

Smallacombe - Sims Hart Parr 30-60 Tractor

At the 2016 Threshermen's Reunion and Stampede, Mr. David Stemler asked a Museum volunteer where the 30-60 Hart Parr tractor, donated by the Sims Brothers, was on the grounds. While taking Mr. Stemler to the tractor, Mr. Stemler identified himself to the volunteer as a descendant of Will Smallacombe who purchased this tractor when it was new. Mr. Stemler indicated he may have a photo of the 30-60 at work on the Smallacombe farm. The volunteer then asked if he would consider donating a digital copy of this photo to the Museum. A digital copy was received by the Museum several days later and is the image seen here of a Hart Parr 30-60 powering a threshing machine.

This photo is the only known photograph the Museum has of a tractor in the Museum's collection actually working in the field during its working life.



The Smallacombe - Sims Hart Parr 30-60 in the Museum's collection is seen here sometime in the early 1920 as it powers a threshing machine in the field. Of all the tractors and steam engines in the collection, this is the only photo the Museum has in its possession that shows a tractor in the collection actually working in the field.

Mr. Stemler thought the photograph had been taken sometime in the 1920s. As the photograph appears to be taken with a film camera, which were somewhat common by the 1920s, the date appears to be correct. Previous to 1920, film cameras were somewhat rare, with glass plate cameras being in common use. While the glass plate cameras were usually high quality cameras producing good quality images, they were expensive, not particularly user friendly and the glass plate negatives were heavy and prone to breakage. A glass plate camera in the hands of the average person was a rare event; but were commonly used by commercial photographers.

William Smallacombe was one of six sons of Thomas and Lydia Smallacombe. Thomas was born in Devonshire, England and immigrated to Ontario with his parents in 1855. He married Lydia Perkins of Osborne Ontario in 1874. In 1878, Thomas came out to Manitoba and homesteaded a quarter in the Huron district which is west of Purves, Manitoba. Thomas returned to Ontario in 1879 for his wife and two children, William and Albert. After they came back to the homestead, they were blessed with four more boys and one girl. At some point, Thomas and Lydia moved to a farm in the Crystal City area.

William Smallacombe, however, remained in the Purves area and operated a farm on the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ 18-2-10. In 1902, he married Lydia Shobbrook from Londesoro, Ontario. The family history is silent as to how he met a lady from Ontario. Perhaps he met her while visiting relatives in Ontario, or met her when she was visiting friends or relatives in the Purves area. William appears to have been a successful farmer, as he then acquired the N $\frac{1}{2}$ of 17-2-10 which was adjacent to the home 1/4. In 1909, William purchased the Hart Parr 30-60 for the sum of \$4,000 which at the time was a significant amount of money. William would have also had to purchase a plow and a threshing machine to match the tractor. William used the tractor on his farm as well as performed custom threshing in the Purves area with the tractor.

In 1912, following the passing of Lydia's sister, Elizabeth Crawford, William and Lydia took in two of Elizabeth's children, Ted and Edna Crawford, as Mr. Crawford was not able to take care of all six children he and Elizabeth had. While Mr. Crawford and the other four Crawford children remained in Ontario, the Smallacombes and the two Crawford children they took in remained in close contact with the Crawfords.

In 1929, William and Lydia moved to Pilot Mound to operate the John Deere agency. However, in 1930 Lydia passed away from heart troubles, and in 1931, William returned to the farm in the Purves area, which he operated until 1941 when he retired. He lived in Ontario from 1942 to 1945, and then returned to Pilot Mound to live with Edna Crawford, who had married Elmer Stemler of Pilot Mound. William Smallacombe passed away in 1958.

