



The Frazer ROTOTILLER®

By Charlie H. Zuck of Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania

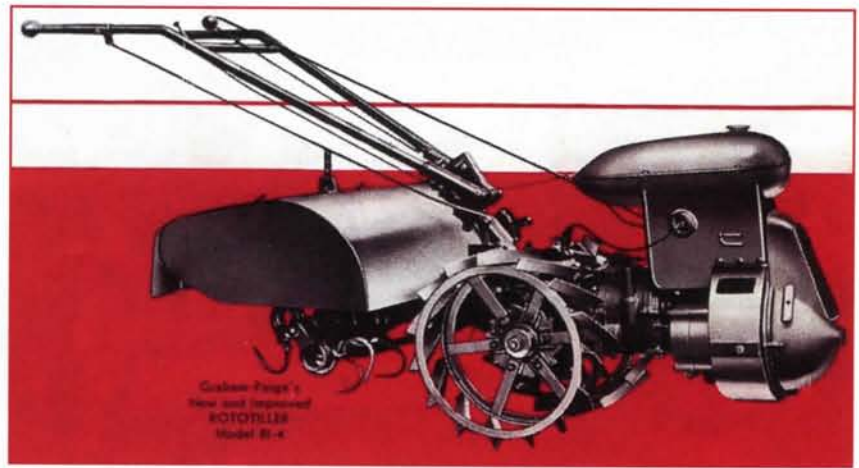
ROTOTILLER, INC. FOUNDER, C.W. KELSEY WANTED TO BUILD tillers for the average home gardener. Graham-Paige was looking for something to manufacture after the war. According to Donald Jones in his book *The Rototiller in America*, Graham-Paige acquired the rights to manufacture the large commercial tiller using the ROTOTILLER brand name in 1944, while ROTOTILLER, INC. would manufacture smaller tillers geared for the home gardener under the Roto-Ette brand name. According to transcripts I received while at the Burden Iron Works Museum in Troy, New York, ROTOTILLER, INC. started working on a B1-4 prototype in 1943. They built two complete prototypes, with one going to G-P and Kelsey getting the other one.



Top left:
Author's
B1-6 built

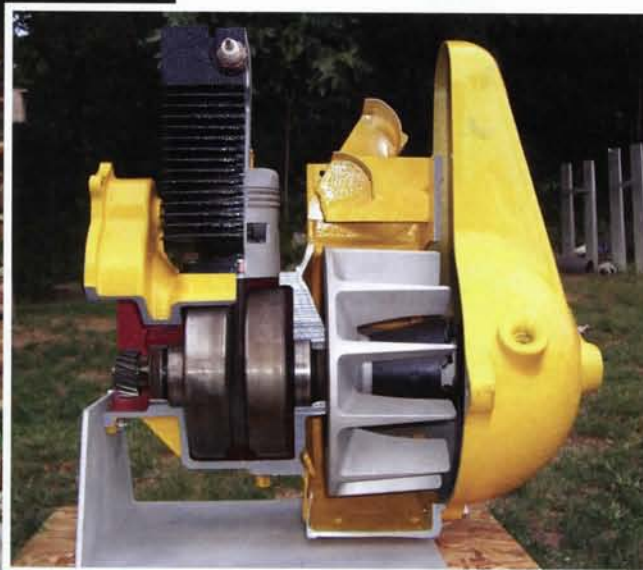
Top right:
B1-4
prototype

Below:
Rototiller
cut away
engine



a tendency to toot their own horn a lot and brag about what they were going to build in the future". In 1945, Henry J. Kaiser and Frazer formed the Kaiser-Frazer Corporation. The ROTOTILLER part of the business was put under Frazer

and the contract with Jaques was ended in January 1949.



Farm Equipment Division, hence the common name these tillers go by Frazer Rototiller.

