

Olmstead

25-50

Great Falls, MT 1912



The Olmstead Gas Traction Company was founded by Charles Olmstead in 1912 in Big Timber, Montana, and would later move to Great Falls, Montana. The Olmstead Gas Traction Company built only one tractor, the Olmstead Four Wheel Pull (it was also the only tractor built in Montana).

It is believed less than 100 of these machines were ever built. Engine number 27, located at JUMP, is the only known one in existence today.

A confident operator stood way back at the rear of the tractor sending about 30 feet of machinery along in front of him, without power steering.

Very little is known about Mr. Olmstead or his company, but what we do know is printed here.

The Olmstead tractor was one of the earliest attempts at an all-wheel-powered tractor. It was built with an articulated frame, meaning the front end twists and turns independent of the rear end. The engine was carried on the rear half and the fuel tank and tool boxes on the front half. This meant a confident operator stood way back at the rear of the tractor sending about 30 feet of machinery along in front of him, without power steering.

Before becoming a part of the tractor collection at JUMP, this Olmstead tractor belonged to the late Oscar Cooke, who owned and operated Oscar's Dream Land in Billings, Montana. He had bought the Olmstead from Frank Scott of Meeteetse, Wyoming. According to Oscar, quoted from an article in Gas Engine Magazine, "Several parts were gone when we got it, and we made most of them and had the sprockets cast new as Mr. Scott said his grandchildren had tossed the originals into the Burlington River where he could not find them. We also put on all four new chains." From what Oscar was able to find out about this tractor, it was first sold to a county for roadwork and then went to a rancher who used it to plow heavy land and perform other general farm work.

According to an article in "Motor Age," in 1914, the Olmstead Gas Traction Company of Great Falls, Montana,

purchased the plant of the Curtis Truck and Forging Co. of Decatur, Illinois, to manufacture four-wheel-pull gasoline tractors for road and farm work of all kinds. Due to the heavy freight charges from Montana to the middle states, the company felt the necessity for an eastern plant and decided to locate it in Decatur, Illinois.



The Olmstead #1, built in Big Timber, Montana, in 1909. Mr. Olmstead is on the tractor.

It is assumed financial difficulties of the Great Depression in the late 1920s ended the production of the Olmstead tractor because Olmstead relocated to Long Beach, California, according to the 1930 census, and he was working in a truck factory.