

FARM TRACTOR  
COLOR • HISTORY

# John Deere Industrials



Brian Rukes

# DID YOU KNOW?

## EARLY LINDEMAN CRAWLERS

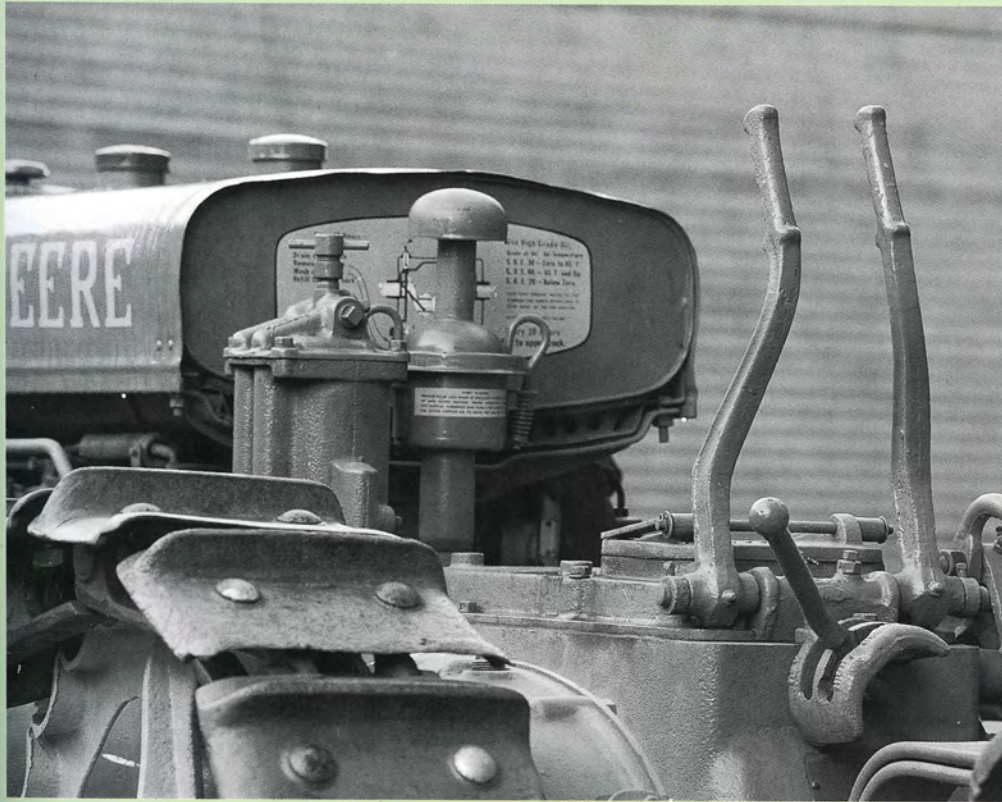
After becoming a John Deere dealer early in the twentieth century, the Lindeman Power Equipment Company of Yakima, Washington, began converting John Deere tractors to crawlers in the early 1930s. Lindeman first converted at least one Model D (and possibly even a few more) into crawlers using tracks from a Best crawler. But the D John Deere Lindeman crawler handled similarly to the way that the standard-tread wheatland-type Model D wheel tractors handled—without superb maneuverability. Lindeman quickly figured out that the model wasn't ideal for use in the orchards around Yakima, but it could be used with some success for more basic agricultural applications, such as plowing fields. Still, though, the regular Model D agricultural models did those jobs just fine without modifications.

Even though the John Deere D Lindeman project didn't pan out, the Lindeman company didn't stop trying to put Deere tractors on tracks. Instead, it shifted its focus to the Model GPO John Deere tractors. The GPO already had many features that made it appealing to orchard growers, including a lowered operator position and a low-clearance exhaust and air intake. Lindeman made the conversions necessary to add the track system, and the result was fairly impressive. A number of the roughly two-dozen GPO Lindeman crawlers featured fenders that helped keep tree limbs out of the track assemblies. Some of those fenders were little more than sheet steel that extended over the top of the crawler tracks, whereas others were true orchard and grove-type fenders covering not only the tops of the tracks but also extending down the outside of the track assemblies.

