

The Coming and Going of Go-Ite Manufacturing Company

Steven K. Vernon

Go-Ite—a name familiar to most collectors of old fishing reels, lures, and rods. If you knew the company was founded by a man named Hite who was married to a lady named Golda, you might conclude that the company name was a play on the combination of their names. You would be wrong.

In March, 1919, two Hoosiers applied for a patent for a filler and gauge, a device meant to eliminate the need of lifting the seat cushion in order to fill an automobile's fuel tank and to permit observation of the fuel level. The co-inventors were George R. Goin and Rexford E. Hite, and Goin assigned his portion of the patent to Hite. Hite and others incorporated Go-Ite Manufacturing Company in Kokomo, Indiana, in late 1920, with a capitalization of \$25,000, to "manufacture automobiles and sporting goods; accessories."¹ The three board members were Hite, also president, Jasper Henderson, vice-president, and Culver Prcesang, secretary and treasurer. Prcesang was Hite's brother-in-law.

Ser. No. 148,381. (CLASS 13. HARDWARE AND PLUMBING AND STEAM-FITTING SUPPLIES.) GO-ITE MANUFACTURING COMPANY, Kokomo, Ind. Filed May 28, 1921.



Particular description of goods.—Filling Attachments for Tanks Placed Under the Seats of Automobiles. Claims use since in the neighborhood of Apr. 1, 1918.

The Go-Ite trademark was registered in 1921 for use on filling attachments.

Born in 1892, George Raymond Goin was a pattern fitter in Kokomo in 1914. By 1918, he was working in Toledo, Ohio, and the next year he filed for the filler patent from Highland Park, Michigan, the site of Henry Ford's first large factory. Goin remained in Detroit, Michigan, from then on, where he built a successful career. By 1930, he was a superintendent at Stout Metal Airplane Company, where he seems to have been employed since 1923. That company had been founded about that time and was acquired by, and made a division of, Ford Motor Company in 1929. It

Sells on Sight

Every Ford and Chevrolet Owner Wants this Unique Gasoline Gauge and Filler

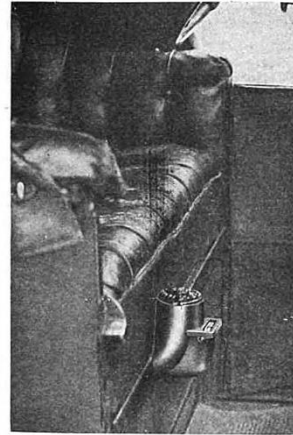


GASOMETER

for it enables the owner of a Ford or Chevrolet car to have his gasoline tank filled without the bother, trouble and waste of time of removing the seat cushion and getting out of the car. All that he has to do is to reach down, unscrew the filler cap and have the gas pumped into the tank without even leaving his seat.

Furthermore, each Gasometer has an accurate glass covered gasoline gauge which is always in plain view of the driver and enables him, at all times, to know to the fraction of a gallon the amount of gasoline in his tank. This positively eliminates the danger of running out of gas in out-of-the-way places and therefore gives driver and passengers a feeling of comfort and safety that alone more than repays them for the slight cost of the Gasometer.

The special air-vent in the Gasometer allows rapid filling of the tank and positively prevents flooding while the tank is being filled. This is a feature which strongly appeals to every car owner in these days of high-cost gasoline.



The above illustration shows the location of the filler cap and gasoline gauge when the Gasometer is installed. Both are out of the way but readily accessible.

Made in Four Models

- (1) Ford or Chevrolet (490) round tank.
- (2) Ford late model oval tank.
- (3) Chevrolet left hand filling opening.
- (4) Ford Coupe oval tank.



A Genuine Boon For Every Ford and Chevrolet Owner

By filling a long-felt want the Gasometer is instantly appealing to every Ford and Chevrolet owner who sees it. The illustrations tell the story. This device can easily be attached by anyone in ten minutes—it is permanently held in place by a simple clamp and screw and does not rattle or shake loose.

