

# FARMALL CENTURY

1923-2023

THE EVOLUTION OF RED TRACTORS AND CRAWLERS IN  
THE GOLDEN AGE OF INTERNATIONAL HARVESTER



**LEE KLANCHER**

FOREWORD BY  
**MAX ARMSTRONG**



THE GOLDEN AGE OF IH

Dear Reader,

I'm thrilled to share these sample pages of my latest book, *Farmall Century!* After ten years of chronicling red tractor history, we are finally tackling the earliest machines in the line—the Farmall and early International Harvester tractors. This book has been a tremendous joy to put together, and myself and our contributors are uncovering a treasure trove of new information about the early IH history and machines.

Sincerely,

*Lee Klancher*

## FARMALL CENTURY DETAILS

*Farmall Century* is a celebration of the 100th anniversary of the Farmall tractor. Presented in both standard and anniversary editions, the model-by-model history traces the evolution and design of the most significant farm tractors of the 20th century.

- New discoveries uncovered by Guy Fay and Lee Klancher, including the revelation that the very first gasoline tractor is NOT the machine you think!
- A dramatic telling of how IHC was founded and formed, including a look at the history of the McCormick and Deering company.
- An intimate look at the creation and evolution of the original Farmall tractor, the Regular.
- Never-before-published photographs of prototype tractors as well as one-off variations of popular models.
- Complete coverage of all IH tractors from the very first tractor up to 1957.
- A visual guide to all post-1957 tractors to carry the Farmall badge.
- Complete coverage of the IH crawler line.
- Detailed history of the high-performance modifications offered by H&M for Letter Series and later tractors.
- Complete coverage of IH machines built for World War II by the always-thorough writer, Jim Allen.
- Technical details and interesting sub-models from Kenneth Updike.

Pre-Order for July

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**LEE KLANCHER**



**OCTANE**  
PRESS



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*by Max Armstrong*

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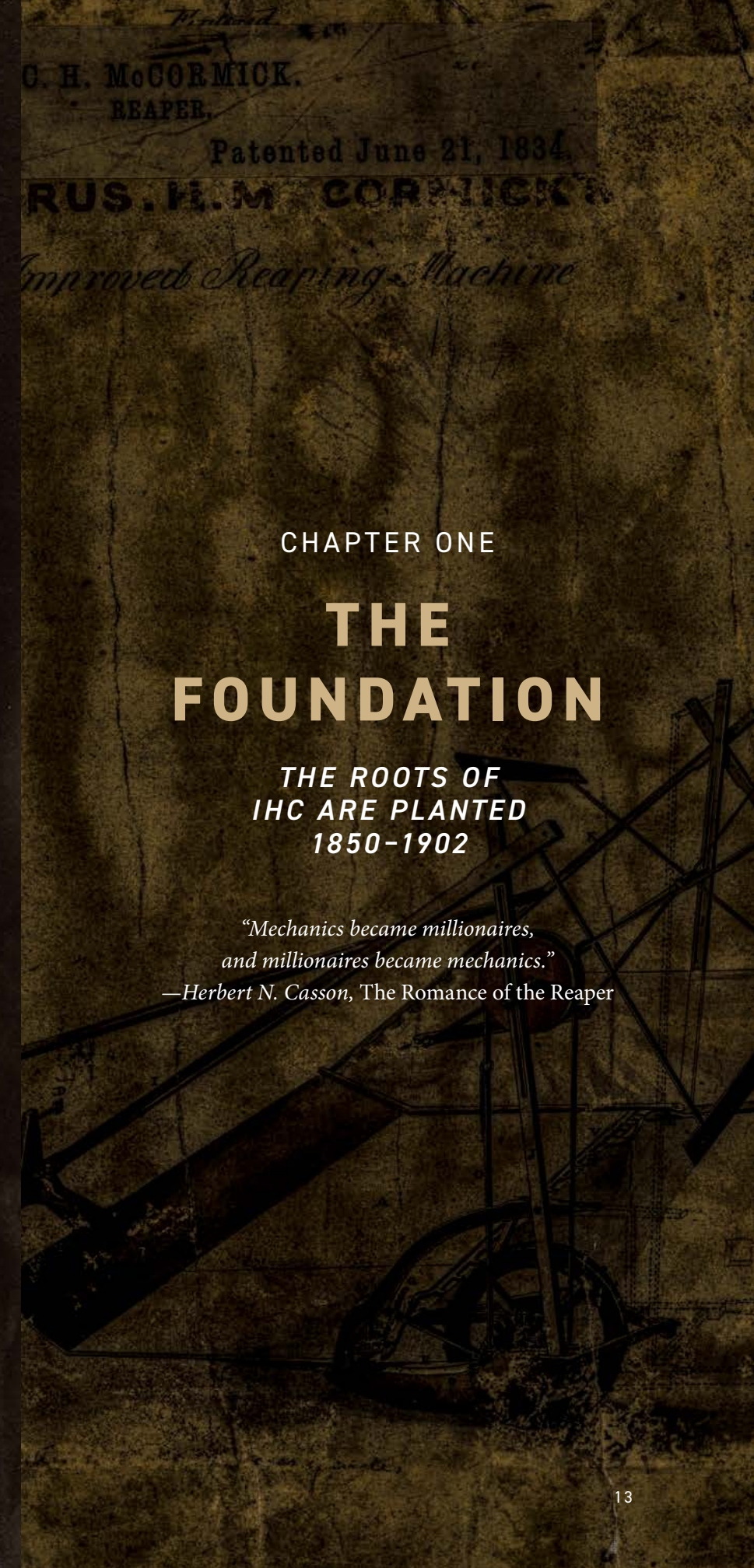
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*The Smith*  
©  
*A. Gilbert*