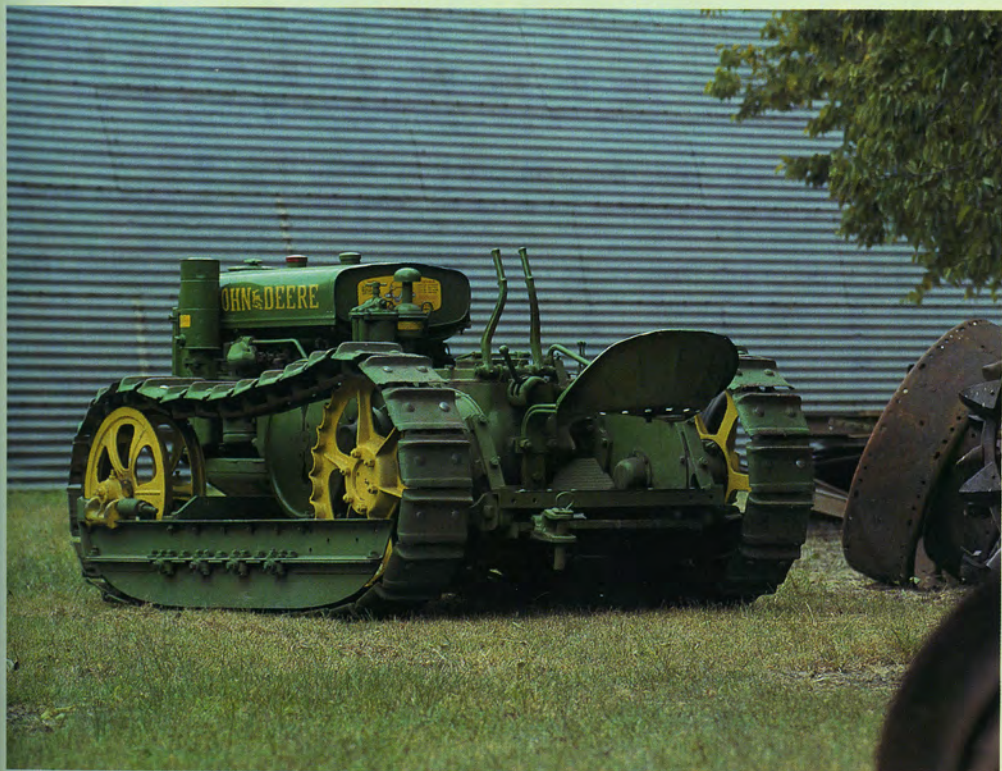
The GPO John Deere Lindeman crawlers were fairly successful, but some people still felt that the GPO crawlers were a bit too large for orchard use. And like the D crawlers, some of the GPO Lindemans found themselves out in the open air plowing fields and doing other non-orchard work. For those who thought the GPO crawlers too large or not nimble enough, things were about to change. Deere discontinued production of the GPO and the rest of the GP series in 1935, but it didn't forget about its orchard and grove customers. The GPO was soon to be replaced by the Model AO and an even smaller model, the Model BO. The AO never received track assemblies, but it was only a matter of time before many of the Model B standard-tread tractors (the Model BO tractors in particular) found themselves atop tracks courtesy the Lindeman Power Equipment Company.



The John Deere GPO Lindeman-converted crawler became the second John Deere on tracks. This unit, somewhat popular for orchard work, also proved usable in some more traditional farm jobs. This model is one of the oldest ancestors to Deere's current popular bulldozer line. *Randy Leffingwell*



When Lindeman converted Deere's tractors into crawlers, the company had to add steering brakes and related controls to the units in addition to the track assemblies. Lindeman did such a good job of making John Deeres into crawlers that Deere & Company eventually bought out the Yakima, Washington-based company. *Randy Leffingwell*



Interestingly, this 1935 model John Deere GPO Lindeman crawler doesn't have support rollers for its track assemblies. Some of these crawlers did feature one centrally located support roller for each track, however. Support rollers or not, these tractors helped set the stage for future Deere crawler success. *Randy Leffingwell*

## DEERE TRADEMARK LOGO CORNER: CHANGES IN 1936 AND 1937

Over the years, Deere & Company has decided to change its logo several times, and such changes typically occur whenever the company itself is undergoing—or has recently undergone—noticeable changes. The fact that Deere changed its trademark logo twice in the 1930s could be considered a good barometer for the amount of change the company was undergoing at the time.

Deere made the first of these revisions in 1936. That trademark logo had a unique design for Deere, immediately recognizable by its border alone. The border featured six points, three on the top half and three on the bottom half, and was the first border ever used as part of the Deere & Company trademark logo. The logo retained the famous figure of a deer jumping over a log with the words "JOHN" and "DEERE" to the left and right of the deer's head, but in this version the deer and log were solid silhouettes instead of detailed renditions. Below the deer appeared the words "MOLINE, ILL." and below that were the words "THE TRADE MARK OF QUALITY MADE FAMOUS BY GOOD IMPLEMENTS".

Deere's new logo for 1936 didn't stay around for long. The company

replaced it the very next year. The 1937 trademark logo was much simpler, lacking both the unique border and the signature phrase. The absence of the phrase in the 1937 trademark logo tells us much about the company's changing focus.

