

# **VGTCOA NEWSLETTER**



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## Porter-Cable Rototiller 133

Probably most collectors have heard about the guy who finds a new or hardly used piece for his collection in some obscure place and you wish it was you. Well, in this case it was me! I was fortunate to acquire the tiller above, three other NOS tillers, and some NOS attachments.

Most people think of electric power tools when they hear the name Porter-Cable. In the late 50s they had a lawn and garden division. Some of us older fellows would remember the name Bob Cummings, a film and TV actor of the 60's and early 70's. He and his whole family are in advertisements for Porter-Cable riding lawn mowers. I am not sure how long they built lawn and garden equipment before acquiring Rototiller, but they only had Rototiller a year and a half, two years at the most.

CW Kelsey, founder of Rototiller, Inc., was originally in the car manufacturing business and as a result liked making changes on his tillers yearly and as you can imagine, that was costly. Kelsey planned to retire and brought in an outside gentleman by the name of John Wright, manufacturer of the Wright reciprocating saw, to take over Rototiller. When Kelsey retired in 1957, Rototiller, Inc. was reorganized with Wright as chairman of a seven man board of directors. This board decided to refinance by selling stock. They were also dealing with declining seasonal sales and competition from the front end tiller market. Wright decided in 1959 to sell Rototiller to the Porter-Cable Lawn and Garden division who bought controlling interest in Rototiller, Inc., They eventually moved the operations to Syracuse, NY in 1960. Porter-Cable had hoped the ROTOTILLER name would help them through a decline in their business but it did not and in 1960 they were acquired by the Rockwell Manufacturing Co. of Pittsburgh. Rockwell had determined that the Porter Cable lawn and garden division was not profitable and consequently sold that division to the Moto Mower Company.



The Porter-Cable Rototiller 133 is a Rototiller Model 23 painted green and white instead of red and yellow, which were the colors Rototiller adopted in 1957. In 1958 Rototiller changed the handlebars and tiller hood to the design that you see on the 133. This particular 133 is s/n153 and has some parts showing red paint where the green paint came off. It has the same 4 step sheave setup that Rototiller used from 1949 on the Model T and later Model 2 & 3 tillers. The extra belt is for low speed since that step is much different in size in relation to the other three on the driven sheave. It is powered by a 4 hp Clinton B1290 engine.

This tiller was new old stock when I acquired it and had never tilled ground. There was paper wrapped around the handlebars. It sat in a dealership since 1959 and was in a damp basement when I first saw it. The wheel transmission

had a piece of the casting broken off where a bolt went to help hold the front lower casting on. That is probably why it was not sold. Two items were missing from the tiller, but I was able to find replacements for them. I cleaned the gas tank and carburetor, checked the oil levels, cleaned the points and it fired up and was able to till ground some 55 years after it was built. This was definitely a great find! How often does one find a new antique? You can see it tilling ground by going to my earthgrinder1 YouTube channel. Information source credit to Gardening Beyond The Plow publication by Garden Way and Allen Cluett, my Troy-Bilt & Rototiller information source in Troy, NY.

