

Indiana

5-10

Anderson, IN 1918-22



Developed in 1917 by Star Tractor Co. of Findlay, Ohio, this 5-10 tractor was known as the Star Tractor until 1919 when the Indiana Silo Co. of Anderson, Indiana, bought out the Star Tractor Co. and renamed the tractor The Indiana Tractor. The Indiana Silo Company was the largest manufacturer in the country of wood-stave silos for storing chopped corn (ensilage) in the first quarter of the 20th century.

The **INDIANA TRACTOR**

INDIANA SILO AND TRACTOR COMPANY
ANDERSON, INDIANA

In 1919, rights for a lightweight, front-wheel-drive tractor were acquired from the Star Tractor Company of Findlay, Ohio, because of the rapidly expanding market for small tractors. An aggressive marketing campaign was launched, and the company name was changed to include "tractor." The Indiana Silo & Tractor Company announced a new factory expansion would be built in Anderson to house the tractor production.

The tractors unusual design, with two large drive wheels in the front and a removable seat at the rear suspended over a transport truck or a farm implement, allowed the farmer to attach the old horse-drawn equipment they already had to the tractor as attachments. This ability to operate the horse-drawn implements from their original seat was a huge advantage over

other tractors that put the operator on the rear of the tractor over the drive wheels and away from the controls of adapted horse-drawn farm implements being pulled behind. Farmers either had to dismount from the tractor to get to the implement controls or devise extensions to allow adjustments from the tractor seat.

During the Indiana's production life, other manufacturers began to make implements for the tractor. The 1-bottom, 16-inch Oliver no. 61 plow was a popular choice. Almost any horse-drawn tool could be modified to fit the Indiana tractor, including riding discs, grain drills, grain binders, and corn binders.

However, lightweight, front-end drive tractors such as the Indiana were not as good at backing with a heavy load. The tractor's back end often reared up, creating a dangerous situation for the driver perched over lightweight implements.

Most tractors of the era were huge, cumbersome, expensive machines. But farmers accustomed to working with teams of horses wanted something smaller and easier to handle. The Indiana was rated as a 5-10 model, meaning 5 horsepower at the drawbar and 10 horsepower at the belt pulley. The company claimed it replaced three horses and did more work than four horses. Tractors were being heavily promoted at the time for not requiring feed and care year around as horses

did. Gasoline was very inexpensive and tractors could work around the clock at faster speeds.

According to an Indiana Tractor leaflet that compared the cost of horses and an Indiana Tractor:

"Are Your Horses Working for You Or Are You Working For Them?" Within the box under the subtitle, "Comparison of Farm Power Cost - Letters received from 261 Farmers" are figures comparing the five-year cost of farming with an Indiana tractor verses the four workhorses it could replace. The figures show the five-year cost of the tractor at \$2,750, not counting any residual value in the tractor, verses \$8,462.60 for four horses, including a \$400.00 remaining value for the horses and their harness."

Although field reports for the Indiana tractor were generally favorable, the light design did not prove very durable. Heavier conventional four-wheel tractor models like the Fordson, with enclosed cast-iron transmissions, won the market. Sales for the Indiana tractor were much lower than anticipated, and the company was driven into bankruptcy by 1922. That ended the brief entry into the tractor market and wiped out an otherwise very successful silo business, making the Indiana tractor a rare bird indeed. Only a few are known to exist and even fewer have been restored.