

# THE MASSEY-HARRIS 60 S

**M**any years ago, Sue and I were visiting friends Glen and the late Carol Francis in Ontario. Glen raised a lot of white beans on his farm. Not being familiar with the term, I assumed that they were just another type of soy bean. Well, Glen soon set me straight and explained the entire complicated harvesting process. It occurred to me that most U.S. readers are probably not familiar with edible bean varieties as a crop. When Bonnie Sitter sent me some photos of the old Massey-Harris combine labeled as a “Bean Special”, I thought that maybe a closer look at this unusual combine and the whole white bean crop was in order.—Editor

**(INSET RIGHT)** George Sitter's face and goggles tell the story of what a dusty and dirty job it was to combine white beans. The fedora he was wearing confirms the era when the photo was taken. It was a time before very popular ball caps, advertising seed companies and implement dealers became widely worn by farmers.



George Sitter is shown combining his white bean crop in 1983 on his farm near Thedford, Ontario. Although there are no records as to when George bought the Massey-Harris-Ferguson Limited combine, the metal plate that is attached to the side of the combine indicates it was manufactured in Toronto and the model is 60RT 065607K92. The Machine Serial Number is 252951. The Motor type is 01 and Motor Serial Number is #12544, so research could probably pinpoint the year it was manufactured. The photo was taken by his brother Conrad who was visiting the farm.

# P BEAN SPECIAL COMBINE

BY BONNIE SITTER

I have learned that the name “Navy bean” is an American term, coined by the US Navy because they have served the beans as a staple to its sailors since the mid-1800s. Navy beans are the smallest of all the types of white beans and have a mild flavor. You’ll find them in Boston Baked Beans and other American dishes. They’re also known as Boston beans or pea beans.

Here in Ontario, where I live, they are commonly called white beans. Same beans, just have a different name. Surprisingly enough, there are three other white beans grown here and they are: the white kidney (Cannellini), Otego and Great Northern beans. Although all these beans are white, they differ in size, shape, taste and traditional uses. Navy/white beans are oval-shaped and they are much smaller and slightly plumper than great northern, with thicker skins.

George’s son, Nick, doesn’t know when his father last used the combine but it has been stored for many years in a barn on the property near Thedford, where Nick lives with his wife Carla and their two sons, Cale and Gavin. It would be lovely to see it restored. Right now the tires are flat, the dust is thick and the rust is extensive. Although the Sitters are no longer growing white beans, I looked into some white bean facts. A year ago in 2020, the acreage planted in Ontario was 75,229 with 2568 lbs. per acre harvested. This compares to figures from 1988 when there were 105,000 acres planted and the yield was 1220 lbs. per acre.

## WHITE BEANS BECOME BIG BUSINESS

My deceased brother-in-law, George Sitter, was a great promoter of white beans. So much so, he not only grew them but was a director on what was known as the White Bean Board. He took the “bull by the horns” so to speak and purchased the Massey-Harris 60sp Bean Special shown in the photos, which were taken in 1983. This equipment enabled him to combine his beans and those of neighbouring farmers as white beans became a popular crop.

A neighbour and friend, Base Eberly, maintained the “Bean Special” combine and could be counted on to get it started if George ran into trouble. I discovered George’s combine sitting forgotten, very dusty and with flat tires, in his son’s barn.

His son Nick recalled a few things, “The Ontario Bean Producers’ Marketing Board ended in 2013. I don’t remember what years my dad was involved, but it was at least a couple of decades—not all of which was as a director, a lot of years he was a district representative. They merged with

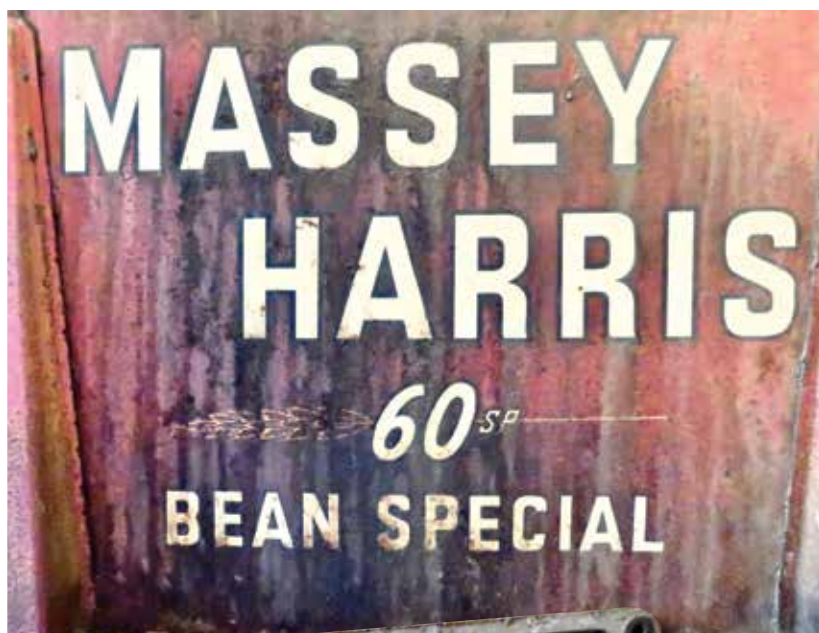
the Ontario Coloured Bean Growers Association to form the “Ontario Bean Growers.”