In August of 1949, 50% of Frazer Farm Equipment was sold to Mast-Foos Corporation and a year later the remainder was sold to them. Dallas Winslow, owner and president of Mast-Foos Manufacturing, Ideal Power Lawn Mower Company and the Auburn-Cord-Duesenberg Company in Auburn, Indiana, moved the Frazer Farm Equipment operation to Auburn, Indiana. Herbert Stanley Liddell, Sr., General Manager of the Frazer operation became owner when Winslow died in 1963 and was there until his death sometime in 1984. According to a letter I have from H. S. Liddell, 60,000 of these tillers were made from 1946 until late in 1949 when regular production was stopped. He went on to say that after the move to Auburn, Indiana in 1950 a few lots of 500 and then lots of 100 were assembled in the years 1950, '51, and up to 1955. After that, new machines were assembled by special order only.

THE COMPANY REALLY HAD TO Complete the B1-4 in order to receive much needed money to get the Home Gardener into production by 1945.

During this time, G-P was undergoing major changes. According to Donald Jones, Joe Frazer and his associates took control of G-P in August 1944 and had planned on building an automobile, a general-purpose tractor and a new line of farm equipment. It appears that there were many ads for equipment that were never produced. Jones says, "G-P had

During this period of time, a lot of corporate changes were taking place. The B1-6 did not go into production until April 1946; three years after ROTOTILLER, INC. built the B1-4 prototype. In the summer of 1947, Frazer Farm Equipment Division moved from Willow Run, Michigan to York, Pennsylvania. The Jaques-Frazer Model T tractor was introduced in 1948. The Jaques Power Saw Company in Texas built the majority of the tractor and shipped it to York, where the Rototiller engine was installed. Jones says only around 470 tractors were built

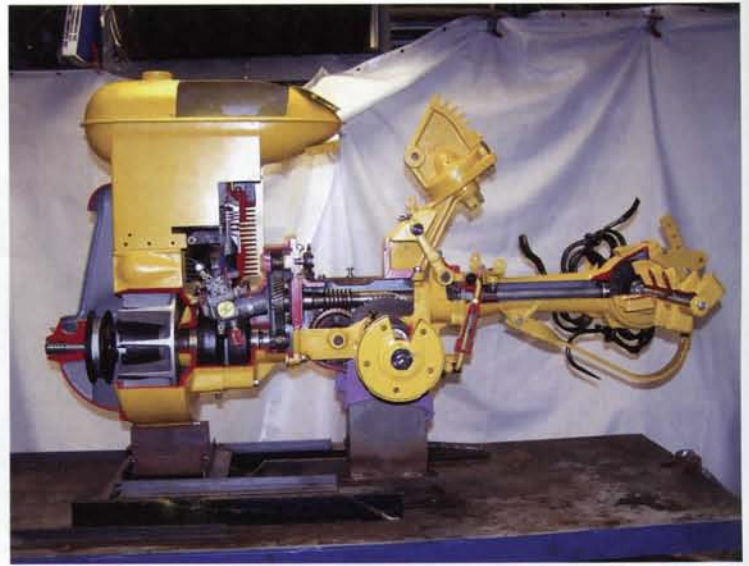
According to a ROTOTILLER, INC. brochure I recently acquired, "Early this year, 1951, the contract with Kaiser-Frazer was formally canceled.....". By this time the company was actually owned by Dallas Winslow, but was still called Frazer Farm Equipment. According to copies of lawyer timesheets, termination of the G-P contract was mentioned in 1947.

The B1-6 & 7 used the same SIMAR engine design that ROTOTILLER, INC. had used in all their large tillers. These motors were very simple, low rpm for a

2-cycle, and very well built. Bell Aircraft in Burlington, Vermont initially built the engines and transmissions for G-P. Jones says Ramsey Manufacturing Company of Seneca Falls, New York built the tiller and tine assembly. American Chain and Cable of Reading, Pennsylvania made the gears while ROTOTILLER was in York, Pennsylvania.

Top right: Russ Jordan's beautiful ROTOTILLER cutaway.

More views can be seen via a link on my website: www.zucksrotillers.com



Top left: B1-7RS with Parker-Grate field mower

Bottom left: B1-6 with G-P Model B67, s/n 50506 front mount field mower.



nal pitman arm has two or three bends because it went up and over the axle and down to the gearbox attached to the left side. I know of two others like this one that were made to keep the front of the tiller higher. This would have prevented the engine fan from pulling debris into the engine.

some machines and even started Zuck's ROTOTILLERS website which features all equipment with the ROTOTILLER brand name.

