

# FARM COLLECTOR

Dedicated to the Preservation  
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Collector on track with

## Lindeman Crawlers

### Orphaned Oilburner

Briggs & Stratton engine  
rescued from remote island

### Classic Pumps

Farm relics find a future  
in Iowa man's collection



# Long Live Lindeman

## Lindeman crawler finds new home in Ohio collector's John Deere herd

By Jason B. Harmon

**T**here's no doubt about it, Terry Wachtman is a devoted John Deere collector. The Defiance, Ohio, old-iron enthusiast grew up around John Deere tractors and uses them nearly every day on his family's farm. Yet, his small collection of restored green tractors wasn't complete, Terry says, until he added one more special machine – a John Deere Model BO-Lindeman crawler.





"I always wanted one," Terry explains about his steel-tracked fascination with the crawlers he read about in books and magazines for years. "I told myself I wouldn't buy another piece unless it was a Lindeman."

Terry, 30, honored that promise in January 2003, when he finally bought his dream crawler.

He searched high and low for a Lindeman to restore, but had little luck finding one, in part because so few were produced – about 1,600, most sources agree. Restored Lindeman crawlers are too pricey for Terry's budget, so he had to find a well-used tractor to match his price range.

By chance, a friend who knew about Terry's Lindeman search discovered a classified ad placed by a Prairie City, Ore., cattle rancher, and Terry was understandably delighted.

When he responded to the ad, the 70-year-old rancher explained that he could no longer turn the tractor's hand crank to start its engine. The rancher sadly sold the machine that served him for decades on the ranch, and Terry happily gave it a new home.

### Rough-cut

The Lindeman crawler arrived by truck at Terry's farm in February with the mercury hovering at 20 degrees below zero, hardly ideal conditions for greeting the newest addition to his ever-growing herd of John Deere tractors. The tractor's steel was as cold as the weather itself, so Terry moved the tractor inside his shop to warm the crawler for a proper inspection. What he found didn't surprise him.

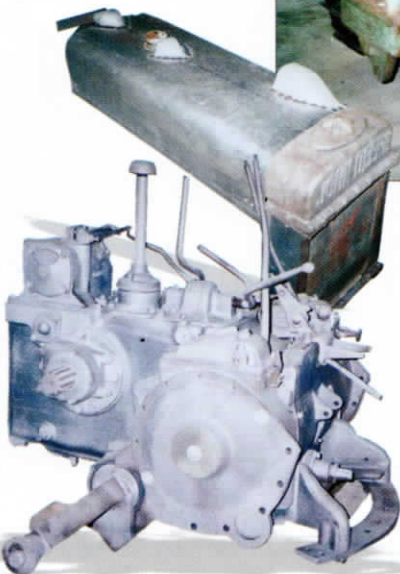
"It was rough," Terry says about the little tractor. "But I was prepared for the poor condition because I'd seen photos."

Yet, he wasn't prepared for the nearly complete engine overhaul the tractor needed. The rust-covered body showed its age from years of difficult work in Oregon's high-desert cattle country, but new paint was the least of Terry's worries.

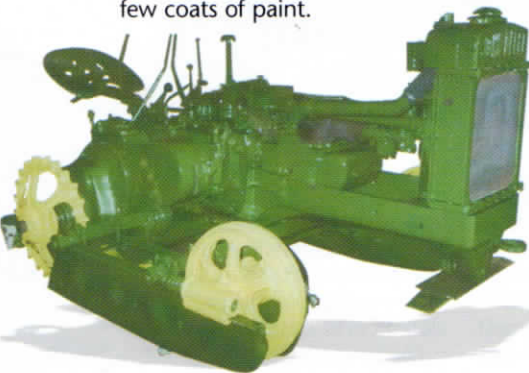
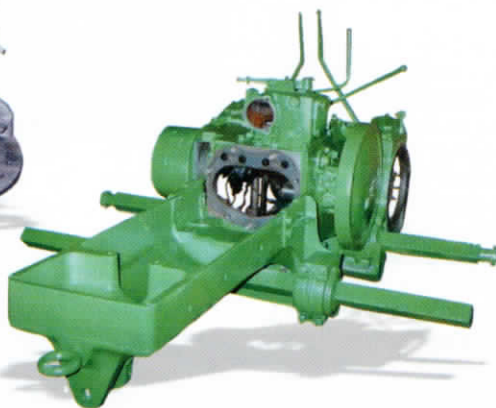
When he cranked the engine, he heard the telltale rattle and clank that signals rod and piston troubles. Terry removed the engine cover and discovered the crankcase was filled with frozen water that he describes as "black ice." Fortunately, the ice didn't crack the block, and after a bit of tinkering Terry decided to test the tractor and discover its weaknesses.

