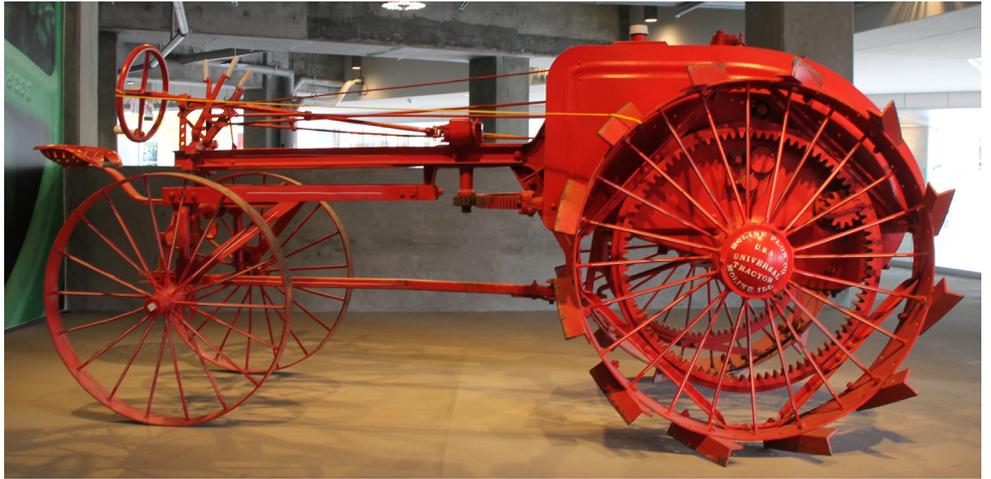


# Moline Universal Model C

Moline, IL 1917-23



The Moline Plow Company (MPC) was formed in the 1870s when the firm of Candee & Swan, a competitor of Deere and Company, won a lawsuit against Deere that allowed it to use the “Moline Plow” name. Reorganized under the new name, it built a line of horse-drawn plows and other implements to serve the large American agricultural market.

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The implement line included wagons and carriages, and the company absorbed various smaller implement and wagon companies throughout the years. MPC was tremendously successful, and from 1895 to 1910, business doubled every five years. Gross sales for the year ending June 30, 1913, were estimated at \$15 million. Yet “power farming” was gaining in popularity, and in 1915, MPC purchased the Universal Tractor Co. of Columbus, Ohio.

The Moline Universal Tractor was an early attempt to serve unmet market demand for a small, light, affordable, general-

purpose tractor. The Moline Universal was so versatile, people consider it to be the first practical row-crop tractor a decade ahead of both Farmall and the Fordson. The Universal would become the best-selling tractor of its time. Many imitators were made, and the Universal would become the patriarch of the long line of farm equipment. It would later become the Minneapolis-Moline. The Universal was built on two ideas. First, farmers were ready for an agile, lightweight row-crop machine and, second, many of the early-1900s farmers were not ready to let their horse out to pasture. Many farmers still loved to work their horses because it gave them a sense of control.

This row-crop tractor design, with the driving wheels and engine at the front and a hitch at the rear, allowed a variety of implements to be attached for various tasks. The farmer could easily adapt his existing horse-drawn implements to be pulled by this tractor, and he could also use the seat on these implements when driving the machine. Farmers claimed the Model C was a tractor ahead of its time. Indeed, an electric starter, lockable axle, standard headlamp, and a variety of rear attachments all gave farmers a flexible and lightweight tractor that was ultra modern. Early models of the “Universal” produced by Moline used a two-cylinder engine first brought in from Reliable Steam Engine Company and then later built by Moline themselves. In 1918, they re-launched the tractor as the Model D with a four-cylinder engine, electric starter, and electric

lights. Although the “Universal” was an interesting design concept, it never really caught on.

**MOLINE  
UNIVERSAL TRACTOR**  
*“It Solves the Farm Help Problem”*

The unfavorable economic climate of the early 1920s, including the post-World War I recession, the depression of 1920–21, and the tractor wars, forced the Moline Universal out of production in 1923. In 1924, Moline chose the implement line for its future focus, and they changed the name to the Moline Implement Company to reflect this decision.

In 1929, the Moline Implement Company was merged with two other companies, the Minneapolis Steel & Machinery Company and the Minneapolis Threshing Machine Company (both of Minneapolis, Minnesota), to form the Minneapolis-Moline Power Implement Company.