When Deere started using the words "THE TRADE MARK OF QUALITY MADE FAMOUS BY GOOD IMPLEMENTS" in its 1912 logo, they definitely rang true. At the time, Deere & Company's primary products were its implements, and Deere certainly made an understatement by describing them simply as "good." By the mid-1930s, however, Deere & Company had clearly established itself as a producer of quality farm machinery, but its product list had grown tremendously since 1912. The most important new farm machinery Deere produced by the mid-1930s were its tractors. And, like its famous implements, Deere's tractors were certainly high-quality units. So it made sense that Deere would choose to broaden its image by removing any reference to implements from its trademark logo. The 1937 change seems to clearly reflect the company's success with agricultural tractors, but it likely also gives some hint of the company's efforts in the industrial tractor market as well.

company formally introduced the Model DI. But Deere realized that certain industrial customers preferred to buy industrial tractors painted some color other than highway yellow; still other customers were required by state, local, or city laws to paint their industrial tractors some specific color that wasn't highway yellow. Thus, in the summer of 1937, Deere & Company made additional special paint colors available for all of its industrial tractors. Those colors included light red, gray, blue, orange, green (different from the standard John Deere green, which customers could also specify for industrial tractors), and yellows other than highway yellow.

If Deere was counting on new color options increasing sales, those expectations went virtually unmet initially. No one knows for certain how many Model AI, BI, and DI tractors received those special paint colors, but it would seem that very few did. Indeed, it's entirely possible that no Model AI or DI received special paint. Apparently, the factory did paint at least one Model BI red to fill a special order, though, and this tractor still exists to this day.

One reason more customers didn't take advantage of the special colors is that they didn't need to. The laws requiring particular colors for certain equipment typically applied to machines used on or near roads, such as mowers and street sweepers. Since the models AI, BI, and DI weren't typically handling those jobs, customers had no incentive to special order a particular

The Model BI served as Deere's smallest industrial tractor, while the Model DI was its biggest. The mid-sized Model AI was perhaps the most versatile of the three models, however, and its size was "just right" for many applications. But even with three respectable industrial tractors in production, Deere wanted to do more in this market sector.

### Yellow Isn't the Only Industrial Color

In the summer of 1937, Deere made an interesting (and certainly colorful) decision to help satisfy the needs of its industrial customers. Prior to that time, most of Deere's industrial tractor models had been painted yellow with black lettering. Deere had made that practice official back in late 1935 when the

color. Deere & Company may simply have been covering its bases, though, by approving the use of special colors on its industrial tractors, for the company would soon introduce a small tractor that would take advantage of that option.

### **Lovable Littler Letter Series Industrials Introduced**

The story of the Model 62 and its descendants began back in the mid-1930s when Deere recognized the needs of many small farmers for a tractor that was smaller and less expensive than the John Deere B. Responding, the company ordered its engineers at the John Deere Wagon Works in Moline, Illinois, to begin working on a new tractor design. The first tangible results appeared with the experimental Model Y of 1936. The Y soon evolved into the John Deere Model 62 tractor, which Deere began producing on a limited basis early in 1937 (prior to announcing the approval of additional colors for industrial tractors). The Model 62 had a very short production life, ending production by late 1937. But then the Model 62 evolved into yet another new model: the Model L.

Like the 62, the new Model L was envisioned primarily as an agricultural tractor. But Deere did make an industrial derivative of the Model L available almost from the start of its production beginning in the 1938 model year. It is important to note that, like the first industrial versions of the Model D, these early Model Ls

were not yet officially designated Model LIs. The industrial L differed very little from the regular, original agricultural version of the model—the main difference between the two versions being the colors they were painted.

Initially, the industrial versions of the Model L didn't seem to take much (if any) advantage of the new special colors that Deere had approved. Instead, like most Deere industrial tractors, the industrial Ls were painted some shade of yellow. It is possible that a few Model Ls produced during the 1938 model year (the only year during which the L was "unstyled," see Styling Issues, following) received special paint colors, but records for those units no longer exist. However, Deere's Serial Number Registers do still exist for the styled Model L tractors, which Deere introduced in the 1939 model year. In a number of instances, those records indicate when styled Model Ls were painted any color other than the standard John Deere green (which, of course, was the main body color for the agricultural Model Ls). Thus, by looking at those records, one can determine fairly easily which styled Ls could be considered industrial versions. Model L serial number 625073—just 74 tractors into styled Model L production—is the first styled L noted as being painted a specific color; it was painted simply "yellow." The next tractor with a specifically identified paint color is serial number 625075; its color was the official color for the majority of Deere's industrial tractors at the

time—highway yellow. Deere's Serial Number Registers seem to indicate that yellow and highway yellow were the only special colors used on the 1939 and early 1940 model styled L tractors. No evidence exists that the L up to that point had used any additional special colors, but that was about to change. The industrial versions of the L proved themselves very popular for performing roadside duties, and it was only a matter of time before someone would want one of those tractors but either need or want it painted some color other than yellow or John Deere green.

