

Step back in time at the Old Iron Show

By Jeff Peterson
For Go! Magazine

PENDLETON — Come for the sounds. Stay for the history lesson. Meet enthusiasts who eagerly invest thousands of dollars making old iron sing.

Poppin' Johnnies will join the chorus with their distinctive exhaust notes, and Hit and Misses add their snort POP whoosh whoosh whoosh snort POP at the 18th annual Old Iron Show June 3-5 at Roy Raley Park, 1205 SW Court Ave.

You've probably heard Johnnies. The distinctive green and yellow John Deere two-cylinder tractors, made up to 1960, could be heard from the south 40 to the north 40.

Hit and Misses are stationary internal combustion engines. In peak use from about 1910 to the early 1930s, they hit when operating at or below a set speed and missed when exceeding their set speed.

Presented by the Umatilla County Historical Society, the

show will run from 8 a.m. to dusk Friday and Saturday and 8 a.m.-1 p.m. Sunday. Admission is free.

At least 50 exhibitors will bring one to five items — machinery from bygone eras — to the show. Expect old iron engines — “the oldest we ever had was a Golden Gate made in 1897,” said Jack Remillard, who started the show in 2004 and helps organize it each year. “I'd been to shows around the Northwest, and asked myself, ‘Why can't we do that in Pendleton?’”

The show has been a going concern ever since.

Attendees will see tractors, antique cars and vintage farm implements, perhaps including a corn sheller and a hay chopper. As many as 100 single-cylinder engines will be on hand to show how things were done back in the day.

But that's not all. Remillard's steam engine drew a crowd last year when he brought it to the show for the first time. He will bring it back this year. The steam engine is as quiet as the Johnny Popper is noisy.



Heritage Station Museum/Contributed photo
The Old Iron Show is set for June 3-5 at Roy Raley Park in Pendleton.

“Steam was king for 150 years or better,” he said, “and the one we have, built in 1900, is a fairly modern one. They run on wood, straw, coal — anything that will burn — and are so quiet.”

Also on display this year will be World War II gear — an ambulance, half track (wheels front, tracks back) and weapons.

Exhibitors come from all over. Many show up Thursday to begin setting up for the show.

“They come from California, Nevada, Washington, Idaho and all over Oregon,” Remillard said. “They spend thousands and thousands to fix up equipment and bring to the show. I always try to get people to bring their

most unique piece so it's something unusual. It's amazing what shows up every year.”

The payoff is not just in camaraderie among exhibitors or the enjoyment of showing their labors of love to antique gear fanatics.

In a display of Pendleton hospitality, “we feed all the exhibitors Friday and Saturday evenings, and provide them with lunch tickets for Friday and Saturday,” Remillard said.

The event started much more modestly. Perhaps 10 exhibitors appeared at the first one-day show. It expanded first to two days and then to three about a decade ago.

In year one, admission was

charged, but the family-friendly event has been free ever since.

Other special features this year include a vendor serving Mexican food and hamburgers. A tractor train will drive children around the park.

Major sponsors are RDO Equipment Co., Hill's Premium Meats, Olsen's Auto Parts, the Umatilla Electric Cooperation and the P.J. Rohde Ranch.

In deference to the COVID pandemic, hand-cleaning stations will be set up and masks will be available to hand out. They are not required for the outdoor venue.

“People are anxious to get out,” Remillard said. “We saw that last year, and I think we'll see that even more so this year.”

The event is a fundraiser for the Umatilla County Historical Society and Heritage Station Museum.

“Everything we get is by donation,” Remillard said. “Last year we made about \$3,500 for the museum.”

For information call Mark at 541-303-3309, Bill at 541-240-9023 or Jack at 541-310-0583.

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