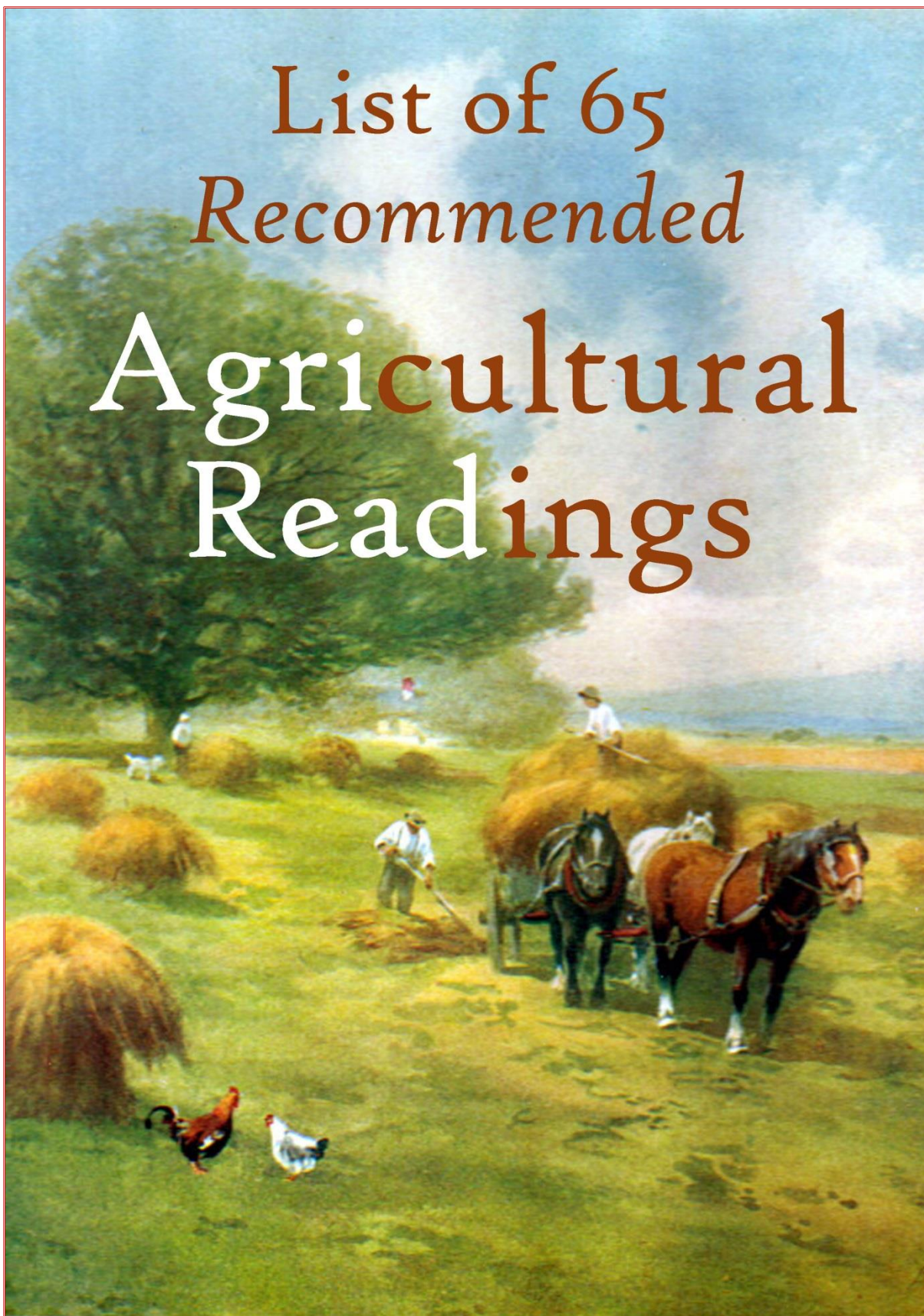


List of 65
Recommended
Agricultural
Readings



RHODE'S

Robert T. Rhode's

List of 65 Recommended Agricultural Readings

I am often asked what books I can recommend for readers who enjoy American agricultural topics. Many books on my list are out of print, but, with a little ingenuity, you can still find copies of several of them or read them online. When there have been multiple editions of books, I mention only the edition that I prefer. I probably have overlooked your favorite, and for that I am sorry. To keep the list from becoming too long, I have not included books on individual implements, such as the plow or reaper. I have grouped my suggestions under these categories:

