

Happy Farmer Model G

La Crosse, WI 1919-22



The Happy Farmer Tractor Co. was incorporated in 1915 in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and soon thereafter production of the Happy Farmer tractor began. That same year the La Crosse Implement Co. of La Crosse, Wisconsin, also began to sell the Happy Farmer tractor, and, in 1916, the two companies were combined to form the La Crosse Tractor Company. Tractor manufacturing was just one of several enterprises founded by La Crosse businessman Albert Hirschheimer.

The two happiest days in a Happy Farmer Owner's life; the day he got the tractor and the day he got rid of it.

In the early years, only two models were available, the 8-16 Model A and the 12-24 Model B. In 1919, these were replaced with the 12-24 model F, which was basically an improved Model B, and the four-wheeled 12-24 Model G. In 1921, the Model M "line-drive" 7-12 was released and was the first and only line-drive tractor tested at the Nebraska Tractor Tests. About a year later, the Model H 12-24 tractor was released, which was basically an improved Model G.

In 1922, after a failed bid to move to Oshkosh, Wisconsin, as the Oshkosh Tractor Company, the La Crosse Tractor

Co. announced its dissolution. In 1927, a former board member attempted to restart the company. He continued to sell parts as well as service and refurbish old Happy Farmers and La Crosse. In 1929, the La Crosse manufacturing segment was sold to Allis Chalmers, although the actual Lacrosse/Happy Farmer line was not. Happy Farmers have been found throughout the U.S. as well as France, South American, and Great Britain.

The La Crosse Happy Farmer G could be equipped with a "line-drive" system that enabled it to be controlled from an attached wagon or implement much like a team of horses. Four lines were used to control the tractor, two for steering and two for stopping. The Model G was built on the same frame as the Model F. The only difference between them was that the Model G used a conventional four-wheel chassis, while the Model F was a three-wheeled design. The Model G weighed in at 4,670 pounds and sold for about \$1,250.

The La Crosse advertising stated:

"The La Crosse Tractor is based upon the proven engineering principles which have been so successful in the La Crosse Happy Farmer Tractor, combined with standard four wheel construction of the most practical type. Whenever you see the bright orange of the La Crosse Tractor there you may expect to find a Happy Farmer.

It is large enough to do any power farming job on the average farm, while

it is small enough to be economical on fuel and light in weight. You can handle it, together with the La Crosse Tractor Implements, single handed."

The La Crosse Tractor is famous for its low upkeep cost. It holds the official record for low fuel consumption per acre and for non-stop efficiency.

Although the company promoted its tractors as being well-built and reliable, actual use suggested something different. An old saying notes "The two happiest days in a Happy Farmer Owner's life; the day he got the tractor and the day he got rid of it." In parts of Wisconsin, farms couldn't even sell Happy Farmers back to the dealer. They wouldn't even take them in trade. Consequently, many owners stockpiled Happy Farmers for their parts.

