

# THE KINGERY MANUFACTURING COMPANY OF CINCINNATI, OHIO

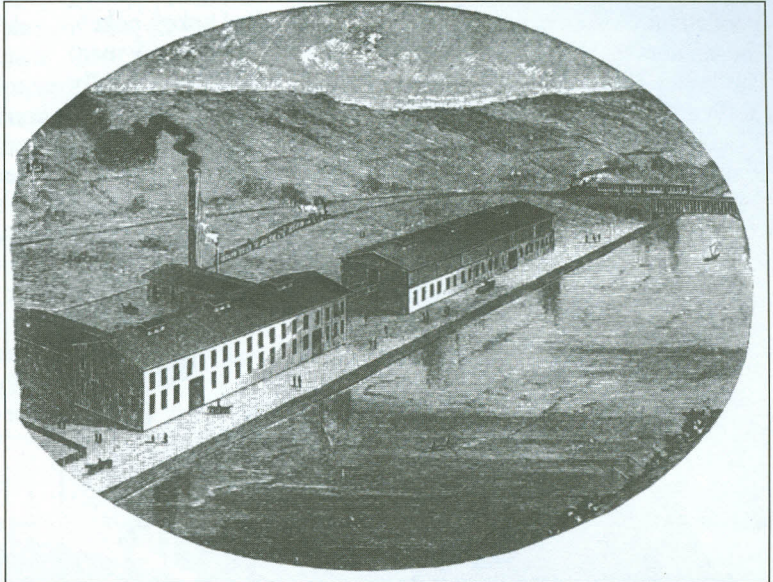
By: Robert T. Rhode

Since the late 1800s, peanut roasters and popcorn machines have been familiar sights at fairs, on city street corners, in candy shops, in general stores, and in motion picture theaters. The C. Cretors Company of Chicago, Illinois, was a well-known builder of such equipment, but the Kingery Manufacturing Company of Cincinnati, Ohio, began earlier and gained prominence through supplying the trade with a

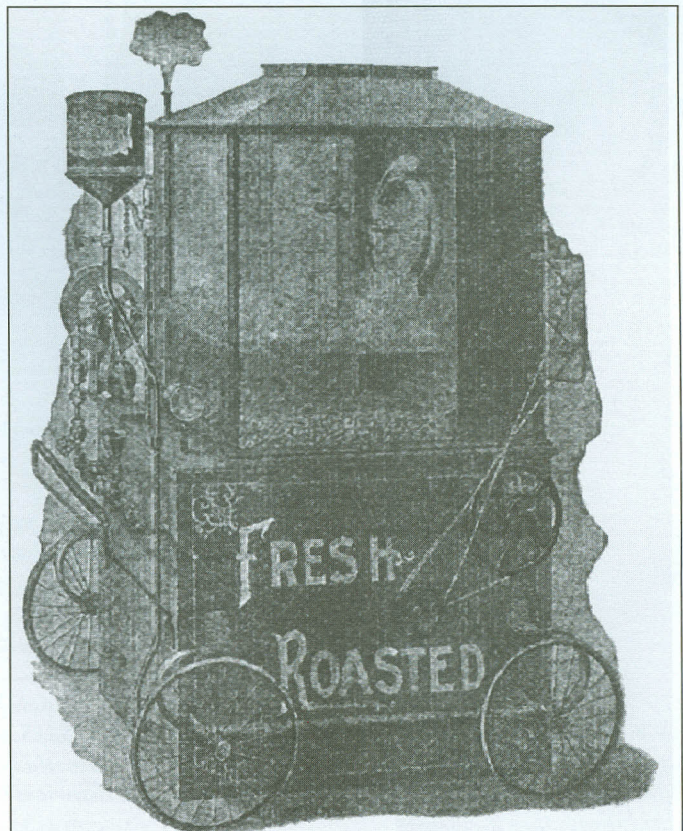


In 1905, the Newspaper Cartoonists Association of Cincinnati included this caricature of Samuel Sylvester Kingery in a book entitled "Cincinnati As We See 'Em." The artist sketched a feline that, oddly enough, resembled the animated Krazy Kat cartoons of the 1930s.