With snow on the ground and a chill in the air, Terry hooked the Lindeman crawler to the old sleigh his great grandfather built decades before, and his

**Right:** Terry's John Deere Model BO-Lindeman crawler as it looked before restoration in January 2003.



**Above:** The crawler's transmission and drive axles are primed for painting. **Right:** The same components after a few coats of paint.



**Left:** The Lindeman crawler is nearly completed, although the tracks have yet to be installed, as well as other finishing touches like decals and gauges. The entire restoration process was relatively short, and Terry and others completed the crawler just three months after it arrived at his family's Ohio farm.

father, Vernon, pulled his grandchildren around the farm.

Terry's Lindeman crawler was built sometime between 1939 and 1947, although the exact date is impossible to determine because the tractor's brass serial number tag was absent when the machine arrived. Based on numbers stamped on some components, however, Terry suspects the crawler is one of the earlier production models.

Unfortunately, Terry's initial fears about knocking rods and broken pistons were true. Rather than wait for good weather to restore the tractor, Terry tackled the project sooner rather than later to get that crawler back on track.

### Remove and restore

Although Terry's a relatively young collector in a hobby dominated by elders, he's an old hand at restoring old iron.

"I've just always been fascinated with mechanical things," Terry explains.

Terry was only 8 years old when he first operated his family's 1944 John Deere Model B tractor, and eventually restored that same machine in high school as his first attempt at breathing new life into an old tractor. His father also collects and restores old iron – and only John Deere tractors are found on the farm.

"Everything's John Deere," Terry adds.





Before the Lindeman crawler, Terry and his father restored a 1934 Model D and a 1936 Model A, while Terry restored a 1959 Model 730 diesel standard and a 1929 Model GP on his own.

The family's love for John Deere tractors began with Terry's grandfather, Fred Wachtman, who bought a 1936 Model A. It was the first John Deere in the Wachtman family, and Terry's tried for years to bring it back into the fold. He knows the tractor's whereabouts, but the current owner won't part with the tractor. Terry remains hopeful that it will someday return to the family farm.

With the help of his brother, David, and Terry's girlfriend, Kaycie Deming, Terry began to restore the Lindeman. As a mechanic at an International truck dealership, he was well suited to the task.

Terry and his helpers spent two weeks dismantling the entire tractor. The engine needed the most work, so he split the block – and sure enough – found many broken parts, including a piston and connecting rod.

Since many John Deere parts – even those for unusual Lindeman crawlers – are available from after-market sources, Terry easily located most of the components he needed to restore the crawler. Still, he discovered the steering drive clutches were worn beyond repair. No vendors he contacted carried the clutch parts, so he hired a shop to custom fabricate the pieces.

With a new piston and rod, the engine was essentially good-as-new and Terry turned his attention to the trac-



tor's exterior. The tiny crawler's sheet metal was too rusted to restore, so Terry purchased a new engine cover from an after-market supplier, as well as new decals and gauges.

Next, he cleaned, sandblasted and primed the entire crawler until the machine was ready for that famous green-and-yellow John Deere paint scheme.

Terry's devotion to John Deere minutia is evident in his paint selection. "We use only John Deere paint," Terry declares. "It's the only paint that has the true John Deere colors."

### Show and shine

By the end of May – only three short months after the crawler first rolled off the flatbed – the machine was reassembled, cleaned and painted. Best of all, Terry says, the like-new Lindeman was ready to show and shine. Terry didn't waste any time, and just days after the last paint dried, he unveiled the crawler at the 59th National Threshers

**The completed** Lindeman crawler looked good as new from every angle when Terry unveiled it in June 2003. His only regret was that he didn't drive to Oregon to retrieve the collectible tractor himself, but instead had it trucked to Ohio to save time and money.



Association Reunion in Wauseon, Ohio, in June 2003.

