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The Hercules Engine News

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It is well documented that the Hercules Gas Engine Company was incorporated on November 8, 1912. The primary purpose was to supply gas engines to Sears, Roebuck and Company for sale through their mail order catalogs. Construction of the new company began early in 1913 at Evansville, Indiana. The first engines were produced the week of January 19, 1914. This is all recorded in history. This article is about those things not recorded anywhere in history. Yours truly has recorded much information from observations and from comments by other Hercules-built engine owners.

The first engines produced at the new factory were the D models. These engines were modified but similar to the last engines produced at Sparta, Michigan, in August 1913. These D models had no serial number or data tag on them. Some had a number and the HP

rating stamped on the end of the crankshaft. Less than half of the D models are noticeably stamped. The range of the numbers currently known is 33 to 5336, so it is likely that fewer than 6,000 of the D models were produced.

Concurrently, at a different location in Evansville, "Sparta" Economy engines were being produced and/or assembled. The majority of the parts were likely brought along on the factory move back in October 1913. It would appear that some 3,000 to 4,000 "Sparta" Economys were actually shipped from Evansville.

A study of the D models built by Hercules indicates that 80% or 90% of these were the Economy brand for Sears. The production was going primarily to Sears to fill back orders that had accumulated during the four month shutdown and moving period.

By mid-1914, Hercules was producing another modification called the E model. It was the first to have an ID tag, but it would be located in rather odd places. The small size 1½ HP and some of the 2½/2¼ HP had the base tag and some had it located on the front top rolled edge of the water hopper. The

5 HP and larger engines had the tag also on the rolled hopper lip. Again the majority of the production (75%) went to Sears as the Economy brand with the remainder being the Hercules brand. *

After production of 8,000 of the E models, the hopper shape was changed and the tag area was now located on the flat area toward the front top of the hopper as seen on most Hercules-built engines today. E model serial numbers began at 50,000 and all the way up to 70,000 production was heavily in the Economy brand. From that point on, production trended toward half Economy and half Hercules brand engines, and by the late teens it was 50-50.

During the first year at Hercules (1914) there were a number of short-lived features that showed up and disappeared. These will be covered in the future.

The chart below summarizes the data collected on engines in the 50,000 to 70,000 serial number range. There are several more known in this range but the brand is unknown. ○

HP	1½	2½-3	5	7	9	12
Hercules	8	6	11	7	3	
Economy	42	38	9	16	3	4
*Champion				1		