

Russell Steam Engine

Massillon, OH 1882-1924



The Russell & Company had its roots all the way back to 1842. Originally carpenters, the trio of Russell brothers – Charles, Nahum, and Clement – formed the C.M. Russell & Co. in 1942 to make threshers and horse powers after their carpentry shop burned down.

In 1846, the citizens of Massillon realized they needed a railroad. The Russell brothers not only bought stock in the Ohio & Pennsylvania Railroad to urge it to come through Massillon, but also built railroad handcars and stock cars for the company.



Russell Company Logo "The Boss"

There is no exact date available for when the Russell brothers started making steam tractor engines, but it is believed to have begun shortly after their incorporation of their company in 1878.

From 1882 to 1924, nearly 16,000 Russell traction engines were produced. Available in sizes ranging from 6 hp all the way up to 150 hp, Russell offered engines for nearly every application.

In 1887, Russell offered the 6 horsepower, which was equipped with self-adjusting piston rings, which freed up the task of lubrication. In the same year, Russell & Co. also create a 10-horsepower model, which included the patented features of a friction clutch, reverse gear, equilibrium valve, and boiler. In 1891, The 10-horsepower model, along with their 13-horsepower and 16-horsepower models, included a throttle lever, brake lever, steam chest, and reverse lever.

Along with the engines, Russell produced a full line of threshing machines, horsepowers, railroad cars, sawmills, and other farm equipment. Russell was one of the largest employers in Massillon for many years.

Like many of the other successful steam-engine builders, Russell was late to make a move toward gas-powered equipment. However, in 1909 they produced their first gas-powered tractor. Russell tractors were solidly built, like all of their products, but they were not particularly innovative, which perhaps cost them a significant part of the market share.

Although very successful in the steam engine and threshing industry, the Russell Company did not do as well in the new gas-powered market. While they did produce several gas- and kerosene-powered tractors, the Russell Company of Massillon, Ohio, was sold at auction in March 1927. A small branch of the company called Russell Service Co. continued on and provided repair parts until 1942.

The Russell falls into the orphan tractor category, meaning it had no parent or offspring companies.

A paramount principle of the Russell company was that Russell machinery should be durable, efficient, and economical. Russell steam engines were not known for their innovative design, but rather for their ease of use and maintenance. All moving parts were located in plain sight and were easily accessible. This made it easy for a farmer to adjust and repair a Russell steam engine using ordinary tools.

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