[Reading for Fun](#)

[Books on the History of Agricultural Steam Power](#)

[Books on the Application of Steam to Farming and Related Pursuits](#)

[Books Published During the Agricultural Steam Era](#)

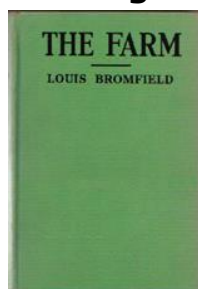
[Biographies of People Connected to Agricultural Steam Power](#)

[Books on Implements and Gasoline Tractors](#)

[Books for Children](#)

[A Few Books on Farming and on Transportation History](#)

Reading for Fun



Bromfield, Louis. *The Farm*. New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1933. The prize-winning Bromfield was a prolific writer, and I can recommend everything he wrote. I can *highly* recommend a tour of Bromfield's Ohio estate, Malabar Farm, [http://www.malabarfarm.org/!](http://www.malabarfarm.org/)



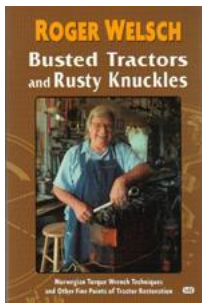
Cather, Willa. *My Antonia!* Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1918. This fictional work will transport you to Nebraska from the pioneer days through the steam era. Each time that I read Cather's novel, I wish I could write as well as she did.



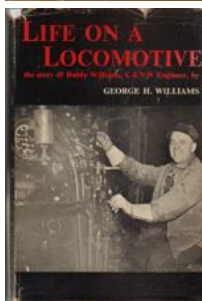
Quick, Herbert. *The Hawkeye*. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1923. This novel from the pen of an Iowa journalist is a quirky but delightful story set during the time of steam-powered threshing. Of the novels that feature "thrashin'" machines, this one stands far above the rest.



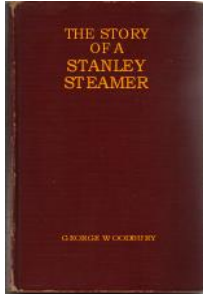
Upson, William Hazlett. *Alexander Botts: Earthworm Tractors*. New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1929. Paperback: Pocket Books, 1945, 1946. While the book is about gasoline tractors, not steam engines, it is funny and true to the life of equipment salesmen in any era.



Anything by Roger Welsch. Choose any book he has written! You can't go wrong! If I were forced to select one title—and I mean really pushed into it—I would say *Busted Tractors and Rusty Knuckles*, Osceola, WI: Motorbooks, International, 1997. By the way, Roger is a fan of Willa Cather's writing (listed above).



Williams, George H. *Life on a Locomotive: The Story of Buddy Williams, C&NW Engineer*. Berkeley: Howell-North Books, 1971. This book's descriptions will put you in the cab of a steam engine racing down the tracks! There are zillions of great books on locomotives, and I have named only this one because my list is focused on agriculture.



Woodbury, George. *The Story of a Stanley Steamer*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1950. Woodbury was a professor of English that acted on his love for steam power by purchasing a derelict Stanley Steamer. His narrative of assembling the car is delightfully humorous. This book may have little to do with agriculture, but it would be a shame not to mention such a gem!