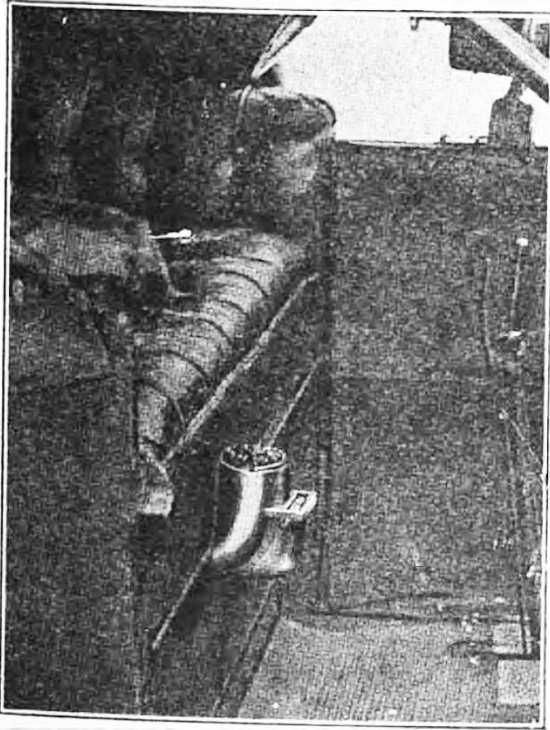
The Gasometer is the only combined gasoline filler and gauge on the market. Dealers everywhere are saying that the Gasometer sells on sight. Write your jobber today, if he cannot supply write direct to the manufacturer. We want more dealers in every part of the country. Our trade discounts are liberal.

Go-ite Sales Company

KOKOMO, INDIANA
U. S. A.

An ad for the Gasometer in Automobile Trade Directory, April, 1921

built the famous Ford tri-motor plane. Goin may have been one of Stout's first employees. In 1929, he successfully applied for a patent for an airplane-covering material and assigned it to Ford Motor Company. During the late 1930s, Goin assigned two patents for his machines to Peninsular Metal Products Corporation, a Detroit firm that made a wide variety of products, including trailers, auto equipment, barrels, etc. In 1942, he was employed by Woodall Industries, Detroit, which made auto parts. I don't know how long he remained affiliated with Go-Ite. He died in Detroit in 1961.



The GOITE FILLOMETER
Combined gas filler and gauge
for all Ford models. Write to
Goite Manufacturing Company
Kokomo, Indiana

*An ad for the Fillometer in Automobile Trade Directory,
 October, 1921*

Rexford Earl Hite also was born in 1892. He married Golda Prcesang in 1910 and worked at Globe Stove & Range Company in Kokomo. He probably met Goin when the two worked in Kokomo, and, possibly influenced by the ambitious Goin, took a job at Ford Tractor in Dearborn, Michigan. By 1918, he, like Goin, was working in Toledo—at McCarthy Drill & Tool Company—but he returned to Kokomo to establish Go-It.

Go-It's major product was, of course, its Goin-Hite invention. Early branding may have been debated. An advertisement in *Automobile Trade Directory*, April, 1921, described the Go-It "Gasometer" for Fords and Chevrolets. A bit later, the company's advertisement in *Automobile Trade Directory*, October, 1921, promoted its "Fillometer" for "all Ford models." Maybe someone informed the inventors that "gasometer" had been in use for over a century to refer to enormous tanks for storing natural gas.

THE GO-ITE
Anti-Back Lash Reels
and Baits

Just the reel that the particular angler has been looking for. The beginner can use this reel with the ease of a professional. Nothing to get out of order. It drives direct on one brass-on-steel bearing. Will last for years and the price is within the reach of all.

Nine GO-ITE outstanding points of construction:

1. The thumbing band, giving angler absolute control;
2. The tension nut and spring housing;
3. The Anti-Back-Lash Ring which eliminates back lash;
4. The direct agate line guide;
5. The one-piece reel;
6. The off-set reel seat, giving full grip on rod;
7. The large circumference, giving full control of fish;
8. The weight, which is only 6 ounces complete;
9. The line-dry wheel; never have to take line off to dry.

This is the reel that you have been looking for; it has the improvements you have always wanted. Many anglers have adopted this reel for all practical fishing in preference to other types.

GO-ITE WATER-PLANE BAIT

is also something that will be of interest to you. A combined spinner and spinning spoon that will lure any fish. Made in plain and feathered models. Your tackle will be incomplete without this bait.

Your dealer has the GO-ITE. If he hasn't write us giving his name; we will see that you are supplied. Illustrated catalog furnished on request.



Go-It Manufacturing
Company
Kokomo, Indiana.

