

I FOUND THIS 1913 RUMELY GasPull in 1992, about 20 miles from my home. A guy told me a Rumely GasPull was sitting in a woods nearby, but I didn't believe him at first. A Rumely GasPull just sitting out in a woods in Indiana? That's something you don't hear about every day.

I went to look at it, and it was very rough. There was a 14-inch walnut tree growing through the front wheel, the cab was gone, and it was so rusty some of the grousers on the rear wheels were rusted in two. The story I was told is that one family owned three of them, and this is what was left. From the quantity of GasPull parts there, I'd say that was probably right. I made an offer on it, and the owner thought about it for about two weeks before he decided to sell.

Word had gotten around, and the day I went to get it, about six guys showed up with a chainsaw, axes, and shovels



## GasPull—A Universal by Rumely

*Patrick Ertel's interview with Kent Kaster*





A 14-inch walnut tree was entangled in the front wheel. At first glance, the tractor didn't look too bad, considering it had been out in the weather for decades. Notice that scavengers had cut off the drawbar.

to help get it out. I got it home, and it sat for four or five years before I got up the courage to start restoring it.

The radiator needed to be rebuilt, as it was rusted out. It has a steel header tank and a cast-iron bottom tank with 144 brass tubes rolled into them like the tubes in a steam boiler. There is no solder at all, it's just the tight fit between the brass and the iron that keeps it from leaking. We took it to Bob Gold at B&B Steam in New Point, Indiana, to be rebuilt. He has all the equipment to repair the tanks and roll the tubes in.

The oiler is an odd model made by Detroit. All the lubrication for the engine comes from the oiler. There is no oil reservoir in the crankcase. The oil runs from the oiler, through the bearings, and then collects in the bottom of the crankcase. You drain it out now and then, when it gets too full. We took the cover off the oiler, and there was no water in it, but the shaft was stuck. It wasn't too much of a problem to free it up. I've never seen another oiler like this one, so I was glad to be able to make this one work.

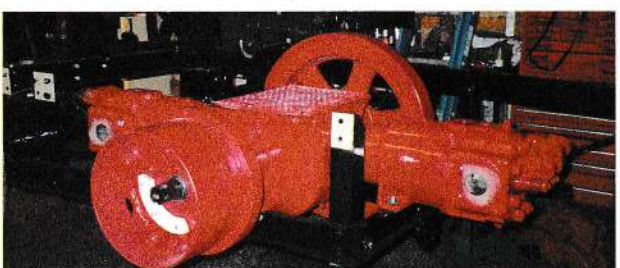
We had trouble finding a machine shop that could bore a cylinder 22 inches long. We had to start boring it with an engine-cylinder borer and finish with a line-boring machine.

The old rods and pistons were usable, except we had to repour half of one rod bearing. I had new valves made and increased the size of the valve stem from the original 3/4-inch to 9/16-inch so we wouldn't have to make new guides, too.

The GasPull doesn't have anything in common with other Rumely tractors. Rumely got it when it bought the



Word got around that I'd bought the GasPull, and the day I went to get it, half a dozen guys showed up with shovels, axes, and a chainsaw to help me get it home.



With new cylinder sleeves, valves, and a new paint job, the engine was ready to go back into the frame.



New hood sheet metal was put on the old framework.



Each cylinder is cast integrally with one of the crankcase halves.



Four bolts hold each rod cap on.



The crankcase isn't very big because the engine was not designed to have any oil standing in it.

## Wrong Fuel for the Times

The GasPull tractor had a short and checkered career on the stage of American agriculture. It first appeared in 1909 as the Universal Farm Motor, built by the Universal Tractor Company of Crookston, Minnesota.

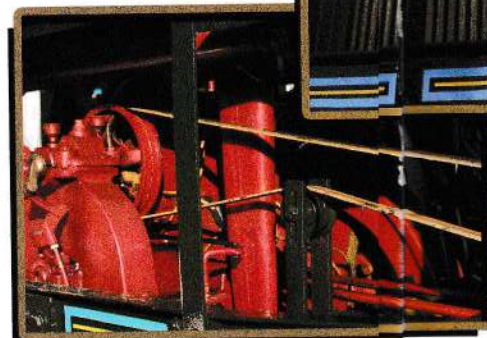
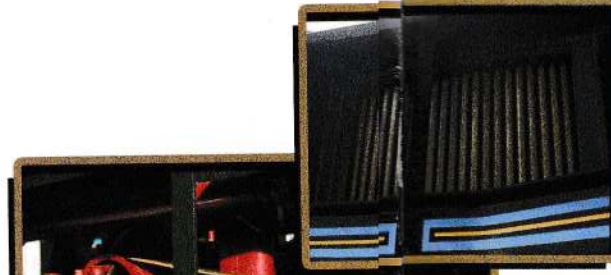
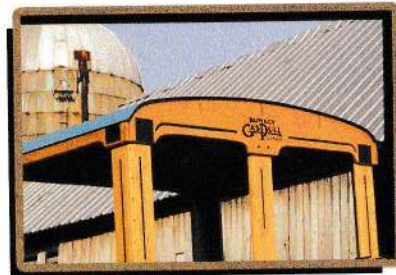
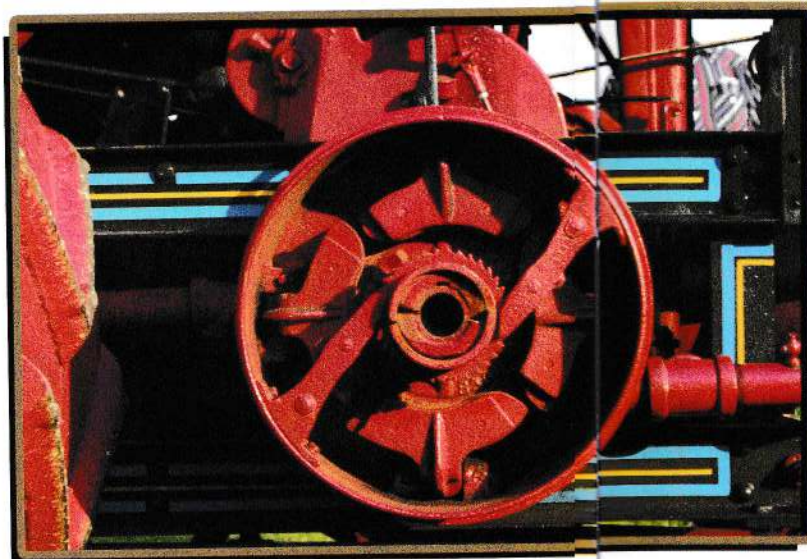
The Universal was powered by a 2-cylinder, 707ci, horizontally opposed engine with a bore and stroke of 7½x8 inches. It was originally introduced as an 18hp tractor but was soon being advertised as a 20hp machine.