O. H. McCORMICK.  
REAPER.  
Patented June 21, 1834.  
RUS. H. M. CORNICK  
*Improved Reaper Machine*

CHAPTER ONE

# THE FOUNDATION

THE ROOTS OF  
IHC ARE PLANTED  
1850-1902

*"Mechanics became millionaires,  
and millionaires became mechanics."  
—Herbert N. Casson, The Romance of the Reaper*

### REAPERS IN THE CIVIL WAR

When the Civil War broke out in 1861, the McCormicks were keenly aware each machine freed up two or three farmhands to fight. They sold 250,000 reapers and mowers during the Civil War. The company presented their machine as battlefield contributors with a series of posters like the one you see here. *Cosack & Co., Library of Congress LC-DIG-pga-00540*

## THE CHALLENGES OF THE CIVIL WAR

In 1861, the American Civil War created huge business challenges. McCormick couldn't meet demand that year and in 1862, estimating that more than 2,500 sales went unfilled due to shortages (a typical production run at this time was about five thousand machines). In 1863, low crop prices and difficulties delivering machines left the company with a surplus of two thousand machines. Prices fluctuated wildly throughout the war, and, by the end, farmers became understandably wary of new equipment purchases.<sup>48</sup>

As with later wars, the McCormick company struggled with raw material supplies and costs. Lumber prices doubled, and the cost of coal and pig iron nearly tripled. Hiring enough skilled labor during this time was challenging, with strikes also causing production delays. Transportation costs increased on the rails and the water, and at times routes were shut down due to battles or closed borders. Currency could also be an issue—the northern banks would sometimes refuse to accept the Confederate dollar.

Competition for sales were fierce, making large price increases suicidal. McCormick only increased prices by roughly 15 percent, despite the huge cost increases. In 1862, the Eastern Seaboard harvesting companies, including McCormick, met and agreed to increase prices 10 percent for reapers and mowers. Meetings like this continued into 1864, with much discussion of industry-wide price increases and terms. The business practice was collusion, and it would be made illegal by the Sherman Act of 1890.

Despite all these challenges, the Civil War increased farmer's reliance on and use of farm machinery, particularly reapers that replaces the handwork of cutting grain with a cradle scythe.



Entered according to Act of Congress  
in the Year 1865 by the  
McCORMICK HARVESTING MACHINE CO.  
in the Office of the  
Librarian of Congress at Washington.

·BATTLE OF SHILOH·APRIL 6<sup>th</sup> 1862·

THE McCORMICK MACHINES COME VICTORIOUSLY OUT OF EVERY CONTEST, AND WITHOUT A SCRATCH.

·PRESENTED WITH COMPLIMENTS OF McCORMICK HARVESTING MACHINE COMPANY·

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From The  
·PANORAMA PAINTING·  
ON EXHIBITION IN CHICAGO.

