

Hercules Engine News

By Glenn Karch

Hercules Variations



Over the past 15 years or so, I have assembled a registry of sorts for engines built by the Hercules Gas Engine Co. at Evansville, Ind. The registry starts with engines produced in 1914. At last count there were 3,682 engines on the list, consisting of engines I have seen or have been reported to me.

Many people think Hercules-built engines are simple, look-alike engines. The engines with a 3-1/4-inch bore by 5-inch stroke are, by far, the most common size, and the variations are numerous. There were likely some 140,000 of this size built. The chart at right shows a breakdown of the brands produced by Hercules and the number of 3-1/4-inch x 5-inch size engines on my list to date:

Despite all the variations, you could throw most of the parts into a pile and build up a mix and match engine. This is what makes it hard to properly identify some engines in the Hercules line, because frequently someone has already mixed and matched parts.

This listing does not include 32 of the 1-1/2 HP Sparta Economy-style engines built in Evansville. Nor does it include 31 of the 1-1/2 HP D models. The 3-1/2-inch x 4-inch 1-1/2

Hercules Registry Breakdown by Brand 3-1/4 x 5 Bore and Stroke

Brand	Number	Percent
Hercules	602	37.5
Economy	530	33.0
ARCO	75	4.7
Jaeger	337	21.0
Saxon	12	.7
Emu Australia	4	.2
Champion	2	.1
Phillips	3	.2
Unknown	40	2.5
TOTAL	1,605	99.9

HP Model N is not included either. There are 68 of them on the list.

When all the variations among the engines on this list are considered, it becomes mind boggling to sort them all out. Between 1914 and 1929 there were nine different Hercules models produce, eight different Economy models, four different Jaegers and four different ARCOs. Many of these models look almost alike, but that is where the fun comes in, because within these models are numerous variations or special adaptations.

Did you ever see a 1-3/4 HP SK Hercules? If you have, did you ever see an SK Hercules

with an air-cooled head? Did you ever see a Hercules with a two-piece frame? Did you ever see a Hercules/Economy with a natural gas mixer? Did you ever see a Jaeger with the spark plug in the head? Did you ever see an ARCO with a hopper-shaped fuel tank mounted to the side of the water hopper? Did you ever see an early Hercules with a sheet metal crank guard? These are just hints of the oddities that occur.

To round out the rest of the 3,682 engines I have also included a breakdown of the larger engines.

Add to all of this 215 X Models, 169 J Models and 125 Thermoils. I hope all these numbers aren't confusing, but when someone talks about collecting one of everything in one of the Hercules-built brands or sizes, it becomes a challenging and never ending hunt.

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Hercules Registry Breakdown/Larger Engines

Bore and stroke	Size HP	Number	Percent
3-5/8x5	2, 2-1/4 and 2-1/2	164	4.5
4, 4-1/4x6	2-1/2, 2-3/4, 3, and 3-1/2	559	15.2
5x7	5 and 6	395	10.7
5-3/4x9	7 and 8	213	5.8
6-1/2x11	9 and 10	75	2.0
7-1/2x12	12 and 14	64	1.7