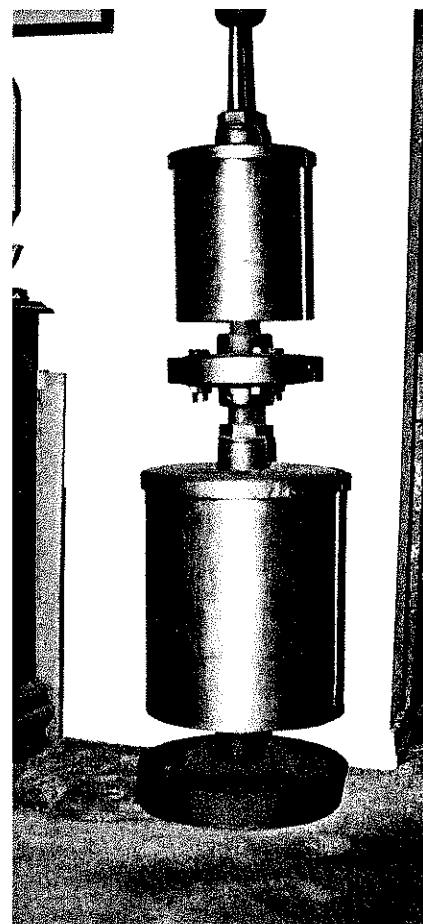
In the course of the conversation, he mentioned that his dad, Allen Hay, had the old steam whistle that came off the original Hercules power plant that was located just east of the Hercules Buggy Works. In 1936 the whistle was moved to a new power plant built by Servel Inc., the successor to Hercules. I had known about the old whistle, but I didn't know where it was. We were hoping to get it to display at the Classic Iron Show June 11, 12 and 13 to help commemorate 85 years of Hercules built engines.

Arrangements were made to visit Mr. Hay and to photograph the whistle. Shown here is what remains of the original three-stage whistle. Mr. Hay

worked at Servel and later at ARCLA when they took over. He retired in 1976. In 1986 he drove by one day and noticed that the old whistle was gone. After inquiring, he was able to obtain the upper two parts. The lower part had reportedly deteriorated and he was unable to locate the remains. The part shown at right is about four feet tall and weighs 165 pounds. Mr. Hay brought it home, cleaned it up, and now has it on display in his dining room.

It was the whistle of all whistles in Evansville, Indiana. After both WWI and WWII it was blown continuously for an hour or more until steam pressure was lost. After steam pressure built back up, the blowing continued several more times. It once was tradition to blow the steam whistles at midnight New Year's Eve in Evansville. Mr. Hay reported that the Hercules-Servel whistle drowned out all the others.

Now, back to the engine that caused this story. After taking pictures of the steam whistle, I went over to his son Steve's house to see about the engine. He took me to the corn crib and there it was, a 1¼ HP model XK Economy. It was well weathered and stuck, but it was complete except for the muffler and (you guessed it) the WICO EK magneto. He really didn't want the engine



but wanted someone to have it who would fix it up so he could see and hear it run again. A deal was quickly struck and I loaded it up and took it home.

After quickly disassembling it, I filled the cylinder with a soaking solution. In less than 24 hours it soaked through, and with the help of an oak block and a big hammer, the job was completed. You always have to wonder just what has happened in the past to an engine. Generally, it was in good shape, but the governor weights had been welded, the camshaft was remade, the cam gear had some odd gouges and scratches on it, and the head had been brazed. It has serial number 7298 with a 1-14-29 casting date on the head and 1-31-29 on the block. It is shown at left, in original condition as it arrived in my shop.

Both the whistle and the engine will be on display at our show next June. Come and see them. ○

