

## Brandon Light Tractor Plowing Demonstration of 1916

While the Winnipeg Tractor Trials had come to an end in 1913, E.W. Hamilton the editor of the Canadian Thresherman and Farmer magazine remained interested in promoting tractors and, more importantly, the farming public remained very interested in tractors with their promise of being able to perform more work at a lower cost than horses. Hamilton was aware of the tractor demonstration days which had begun to be held in the US where tractor companies offered the opportunity to farmers to operate their tractors. These events were local in nature and drew farmers from the local area. The advantage of a tractor demonstration day was that a farmer could actually operate a tractor while cultivating or performing the other tasks that it would be called upon to do on a farm and the farmer could speak directly to a company representative. And there were no “high falluting” test results that a farmer needed an engineer to interpret. Demonstration days in the US grew to such an extent that the Tractor Manufacturers Association set up a tractor demonstration circuit so as to better coordinate demonstration dates allowing manufacturers to efficiently move equipment and representatives between demonstrations. US demonstrations began with plowing but soon expanded to tractors discing, harrowing and seeding.

In the spring of 1914 Hamilton attempted to get the Western Agricultural and Arts Association which operated the Brandon Summer and Winter Fairs on board with the idea of a tractor demonstration. However the failure of the 1909 Brandon Tractor Trials weighed heavily on the Association’s mind and they passed on the idea. However in the spring of 1916, Hamilton again approached the Association and they agreed to host a demonstration for light tractors. The demonstrations were to be held during the dates of the Brandon Summer of 1916, it was decided that the tractor demonstrations would be held July 18, 19 and 20, 1916 between 10 AM and Noon. At the time the Association thought that if the demonstration was held by itself, not enough people would appear to make the event worthwhile. However if held in conjunction with the Summer Fair, farmers would appear in numbers as they could also take in the livestock events, particularly the heavy horses, for which the Brandon Summer and Winter Fairs were known for.

The Brandon Summer Fair scored a first here as the 1916 demonstration was the very first tractor demonstration to be held in Western Canada.

A field adjacent to the Summer Fair grounds was obtained to allow the tractors to demonstrate plowing to anyone who cared to attend. The field was a sandy loam soil and appears to have been worked before as the plows were fitted with stubble bottoms. When it was determined that 19 tractors would be attending the event, the field was divided into 19 plots to allow each tractor to have one plot. However the plot size varied according the number of plow bottoms that each tractor was pulling. So a tractor with a 4 bottom plow had more land to plow than a tractor handling a 2 bottom plow. The formula used allocated to each plow bottom 1.16 acres.

The rules at the Brandon demonstration were simple:

- The dates of July 18, 19 and 20, 1916 between the hours of 10 AM to 12 Noon set for the Demonstrations.
- Tractors had to start plowing promptly at 10 AM or the tractor would not be allowed to demonstrate that day.
- No tractor could be entered that pulled more than five bottoms.
- Any make of plow could be pulled. 12 inch or 14 inch shares could be used but the stubble moldboards must be in use on all plows.
- All plowing must be done to a uniform depth of five inches.
- A tractor company could enter as many tractors as it wanted as long as they were of different types or sizes.
- The tractors could travel at any speed the operator wanted and could make as many stops as the operator wanted to make. However each tractor had to complete at least one round during the two hour daily event.
- Tractors had to be entered before July 1, 1916.
- Each entry was responsible for providing any supplies necessary including the plow.
- The plot of ground assigned to each entry had to be plowed before the tractor was allowed to leave at the end of the event.
- A \$10 entry fee was charged. In the event of a company making multiple entries, the first entry was charged \$10 with subsequent entries for this company being charged \$5.
- This event is not a contest and no medals will be awarded.
- The demonstrations will be in the charge of a field man who has full authority over the field.
- Each tractor should have six 6 ft long stakes to mark out the first furrow.
- All of a company’s supplies must be removed from the field at the end of the demonstration event.