### **Changing Times: Styling Issues**

By 1939, Deere & Company had clearly exhibited the fact that it wanted to consider its industrial tractor production as being separate from its regular agricultural production. And, in many ways, the company treated those models differently than it treated their agricultural counterparts. For instance, it seemed that Deere didn't mind having its industrial tractors remain in unstyled form, even after the company made big moves to stylize its most popular agricultural models at the start of and during the 1939 model year, including the row-crop versions of the Models A and B. Then, not long after 1939 model production began, Deere stylized its popular standard-tread Model D. While those agricultural models were stylized, though, the industrial Models AI, BI, and even the DI remained unstyled.

So, starting in 1939, most of Deere's industrial tractors remained in unstyled form for whatever reason. But the industrial versions of the Model L seemed to go against the grain of Deere industrial production. For instance, the industrial Ls didn't remain in unstyled form after the agricultural versions of that model were styled in 1939; they were styled right along with the agricultural versions (making them the first and only styled industrial tractors in Deere's line for several years). Additionally, even though by 1939 Deere had designated its industrial versions of the Models D, A, and B with a special model designation—the basic model series designation followed by an "I"—the industrial versions of the L still didn't adhere to that system of model designation. They still weren't officially Model LI tractors yet; instead, they continued to be classified merely as industrial versions of the Model L.

While the 1939 stylizations of many of Deere's agricultural models took the headlines that year, Deere's industrial tractor production didn't make the headlines in any noticeable fashion. The following model year would be similar. After all, Deere introduced a wide array of improvements for its 1940 model agricultural tractors,

but the industrial tractors didn't appear to receive much attention. But 1940 was far more important for Deere's industrial tractor production than one might imagine, and it was all because of just one single tractor.

### **An Industrial on Tracks**

In 1940, one single Model BI tractor—serial number 330986—was changed in a way that no Deere industrial tractor had ever been changed before. And it wasn't even Deere that made the modifications. The Lindeman Power Equipment Company of Yakima, Washington, took a 1940 Model BI and fitted tracks to it. This machine changed the company product line forever, marking the beginning of the Deere industrial crawler tractor.

Lindeman's conversion proved that the standard-tread B series John Deere tractors worked well when converted to crawler tractors. Despite that fact, Lindeman didn't convert another standard-tread Model B series tractor into a crawler for quite some time. Starting in early 1941, Deere's production of the standard-tread B tractors as a whole—including the Model BI—slowed to a crawl. The company manufactured fewer than 400 standard-tread Bs in 1941, and production remained at