Although the reunion was dedicated to machines built by M. Rumely Co., Terry's beautifully restored Lindeman crawler stood out among that sea of Rumely dark green and drew many a spectator. Understandably, Terry was proud of the attention given to his tractor.

More than that, Terry says he's pleased to carry on the family's tradition of using and restoring classic John Deere tractors. **FC**

– To learn more about Terry's Lindeman crawler, write him at 4421 Adams Ridge Rd., Defiance, OH 43512; or e-mail at [lhwh@bright.net](mailto:lhwh@bright.net)



# The Deere & Co. – Lindeman Connection

Deere & Co. sold Lindeman crawlers to farmers across America, but the brains behind the machine belonged to Jesse G. Lindeman. Born in 1900 in Cass County, Iowa, Jesse served in the U.S. Army during World War I and moved to Yakima, Wash., after the war.

There he established the Lindeman Power Equipment Co. with his brother, Harry, in 1924. Their company began as a small farm-implement business. Drawing from his experience with western agriculture, Jesse designed rotary tillers, fruit-handling equipment, disc harrows and other specialized farm tools.

While building those implements, Jesse envisioned a tractor that sat low to the ground to safely pass through narrow orchard rows filled with overhanging branches. Thus, his crawler concept was born.

By the 1930s, Deere & Co. wanted to enter the crawler market. The firm made a deal with Jesse to adapt Model B tractors to crawler treads, although Jesse also



Lindeman crawlers, like the one shown here, were designed for orchard work and other western America farm chores. (YAKIMA VALLEY MUSEUM)

modified a small number of Model GPO, BI, and BR tractors. Deere & Co. built the chassis, which included the engine and transmission, and shipped them to Yakima, where Jesse's company attached the undercarriage and tracks. Finished models carried both the John Deere and Lindeman names.

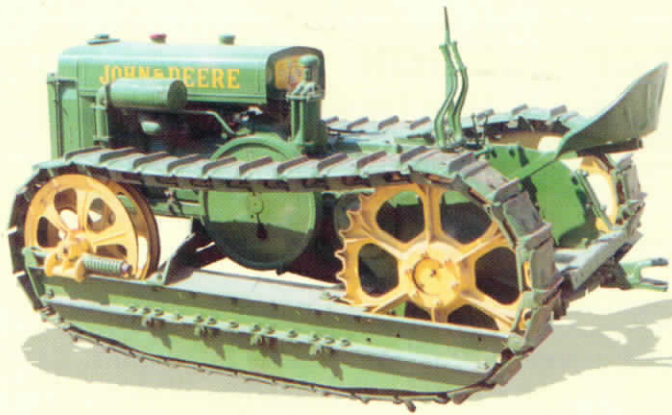
The idea proved moderately successful, and nearly 1,600 John Deere Lindeman crawlers were built and sold between 1939 and 1947. The tractors sold for less than \$1,400, which wasn't cheap during the Great Depression, but farmers who bought the sturdy machines were generally pleased with the tractors, and many used them for decades on farms and orchards.

Jesse and his family sold their business to John Deere in 1947

for \$1.2 million, and Deere & Co. unveiled its own crawler, the Model MC, in 1948. Jesse and family operated the Northwest Equipment Co., and produced a variety of farm equipment until it sold in 1982.

After decades of innovation and farming contributions, Jesse Lindeman died in 1992. Even though the famed farm-equipment inventor is gone, his legacy lives on with each Lindeman crawler.

– To learn more about Jesse G. Lindeman, visit the Yakima Valley Museum's Web site at [www.yakimamemory.org](http://www.yakimamemory.org)



Jesse G. Lindeman, who first adapted Deere & Co. tractors into Lindeman crawlers, shows off one of his famous creations. (YAKIMA VALLEY MUSEUM)

**Above:** This very rare GPO Lindeman crawler is one of 24 produced. It sold for \$100,000 at the 2003 Dennis Polk Labor Day Sale in Indiana.

**Right:** One of 27 John Deere Model BR Lindeman crawlers adapted by Jesse Lindeman.



## The Model BO-Lindeman Crawler at a Glance

- Built: 1939-1947
- Serial Numbers: 329000-337514 (Serial numbers were interspersed with regular BO models)
- Two-cylinder John Deere engine
- Four-speed transmission
- Bore: 4 1/2"
- Stroke: 5 1/2"
- Weight: 4,420 pounds
- Horsepower: 16