Right: Here is an illustration from the 1898 Kingery catalog. Weighing 500 pounds, the Perfection Steam Power Peanut Roaster and Faultless Corn Popper Combined was advertised as producing a half bushel of roasted peanuts and four bushels of popcorn per hour. Price: \$150! Courtesy Ohio Historical Society.



This cut, from the 1908 catalog of the Kingery Manufacturing Company, depicts the Kingery factory in Hamilton and was reproduced for many years in Cincinnati city directories. Courtesy Cincinnati Historical Society Library.





broad line of products. The small steam engines that powered many of the popcorn machines caught the public's attention. Kingery catalogs asserted that the motion of the little steamers fascinated patrons and helped guarantee sales of popcorn and peanuts.

#### History of the Kingery Manufacturing Company

In 1876, brothers Samuel Sylvester Kingery (born 1850) and Hiel H. Kingery (born 1858) founded a confectionary business in Camden in northwestern Indiana. In 1879, they moved the company to Number 50 Sycamore Street in Cincinnati. The 1882 city directory lists S. S. Kingery as a maker of ice cream. When scooped into waxed paper, the ice cream was called hokey-pokey. The vendors that sold the treat were known as hokey-pokey men. The hokey-pokey dances and songs of the 1940s nostalgically recalled the ice cream vendors of earlier years.

George W. Kingery, another brother, joined the firm as a traveling agent in 1883. In 1884, the company was advertising Crystal Flake (an ingredient in making ice cream), flavoring extracts, coffee roasters, and peanut roasters. In 1885, the

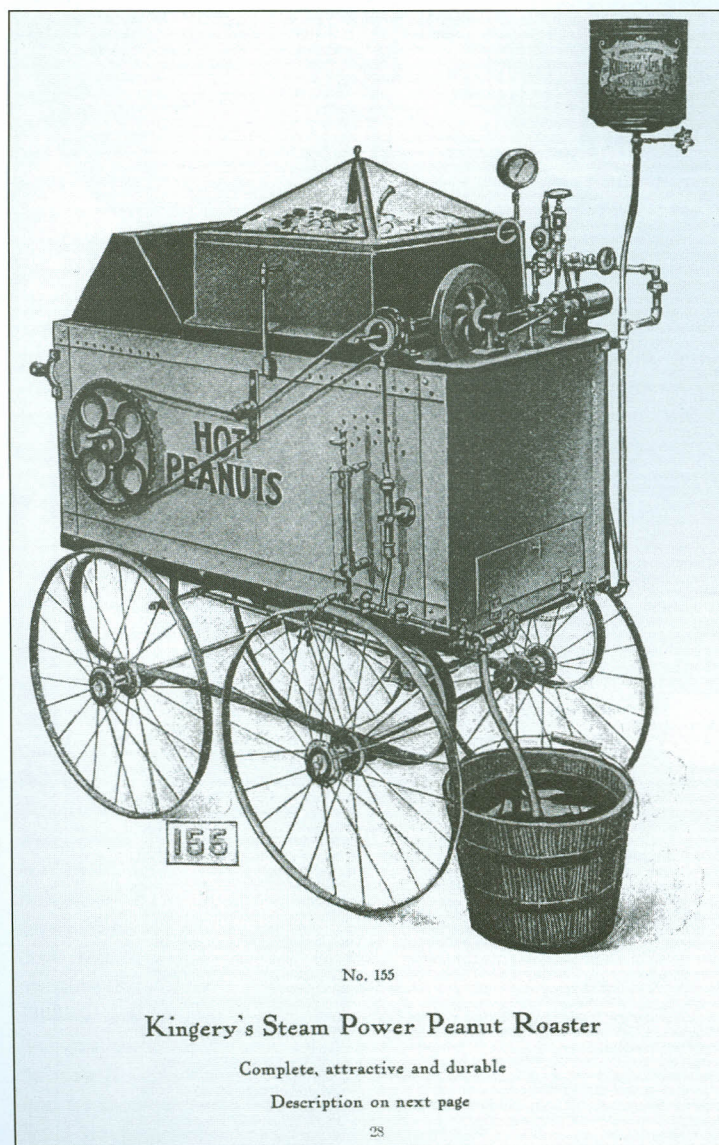
Kingery firm relocated to a four-story building at Number 9 West Pearl Street; the business employed up to twenty workers and sold gelatin and ice cream freezers that looked like heavy buckets. Kingery also marketed roasters.