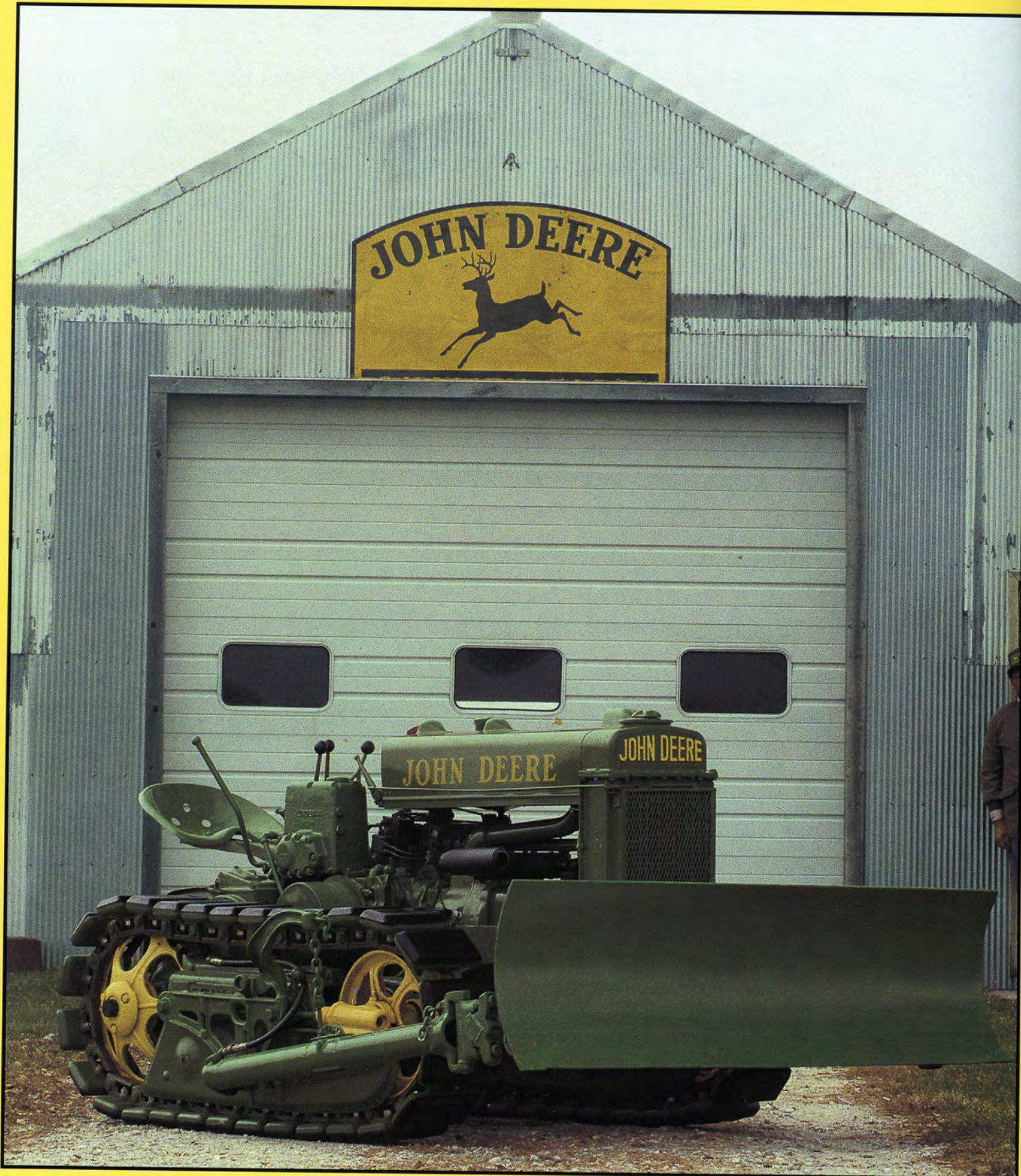
or near that same level through the 1944 model year.

### **Models AI, BI, and DI Discontinued**

The problems for Deere's industrial tractor production weren't just limited to the low production figures of the BI, however. Indeed, on the surface, things had started looking pretty dismal for almost all of Deere's industrial tractor production by 1941. Sales of the Models AI, BI, and DI were far from impressive; indeed, in six years of production, Deere had produced and sold fewer than 500 of all of its industrial tractor models combined. By the summer of 1941, Deere & Company decided to drop the Models AI, BI, and DI from production. That decision appeared in both the company's Branch House Bulletin 918 of May 17, 1941, and its Engineering Decision D9900 of June 12, 1941. Branch House Bulletin No. 918 also stated that Deere & Company would "no longer be in position to supply bumper plates, special hitches, special brakes, special speeds, etc." on those tractors for use in industrial applications. Thus, at first glance, it may seem as if the era of John Deere industrial production was coming to a close in 1941; but, as most people know, looks are sometimes very deceiving.



Even though the first B series tractor placed on tracks was an industrial, it was also the last Model B1 put on tracks. By the time Lindeman resumed its practice of putting the standard-tread B tractors on track assemblies, Deere & Company had dropped the Model B1. As a result, Lindeman switched to the B0 and BR models, the B0s being the most popular model for that purpose. *Randy Leffingwell*





# John Deere Industrials During the War Years

John Deere had certainly firmly established itself as a top producer of farm tractors by the late 1930s. By that time, the company had also been trying for several years to get a similar firm footing in the industrial tractor industry. The company hadn't found much success in that market, though; in fact, sales of the AI, BI, and DI industrial tractors had been far from promising, leading Deere management to eliminate those models from the company's lineup. Deere & Company produced its last Model DI in early March of 1941, and the last AI in mid-June of that year. The last BI rolled off the lines at about the same time. According to Engineering Decision D9900, the three models were officially taken off Deere's books on July 1, 1941. But John Deere industrial production wasn't down for the count. During the first half of the 1940s, the company did much to solidify itself as a producer of industrial tractors.

Despite the fact that regular production of the AI, BI, and DI was coming to a close, both Branch House Bulletin No. 918 and Engineering Decision D9900 indicate

that special paint colors were still going to be available on regular agricultural tractors that buyers intended to use for nonagricultural applications. The same held true for the Model L, which Deere still made available in an industrial version, even though it didn't yet have the official industrial tractor model designation of Model LI.