The OBG is an Ontario thing. I don’t think other Provinces have their own version, just us. That said, Manitoba might—they used to grow a lot of white beans, too. They are mostly marketed to the canned bean companies—especially buyers in England—to make ‘brown’ beans. However, they are also sold in grocery chains as dried beans.

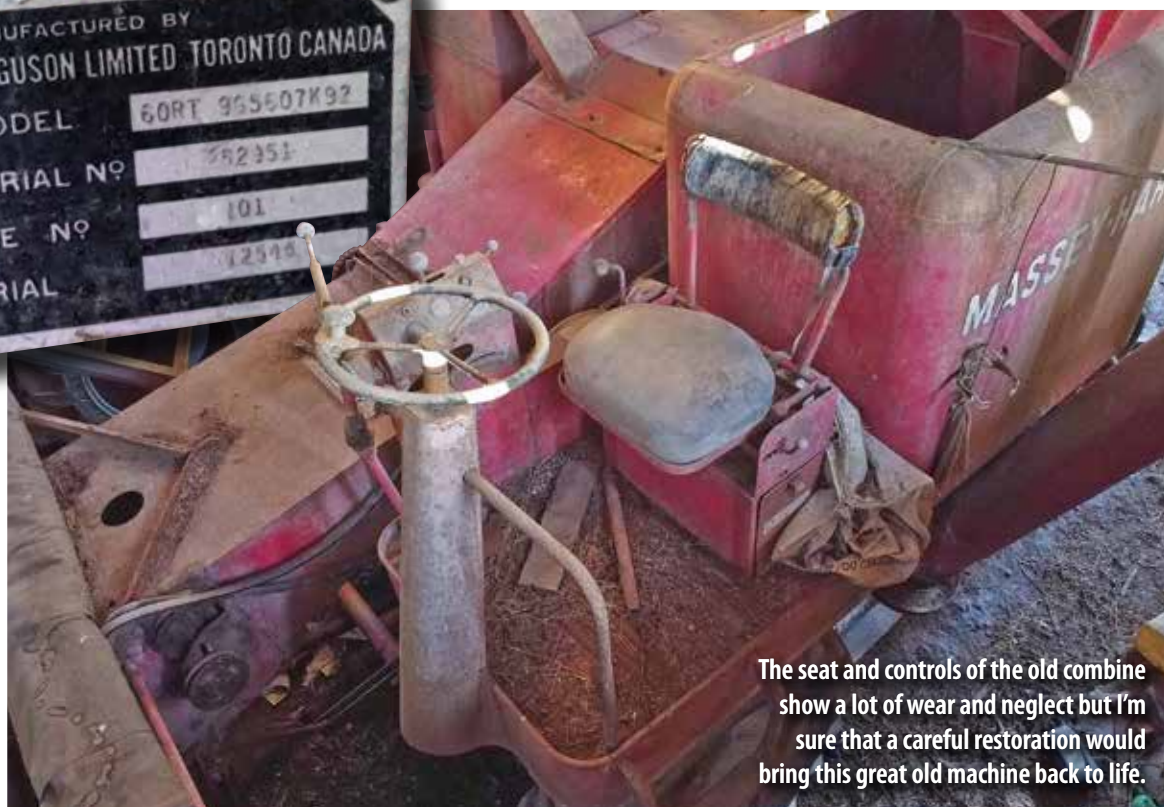
George’s sister, eighty-seven year old Mary Ellen Sitter Anderson, had a few comments about growing white beans. This







Although the metal manufacturing plate says Massey-Harris-Ferguson Limited, only Massey-Harris 60sp Bean Special is painted on the side. I would be interested in knowing how many of the Bean Special Combines were manufactured and in what years.



The seat and controls of the old combine show a lot of wear and neglect but I'm sure that a careful restoration would bring this great old machine back to life.

is what she remembers. "Huron County was famous for white bean production. My husband Dean and I grew white beans for a few years but it was a very risky crop to produce. If I remember correctly, they had to be pulled up with a bean puller and raked into windrows for the combine to pick them up. If they got rained on after

they were ripe they became discoloured and weren't worth as much. So we started growing soybeans instead. They grow taller, can be combined without pulling, and don't discolour like white beans do. I think the bean board was responsible for selling the Ontario white bean crop before farmers were able to sell their own crop."