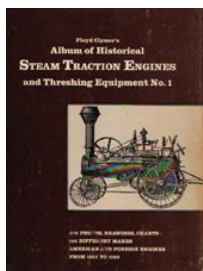
Books on the History of Agricultural Steam Power



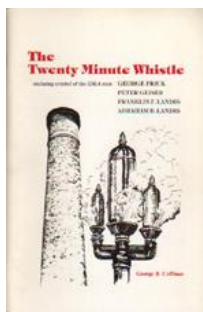
Bixler, Lorin E. *Cornelius Aultman, C. Aultman & Co., and the Aultman Co.* Enola, PA: Stemgas, 1967. Copies of this book are hard to find. Dr. Bixler was a professor at Muskingum College, and he took an ardent interest in the various Aultman industries.



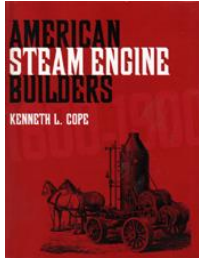
Bottorff, Michele and William A. Stahl. *The History of Swayne, Robinson & Company, 1842-1997*. Richmond: Wayne County History Museum, 1999. Several of the captions do not match the illustrations that they supposedly explain; they must be out of order.



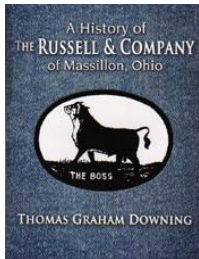
Clymer, Floyd. *Album of Historical Steam Traction Engines and Threshing Equipment*. New York: Bonanza Books, 1949. Paperback: Stemgas Publishing Company. This book is valuable for its illustrations; it gives almost no history or other textual information.



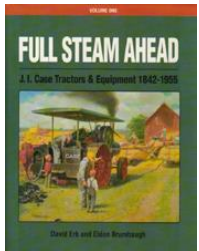
Coffman, George B. *The Twenty Minute Whistle: Enduring Symbol of the Idea Men, George Frick, Peter Geiser, Franklin Landis, Abraham Landis*. Waynesboro, PA: Caslon Press, 1980; J M Printing, 1997.



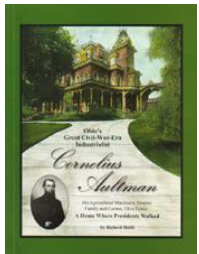
Cope, Kenneth L. *American Steam Engine Builders*. Mendham, NJ: Astragal Press, 2006. This is a sturdy book with ample illustrations depicting the engines of many manufacturers, some not represented in other books.



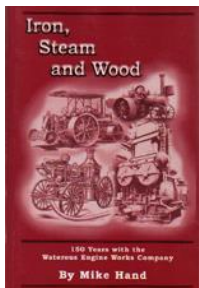
Downing, Thomas Graham. *A History of the Russell & Company of Massillon, Ohio*. There is no additional publication information because my friend Tom privately printed this book, which collects historical details about a great steam engine manufacturing firm.



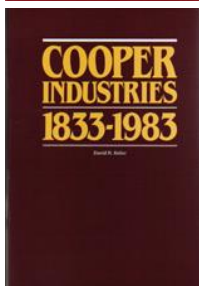
Erb, Dave and Eldon Brumbaugh. *Full Steam Ahead: J. I. Case Tractors & Equipment 1842-1955*. St. Joseph, MI: American society of Agricultural Engineers, 1993.



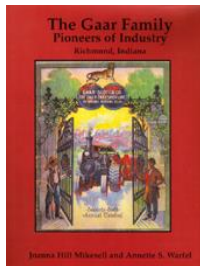
Haldi, Richard. *Ohio's Great Civil-War-Era Industrialist: Cornelius Aultman*. Canton: Haldi, 2011. This book's descriptions and illustrations capture the opulent era of the industrialists. Cornelius Aultman's mansion was, in a word, "lavish"! Eventually, it was torn down.