There were numerous attachments for these tillers. It seems

I would assume this may have been an improvement to the mower and that my particular mower is an early version. Most literature shows a different version of the field mower similar to the Parker-Grate, but without the long pitman arm connected to the blade. Instead it shows a belt to a small bell-crank arrangement. Until just recently, I had never seen one of these units. Still there was another version available called the Feezel's Rotomowbar which was a rear mounted sickle bar utilizing a bell crank arrangement and two short pitman arms. This was an aftermarket mower made by L. Paul Feezel in Ohio. That makes three different rear mounts and two different configurations of front mount sickle bar mowers for a tiller that was basically mass produced for only two or three years.

The previous owner of this dozer blade used it for many years to plow snow from his farm lane. I did not have the potato digger when I grew potatoes in my home garden, but I really wonder how well it would have worked. Even with the weight of the tiller, I can't imagine that it was heavy enough or had enough traction to be able to plow potatoes. It does not look

The Frazer ROTOTILLER is a well-built machine, weighing in at over 450 pounds. The tiller section is very robust, using a simple ring and pinion gear setup instead of the worm gear used in most of today's tillers.

I purchased the B1-6 featured at the beginning of this article in 1977. I used it in my garden from 1977 until 1989 when we stopped gardening. In 2000 I started attending a local "old iron" show with my Frazer Rototiller. For some reason, more of these machines followed me home. I became very enamored with these awe-

during that period of time, manufacturers tried to do as much as possible with a piece of equipment.

The photo above shows a rear-mounted three foot Parker-Grate field mower, which does a fair job at mowing tall grass and weeds.

The photo below shows one version of the front-mounted sickle bar mower. The pitman arm was modified by the former owner and apparently required the rear right-angle gearbox to be installed 90 degrees from its original design. The origi-

Potato digger and 42" dozer blade (Model B70. s/n 8221)



Left: Les Miller's "elevated mount" sickle bar mower

Bottom left: I do have copies of literature with actual photos of this attachment.

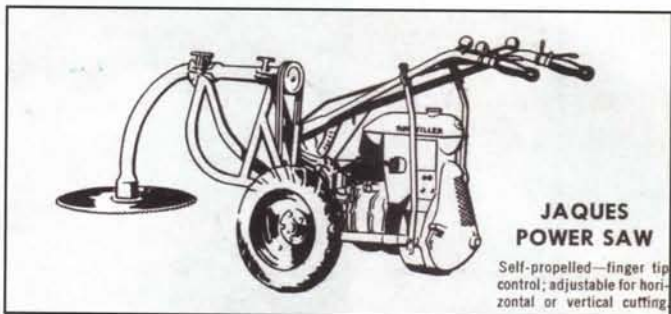
made for this tiller such as, a hiller/furrower, a single or two row planter by Planet Jr., a buck saw for cutting fire wood, a water pump, cart, lawn roller, a cultivator bar that mounted where the tiller mounts up, rear mounted "brush hog", right angle gearbox with pulley mounted for flat belt use, straight shaft extension with a v-belt sheave, post hole auger, air compressor for spray painting and a nasty looking saw for cutting down trees made by the Jaques

mount something and drive it with v-belts.

These machines have quite a reputation. They will do a tremendous job making an excellent seedbed. More than one has gone through a fence or ran into other obstacles while the operator was frantically trying to get it to stop.

If you have a "rototiller story" or would like to talk about these unique tillers, email me at

For more information on ROTOTILLER brand tillers, check my website at www.zucksrototillers.com, or get a copy of Donald Jones book **The Rototiller in America**. There are many photos of attachments on www.e-rototiller.com in the Photo Gallery. Special thanks to Donald Jones for permission to use quotes and information from his book **The Rototiller in America**. **LAGC**



JAQUES POWER SAW
Self-propelled—finger tip control; adjustable for horizontal or vertical cutting.

like this particular digger was used much with all the paint that still remains.

There were many other attachments

Saw Company.

Here is a rather strange attachment I saw. It is a flexible drive shaft with a plate to