

# Tractor expo opens in Missoula

■ The expo starts Thursday and runs through Saturday at the Western Montana Fairgrounds. Admission for adults is \$5. Children ages 6-17 will be charged \$2.50. It's free for children under 5.

The Montana Fiddlers will be playing Thursday from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m., and Friday from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m.

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By **JOHN STUCKE**  
of the Missoulian

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You'd think he was babying a new sports car, the way Chris Carl carefully wipes grime from the engine.

With his spray in tow, he's polishing his prized possession, making sure the crank case and piston housings shine.

In fact, there's a lot of guys like Carl at the Western Montana Fairgrounds this week.

Some are farmers, wearing baseball caps advertising seed companies. All are collectors of the green-and-yellow Iowa-made

tractors that tilled much of a continent.

This weekend, for the first time outside the Hawkeye State, Missoula will host the National John Deere Two-Cylinder Exposition.

More than 200 tractors built by the Waterloo, Iowa, manufacturer between the years 1918 and 1960 will be on display.

Some rest on studded iron wheels. Most sport rubber tires.

A few tractors – called crawlers – are just a bit bigger than riding lawnmowers and have tread like army tanks.

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## Deere-borne excitement



MICHAEL GALLACHER/Missoulian

**ABOVE:** The National John Deere Two-Cylinder Exposition being held in Missoula this week is a great place to swap tractor stories or just get a close-up look at some farm history. Tractor buffs Troy McKinney, left, Buz Baitsholts, center, and Cecil Hopko admire a couple John Deere/Lindeman Crawlers on display at the show. **BELOW:** Chris Carl of Shoreline, Wash., cleans one of two 1936 B tractors he brought to Missoula. The tractor expo runs Thursday through Saturday at the Western Montana Fairgrounds.

# Tractor

## Continued

The assembly of this expo began Tuesday afternoon with Dennis Black, beaming as he unloaded about a dozen tractors he rebuilt over the years.

Raised on a farm, he has always liked tractors. But it was muscle cars where he tuned his mechanical skills. When that became too expensive, he began working on John Deeres.

"This is quite an honor for Missoula," Black said after unloading some of his prized tractors.

This weekend, Black will finally be among his tractor-loving brethren. In western Montana, old tractors aren't necessarily links to the past, as they are in the Midwest and the Great Plains.

But tractors do have history here, and Black is ready to show it. He brought a restored 1928 XD,

an experimental tractor that John Deere built with a different transmission. It had three gears. Most John Deeres had two gears.

The tractor was a good puller, added Jack Cherry, who has worked for and written about John Deere most of his life.

The company built about 100 of these tractors in 1928, shipping most of them to Montana and a few to Arizona. Busting sod and planting wheat, the tractors were put to the test.

But the Great Depression ended all plans of manufacturing new tractors.

Struggling farmers weren't about to buy new tractors and John Deere, said historian Cherry, couldn't afford to manufacture them.

So the experimental tractors were discontinued and now 70 years later are considered rare collectibles. Five will be at the expo.

It's these kind of stories mixed with family history that makes people collectors.

Ron and Nyna Moss of Rexburg,

Idaho, came to show tractors and swap John Deere stories.

They grew potatoes in southeast Idaho, buying their first John Deere in 1958. It was a Model B built in 1936, and nearly set off a family uproar.

You see, the Moss family had used International tractors to farm, and switching to a Deere was near sacrilegious – sort of like buying a Chevy pickup even though your dad is a Ford man.

But Ron Moss is hooked. He brought his 1936 tractor to the show, and left four others at his home outside Rexburg.

"This is our first expo. We're excited it's out West," he said while watching tractors being unloaded.

Meanwhile, Carl said he used to ride on his grandfather's Model A. His cousin owns that tractor now, and he owns a different Model B that his grandfather used to haul a spray rig over fields of peas.

These and many more John Deere tractors will continue to arrive Wednesday.