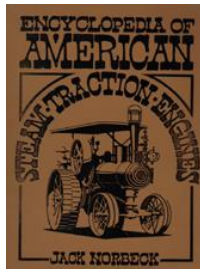
Hand, Mike. *Iron, Steam and Wood: 150 Years with the Waterous Engine Works Company*. There is no additional publication information because Mike Hand privately printed this book, which is one of the better company histories that I have seen.



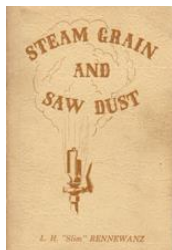
Keller, David N. *Cooper Industries, 1833-1983*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 1983. This two-volume set contains a few inaccuracies but is useful, provided that the researcher has access to other Cooper histories, such as the one that I have listed under "Books Published During the Agricultural Steam Era."



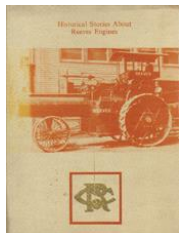
Mikesell, Joanna and Annette S. Warfel. *The Gaar Family: Pioneers of Industry, Richmond, Indiana*. Richmond: Print Press, 1999. The late Joanna Mikesell, who was a direct descendant of the Gaar family and a wonderful person, included significant facts in her book, which is primarily a genealogical work but which has useful descriptions of the Gaar, Scott & Company steam engines.



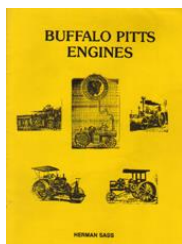
Norbeck, Jack. *Encyclopedia of American Steam Traction Engines*. Sarasota: Crestline, 1976. This book deserves accolades for pioneering the concept of an encyclopedia of farm engines and for its excellent collection of cuts.



Rennewanz, L. H. "Slim." *Steam, Grain and Saw Dust*. Bozeman, MT: Gallatin County Tribune, 1968. This book contains many first-hand recollections of oddball steam engines—that is, one-of-a-kind models built by mainstream companies.



St. Clair, Harvey L. *Historical Stories About Reeves Engines*. As this book was privately printed, there is no additional publication information. It is essential reading for anyone that plans to write about the Reeves firm. Unfortunately, it is arguably the rarest book on my list. Copies are scarce as proverbial hens' teeth, and you will be fortunate to find one.



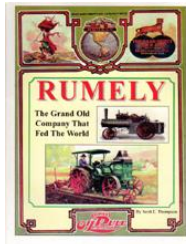
Sass, Herman. *Buffalo Pitts Engines*. Buffalo: Sass, no date. This poorly printed paperback (with muddy illustrations lacking detail) is an extremely important book. While there is a disappointing amount of information in this paperback, it is, in several key respects, the *only print* source for various facts about Buffalo Pitts. For more on the firm, be sure to see Brian Szafranski's excellent site [http://www.buffalopitts.com/!](http://www.buffalopitts.com/)



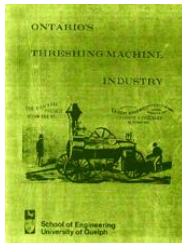
Smith, G. E. *Steam Album*. Orillia, ON: Smith, no date. This paperback offers several rare cuts of Canadian steam engines. There are few books that provide in-depth information on farm steam power in Canada. Many of the best histories have been recently published in magazines by Rick Mannen, and the Searson family is conducting important research today.



Smith T. H. *The Album of American Steam Traction Engines*. Self-published: 1953. This rare book contains cuts and almost no verbal content. Smith was the first editor of *Engineers and Engines Magazine*.



Thompson, Scott L. *Rumely: The Grand Old Company That Fed the World*. Pekin, IL: Thompson, 2006. Scott has assembled a host of illustrations depicting the famous Rumely products and has collected many vitally important historical facts.

