

# Hercules Engine News

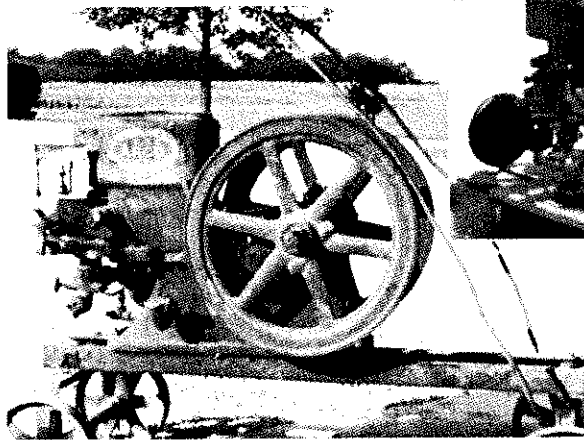
By Glenn Karch

## ARCO Heirloom



In February 1974, I discovered a 12 HP ARCO engine, serial no. 348776, while hunting for old oil field engines in southwestern Indiana. A farmer in the area told me about an engine in a barn on some land he farmed, so I contacted the farm's owner, and she said she'd sell it for \$10.

Her grandson had used an axe to knock the oiler off, most of the Wico magneto and the spark plug. The engine was among the most worn engines that I've ever encountered. The engine suffered from excessive play in every moving joint with nails or baling wire replacing the cotter pins.

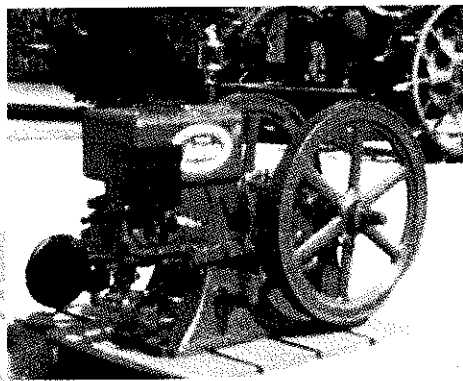


The casting date on the block is July 22, 1926, and I suspect that it was assembled some time that fall. Although most ARCO engines were used on Hardie orchard sprayers made at Hudson, Mich., this engine was supposedly used to pump water. It was mounted on an authentic Hercules cart, but the ARCO didn't come with the hopper cover or the normal crankcase enclosure.

In the United States, 4-H members often participate in a

project called Americana. Americana participants are encouraged to exhibit original or restored antique items that have a compelling story behind the item's history. Accordingly, my older son Kurt made the ARCO his 4-H Americana project.

In December 1974, Kurt disassembled and began repairing the engine. He reamed out all the worn cotter pin holes and installed larger cotter pins. He had the



Left: The 2 HP ARCO engine before the first restoration. Above: The same engine after it was restored in 1975.

cylinder bored out 1/64 of an inch and installed a 3-5/16-inch aluminum piston from a Continental engine.

Following original paint colors, the engine was painted blue and gray to approximate the original paint scheme, and the pin-striping was redone in gold. Since no ARCO reproduction decals were available at the time, we had new ones fabricated using the original decal on the engine as a guide. The new decals are made

of pressure-sensitive vinyl, India ink and a red felt-tip pen. The oval decal and letters were then cut out of the vinyl and applied on the engine. Once finished, my son exhibited the restored ARCO at the 1975 4-H fair and was awarded a Champion ribbon for his efforts.

The story of this ARCO engine doesn't end there. My sons exhibited it at engine shows for years, but as they grew up and became interested in other things (such as muscle cars) the engine was pushed to the back of the barn, where it stayed 'til last summer.

### History Repeats

Now – some 28 years later – my granddaughter has decided to make it her 4-H Americana project. So, we'll repeat the same familiar steps of getting it out again, stripping the paint off, re-doing and correcting a few earlier repairs, and making it look like-new once more. The engine's original cart was sold to our nearby friend Keith Kinney many years ago. Fortunately, he's going to loan it back to us for the 4-H project.

For now, I'm glad to see this old engine discovered again by yet another generation. Yet, I suppose that in another year or two my grandson will want to claim it for his own project, thus carrying on an age-old tradition of restoring old engines.

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