By 1889, a Kingery factory had been opened to the north of Cincinnati in nearby Hamilton. Samuel Kingery, F. H. Berk, and H. P. Deucher had remodeled the old Rupp pork house in that city and transformed it into a gelatin plant. The Kingery advertisement for 1889 proclaimed that the firm's Economy Freezer cost half the price of competitors' products and that a trial package of Crystal Flake with a recipe containing "the secret of making that delicious Ice Cream" would be sent free with each freezer or could be mailed for 25¢.

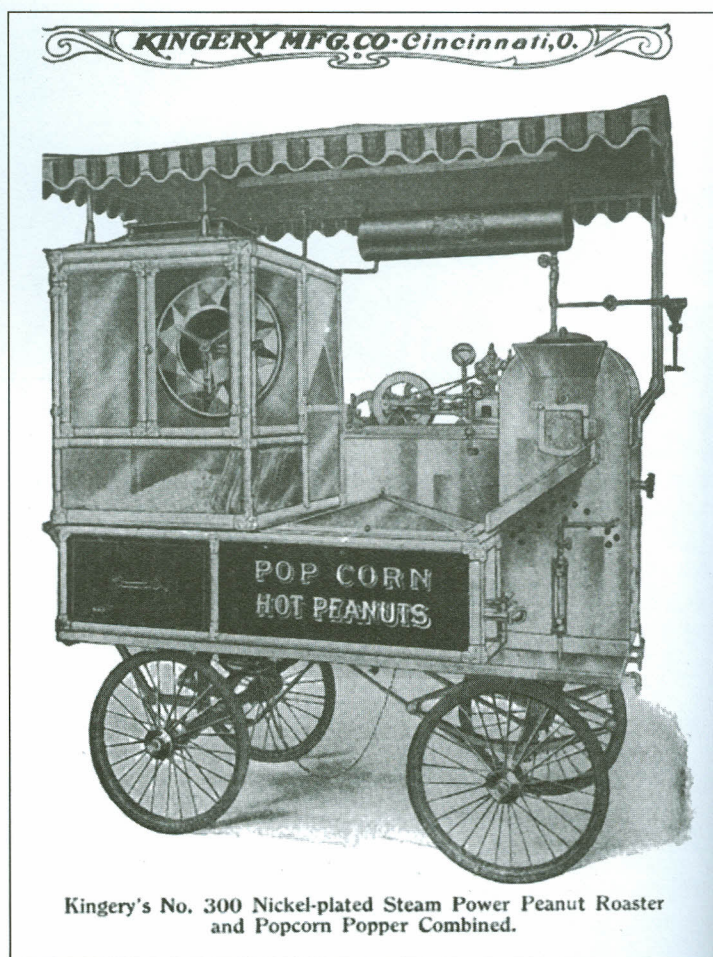
In 1897, Kingery ads proclaimed steam-powered and hand-cranked peanut roasters. By 1899, promotional materials included French pot freezers, ice cream cabinets, ice cream dishers, ice shavers, milk shakers, lemon squeezers, rotary corn poppers with a capacity of two bushels or more per hour, and combined peanut roasters and rotary popcorn poppers. In 1905, the company's address was 106 and 108 East Pearl Street. Chewing gum was listed for the first time in 1907.

Early catalogs of the Kingery Manufacturing Company describe a torch that gave the vendor light at night and a 7-inch gong that could "be rung at will" to "attract the attention of the people."

