

UPDATE ON NEWARK MACHINE WORKS

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In the article entitled "H. & F. Blandy of Zanesville and Newark, Ohio," which John Spalding and I authored and which was published in the February-March 2011 issue of this magazine, John and I included a detail from a photograph that Thomas Norrell collected. In the caption (on page 9), we said that the image might show a prototype of the Newark self-propelling engine of 1858. It does not. John H. White, Jr., well-known author of numerous books and articles on locomotives and other forms of transportation, historian for many years at the Smithsonian Institution, and now a faculty member at Miami University, recently gave me a sharper copy of the Norrell photograph. I can see that the agricultural engine in the image is a portable engine after all. With the exception that the flywheel is on the right, the engine is identical to the 1857 model in the cut from page 147 in the Ohio State Board of Agriculture report—a cut that also appears on page 9 in the February-March issue of *Engineers and Engines*. The rear wheels are in the same position on both engines. The angle of the machine in the Newark photo gives the optical illusion that the wheels are farther back than those in the cut. Evidently, the rear wheels were spaced at a wide distance from the sides of the firebox. There is no chain and there are no gears for traction.

On page 31 of the *Ohio Farmer* for July 21, 1860, there is an advertisement for the Newark Machine Works that carries this introductory participial phrase (with capitalization as shown in the ad): "Having been engaged in the manufacture of PORTABLE AND STATIONARY STEAM ENGINES AND MILLS of all kinds for five years . . ." In my experience, the vast majority—if not all—of early builders of farm steam engines stretched the truth to the breaking point by pushing back their inception year as far as possible. Doing so was logical because it was to the companies' advantage to appear to be well established in the trade. On the one hand, if the writer of the ad is including 1860 as one of the years, Newark Iron Works began production of portable engines in 1856—a year that stands to reason because it was in 1857 that the firm entered one of its first engines in a competition in Cincinnati. On the other hand, if the author of the ad is not including 1860, Newark Iron Works initiated the building of portable engines in 1855. I am

not certain that the Norrell photo could have been taken in 1854, as is claimed for the image. If it was, the engine had to have been a prototype, or else the writer of the ad was misinformed (and his being misinformed is unlikely). Had there been a prototype as early as 1854, I feel certain that the writer of the ad would have said that portable engines had been built for either six or seven years. I am of the opinion that the Norrell photo was not taken in 1854 but a year or possibly several years later.

Incidentally, the ad in the 1860 *Ohio Farmer* depicts a cut of a "Six-Horse

Farm Engine" for \$700 "Mounted" or \$900 "Self-Propelling." (The cut is reproduced in the February-March *E&E* article and in earlier publications of mine.) Lower in the ad, the firm lists a "Saw-Mill Engine" with 9" bore and 18" stroke for \$1,375 (without governor), a "Saw-Mill Engine" with 9" bore and 16" stroke for \$1,200, and a "Saw-Mill Engine" with 8" bore and 16" stroke for \$1,000.

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A clear print of the photograph of the Newark Machine Works that was allegedly taken in 1854 reveals this detail. The portable engine in this image closely resembles the Newark machine that won an award in competition at the Ohio State Fair held in Cincinnati in 1857. Advertising in the *Ohio Farmer* for July 21, 1860, suggests that Newark built its first portable engine in 1855 or 56. This fact calls into question the date when the photo was taken.