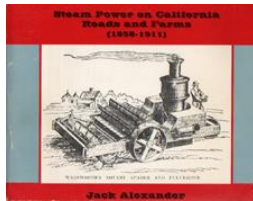


Turner, Harold S. *Ontario's Threshing Machine Industry*. Milton, ON: Ontario Steam & Antique Preservers Association, 1974, 1975. Harold S. Turner has given the most accurate book-length history of the firms that built agricultural steam engines in Canada, but a new crop of historians including Rick Mannen has been contributing excellent magazine articles on Canadian firms.

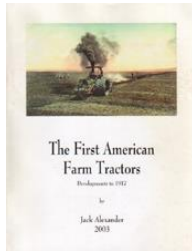


Wendel, C. H. *150 Years of J. I. Case*. Osceola, WI: Motorbooks, 1991, 1994. This book is essential reading for any Case collector.

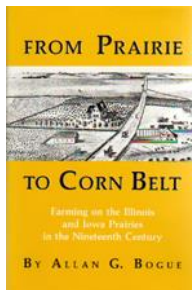
Books on the Application of Steam to Farming and Related Pursuits



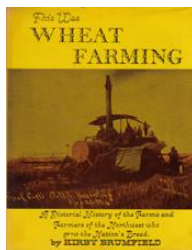
Alexander, Jack. *Steam Power on California Roads and Farms (1858–1911)*. Self-published: 1998. This groundbreaking book features many surprises. Who knew that California had traction engines so early in American history?



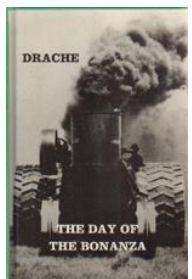
Alexander, Jack. *The First American Farm Tractors: Developments to 1917*. Self-published: 2003. Be sure to see more of Jack's books at <http://www.lulu.com/spotlight/jackleeatgarlicdotcom!>



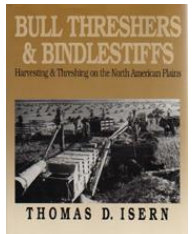
Bogue, Allan G. *From Prairie to Corn Belt*. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1994. First published by the University of Chicago in 1963, this book is the seminal work on the topic of corn. While it does not examine steam power directly, it covers the period of time when agricultural steam engines were prevalent.



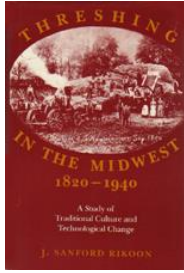
Brumfield, Kirby. *This Was Wheat Farming*. New York: Bonanza, 1968. This book is general but has many fine photographs.



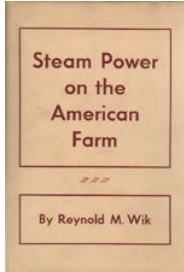
Drache, Hiram M. *The Day of the Bonanza*. Danville, IL: Interstate Printers & Publishers, 1964. Drache's book affords a detailed, scholarly look at the steam-powered threshing of the gigantic bonanza farms of the upper Midwest from the territorial days to the days of statehood. A must-read for serious historians!



Isern, Thomas D. *Bull Threshers & Bindlestiffs: Harvesting & Threshing on the North American Plains*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1990. This scholarly book focuses on the ways that threshing was done in Kansas.

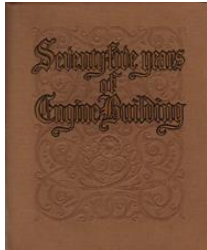


Rikoon, J. Sanford. *Threshing in the Midwest: 1820-1940*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988. This book is a scholarly work. It is fascinating because it is written by a sociologist, not a historian. I find it accurate and compelling.

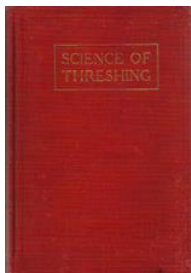


Wik, Reynold M. *Steam Power on the American Farm*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1953. This is arguably the most important book ever written about farm steam engines.