## THE MASSEY BEAN SPECIAL COMBINE

I was curious about how the Bean Special combine was different from a conventional combine. It was obviously a combine designed to harvest edible beans so it has some significant differences from a conventional machine that cuts soy beans. First of all, the white bean plants are pulled from the

ground with an implement called, surprisingly enough, a bean puller. After they dry for a while, they are raked into windrows to further facilitate the drying process. Ferguson actually made an adapter kit to convert their standard hay rake to a bean rake. The time that the bean windrow spends on the ground is crucial. If they are rained on, the color and



# SPECIAL ATTACHMENTS FOR 60 SP COMBINES

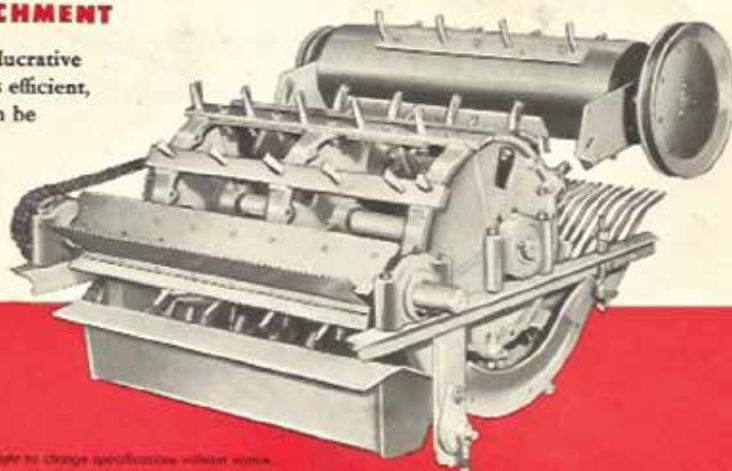
## CORN PICKER-SHELLER

You can convert your 60 SP to the finest corn combine on the market in one hour. Picks, shells and wagon loads corn with up to 30% moisture. The conversion will give you an unbeatable 2-row picker-sheller for less than the cost of a 2-row pull type picker.



## EDIBLE BEAN ATTACHMENT

Now you can cash in on the lucrative edible bean market, with this efficient, low cost attachment. You can be sure in the knowledge that your 60 will convert to handle the harvesting satisfactory. Be sure to get full details.



Massey-Harris-Johnson Limited, reserves the right to change specifications without notice.

*Dear Gary,*

In regards to your inquiry about the Massey-Harris 60 SP bean combine. I went through my Farmer's Handy Catalogs and in the mid-fifties, M-H lists special equipment such as rotary screen, rubber rollers, sprockets for soy and edible beans, spike tooth cylinders, etc. The difference in threshing white beans is the type of cylinder running at a slower speed. A conventional cylinder and concave running at high speed, would cause splitting. Any beans that were not perfect were rejected as "pickers" and were only good for animal feed. The farmer was docked for splits and black moisture spots on the beans and these rejected beans were sold for feed. We had a bean cooker in the yard, which was fired by wood to cook them for cattle feed which they loved. They smelled so good, I was tempted to eat them. Most beans were grown close to Lake Huron in Ontario and also in Michigan, as I was told there was less chance of a late spring frost or an early fall frost that would ruin the crop. My father grew a lot of white beans and always said that they were a "wish crop." If you had a good year and got them harvested, you wished that you had planted more but if it was a bad fall and they stayed in the field, you wished you hadn't planted any. He also said you should only plant as many acres as you could afford to loose because about once in five years, Mother Nature would take your crop. In a couple of Massey-Harris 60 catalogs, I did find some pictures that show the difference in the cylinders for threshing white beans. I hope this answers some of your questions.

—Ken Reichert  
Arva, Ontario

quality—and the price—is greatly affected. If they are rained on a lot, the beans can turn black or in the worst case start to sprout, making the crop almost worthless.

When combining the crop, the beans must be handled carefully in the threshing process so as not to split or damage the bean in any way. One of the most noticeable differences is the use of a spring-tooth cylinder. You can also see that the beans are transported, from the cylinder by elevator to a cleaner. The beans then drop out of the bottom of the seed cleaner directly into the bin.

## MORE THAN JUST A BOWL OF SOUP

The Zurich Bean Festival, always held on the 4th Saturday in August, is a popular event here. It draws large crowds and visitors enjoy delicious baked beans with smoked pork chops, apple-sauce and coleslaw. Every item on the menu is produced locally. Zurich holds the festival but the town of Hensall, just a few miles down the highway, is known as the White Bean Capital of Canada and home to Canada's largest inland granary. The Hensall Cooperative receives over half of the edible beans grown in Ontario, and there are at least twelve varieties grown here. Figures from 2015 showed 150,000 metric tons were received at nineteen elevator locations and there were 75,000 acres of white beans grown. They export 85% of the edible beans grown in Ontario to over sixty-five countries—a big business for sure.