The 1913 directory featured both horse-drawn and hand-pulled



The 1908 catalog of the Kingery firm featured this model, which was named Number 155, weighed 226 pounds, and sold for \$115. Nickel plating, German silver, and polished brass made this machine a handsome unit. Courtesy Cincinnati Historical Society Library.



The 1916 Kingery catalog advertised Number 300, a Nickel-plated Steam Power Peanut Roaster and Popcorn Popper. Weighing 685 pounds, this unit cost \$400. Courtesy Ohio Historical Society.



vending wagons. The company's ad for 1915 mentioned steam-, electric-, spring-, and hand-powered peanut roasters and corn poppers. A clever product name was offered: Self-C-Z-ning Corn Poppers (self-seasoning). By the 1920s, Kingery was advertising a full line of barbecue machines.

In 1927, Samuel S. Kingery, Jr. (born 1898), was secretary and treasurer, and, by 1929, Geary F. Stewart had risen from vice president to president of the firm with Mrs. Elsie K. Boutet assuming the role of vice president. In those days, few women occupied high offices within important businesses. Clearly, Elsie K. Boutet was a gifted administrator.

When Prohibition ended in 1933, the Kingery firm added a line of beer equipment, as well as cheese-coating machinery. In 1938, Samuel S. Kingery, Jr., became president of the company.

After 1945, the Kingery firm no longer appeared in city directories. The Stardust

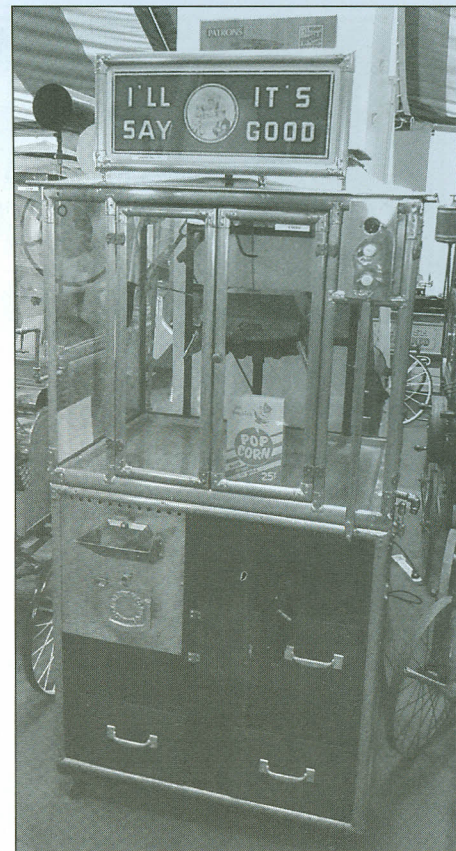
Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas, which opened in 1958, boasted a Kingery peanut roaster and popcorn popper, but the date when the machine was manufactured is not readily available.

Aficionados of agricultural steam engines recognize that John B. Bartholomew of the Avery Company competed with Cretors and Kingery. Bartholomew invented peanut roasters and waffle machines. He was manufacturing corn poppers in the 1890s. By 1900, his popcorn firm, called the Bartholomew Company, offered a line of popcorn poppers and wagons ranging in price from \$60 for The Boss on Wheels to \$125 for The Stunner. Andrew F. Smith's often reprinted book entitled *Popped Culture: A Social History of Popcorn in America* highlights Bartholomew's machine named The Columbia Popper that shot popcorn in such a way as to resemble snowflakes falling from clouds.