Starting in late 1940, the industrial versions of the styled L started using more specialized colors. Deere's Serial Number Registers indicate that late 1940 model Ls serial numbered 633035 to 633039 were painted "burnt orange." The list of special colors used on the industrial styled Ls then grew greatly in the 1941 model year. For instance, the Serial Number Registers show that tractors 633341, 633344, 633348, and 633358 through 633360 were all painted a "special yellow." Then, shades of orange became the predominant color used on those tractors, as tractor 633361 was painted a "special orange," and tractors 633362, 633363, and 633370 through 633376 were all painted "Tenn. orange" (which likely means "Tennessee orange"). The Serial Number

Despite Deere's limited success in its early efforts to establish itself as an industrial tractor manufacturer, two small tractors laid a foundation for future success: One was a true industrial tractor, the little Model LI. The other was not even really an industrial officially, but it took on a number of industrial-related roles in its active lifespan. That model was the Model BO Lindeman, seen here. *Randy Leffingwell*



The John Deere Model LI: an industrial tractor with style! Even though Deere did produce a few unstyled Model L tractors for industrial use, the actual Model LI always had styled lines. It was the beginning of a styling revolution that would change the face of Deere industrial machines forever. *Andy Kraushaar*

Registers also show that one 1941 Model L, serial number 633364, was painted a "special color," though no known documents describe it.

#### **Another L with Industrial Aspirations: The Model LA**

Whenever things started looking dim for Deere's industrial tractor production prospects, the L

series tractors always seemed to somehow lighten things up. Starting in late 1940, the series gave yet another boost to Deere's industrial tractor production. At that time, Deere & Company introduced an enhanced version of its Model L, the Model LA.

The Model LA had several features not available on the original

model that made it all the more appealing to industrial customers and farmers. First of all, the LA featured a larger engine; its 1/4-inch bigger bore gave the model an additional 11 inches of displacement. Deere also increased the engine's rated rpm by 300. Those changes caused a boost of about 4 horsepower on both the belt and

the drawbar. The LA also weighed more than the L, a feature that helped deliver that additional horsepower to the ground more effectively. Deere gave the LA its additional weight in part by building the model with a heavy round bar stock frame, as opposed to the L's tubelike frame. Deere & Company also boosted the LA's front-end clearance, making standard the extended front spindles that had been available as an option on the basic Model L. Because of all these improvements, the LA attracted the attention of a number of industrial customers.

Some evidence suggests that the company did make the model available with industrial features and paint job, though these derivatives were not called LAI models—just as the company hadn't called the industrial derivatives of the Model L the Model LI . . . at least not yet.

### The LI and the War Years

In May of 1941, just as it was closing down the AI, BI and DI models, Deere & Company shifted the industrial production mantle to the Model L, renaming it the Model LI. With the name change, the company assigned an all-new serial number run to the model. This was the first time a Deere industrial tractor received its own run of serial numbers. Along with the change in name and the new serial number run, the industrial version of the L also experienced a few design changes. For one, the tractor featured a larger-capacity fuel tank, a strengthened front axle



What happened to all that tall grass on the roadsides? The John Deere Model LI with side-mounted sickle mower conquered it. Even though Deere's industrial tractors clear back to the industrial Model Ds had been available with mowers, the Model LI proved the first astounding success in that capacity for Deere. Today, yellow John Deere tractors appear along roadsides throughout the nation. *Andy Kraushaar*

with shorter spindles, and a higher-g geared transmission. By the end of the 1941 model year, the Model LI existed as the only official John Deere industrial tractor in production.

The new Model LI proved itself to be an effective and popular industrial tractor. Like its yellow-painted Model L predecessors, the LI served mainly to mow roadsides

for state and local highway departments, but the tractor also found acceptance in a variety of other roles as well. For instance, it made a handy lot tractor for pulling small items around in tight locations. What's more, the model's relatively low price tag put it within reach of many potential customers. In its first year, the company produced about 340 units of the new model.



Perhaps the reason the LI became so popular as a mower tractor was that it afforded its operator a high degree of visibility. On the small yellow machine, an operator could easily see in front of him or her, immediately behind him or her, and just how close the tires were to fences or other barriers. *Andy Kraushaar*

The LI had a strong launch, but events in Hawaii and overseas would shortly limit its production and sales potential. Little more than six months after the LI's May introduction, the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, pulling the United States into the Second World War. The war disrupted the national economy in many ways: able-bodied men left farms, offices, and factories to fight; industry shifted production from peacetime goods to war materiel; and rationing of goods such as gas,

tires, aluminum, rubber, and brass left manufacturers without adequate supplies to build or repair their products. Tractor production decreased throughout the nation, though manufacturers continued to produce some models—the nation still had to feed itself, even if many of its farmers had shipped out to fight.