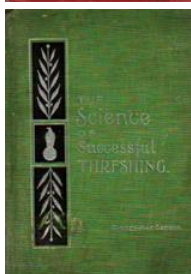
Books Published During the Agricultural Steam Era



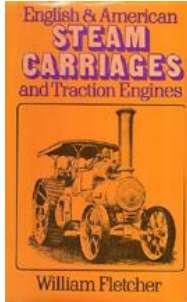
C. & G. Cooper, *Seventy-Five Years of Engine Building*. Mount Vernon, OH: C. & G. Cooper, 1909. The Knox County Historical Society and the Ohio Memory Project have significant Cooper history available online; for example, see <https://www.asme.org/getmedia/61d6144f-7b37-43ce-9edd-e97f60aa0cd9/Cyrus-McCormick-machines.aspx>!



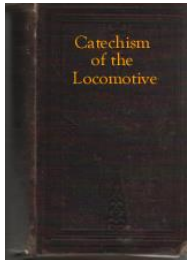
Conner, G. F. *Science of Threshing*. St. Joseph, MI: Threshermen's Review Co., 1906. Although the book does not mention this fact, Conner worked for Port Huron.



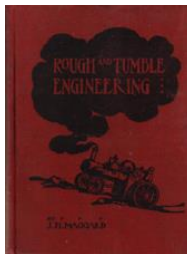
Dingee, William W. and Wallace MacGregor, *The Science of Successful Threshing*. Racine: J. I. Case, 1899. This book appeared with several different covers over the years and varied in height, as well. These various books are not separate editions, as the content remained virtually the same year after year.



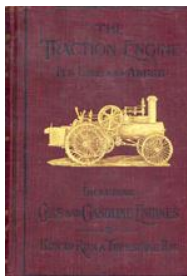
Fletcher, William. *English and American Steam Carriages and Traction Engines*. New York: Longmans, Green, 1904. This source contains several important details about American machines. The dust jacket of the 1973 reprint is shown here.



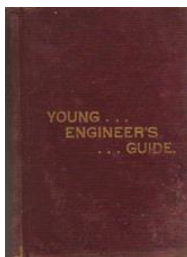
Forney, M. N. *Catechism of the Locomotive*. New York: The Railroad Gazette, 1875. This book focuses on railroad locomotives, not agricultural engines, but it has extremely useful information about the technology of steam power.



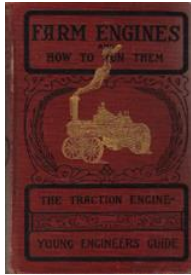
Maggard, James H. *Rough and Tumble Engineering*. Iowa City: Maggard, no dates. This book appeared in numerous editions that are truly separate editions because Maggard kept subtly changing the content. A relatively recent reprinting of one of these editions was produced by the Rough and Tumble steam club in Kinzers, PA.



Maggard, James H. *The Traction Engine: Its Use and Abuse*. Philadelphia: David McKay, 1908. This book is essentially the last edition of *Rough and Tumble Engineering* with a new section on gasoline motors.



Rohan, J. V. *Young Engineer's Guide*. Racine: J. I. Case, 1899. There were numerous printings of this book—at least thirteen of which I am aware. Oddly, this book was reprinted in the 1990s by T. L. Hanson of Milton, North Dakota, without giving the title or author of the original work. Readers that see Hanson's spiral-bound paperback might think that he wrote it.

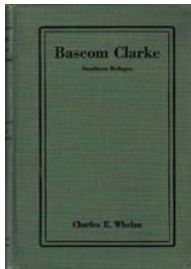


Stephenson, James H. *Farm Engines and How to Run Them*. Chicago: Frederick J. Drake & Co., 1903, 1910. Again oddly, Stephenson plagiarized much of Maggard's book and, at one point, admitted doing so in wording something like this: "As a great author on steam engines has said" All the same, Stephenson's book was reprinted, and many farm engineers owned a copy.