General Grant and Staff

## RISING FROM THE ASHES

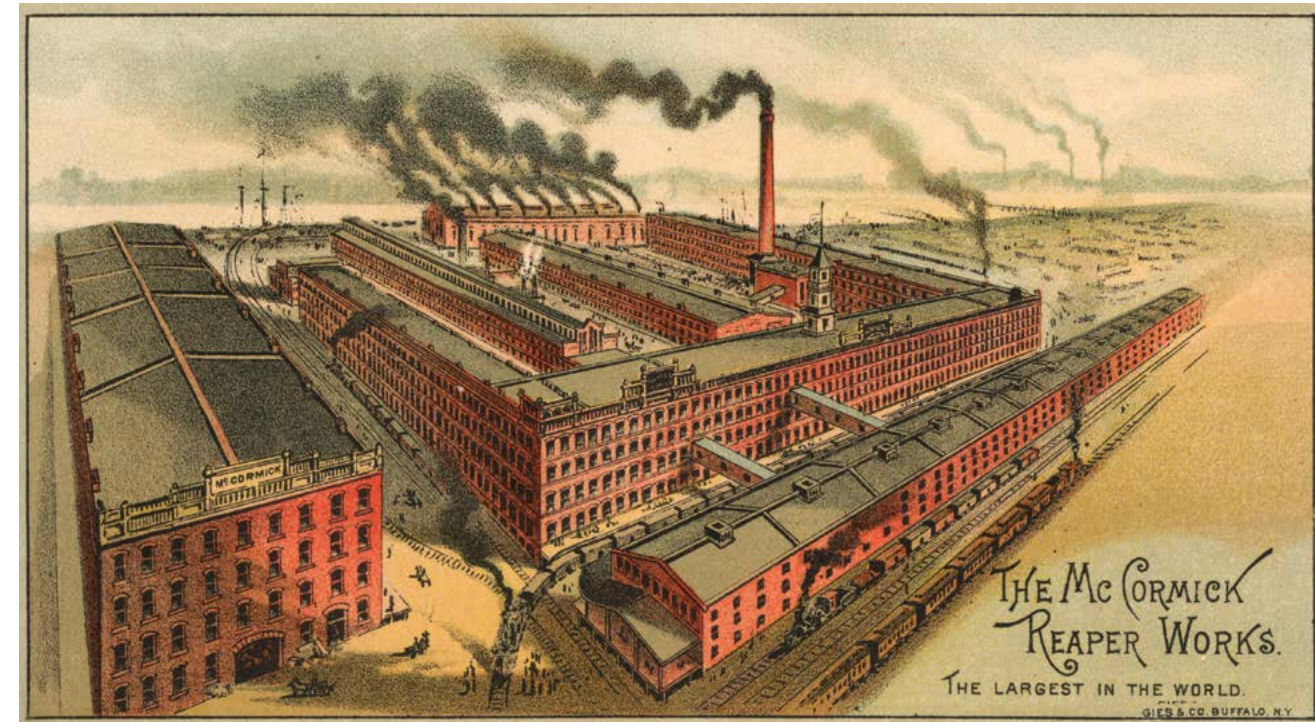
When the Great Chicago Fire of 1871 destroyed the McCormick factory, Cyrus Sr. reputedly expressed great doubt about rebuilding. The loss was valued at \$2 million<sup>57</sup>—one of the largest in the Chicago fire and \$48 million in 2023 dollars—and the fire destroyed the company's patterns and machinery. Legend has it that Cyrus Sr.'s concerns were overruled by Nettie, who insisted they rebuild. They did so in fine fashion.

Construction began on the new McCormick Reaper Works in 1872. The plant was built on 155 acres on the north branch of the river, with 1,320 feet

of dock footage. The buildings alone covered twenty-one acres of ground and were equipped with all the latest machinery.

