

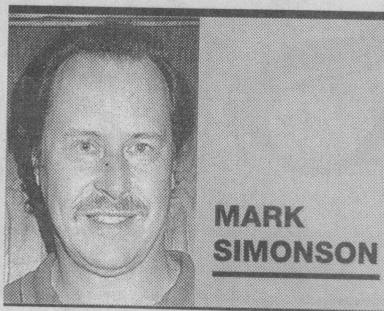
Unexpected pit stop lead

I've made a few changes in direction over the span of my professional career. But as I read about other people's changes as I share these columns with you, one struck me as quite drastic —but nonetheless beneficial to the region. Meet Holman Harry Linn, a guy who came to Morris with a tent show and ended up sticking around, becoming a force behind a productive regional manufacturer.

A November 1915 edition of the Morris Chronicle reported how Linn chose to stay for the winter with his tent show. Linn was reported to "be at work in Kenyon's Machine Shop on Grove Street building a caterpillar gasoline tractor with runners to use when sleighing comes." It actually took awhile for Linn to get really focused on his tractor. The "showbiz bug" apparently couldn't be shaken, so he spent his time between mechanical experimentation and entertaining.

Back in H.H. Linn's hometown of Washburn, Maine, he and his wife started a small circus that would travel from town to town across New England and New York. His wife sang. Linn trained some dogs and a pony. The circus also featured a state-of-the-art novelty around 1900 — motion pictures.

Linn and his troupe would get their convoy of props and



**MARK
SIMONSON**

animals from town to town by horse drawn vehicles, at first. But when automobiles became popular, he bought one. Apparently Linn could see there was room for transportation improvement, and that's where his mechanical experimentation kicked in.

By 1906 he had built a vehicle with two gas engines connected to one drive shaft, and later tried a steam propelled car. One invention was a tractor with a full, flexible caterpillar tread. It was built in Syracuse at first in 1912, and caught some attention.

The circus troupe was on its way from Sidney to Oneonta with one of these tractors when Linn encountered a landslide across the road caused by a heavy rain. An alternate route led the troupe to Morris, and being near the end of the season, Linn looked for a place to spend the winter. He ended up at the Morris Fairgrounds, where he rented space for the

animals and a house, and sought a place where he could work on improving his tractor.

Linn loved to give demonstrations of the pulling, plowing and maneuvering features of his tractor. It worked on uneven ground. It could pull three times its own weight on heavy or soft ground. Sure enough, his efforts matured and the papers were filed in December 1916 for the Linn Manufacturing Corp. of Morris. The first tractors were manufactured in the Kenyon Machine Shop. Linn's first improved tractor was a "cling to the ground" type; geared for lumbering and heavy road work.

The new plant was powered by Hargrave Lake. The company prospered and was soon shipping machines to all parts of the world. Linn eventually teamed up with Carl Frink of Clayton to put a snowplow on the front of the Linn Tractor.

In 1927, the company was sold to the Republic Motor Corp., but Linn stayed on as vice president in charge of engineering. Linn expanded operations to Oneonta after he invented a one-wheel auto trailer called the "U-Can-Back." It led to a growth of the Linn Trailer Corp. at the corner of Chestnut and Oneida streets. Other types of trailers were added on occasionally. Through other ownership changes, the plant altered its name to Lyncoach.