

## Case Delivery Day Gretna, Manitoba 1903

The delivery of a number of J.I. Case steam engines and threshing machines at Gretna, Manitoba was big news in 1903 warranting a photo in the Canadian Thresherman and Farmer.

The separators are built of wood and sharp eyes will note that the middle separator is equipped with a wind stacker while the separators on either side of the middle separator, are equipped with apron stackers which were simply a slatted chain conveyor. As the chain did not run fast, the straw just dropped off the end of the stacker. While the stacker could swivel to some degree, the movement was limited. The result was that the threshing machine had to move often in order to get more room to stack straw or the threshing crew had to "buck" or push the straw away with a wooden device pushed by a team of horses. This simple machine appears to have been also used, in some cases, to push hay to an overshot hay stacker.

The wind stacker offered several advantages. It blew the straw away from the end of the blower pipe, the pipe could be raised up or dropped down and the blower pipe could swivel almost 180 degrees. On many threshing machines the blower pipe telescoped, extending the distance straw could be blown so more straw could be piled before the threshing machine equipped with a wind stacker had to move. On the downside the wind stacker required more power to operate it and it was noisy, a serious consideration when horses were around. The horses had to become habituated to the noise. The first few days of a threshing run usually featured run away teams as the horses got used to working around the machinery.

The rear of the center threshing machine is obscured by three men standing there. If they were not there, one could have seen the blower was slung under the machine and was laying on its side. J.I. Case and other manufacturers used this arrangement when first installing wind stackers. Later designs featured a blower standing upright on the side of the machine and tin work installed at the back of the machine to direct the straw into the blower as it fell off the straw walkers. The design here had the straw falling directly off the walkers into the blower with no need for tin work to direct the straw. However the drive arrangements were more complicated with this type of installation. All the other driven shafts on the machine were horizontal while the driven shaft on the underslung blower was vertical. Case solved this problem here by using a set of bevel gears. It would appear Case and other manufacturers realized that the upright blower was a better design as it simplified the drive arrangements.

The four J.I. Case steam engines appear to be Case 25-75 engines. While Case built larger engines, judging from the Case engines in the Museum collection, the 75 was the most popular seller, or at least in Manitoba. As for why, maybe a combination of cost, handiness and a minimal crew size needed. The larger engines were more expensive, heavier, more clumsy and, a very important consideration, would have required a larger thresher to make use of all the power. And a larger thresher was more expensive and meant more men in the crew to efficiently feed the machine with sheaves.

While the Museum does not hold in its collection any of the machinery in the photo it does hold a Case 75 steam engine and a Case wooden separator identical to the machines in this photo, the Williamson outfit.

This outfit consists of a J.I. Case 25-75, nicknamed "Old Jennie" and a J.I. Case separator. The outfit was purchased at the 1904 Brandon Fair however it was then reclaimed by J.I. Case probably because payments were not being made. The Williamson Brothers of Alexander, Manitoba purchased the outfit on June 26<sup>th</sup> of 1906 for \$3,000. The engine's cost was assessed at \$2,000 at this time. Old Jennie and the separator harvested crops in the Alexander area from 1906 to 1938. It is estimated that 1,500,000 bushels of grain were threshed by the separator by the end of 1938. The outfit was parked after the harvest of 1938 and in the early 1960s was donated to the Manitoba Agricultural Museum. The outfit can be seen parked undercover in the Heritage Building.

The Manitoba Agricultural Museum is open year round and operates a website at <http://ag-museum.mb.ca/> which can provide visitors with information on the Museum including location and hours of operation.



*Case Delivery Day Gretna 1903. Three Case threshing machines and of our Case Steam engines are seen here after being unloaded for delivery to farmers. The box car on the right side of the image is lettered for the Great Northern Railway and more than likely the equipment was railed to Gretna on the Great Northern from Case's US manufacturing plants. Great Northern was a major US railway at the time and is now part of the BNSF railway. In the early 1900s, Great Northern had three branch lines running across the border into Canada. Gretna was on a line that ran north from Grand Forks, North Dakota to Portage via Gretna, Plum Coulee, Roland and Carman. The line does not appear to have been too successful as by 1926 it was abandoned with the exception of the section between Carman and Plum Coulee which was sold to the Canadian Pacific Railway.*