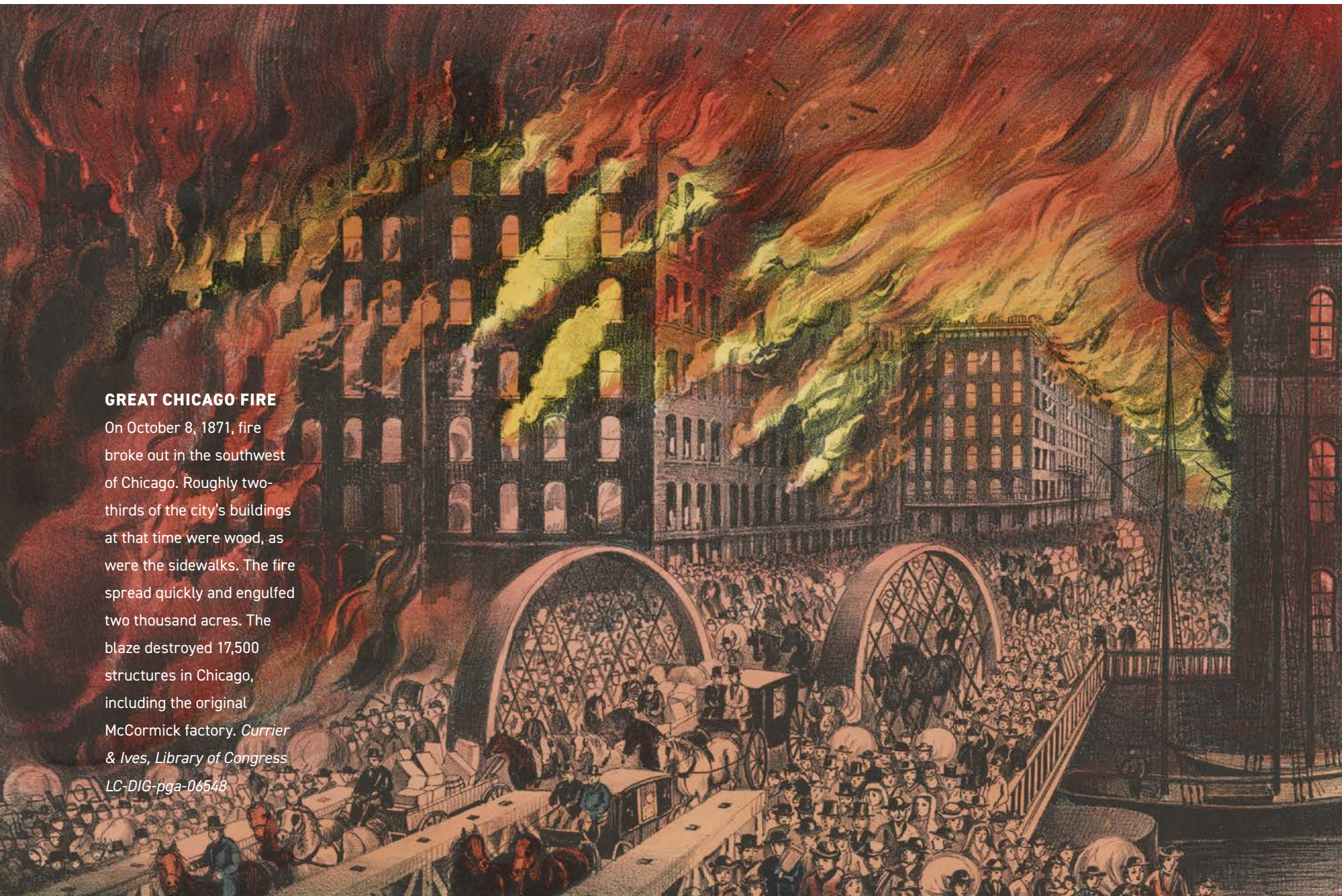
The McCormicks built not only the works, but also homes, office buildings, and other buildings in Chicago in the ensuing years.

The new factory enabled McCormick to cement its place as a leader in the agricultural implement industry. Farm equipment was built in the factory and on that ground—with more than fifty-three buildings on it—until McCormick Works closed in 1959.



## McCORMICK WORKS 1887

The McCormicks rebuilt their factory on 155 acres on the north bank of the Chicago river, featuring 1,320 feet of water frontage. The works itself covered twenty-one acres and remained in place until 1962. *McCormick Harvesting Machine Company, Wisconsin Historical Society / 39554*



## GREAT CHICAGO FIRE

On October 8, 1871, fire broke out in the southwest of Chicago. Roughly two-thirds of the city's buildings at that time were wood, as were the sidewalks. The fire spread quickly and engulfed two thousand acres. The blaze destroyed 17,500 structures in Chicago, including the original McCormick factory. *Currier & Ives, Library of Congress LC-DIG-pga-06548*



## McCORMICK REAPER AND BINDER

By the 1880s, reapers were able to bind and cut grain, with no need to have anyone walk with it and tend to the horses or the grain. This model was built in 1883 and added a binder to the operation, but it used a frame that largely wood. *McCormick Harvesting Machine Company, Wisconsin Historical Society / 22888*

## THE COWBOY AND THE PRINCESS

By 1895, our man Alexander Legge was continuing to distinguish himself in collections for McCormick in Nebraska and was in fact the lead man in the territory. The “tall cowpuncher” made his mark with tough but fair negotiations.

A favorite tale is of the farmer who put up his bull for collateral when he purchased his equipment. When Legge requested the bull be returned to offset missed payments, the following conversation ensued.

“Where is the bull?”

“Out there in that little pasture.”

“I don’t see any bull there.”

“Of course you don’t,” the farmer said. “He’s under the ground not on top of it—dead as a mackerel.”