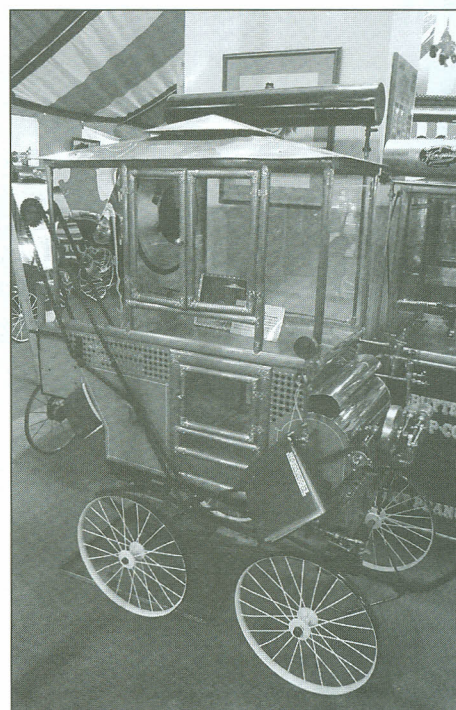


Number 900 was billed as "Kingery's Store on Wheels." A combination peanut, popcorn, and candy vending car, this horse-drawn machine was the firm's luxury model and sold for \$1,550 in 1924. The wagon was fitted for "popping corn, roasting peanuts and attractively displaying them, also candies and other sweet meats, chewing gum, waffles, lunches, ice cream and ice cream cones." This cut is from the 1916 catalog, and the quoted description is from the 1924 catalog.

Right: Here is a restored Number 180 Kingery combined peanut roaster and popcorn popper in the Wyandot Popcorn Museum, which gives the year of manufacture as 1896. In 1908, such a machine sold for \$210; in 1916, \$240; and, in 1924, \$400. This model of Kingery is termed a "dry popper" in the popcorn trade. Courtesy Jim Carpenter.



This Kingery machine, a Number 891, is one of three Kingery poppers on display at the Wyandot Popcorn Museum, which is housed within Heritage Hall, the headquarters of the Marion County Historical Society in Marion, Ohio. Kingery named this model the Self-C-Z-ning Corn Popper and Peanut Roaster, and it was priced at \$312 in 1924. Courtesy Jim Carpenter of the Marion County Historical Society.