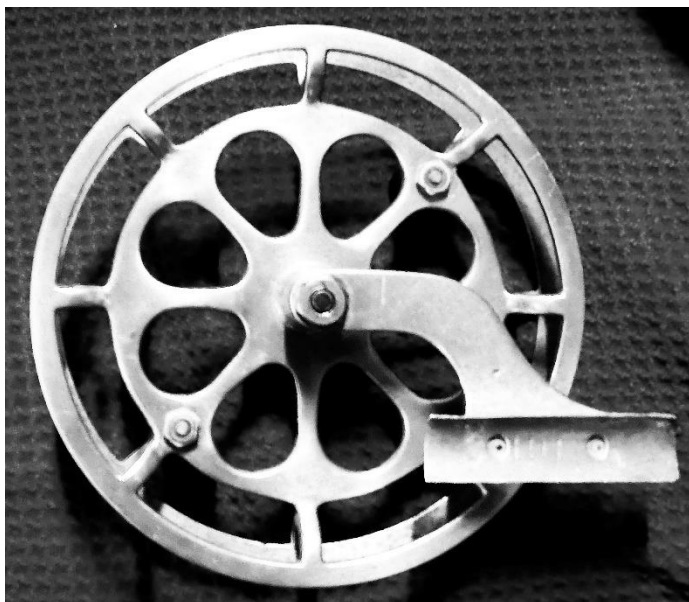
The earliest Go-It tackle ad I have found, Outers' Recreation, March, 1922

Advertisements published at least as early as March, 1922, in nationally-distributed sporting magazines demonstrated that the company was not putting all its fuel in one Gasometer. The ads featured a side-mounted, Indiana-style, "skeleton"-spooled fishing reel and a "Water-Plane Bait," a "combined spinner and spinning spoon."

On April 15, 1922, Joseph Clyde Coleman, a molder who worked at Kokomo Brass Works, applied for a patent for a reel that resembled the advertised Go-

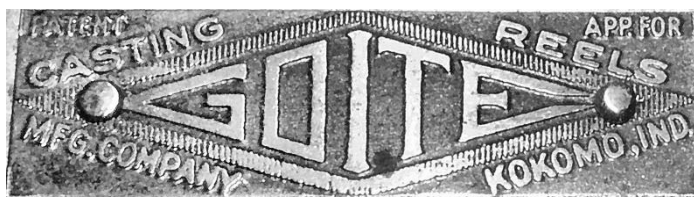


A Go-It reel made in Kokomo. (Photo by Jonathan Kring)

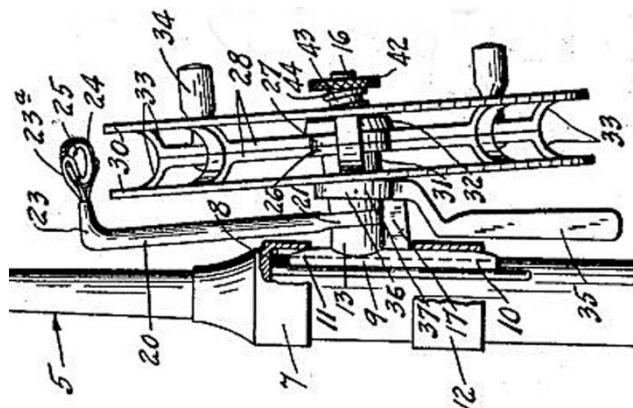


The underside of the Kokomo reel. Note the orientation of the foot, which supports the spool on top of the rod. The line guide bracket has been removed for clarity. (Photo by Jonathan Kring)

Ite reel. Beneath the spool were two extensions fastened to the center post: one was a brake lever, and the other held a line guide. The spool itself had eight radial arms, rather than being a perforated disc. Instead of having a brake lever, the Go-Ite reel had a bracket holding an offset reel foot that supported the reel above the rod butt.



The plaque on the reel foot shows where Go-Ite was located when the reel was made. Later plaques show Flint and Birmingham locations. (Photo by Jonathan Kring)



One of Coleman's patent drawings. The line guide (24) and the brake lever (35) are attached separately to the center post. Note the two-piece construction of the spool.

Coleman's reel may well have been the inspiration for the Go-Ite reel. The earliest Go-Ite reel ads I have found appeared a month before Coleman filed his application. The simpler construction of the Go-Ite could have resulted from a decision to minimize manufacturing costs and to get the reel on the market quickly. I would like to think that Go-Ite bought or licensed the reel design from Coleman, but perhaps Coleman "adapted" the Go-Ite design when he caught wind of its Kokomo manufacture.

Hite left Kokomo in 1924 or a bit later, taking Go-Ite with him. This was around the time that the first electrical fuel gauge became available, and the Gasometer would soon become obsolete. Hite got a job as a pattern maker at Buick Motor Company in Flint, Michigan. That plant produced motors, transmissions, and various chassis parts for shipment to, and assembly at, Buick's Detroit factory. Hite would remain at Flint for the rest of his career.



