

**IHC**

# Type A

Chicago, IL 1907-16



The International Harvester Company was formed in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in 1902 by a merger of the McCormick Harvesting Machine Co., the Deering Harvester Co. and a number of smaller companies. Cyrus McCormick was responsible for introducing a highly successful reaper in the 1830s, and his descendants turned the company into a world-famous producer of harvesting machinery. McCormick's main rival was William Deering, who founded a company to manufacture binders, mowers, and other harvest equipment in 1870. In the 1890s, the rivalry reached new heights, and in 1902, the two companies decided to pool their resources and a merger was announced.

Although McCormick had experimented briefly with tractor design, culminating in the lightweight "Auto-Mower" of 1898, the first tractors produced by the International Harvester Co. (IHC) in 1906 were entirely different.

In 1889, S.S. Morton's friction-drive traction trucks were already attracting attention and, in 1906, International Harvester started producing gasoline tractors. With this chassis, almost any gasoline engines could be mounted as the power unit. International Harvester did so with its newly designed gasoline engines. Various styles of friction-drive tractors were built in the following years.

These early tractors consisted of an internationally "famous" single-cylinder stationary engine mounted on a proprietary chassis produced by Samuel

Morton, and it featured frictiondrive to the wheels. They were available in several different sizes: 10, 12, 15, and 20 horsepower. The friction drive proved unsuitable under a heavy load, and so was replaced by gear drive in the Type A and Type B models that appeared in 1907 and 1908, respectively.

The Type A design arrived from the Ohio Manufacturing Company in crude form, probably as a hand-built sample. C. N. Hostetter, the Superintendent of the Experimental Department, recalls the sample did not come with drawings or specifications and that the gears did not use a standard pitch. The first attempt to duplicate the gear-drive design resulted in a machine with gears that either could not be driven into place or simply did not touch at all. According to Hostetter, IHC engineers conferred and decided to make an appropriate engineering drawing and simply discard the samples. Despite the fact that IHC bought the Type A design, enough of the engineering was performed in-house for the Type A to earn the IHC name.

In 1909, the 12-horsepower, two-speed Type A was introduced. The tractor featured an interesting gear-driven forward drive and friction-drive reverse. International said it reduced the possibility of stripping the gears by putting it in reverse while still moving forward. Whether this was actually a problem or if the friction-drive reverse was cheaper and simpler to build is unknown, but many of the early tractors

used a gear-drive forward and a friction-drive reverse.

The Type A used two friction clutches rather than a friction drive. The larger one moved the tractor forward, while the smaller one engaged an intermediate gear that put the tractor in reverse.

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Two forward speeds had obvious advantages over one, and IHC described the tractor as meeting the need for a "fast moving tractor." Considering the early tractor engines ran about 240 rpm and propelled the tractors forward at a couple of miles per hour, "fast-moving" was only relative. Regular production ended in 1913, but a few Type A tractors were assembled as late as 1916.