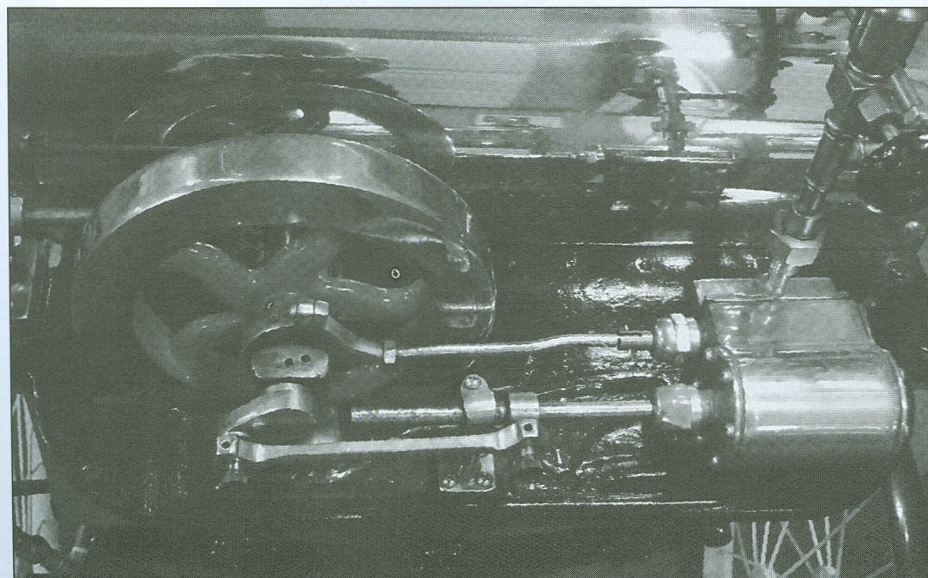




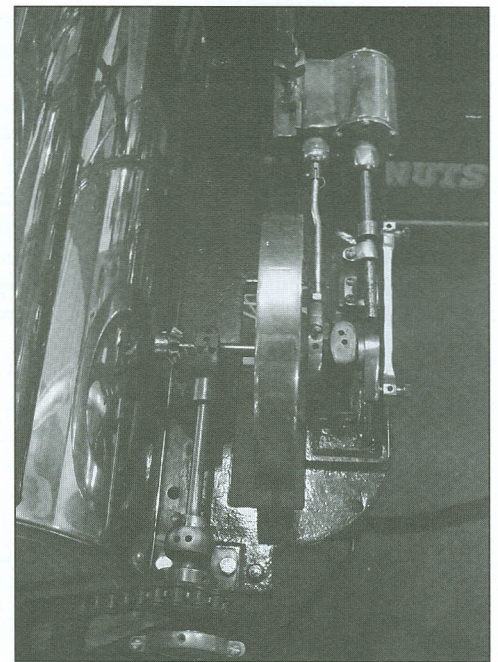
Here is a detail from the Self-C-Z-ning Kingery in the Wyandot Popcorn Museum. Catalogs described this sign as "flashing on and off" as "a sure business getter." Of special note is the charming scene of children enjoying popcorn. The 1924 catalog advised readers that everybody is a potential customer "from the small child who brings you a nickel or dime clutched in his tiny fist to the patrons who stop . . . in their automobiles." Courtesy Jim Carpenter.



The elegant Kingery trademark always assumed this form. Courtesy Jim Carpenter.



The nickel-plated, red-enameled engine of this Kingery wagon in the Wyandot Popcorn Museum is reflected in the highly polished surfaces behind it. Courtesy Jim Carpenter.

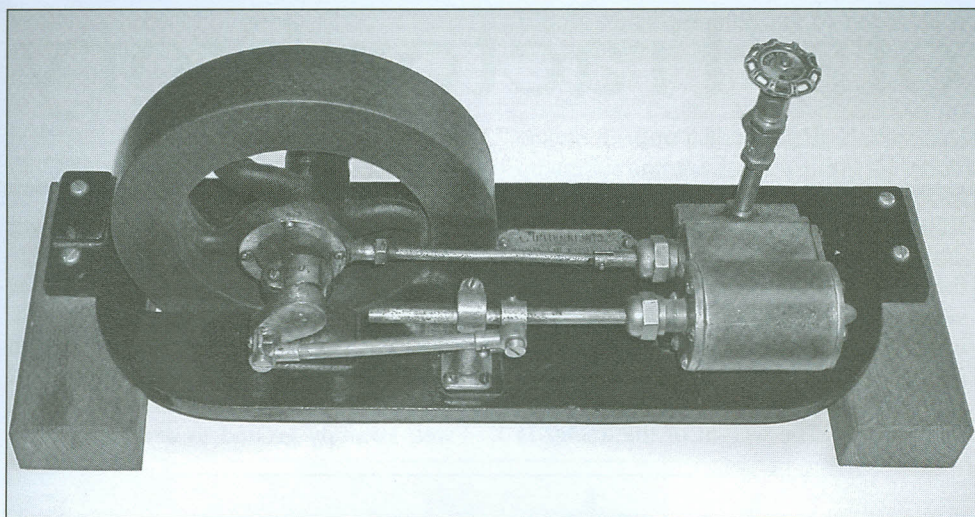


This view of the steam engine of the Number 180 Kingery wagon shows the sprocket gear mechanism that ran the machine. Courtesy Jim Carpenter.

#### My Kingery Steam Engine

When Mike McKnight generously offered to sell his Kingery popcorn engine to me, he gave me no illusions about its condition, which he described as rough. The base was broken, and the engine could not possibly operate. As I had wanted a small steam engine and as this one had been built in Cincinnati, where I was living at the time, I jumped at the chance to buy it. Slowly but surely, the engine (Serial Number 211) came back together. Jack Ertel, who taught welding for over twenty years at a vocational school, carefully welded the base and painted it with black enamel. After inspecting the engine, Bruce Babcock, whom readers of this magazine recognize as an authority on numerous instruments related to steam power, coaxed the Kingery into running again. He pointed out problem areas that needed to be addressed. Dale Miner, who is well known as a machinist and who exhibits a 65 HP Case at various shows, patiently repaired the piston and rebuilt parts to help the engine run smoothly. Carl G. Schwab, who is expert at restoring small engines, machined a new piston valve and adjusted the timing until the Kingery is, in Carl's judgment, the best running small steam engine he has seen. Using castings, gears, stock, and blueprints that I bought from Coles Power Models, Carl painstakingly created a new working flyball governor for