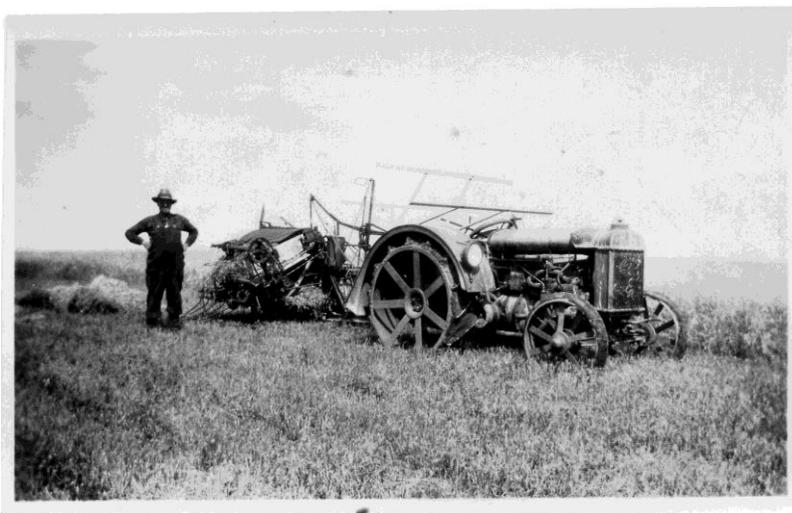
In 1928, the Hart Parr 30-60 was sold by William Smallacombe, and purchased by Herb Sims of the Snowflake, MB area. The 30-60 continued in service on the Sims farm. The tractor was parked in the 1940s, but Mr. Sims thought enough of tractor that he refused to let it be scrapped during the Second World War. The tractor was donated to the Museum in the 1950s, and was one of the first gas engines in the collection. For many years, the tractor participated in the steam outfit versus gasoline outfit threshing contest at the Museum's annual Threshermen's Reunion. The 30-60 remains in operating condition.

While there is a tank wagon in the photo, probably the tank contained kerosene fuel as the Hart Parr 30-60 was cooled with oil. As well as oil not freezing in cold weather, oil cooling also resulted in the engine running hotter than it would if it was cooled with water. This was a benefit when the tractor was burning kerosene as a fuel as the higher engine temperatures more thoroughly vaporized the kerosene as the fuel / air mixture was drawn into the engine cylinders. However, the pre-detonation of the fuel air mixture was a problem and the carburetor also injected a small amount of water into the fuel air mixture to prevent pre-detonation. It could well be that the tank wagon featured a multi compartment tank to hold kerosene and water, both of which would be consumed in the normal operation of the engine.

Kerosene was a common tractor fuel from 1910, well into the 1920s, with distillate fuel then appearing in the 1920s. Kerosene was cheaper than gasoline, and as burning kerosene as an engine fuel required the operator's attention, it was not really suitable for use in cars. Tractor operators had the time to adjust the carburetor properly as the tractor was moving slowly, or if on the belt, not moving at all. When burning kerosene as a fuel, the tractor operator also had to pay attention to the engine temperature and keep it up by adjusting the radiator shutters or curtains. Many kerosene rule tractors also had an intake manifold heat control. Using oil as a coolant fluid did away with radiator shutters and intake manifold heat.

Kerosene was a byproduct of the petroleum refineries of the time which used thermal cracking to produce gasoline from oil. With the perfection in the late 1930s of catalytic cracking which more thoroughly broke down the molecule chains of oil, more gasoline and less kerosene or distillate was produced per barrel of crude oil. Kerosene then become more expensive, and so fell out of use as a tractor fuel.

Mr. Stemler also donated digital copies of three other photos taken on the Smallacombe farm, two photos of a Fordson tractor pulling a binder and a photo of a horse drawn binder with the four horses identified, as well as the man operating the binder. Probably the Fordson replaced horses on the Smallacombe farm for duties such as pulling binders and seed drills. Given the Fordson's size and general maneuverability, it was well suited for these duties. With the proper sized plow and threshing machine, the Fordson would do an adequate job with these machines, however at a much slower pace than the larger Hart Parr. The Fordson is equipped with a single headlight. Given that farmers at the time were frugal, if the tractor was equipped with a headlight, then William Smallacombe intended to operate the tractor at night. Whether he was seeding, harrowing or pulling a grain binder at night is not known, however one would suspect it would be seeding or harrowing. As well as speeding the seeding of a crop, operating at night was cooler for the operator.



William Smallacombe is standing beside his Fordson tractor, which is drawing a grain binder. William appears to be taking a break from cutting a field of oats. Perhaps someone brought William lunch, and took the opportunity to take a photo of William in the field with the Fordson and binder?

There are no Smallacombes remaining in the Purves area, and so the Smallacombe family has passed the way of many other pioneer farm families in Western Canada. Other opportunities beckoned to many of these families, and so they moved on from their farms. New people came to these farms, and worked and struggled like William and Lydia Smallacombe. Some made their lives, and continue to make their lives on the farms. But once, the Smallacombes and others were here.