

# *R-Cab Thoughts*

By Butch Fuder & Rex Mercer

As some of you might remember, Rex and I asked for your help a couple of years ago regarding information concerning ownership, location, serial numbers of tractors, and frontend styles of any and all tractors and cabs built for the Minneapolis Moline “R” tractors. Thanks to all who have responded to date, we now have a much better grasp of the total number of these cabs that have survived since their introduction in 1939.

A little introductory information about Rex and myself may be in order before we get into the “meat and potatoes” of this article. Over the years Rex has restored a number of these cabs and has reproduced certain parts that are necessary for a cab restoration to be considered complete. Among those items are the upholstered seats. To date, he has made and sold a total of 52 seats. My involvement stems from the reproduction of 25 sets of doors and the inside panels for the window regulators of the cabs.

Although Rex and I knew each other before we each started on these projects, our involvement with the “R-Cabs” gave us more reason to converse and bounce ideas, questions, and thoughts off each other pertaining to the cabs. At one of the MM winter conventions in Missouri a number of years ago now, we decided that we should try to see if there was any way that we could determine how many of the cabs were still in existence. Because of the work we had each done involving the cabs, we each had a number of names that we could start with. It was actually a couple of years later that we finally got together and combined our separate lists, entered the information into a spreadsheet, and sorted out the duplicates. If I remember correctly, our original list contained 35 to 40 known cabs. We do know because of research done by another MM collector, that there were originally 401 cabs built. That seems like an odd number, but it is assumed that the 1 was most likely a prototype that was viewed and approved for production by the “powers to be” at Hopkins. Rex and I, being the “R-Cab experts” that we are, guessed that there may be as many as 50 and possibly up to 60 cabs remaining. Time would prove that we were not the experts we thought.

A couple of years ago now, Rex and I submitted an article that appeared in the Correspondent, the PGR, as well as on the MM Collectors web site. In that article we asked for help from the readers for information of known cabs for the “R” tractors. The response was overwhelming. At present we have accounted for 103 cabs. We would like to say that this is a complete and accurate list. We however, know better than to make a blanket statement like that. There is still

the obvious potential of other cabs that we have not been made aware of yet. There is also the possibility that the same cab is counted more than once. These cabs seem to be changing ownership constantly, and consequently our list does not always show the correct owners. In addition to this, our list also does include three ZTX tractors with cabs. The reasoning for including these is that these cabs are basically a slightly modified R-Cab. It should also be noted that two cabs listed are reproductions of the Mail Special tractor.

At this point, we know that you are waiting to see the list of cabs, their owners, and where they are presently located. In the early stages of this project, Rex and I both had conversations with individuals who responded with information for us but at the same time requested to remain anonymous. We have decided to respect those wishes and not publish any names. What we can do is show where these 101 cabs that started their life in Hopkins, are presently. As you can see in the spreadsheet, they range in location all the way from five in Canada, to both the East and West Coasts in twenty-four different states and provinces. Our serial number info is far from complete, but I see at least two examples of consecutive numbers. Some will say that the only correct cabs will be on the square tank "R"s built in 1939 and part way through the 1940 model year. That is not a valid statement because MM did not sell all those cabs as soon as they expected. The last cabs were sold during the war years when farm machinery was almost impossible for farmers to acquire. Dealers who were fortunate enough to get a tractor to sell would sometimes have it delivered with a cab that they did not want as well as the farmer not wanting. This is how MM disposed of the last cabs. An interesting side note is that parts books show three different gas tanks available for "R" tractors: 10a5700 is the square tank, 10a5700A is the round tank with notches cut in the seam to fit the cabs, and 10a5700B is the tank for all non-cab tractors following the square tank production tractors. Another fact that we have discovered is that there are at least three different methods of build for these cabs involving gussets in the corners near the door opening as well as variations of reinforcements under the dash. Rex has literature that MM sent to their dealers, dated April 1942 stating that cabs for the "R" tractors are no longer available. I have a magazine ad that listed the difference in price between a "R" tractor with and without a cab as being \$137. What at one time had little value has turned into a very collectable item!

Rex and I continue to keep this list updated as much as possible. We still need your help in doing so. If you might know of a cab that you think we are not aware of, please, get in touch with one of us. If you have a cab and see that your serial number and/or front end style is not listed, again get in touch and help us fill in the blanks. It would be helpful if you would tell us the name of the previous owner so that we are assured of not counting the same cab more than once. We want to thank you for all of your past and future help with this registry.



Before we end this article, we would like to talk briefly about a rumor concerning “R-Cab Tractors” that seems to come up from time to time. That rumor states that if you have an “R” tractor with an oval shaped hole punched out of the tractor data plate, it signifies that that tractor left the factory with a cab. Rex and I both are in agreement that this is most likely not true. About fifteen years ago I mentioned this rumor to the late Ron Dotzenrod who was that last owner of the MM dealership in Wyndmere, ND. He said he had never heard of that rumor before, but said that they had an “R” in their collection that they knew came from the factory with a cab. We braved the cold January weather to a cold storage shed on the edge of town to check the tractors data plate and found that it did not have the aforementioned oval cutout. Here is a theory that Rex and I both think probably happened. All early MM tractors had tractor and engine data plates made of brass, unlike later models that used aluminum plates. We think that someone at the plant who was stamping these data plates made a mistake on the tractor plates and stamped the 3 3/8 X 4 bore and stroke info that should appear on the engine plate on the same area of the tractor plate which should be a blank area. The supervisor most likely made the decision to stamp out the erroneous information on the tractor plates rather than throw those expensive brass plates away. To substantiate that statement, look at the three pictures we have included. The first picture is of the tractor data plate with the oval cutout. The second picture is of an engine data plate from the same tractor. The third picture shows the tractor plate placed on top of the engine plate. You can see the oval cutout is in the same area as the 3 5/8 X 4 on the engine plate. Now if you look real close, and I hope this shows up on this picture, there is still a very small portion of the number three remaining on the tractor plate at the top and bottom of the left side of the cutout. I think that this proves our theory.

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See the next page for location and number of R cabs we’ve identified.

Location    # of Cabs

Alberta	3
Ca	1
Co	1
Ia	11
Il	9
In	8
Ks	1
Manitoba	1
Md	1
Mi	7
Mn	23
Mo	3
NC	1
ND	2
Ne	3
NM	1
NY	1
Oh	7
Ok	1
Ontario	1
Pa	3
SD	3
Tx	2
Wi	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>103</b>