The design, by F.O. Espe, was a good one for its day but was at a disadvantage because of the fuel it required. Unlike many tractors of that time, which were designed to run on kerosene or light oil, the Universal was designed to operate on pure gasoline. A gasoline engine was easier to operate, but by 1910, gasoline supplies were becoming unreliable and more expensive due to the increasing demand from automobiles. The farm industry liked oil tractors because they would run on almost anything, while gasoline tractors were restricted to operating on gasoline.

Fortunately, threshing-machine manufacturers were scrambling for power sources for their machines, and any tractor that would run reliably was in great demand by them. Northwest Thresher of Stillwater, Minnesota, bought the Universal Tractor Company, in 1911, when the farm-machinery industry was in a frenzy. Farm-implement companies that could supply both the threshing machine and the tractor to drive it were doubling their profits, and every threshing-machine maker wanted a tractor in its catalog. The demand for tractors was high because a company that could produce a successful tractor would be a gold mine for an investor. Consequently, some-65 companies were in the tractor business, though fewer than 30 were actually building tractors, and most of them were only experimental. Companies were being created, bought, and sold by the hour. Northwest Thresher was purchased in 1912 by an investment group, which itself was purchased by the M. Rumely Company, within months. Rumely continued to build the Universal, which it renamed the GasPull, for a few months.

The GasPull was a poor fit in the Rumely product line. Rumely had made its reputation on a successful oil-fueled OilPull, and its advertising stressed the advantage of an oil tractor over a gas tractor. It is no surprise that the GasPull had a short life in Rumely's hands. The M. Rumely Company went bankrupt shortly after purchasing Northwest Thresher, and when it emerged from its financial problems in 1915 as the new Advance-Rumely Company, the GasPull was just a memory. 🛠️





Northwest Thresher Company. It was originally a Universal. Rumely made some improvements when it started building the tractor. For one thing, it moved the rear axle back four inches to make it easier to work on. On the early ones, you couldn't take the rear head off the engine without taking the whole rear axle out. It runs on straight gas, so there is no water injection or anything.

The gearing was in excellent shape. There wasn't much we had to do there. It has two speeds in forward and reverse. The gears are exposed, and you have to get off the tractor and slide the gears by hand to change speeds.

The biggest problem we faced was rust. Even heavy pieces of iron had rusted through. I had to install all new water and exhaust pipes and have a dozen or so grousers for the rear wheels recast, as well as replace a couple of spokes in each front wheel, all because of rust.

A scavenger had cut steel out of the front support, the frame, the rear drawbar, and the gearshift. The same size stock is available today, so it was just a matter of cutting and patching new steel back in. The channel-iron side rails for the frame were so bad we had to start over and

make new ones out of 5x2-inch channel iron. We hot-riveted the old cross members to the new frame.

The sheet metal over the engine was rusted badly, so we put new skin on the old framework. There was not even enough wood left in the cab to make patterns. Don Rhodes in Michigan has a GasPull that he and his father restored several years ago, and he loaned me the old wooden pieces from his to use as patterns.

The cab was probably painted originally, but the natural-finish oak looked so good, I didn't want to paint over it. I'm not sure all the colors are correct, but we did the best we could with the information we had. I saw some blue on the roof so we painted the roof blue.

We got the Rumely Globe decals from Jack Maple and made all the rest ourselves. We make many decals in our business, K&K Antique Tractor, so that wasn't a problem for us, once we found out what the decals were supposed to look like. I wish to thank Dennis Rhodes and Dennis Powers, two other GasPull owners, for their help in finding paint colors and decal designs.

Every bolt in the tractor was replaced. It originally had square-headed bolts, so that's what we used. The magneto isn't the correct one, but it is what was on it when we found it. We finished in time for the big Rumely get-together at Wauseon, Ohio, in 2003. 🛠️