Deere temporarily discontinued some of its tractor models during the war. Such interruptions rarely lasted more than a year per suspended model, but production declined across the board. The

company made 425 Model LI tractors in 1942, but just under 50 in 1943. It built no L or LA models that year. In 1944, Deere & Company didn't build any Model GM or Model H tractors, applying its limited production materials instead to the mid-sized Model B and Model A tractors. Production of the Model B, a very popular agricultural tractor, was down 21 percent during the war years. Compared to these other tractors, the Model LI's production drop of only 14 percent over that period doesn't look too bad.



Without a front-mounted blade, the Model B series Lindeman crawlers could still do a lot. They could plow, they could pull things, and they could certainly turn heads. But whenever these machines came fitted with a front dozer blade, watch out! With that attachment, they pushed themselves into the forests, moving not only logs out of the way but also any reservations customers might have had about using an agricultural tractor for forestry work. *Andy Kraushaar*

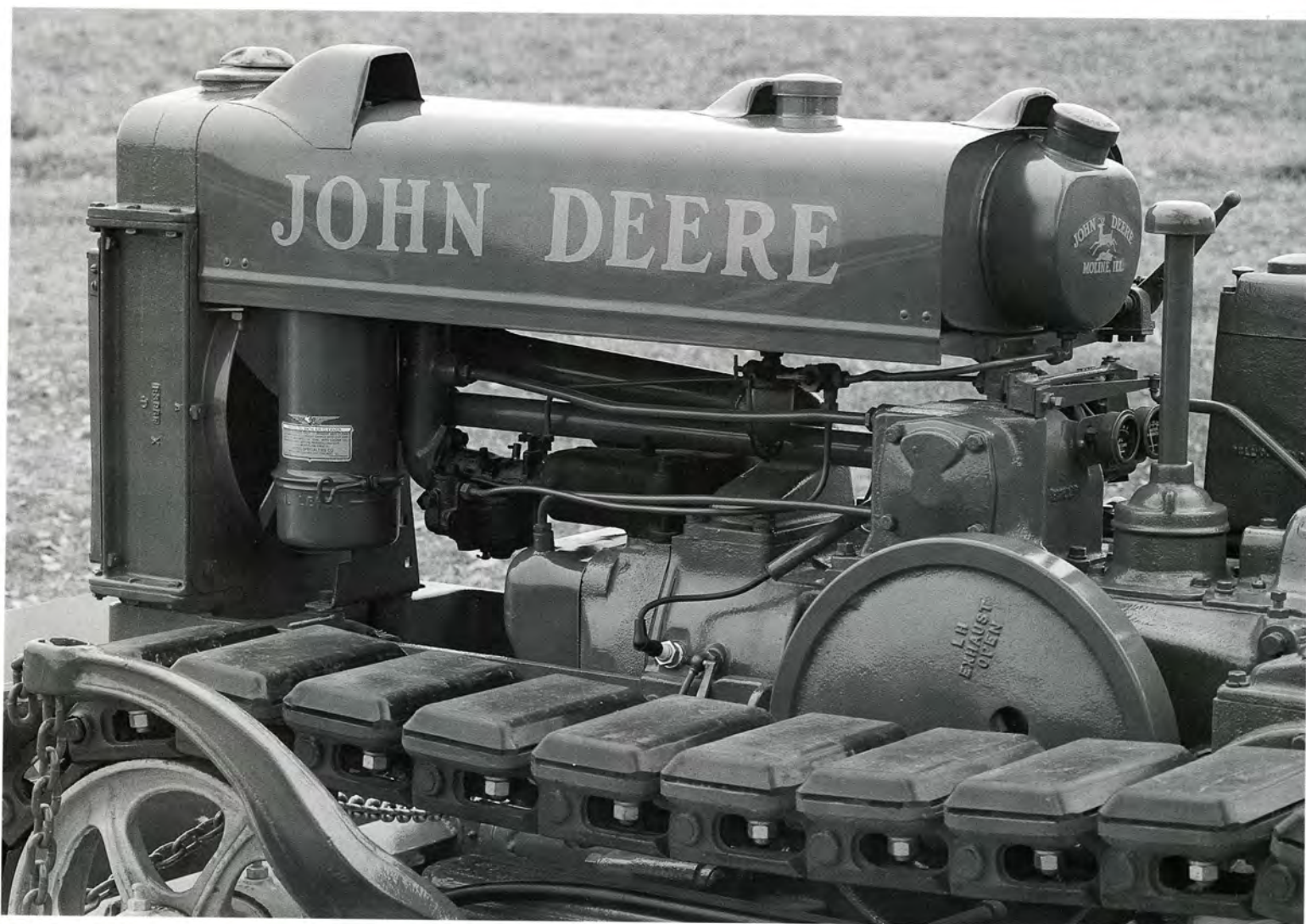
Before production ceased in 1946, Deere & Company would produce more than 2,000 Model LI tractors during its six-year production run.

