

Bethinking of Old Orleans

C.W.Lattin County Historian

Vol. XVIII

1-31-96

No. 4

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American Agriculture has been profoundly affected by two great inventions. It was the reaper in the mid-19th century and the tractor in this century that totally revolutionized farming.

In essence, the tractor was nothing more than a stationary engine placed on a chassis. From its beginning in the late 19th century every conceivable design imaginable has appeared. By the 1920's, then thirty years after its birth, the tractor was streamlined and easily adapted to every farm use. Although a few early tractors were steamers, the ubiquitous "iron horse" was largely perpetuated because of the gasoline engine. One of the first local farmers to own a tractor was Miss Ruth Harding at Five Corners in the mid-teens. However, many farmers were not as progressive nor could many afford a tractor until the 1940's. As a child in the 1940's and 50's, I've always felt I grew up in a transitional period when my father had both an International Farm-all tractor and a team of horses. Certainly by the end of WW II the team of horses had been replaced by a tractor on most farms.

Our photo, taken around seventy years ago, shows Fred Holt on a Cletrac tractor. He was never a farmer, but must have known some local farmer who had one of these and wanted a picture of himself driving it.

The Cletrac was manufactured by the Cleveland Tractor Co. which was organized in 1917. Between the company's founding and 1944, they built some forty different Cletrac models. In 1944 the company was taken over by the Oliver Corporation which produced Oliver-Cletrac crawlers until 1960. The cletrac shown here is definitely



from the early or mid-twenties although the model itself is unidentified.

From its humble beginning over a century ago, the tractor has become an indispensable machine from the small garden type to those huge farm tractors that need the full width of a canal bridge to cross. The iron horse is ever present in the world as we know it today.