Biographies of People Connected to Agricultural Steam Power



Porter, Charles T. *Engineering Reminiscences*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1908. If you have not read it, you are in for a treat—even though it does not concern farm engines. Porter is witty and, at times, biting in his description of events.



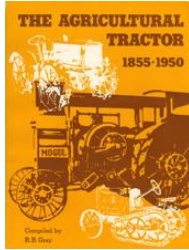
Whelan, Charles E. *Bascom Clarke: Southern Refugee*. Madison, WI: American Thresherman, 1913. This is a must-read for any historian that writes about the agricultural steam era, although it suffers from the prejudices of its century.

Two other biographies are those of William Heilman and A. B. Farquhar, both of which are summarized in detail within *The Steam Tractor Encyclopedia* that John F. Spalding and I wrote.

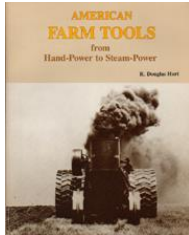
Books on Implements and Gasoline Tractors



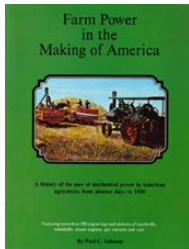
Ardrey, Robert L. *American Agricultural Implements: A Review of Invention and Development in the Agricultural Implement Industry of the United States*. Chicago: R. L. Ardrey, 1894. [Click Here](#)



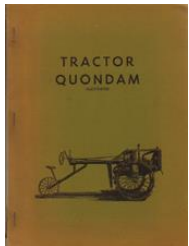
Gray, R. B. *The Agricultural Tractor: 1855-1950*. St. Joseph, MI: American Society of Agricultural Engineers, 1975. This work is an important resource on the development of tractors. There are really too many outstanding books on tractors to list them all.



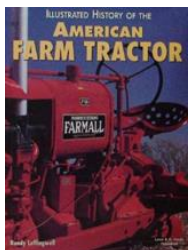
Hurt, R. Douglas. *American Farm Tools from Hand-Power to Steam-Power*. Manhattan, KS: Sunflower University Press, 1982. This book is one of several publications by Professor Hurt. I have quoted most often from this one, but all of his publications are well researched and well written.



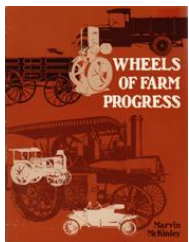
Johnson, Paul C. *Farm Power in the Making of America*. Des Moines: Johnson, 1981. This book features many significant depictions of agricultural machines.



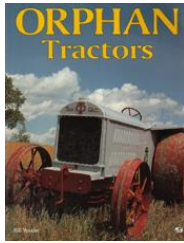
Lang, Arthur P. *Tractor Quondam*. Mahnomon, MN: Lang, 1971. It can be difficult to track down a copy of this small book, but it is worth the effort. The book has several important illustrations not readily found elsewhere.



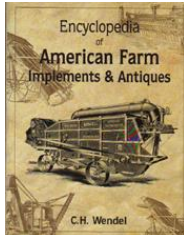
Leffingwell, Randy. *Illustrated History of the American Farm Tractor*. Ann Arbor: Lowe and B. Hould Publishers, 1999. Randy, who wrote the foreword for *Classic American Steamrollers* that Judge Raymond L. Drake and I wrote, has published many books, all of them excellent! He is a champion photographer!



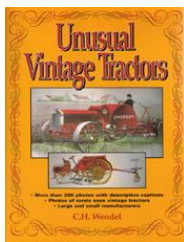
McKinley, Marvin. *Wheels of Farm Progress*. St. Joseph, MI: American Society of Agricultural Engineers, 1980. This book is packed with illustrations evoking a bygone era!



Vossler, Bill. *Orphan Tractors*. Osceola, WI: Motorbooks International, 1996. Many one-of-a-kind tractors are featured. Bill's book is guaranteed to appeal to your curiosity.