Things started looking more promising for the Allied forces in Europe and even in the Pacific starting in 1944. One result was a slight recovery in tractor production within the United States. For the Model LI, production increased 400 percent over 1943 figures, up from slightly fewer than 50 units to slightly more than 200. The Models L and LA also went

back into production, the LA still being available with industrial paint and features.

Deere and other manufacturers made few changes to their products during the war years because of limited supplies and reduced sales. The government had also imposed price freezes on many goods, including tractors, further discouraging new innovations or upgrades—any improvements would go uncompensated in the sales price. And why would a manufacturer want to give its

competitors a look at a new innovation before it could benefit from it financially? Behind the scenes, though, many companies continued to research and plan new, improved models. As soon as the economy improved, they would put these ideas into production. Deere's engineers were quietly experimenting with diesel-fueled engines and with hydraulic lift systems, both of which would prove extremely beneficial to the company's industrial tractors in the years ahead.



Even though Lindeman could have converted more Model BR tractors into crawlers than it did, the company opted to convert the BO tractors instead. The move was a smart one, and it certainly helped make the tractors all the more acceptable to the logging industry. The BO featured few obstructions above its hood and elsewhere—a design decision Deere had made when crafting the model to satisfy the needs of an orchard. Those features proved just as beneficial in the forest. *Randy Leffingwell*

### **Lindeman Puts More John Deere Tractors on Tracks: The BO and BR Lindemans**

Fortunately, Deere didn't have to wait until the end of World War II to benefit from the production of a "new" model that would improve Deere's prospects in the industrial tractor market. In 1943, the Lindeman Power Equipment

Company of Yakima, Washington, picked up where it had left off back in 1940, when it had converted one Model BI John Deere tractor into a crawler by adding track assemblies to the unit. Deere had terminated production of the Model BI back in mid-1941, but the BR and BO models, which used the same chassis, were still in production. At the time

of their release, the BO and BR Lindeman crawlers weren't exactly industrial models, but the market would come to identify and employ tracked tractors as industrial machines. Thus Lindeman was setting a foundation for Deere's future.

Lindeman converted only a handful of the BR tractors into

crawlers, but it converted far more of the BO models with the same track assemblies. By the end of production, Lindeman produced around 1,700 John Deere Model BO crawlers, accounting for nearly one-third of all standard-tread Model B John Deeres produced during those years. Although this is some 300 fewer than total LI production, Lindeman produced its crawlers over a five-year period compared to the LI's six-year run.

Why was the BO Lindeman crawler so successful? It was just the right size, had just the right amount of power, and had just the right price for many, many people. More important, though, the John Deere Model BO Lindeman crawler was versatile. Not only did it perform well in agricultural applications, but it absolutely shone in the logging industry. The tracks of the BO and BR Lindemans worked well in the rough terrain of the forest, terrain that sometimes proved troublesome for rubber-tired two-wheel-drive tractors. The BO and BR Lindeman crawlers could pull logs just fine, and they could also push them. The latter was done via an attached dozer-type blade. And, with that blade, the BO and BR Lindeman crawlers proved their worth in earthmoving applications as well. Those crawlers might not have been industrial yellow, but they proved that they could do the work of tractors that were.

### Change in the Postwar Years

Shortly after the war, Deere wound down production of the



The B series Lindeman crawlers paved their way into industrial markets and became a wonderful foundation on which Deere could expand in the future. The lessons this model and its immediate successors would teach Deere would help the company in producing its first full-fledged bulldozer. *Andy Kraushaar*

Model B and Model H tractors, in addition to the Model L and its derivatives. The L and LI were terminated in June 1946, with the LA following two months later. In mid-January 1947, Deere terminated production of its standard-tread Model B series, even though the row-crop Model Bs continued production after that time. This cut also put an end to both Model BO and BR production, and with it Lindeman's tracked versions of these models.

The Model H, which had no factory-produced standard-tread derivatives or industrial variations, ended production in early February 1947. The H had served as the smallest conventional tricycle-front-end row-crop tractor in Deere's line, and it had been quite popular.

Soon Deere would replace these discontinued tractors with one basic model series. That tractor was already in the works, and it was nearly ready for production.