To which Legge asked for a couple of shovels. “His bones will bring a little something at the rendering plant.”

The farmer was silent for a few moments, then replied, “Hell! If you’re that kind of collector, I might as well pay up!”

Legge would also go to bat for the farmers, getting notes paid by visiting their local banker and enticing them to extend credit to his customer, or helping a farmer employ a bookkeeper to straighten matters so he could pay his bill.

A marriage that would make headlines would also impact our cowboy collector.

Harold F. McCormick—the son of Cyrus Sr.—would marry Edith Rockefeller, the daughter of John D. Rockefeller—founder of Standard Oil.

The connection of the young couple was made by Harold McCormick, who had met John Rockefeller Jr. while they both attended the Browning School, a highly selective boys prep school in New York.<sup>65</sup> John,

his wife Cettie, and three of his sisters visited Harold in 1893 and stayed at Nettie’s house. Harold met Edith there. The two had both grown up in wealthy households in which strict limitations were placed on the children, with strong value placed in charitable work and a relatively modest lifestyle.

“The Rockefellers deplored the vogue among rich Americans of marrying off their daughters to title Europeans and welcomed the McCormicks as an upright, God-fearing industrial family,” Ron Chernow wrote in *Titan*, going on to describe Harold as an “athletic man with luminous blue eyes and a dreamy gaze who wore jeweled cuff links and embroidered vests . . . he stood out for his free and open manner.” Rockefeller Sr. took a shine to Harold, and he was the only son-in-law permitted to smoke in John’s presence.

Rockefeller Sr. also abhorred drinking, and repeatedly appealed to Harold to refrain, and attempted to enlist Edith in his case. This was to no avail.

Harold was twenty-three years old when he and Edith were married in 1895, and he took an assignment to work for the family business in Council Bluffs, Iowa.

Alexander Legge was assigned to teach Harold the ropes. He also was assigned to outfit the couple’s new home. While the couple was not terribly impressed with his decorating skills, they were taken in by his frank, no-nonsense approach, impeccable decision-making, and personal integrity.

“He was refreshingly simple and honest, and engagingly human, as great of heart as of mind.”<sup>66</sup> Harold said of Legge, “He was a gentleman in the most vital definition of the term. His rough exterior covered a rich endowment of fine feeling and



**HAROLD McCORMICK AND EDITH ROCKEFELLER**

Harold and Edith were twenty-three years old when they got married in 1895. After a long honeymoon abroad, these children of great wealth would start their life together in Council Bluffs, Iowa. *Wisconsin Historical Society / 8374*



**ALEXANDER LEGGE**

Legge was tasked with helping young Harold take on a leadership role, first in the local branch and then at the national level of the McCormick company. He is about twenty-two years old in this image. *From Alexander Legge 1866–1933*

natural discrimination in human relationships. . . his reasonings and his decisions were based on practical experience and close personal observation.”<sup>67</sup>

Nettie Fowler McCormick later wrote, “Whatever Mr. Legge says is the law.”<sup>68</sup>

In 1899, Harold had moved from Council Bluffs to Chicago to take on the role as the first vice president of the McCormick company, sitting at the right hand of his brother, Cyrus Jr.

Harold sent Legge a note, asking him to come to Chicago to take charge of the company’s collection

business. Legge quickly distinguished himself with the acuity, tact, and intelligence that served him well in Nebraska.

Legge would be one of the McCormick family’s most trusted lieutenants—and go on to play a variety of key roles for several decades.

When Legge went to the McCormick offices in Chicago, the winds of change were already brewing, with events percolating that would propel a Nebraska farm boy and ranch hand with minimal education to leader of one of the world’s largest companies.

## COUNCIL BLUFFS, IOWA

The town of Council Bluffs, photographed in 1916.

*Library of Congress*

*LC-USZ62-127715*



**Farmall Century**  
\$65.00  
Pre-Order for July

## Farmall Century Anniversary Edition!

This stunning anniversary edition of *Farmall Century* is the finest example of bookcraft that we offer.

- Presented in a brushed aluminum case, uniquely numbered, and stamped with the vintage 1923 IHC logo.
- Book numbers start at QC501—the same numbering sequence as early Farmall tractors!
- The cover features the iconic 1931 Farmall Regular (the 100,000th Farmall built) printed on a metal plate.
- These stunning special editions weigh in at 11 pounds each!
- Available only at Octane Press and a few select retailers.
- Limited quantities will be made.



Farmall Century Anniversary Edition

\$250.00

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Farmall Century

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