Wendel, C. H. *Encyclopedia of American Farm Implements and Antiques*. Iola, WI: Krause, 1997. This book is merely another of the many amazing books that C. H. Wendel has published.

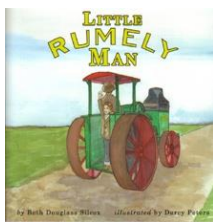


Wendel, C. H. *Unusual Vintage Tractors*. Iola, WI: Krause, 1996. See what I said about C. H. Wendel's amazing books? Here is yet another!



O'Hara, Ward. *From Plow to Now*. Auburn, NY: O'Hara, 1995. If, by some chance, you are unable to find the right machine in Wendel's encyclopedia, you may well find it in O'Hara's collection!

Books for Children



Silcox, Beth Douglass. *Little Rumely Man*. Illustrated by Darcy Peters. College Station, TX: Gypsy Heart Press, 2012. This book is based on the true story of Jack Maple's lifelong love for Rumely OilPulls.

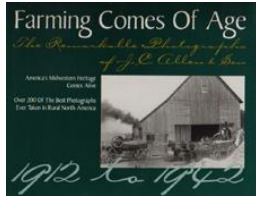


Wearin, Otha D. *Before the Colors Fade*. Illustrated by Felix Summers. Des Moines: Wallace-Homestead Book Company, 1971. This lovely book captures the seasonal work of an old-fashioned farm.

I have barely scratched the surface of excellent books on agriculture, especially gasoline tractors. I have not mentioned works that examine mechanical engineering, instruments such as steam gauges, farm life, livestock, barn construction, or conservation, nor have I begun to list books on steam locomotives and transportation history, topics that are related to

agriculture. Perhaps on another day I will compose a list of my favorite books on those subjects. For now, here are a few titles that I must name because their excellence commands attention.

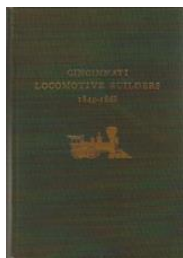
A Few Books on Farming and on Transportation History



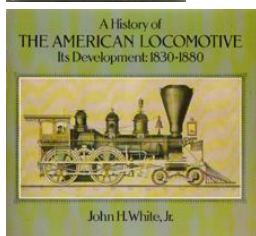
Farming Comes of Age: The Remarkable Photographs of J. C. Allen & Son, 1912 to 1942. Louisville: Harmony House, 1995. The photography depicted in this book is beyond description. Viewers are transported back in time.



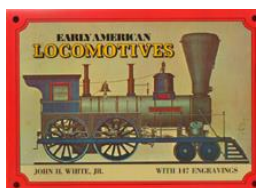
Farming Once Upon a Time: More Remarkable Photographs by J. C. Allen & Son. Louisville: Concord, 1996. The images reproduced in this book save for posterity the golden age of agriculture: the times for which there is such profound nostalgia.



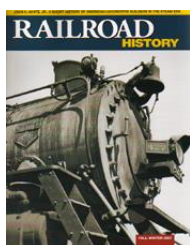
White, John H. *Cincinnati Locomotive Builders, 1845-1868.* Washington, D. C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1965. Written when John H. White, Jr., was curating the transportation exhibits of the Smithsonian Institution, this book is a classic work on early steam locomotives. A book highly sought!



White, John H., Jr. *A History of the American Locomotive, Its Development: 1830-1880.* New York: Dover, 1968. This comprehensive book is the standard work on early steam locomotive history. John is *the* expert on the subject.



White, John H., Jr. *Early American Locomotives.* New York: Dover, 1972. This volume features 147 engravings of early steam locomotives. John has authored numerous books, all excellent, including works on steam riverboats and steam inclines.



White, John H., Jr. *A Short History of American Locomotive Builders in the Steam Era.* Essentially a work that John has produced in many editions, this version is up to date, having appeared as No. 197 of *Railroad History* for the fall and winter of 2007.