### Specifications of Tractors that were entered in the Brandon Plowing Demonstration

NAME OF COMPANY	Nominal Rating	Broken Horse Power	Draw-Bar Horse Power	No. Cylinders	Arrangement of Cylinders	Size of Cylinders	Tractor Road Speed	Cooling System	Size of Wheels		Plus length Inches	Total Width	Full Tank Capacity
									Rear	Front			
Canadian Avery Co.	12-25	25	12	2	Opposed	6½ x 7	1½-2½	Water	56x20-30x 8	164	80	21	
	18-36	36	18	4	Opposed	5½ x 6	2-3	Water	65x20-35x 8	152	84	33	
	25-50	50	25	4	Opposed	6½ x 7	2-3	Water	69x20-38x10	176	90½	33	
Canadian Bull Tractor Co.	7-20	20	7	2	Opposed	5½ x 7	2½-3	Water	60-36x 4½	173	75½	18	
J.I. Case T. M. Co.	10-20	25	12	4	Vertical	4½ x 6	2½x-2½	Water	52x22-30x 8	150	67	20	
	12-25	40	20	2	Opposed	7 x 7	2-3	Water	56x18-38x 8	148½	73	17	
Emerson Brantingham	8-16	16	8	4	Vertical	4½ x 5	1½-2½	Water	60x24-48x10	180	96	25	
J. D. Adshhead Co. (Happy Farmer, Peoria)	8-16	16	8	2	Opposed	5 x 5	2½	Water	56x10-	156	78	15	
	8-20	20	8	4	Vertical	3½ x 5	3	Water	60x18-	172	78	12	
Hart, Parr Co.	22	22	15	2	Horizontal	5½ x 7	3½-2½	Oil	64x26-	153	95½	23½	
	27	27	17	1	Vertical	8½x10	1½-2½	Oil	74x12½-	107½	72	30	
International Harvester Co.	8-16	16	8	1	Horizontal	8 x12	2	Water	54x10-36 x0	135	56	19	
	10-20	20	10	2	Horizontal	6½ x 8	1½-2½	Water	54x10-36x 6	147	60	16	
Minneapolis Steel & Machinery Co.	15-30	30	15	4	Vertical	4½ x 7	2½-1½	Water	60x14-36x 8	178	65	30	
Marshall Son & Co. (Canada) Ltd	16-35	35	16	2	Vertical	7 x 7	1-0	Water	78x18-		169½	30	
Goold Shapley and Muir	15-25	25	15	2	Opposed	8 x10	2½	Water	74x24-44x10	162	97		
Gasoline Engine Supply Co.	12-24	24	12	2	Horizontal	6 x 7	2½	Water	52x10-28x 5	240	96	20	
Sawyer Massey	16-32	32	16	4	Vertical	5½ x 7	2½-3½	Water	62x20-38x 8	175	80½	30	
Grain Grower's Grain Co.	10-20	20	10	2	Opposed	6 x 8	2½-3½	Water	63x20-36x 7	189	91	21	

The event did not go off smoothly. On Monday, July 17 tractors were still being unloaded from railway flat cars. The Brandon railway yards were congested with cars carrying exhibits coming to the Brandon Summer Fair from the Edmonton Fair which had just ended. It was clear that some tractors booked for the demonstrations were caught in this congestion and would not be unloaded until sometime on the

18th. To top it all off, on the evening of the 17th, a heavy rain fell. It was then decided that no demonstrations would take place on Tuesday, July 18th but rather the 18th would be taken up with the various companies staking and striking out their plots of ground in preparation for business on the 19th.

At 9:50 AM on the 19th, all 19 tractors were running on the start line. At 10 AM sharp, sharp mind you, the clutches were engaged and all 19 tractors began plowing. 19 tractors in one location on the prairies at that time was a spectacle, never mind 19 tractors plowing.

