

Hercules Engine News

Including Economy, ARCO, Jaeger & Thermoil

by Glenn Karch
20601 Old State Road
Haubstadt, Indiana 47639

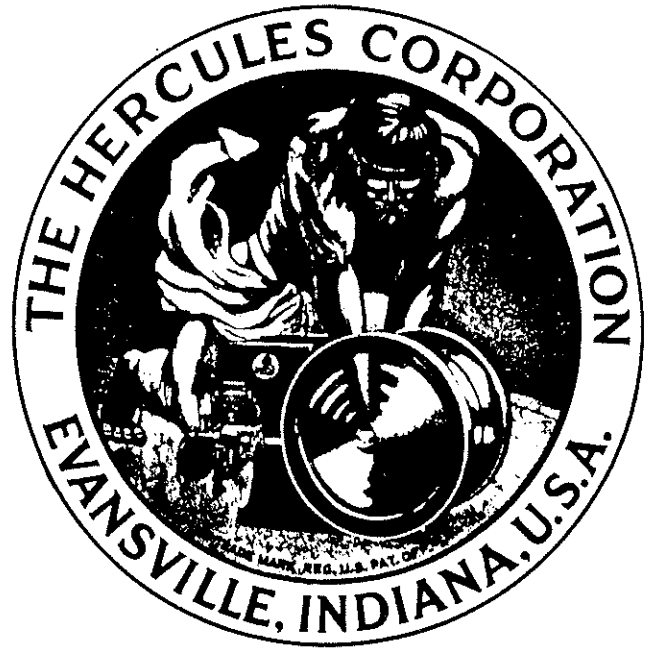
Interesting developments continue to occur at Hercules. Buggies are being turned out in excess of 300 per day, production of vehicle bodies is over 200 per day, and gas engines are produced at over 100 per day.

A farm tractor is developed and a prototype built. It was exhibited at several mid-western state fairs, and nearly 2000 orders were written. Ray Graham of the Graham Glass Company was an enthusiastic booster of the tractor that Hercules developed. It was demonstrated on a 3000 acre farm. It is presumed that was on Graham Farms, located north of Washington, Indiana. It was also demonstrated on leased land at the corner of Green River Road and Weinbach Avenue, southeast of Evansville, Indiana. Yours truly grew up in that very neighborhood, but neither my father, grandfather, nor any other old timers ever mentioned anything about it.

It was a three wheeled affair with two front steering wheels set apart. The long

hood blended into a large fender that covered the single rear drive wheel. The driver's seat and steering wheel extended to the left rear of the drive wheel. No good enough picture exists to show here. A Hercules tractor company was organized, but no factory was built, and no others were produced despite glowing accounts of the tractor's future in newspaper articles of the time. It's probably just as well, because other tractors of that design never made it either.

Hercules was marketing engines worldwide, and said that they were prepared to correspond in German, Spanish, French and Portuguese. A few pieces of literature in Spanish and French still exist. In an effort to market engines into hard-to-reach areas, a special 1½ HP engine was built that could be shipped in parts weighing less than 50 pounds each. These parts could then



be transported by man or beast into remote areas and there assembled. Information indicates that many of this type were shipped to India. An example of this special engine is shown at bottom left. Note that the cylinder-hopper casting can be separated from the base.

Salesmen were called in off the road and orders were being turned down. Hercules had run out of foundry capacity. Construction of a new larger foundry was begun in 1918 and completed in 1919.

In November 23, 1920, the Hercules corporate structure was changed, bringing some half dozen Hercules companies into the Hercules Corporation. Refrigeration was also becoming a part of Hercules efforts.

It was reported that during their first eight years of operation, some 350,000 engines had been built. Engine builders of that time had a strong tendency to exaggerate the production numbers. A careful study of known serial numbers would indicate that the number was more like 250,000. That's still over 30,000 per year, or 100 per day.

Work was being done on new designs for 1½, 3, 6 and 8 HP Thermoil engines to be built. Sears was still interested in marketing a low cost fuel engine, but that's another complicated and interesting story. ○