I did some research to learn when white beans were first introduced in my area of Ontario and discovered a small book written on the history of a village named Kippen, just a twenty minute drive from my home

in Exeter. A historian whose name was Ruth Workman, recorded this information in her local history book. It appears some of the information was gleaned from a newspaper.

Ed Urguhart is reported as bringing up the first bag of white beans to plant in the area. By 1911, more and more beans were being grown and growers considered it to be a profitable crop. A local paper, the Expositor, reported in May 15, 1914, that the bean industry had become very extensive and some farmers were sowing ten to thirty acres. March 19, 1915 Jas Aikenhead

and William Deitz purchased a new up-to-date threshing outfit for beans. The 20 hp engine was received in June and a new thresher was to be along shortly.

The price of beans on Feb 26, 1915 was \$3 a bushel and in November of that same year, Frank Graham received \$825 for 250 bushels (\$3.30). By March of 1918, the price of beans was as high as \$8.00 a bushel and Alvin McBride was charging 6 cents a bushel to thresh them. By 1979, white bean prices to growers were around \$21 cwt. I imagine there are similar stories for counties all over South Western Ontario.

## SOME WHITE BEAN FACTS

The three year average to maturity in white beans ranges from 95 days for the Bolt variety to 109 days for Apex. Days to maturity are counted from the planting date. Varieties are considered mature when 95% of pods are ripe, although it may take an additional 3-10 days for the crop to dry down to conditions suitable for combining.

If you are interested in reading about the Port of Goderich, where ships are loaded to export the beans world-wide, you can download a story I wrote

about soybeans leaving the port of Goderich by going to:

<https://www.huroncitizen.ca/the-last-ship-to-leave>

## STILL WANT MORE BEANS?

If you are a real bean fan, Bonnie sends along this recipe:

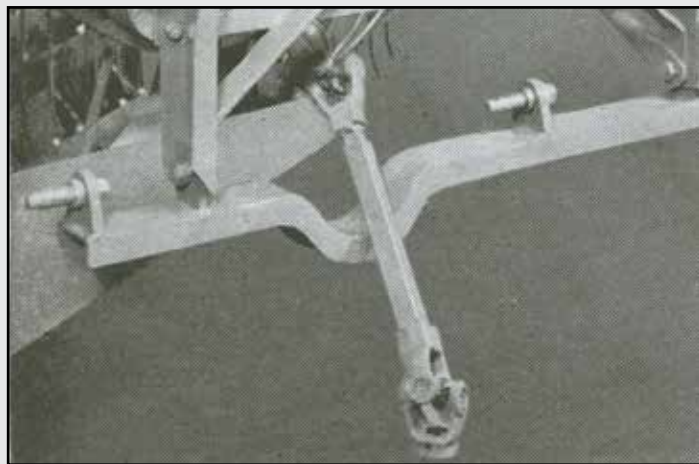
### BAKED BEANS

(Worth the effort and time)

- 2 cups (454 g) Thompson's White/Navy Beans
- 5 cups (1.18 L) cold water
- 1 medium onion, sliced
- 1½ tsp. (7 ml) salt
- 2 tsp. (10 ml) cider vinegar
- 1 tbsp. (15 ml) brown sugar
- ½ tsp. (2ml) prepared mustard
- ¼ cup (60 ml) Crosby's/ Grandma Fancy Molasses
- ½ cup (125 ml) tomato ketchup (no salt added ketchup)
- Pinch black pepper
- ¼ lb. (100 g) lean pork or low salt bacon, sliced

*Sort and rinse beans. SOAK BEANS OVERNIGHT in cold water. Drain. Add 5 cups cold water, cover, heat to boiling, then simmer for 30 minutes or until nearly tender. Drain. Place onion slices on the bottom of a 6-cup flameproof casserole dish. Add remaining 7 ingredients in with the beans, stirring gently to combine, then pour the entire mixture into the casserole dish. Add enough water to cover the mixture, and place sliced lean pork on top. Cover with lid and bake in the oven at 250°F for 7 hours.*

*When beans are tender, remove 1 cup of beans, mash, then stir back into the pot carefully. Cover and continue to bake. Add water as needed to keep beans covered. One hour before serving, remove the cover to darken up the beans. Salt to taste.*



## FERGUSON BEAN KIT

Several companies made bean rakes or sold kits to convert a standard hay rake for use in white beans. Ferguson sold a bean kit for their 3-point mounted rake.

## Massey-Harris Side Rake and Tedder

No, this is not a John Deere rake, it is from a 1920's Massey-Harris catalog. It didn't show the model number but it does clearly states that the 10 1/2 foot version was designed for beans. It seems odd that this horse-drawn Massey-Harris rake, from their early 1920's catalog was painted green and yellow but here it is.