It is thought 3,700 farmers watched the first day of demonstrations and nearly 5,000 farmers the next. Given the size of Brandon at the time, the logistics of moving this many farmers in and out of the city plus feeding them would have been a tremendous task. These numbers indicate that farmers came from some distance around Brandon and so arrived by train or by car, horse or foot. Local newspapers reported that people had driven by car as far as 80 miles one way to attend the demonstration and then returned home by car that night. Given the state of the roads at the time and the cars available, travel by car over such distances in one day was an amazing feat.

The large number of farmers would have overwhelmed the hotel rooms available and so either many of the farmers either left in the evening for home or slept in whatever stable, straw stack or ditch that was handy. Given many of them had probably homesteaded, a night in a straw stack would have held no mysteries for them. They probably drew a line at a chicken coop or a hog sty however. But whatever their abodes for the night, the number of farmers attending the event indicates how strong the interest was to see the tractors in operation.

The event was a success with the tractor companies attending being well pleased. Letters were sent to the Canadian Thresherman and Farmer from various companies expressing their appreciation for the event.

"We have much pleasure informing you that we have no complaint to make, nor have we at the present time any suggestions to offer in regard to the demonstration at the Brandon Exhibition. So far as we are concerned, this demonstration was a complete success and some of our head people from Brantford who were there report as being entirely satisfied. We can assure you that another year if a demonstration is put on, this company will be pleased to assist in every way possible to make the demonstration a success - Goold, Shapley & Muir.



Goold, Shapley & Muir 15-25 "Ideal" Kerosene Tractor, pulling a 5-bottom Cockshutt Powerlift Engine Gang

*Goold Shapley & Muir (GS&M) is important as it was a very early Canadian manufacturer of tractors. GS&M was formed in 1892 from Goold and Company, a manufacturer of beekeeper supplies and refrigerators. The new company diversified and began to manufacture windmills, gasoline engines and other machinery. Manufacturing gas engines resulted in GS&M getting into the tractor business. In 1907, the company introduced the "Ideal" tractor line which consisted of two models the 18-35 and 25-50. GS&M went on to produce the "Ideal Junior" a 15-25 tractor. The Ideal Junior used hopper cooled two cylinder opposed engine. GS&M tractors are rare today however they apparently were a decent tractor at the time.*

"It gives us great pleasure to express our opinion frankly regarding the plowing demonstration held at Brandon. We think that it is one of the best means possible for getting the farmer in actual touch with tractor conditions and as far as our company is concerned, we are greatly pleased with the result, both from an advertising point of view and from actual business closed. If you are interested in getting up any further demonstrations of the kind, you can rest assured that our company will do everything in its power to assist you - The Bull Tractor Co. of Canada, Ltd."

"The plowing demonstration as a whole was certainly something that all tractor manufacturers should be interested in at this time as there are so many very small tractors being made and offered to the farmers. The farmer, of course, is only seeking the one that best suits his purpose and we believe that a more extended plowing exhibition another year should be arranged, extending the time over to the afternoon so that the farmers who come in on the excursions will have the privilege of seeing it. We were well satisfied with the demonstration itself. - Hart Parr Company."

Given the attendance at the 1916 Demonstration, and the strong interest in the event from the tractor companies, a repeat of the demonstration at the Brandon Summer Fair was assured for 1917 and 1918. The 1917 event saw 48 tractors take to the field. The 1918 event appears to be the event at which the Fordson tractor made its formal appearance in Western Canada. While the Demonstrations ended with the 1918 event, the Brandon Summer Fair continued to host machinery companies displaying their farm equipment. In time this became known as "Machinery Row". As an indication of the size Machinery Row grew to, in 1948 a Million Dollars of farm machinery was on display. In 1948 a Million dollars was serious cash.

It is hard to gauge how significant the Brandon Tractor Demonstrations were to the acceptance of the tractor in Manitoba and Western Canada. However given the number of farmers who attended the events, the Brandon Demonstrations made an impact.