

Production of the book on
THE GREAT MINNEAPOLIS LINE

**DIRECT FLUE FIRE-BOX BOILERS
STEAM ENGINES**

By Leland Wyman

In the late 1970's Laura and I stopped at the Hopkins Historical Society in Hopkins, MN and inquired about early Minneapolis Threshing Machine Company history. We met Clinton Kermit Blomquist, curator of HHS, who gave us a rather short narrative on the Minneapolis Threshing Machine Co. and West Minneapolis that included real estate pre-empted by early settlers, Daniel and Belinda Hamilton Dow. We explained our interest in Minneapolis steam engines and the fact that Laura's grandfather Joseph Šídla had worked at the thresher factory until his death June 6, 1914. This triggered more stories from Clint about the old days and the Šídla families who worked at the thresher factory paint shop. So began our Journey, gathering data regarding the history of the Minneapolis Threshing Machine Co, and West Minneapolis.

The next stop was the Hennepin County Government Center in Minneapolis where we looked for and found the contracts, the very beginning of MTM and West Minneapolis.¹ Needless to say Clinton's story was a little different then the legal contracts between the Dow family, Gilbert Farley, Levi Longfellow and the Minneapolis Threshing Machine Co. Changing Hopkins history was a hard sell for Clint who did not want to change his story of Hopkins and who was Levi?

On a very cold weekend in January 1985 we traveled to Fargo, North Dakota where Laura and I met with Jerry Parker. Jerry was very involved in transcribing the steam engine register located at the Minnesota Historical Society in Saint Paul. Out of this gathering we decided to join forces and begin working on a history of Minneapolis Steam Engines. My original thoughts were to begin this book with early history of Minnetonka Township, and move along with the origin of West Minneapolis and the manufacturing of Steam Engines and Threshing Machines. With some help from John Wickery, Steven Nielsen, and Avery Stubbs, early township history was gathered while the Hans J. Andersen lifetime collection, owned by Jerry Parker, offered a lot of steam engine and threshing data which became very important to this book. Sometime in 1985 or early 1986 a Minneapolis Expo, featuring Norman Pross' 45-Single Tandem Compound steam engine, which was being restored at Fargo, also became a part of future plans. The Expo happened but the book did not, it got lost in time and the tremendous amount of work; Parker basically left the project and I set it aside until 2013, which after a meeting with the Hopkins Historical Society I decided to reformat and concentrate on Direct Flue steam engines manufactured at the West Minneapolis factory.

This study of Minneapolis steam traction engines manufactured on Direct Flue Fire-Box boilers was compiled from the ledger, *Minneapolis Threshing Machine Company MN 393*, located at the Minnesota Historical Society in Saint Paul, Minnesota. The ledger is owned and protected under copyright and requires written approval for

¹ Hennepin County Government Center, Minneapolis, MN: Office of Deeds and Records: Book 13 of Deeds, page 151–154.

use of any part of the ledger; it is a ledger listing the steam engines and boilers manufactured at West Minneapolis Minnesota between 1890 and 1924.² Another very important source was a book written by Norman Frank Thomas in the 1950's for his PHD thesis at the University of Minnesota. The President of Minneapolis-Moline, Warren Courtland MacFarlane, gave Norman Thomas access to Minneapolis-Moline archives, of which some are no longer available. Through his work we have some insight into the operation of the company, John McDonald, Frederick Kenaston and Paul Swenson who kept the thresher factory operating on a daily basis.³

November 17, 2016, Duane Swanson, Curator of Manuscripts, from the Minnesota Historical Society, granted me permission to use *MN 393* for the transcription of this work. I finally finished transcribing *MN 393* during the summer of 2017 and began the process of cross checking this work and footnoting entries that were or seemed to be wrong. In some cases the Ledger did not match steam engines that I had purchased, thus an entry. One Steam Engine that I purchased from Stan Reynolds for example was a 25hp single cylinder engine, 4448, with a 9¾-inch bore and labeled in the ledger as a 10-inch bore; you will find endnote number 69 showing both, the entry from the ledger and the actual size of the steam engine. What we do not know is when the change to a 10-inch cylinder bore occurred, so I decided on Engine number 4461.

² Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, MN: *The Minneapolis Threshing Machine Co. Steam Engine Ledger 1890 – 1924*, MN393

³ Norman F. Thomas: *Minneapolis-Moline, a History of its Formation and Operation*, Ayer Co., 1976