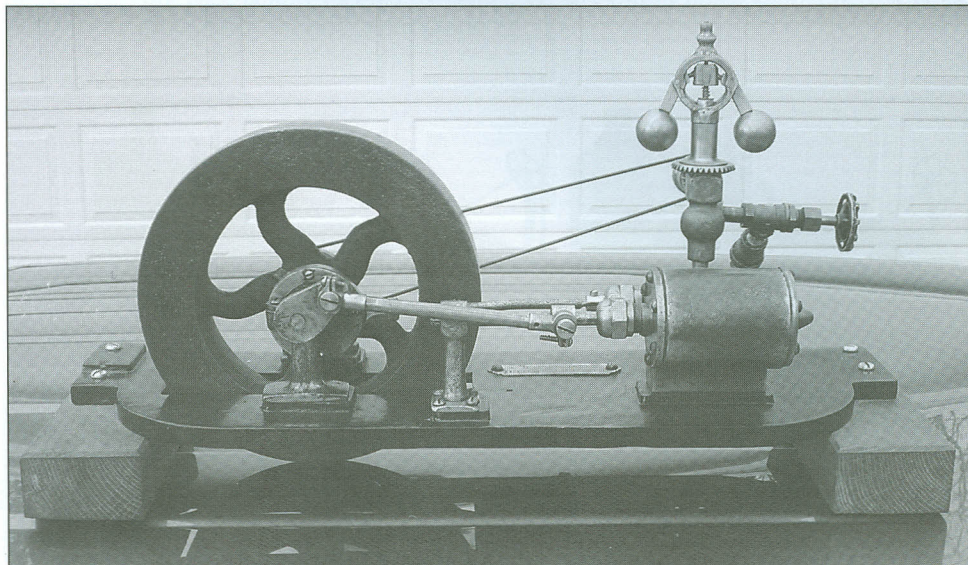




This Kingery popcorn engine (Serial Number 211) belongs to Robert T. Rhode and has been restored to peak running condition, thanks to Jack Ertel, Bruce Babcock, Dale Miner, and Carl G. Schwab. Of note are the thickness of the flywheel, which is wider than the one on the Number 180 in the Wyandot Popcorn Museum, and the platform, which is shaped somewhat differently.



Here is a close-up of the nameplate on the Kingery steam engine in Robert T. Rhode's collection.



Sporting a new flyball governor built by Carl G. Schwab, this Kingery popcorn engine offers a visual testimony to the genius of designers of steam engines.

All photos submitted by Robert T. Rhode.

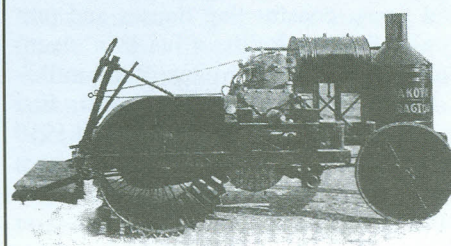
the Kingery engine. As I had seen such governors on Cretors steamers, I thought that the Kingery needed one. Now that I have researched the company, I am not certain that my engine came with a governor, but Carl's is a handsome addition to the machine. Watching the governor react to the opening of the throttle is great fun.

#### Acknowledgments

I thank Jim Carpenter, an associate of the Marion County (Ohio) Historical Society, for photographing Kingery popcorn machines in the Wyandot Popcorn Museum (<http://www.wyandotpopcornmus.com>), which is housed in the society's Heritage Hall; Gale E. Martin, director of the Marion County Historical Society (<http://www.marion-history.com/>), for providing information about the Kingery machines in the collection of the Wyandot Popcorn Museum; Anne B. Shepherd, reference librarian at the Cincinnati Historical Society Library, for helping locate several significant facts about the Kingery Manufacturing Company; and Eleanor Y. Stewart, my friend and frequent co-author for assisting me with research in Marion, Ohio.

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Ad from Jan. 1914 Gas Power magazine.  
From the collection of Ervin King.