Go-Ite ads in the April (upper) and July issues of Outdoor America, 1924, showing a company change of address.

It is hard to gauge how successful Go-Ite was after it left Kokomo. In April, 1924, it advertised that its free catalog of "reels, lines, baits, etc." was available by writing to Go-Ite in Kokomo. In July, 1924, the same ad showed a Go-Ite address of 7437 14th Street, Detroit. I have not been able to learn the occupant(s) of that address. Goin did not reside there, but he may have hired someone to mail out catalogs. It does not appear to have been the address of a printer. Perhaps Hite was there briefly before moving to Flint. In any case, we can see that Go-Ite expanded its line of fishing tackle rapidly.

INCREASE YOUR INCOME—Can make \$100 to \$500 each week. We show you how. Don't miss this great oppor. Exclusive ter. allotted. Write today for full information. Go-Itc Mfg. Co., Automotive Div., Flint, Mich.

An ad in The Philadelphia Inquirer, May 27, 1928, seeking agents for Go-Itc's automotive division in Flint.

In 1928, Go-Itc published "agents-wanted" ads in many large-city newspapers. Applicants were advised to contact the company's Automotive Division in Flint, where Hite was then living.

Examples of Go-Itc reels and lures identifiable as Flint products are relatively uncommon. Such identification usually requires a plaque on the reel foot or a box labeled with the Flint location. Nevertheless, it is clear that Go-Itc remained in business during the 1930s. Hite remained with the company but didn't quit his day job at Buick. *Hardware Age* magazine listed Go-Itc as a fishing reel maker in 1940, and the company was listed in city directories as fishing tackle manufacturers. But alas, the Gasometer was no longer a viable product.

World War II certainly put a damper on the manufacture and sale of sport-fishing equipment. Rex Hite

finally "called it a day," and he appears to have sold Go-Itc by 1947 to Glenn H. Whitney, of Birmingham, Michigan. Whitney, like Hite and Goin, had been born in Indiana, and he worked in Mishawaca during the 1930s. In 1936, he was a draftsman there, but by the end of the decade, he was a "designer" in Muskegon, Michigan. When he registered for the draft in 1942, he was working for Enterprise Tool & Gear Corporation in Detroit, which supplied gears to the Navy during the war. By 1944, he was running Associated Designers, his own business.

Whitney proceeded to grow Go-Itc into a major tackle manufacturer. Like Hite, he advertised in sporting magazines. He redesigned the original reel and expanded the line, making a variety of styles and sizes. The spool center of the Kokomo reel was a disc with drop-shaped perforations. Beneath were two brackets holding a line guide and the reel foot, which positioned the spool on top of the rod. Although Whitney continued to make reels with drop-shaped perforations in the spools, he incorporated a single bracket that held the line guide and reel foot so that the spool would be on the side, rather than the top, of the rod.² He introduced reel spools with radial spokes, resembling the Coleman invention, instead of perforated discs. He also added new lures to the product line and even produced fishing rods.

The last year that Go-Itc was listed in city directories was 1954. By that time, Whitney had begun a business called Whitney Products, which made metal

Lake Trout-Deep Sea Rig

Now you can afford to go after the "big ones" with your own rod and reel. Order direct from the manufacturer and save—40%.

Reel has specially designed friction clutch that provides an adjustable automatic drag on the line take-out and free-spool during the retrieve... aluminum spool 11 inches in diameter, large enough to prevent kinks in line... 1,000 yard capacity... ideal for metal or heavy nylon leader line... easy to clean.

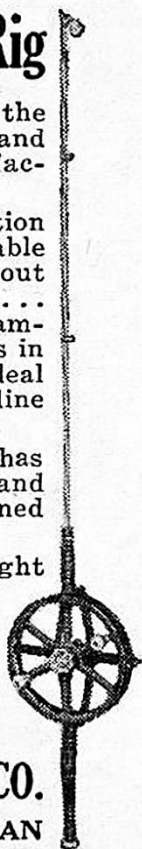
Flexible steel chrome plated rod has beautiful hardwood fore-grip and handle... roller tip... case hardened guides... salt resistant.

Overall length 6-feet... total weight 5 pounds.

\$32.50 POST PAID

Send check or money order today.
Satisfaction guaranteed.

GO-ITE MANUFACTURING CO.
BIRMINGHAM MICHIGAN



This 1948 ad demonstrates some of the expanded, improved product line available from Whitney's Go-Itc company in Birmingham.

*A Go-Itc reel with radial spokes made in Birmingham.
(Photo by David Lehmann)*



*A Birmingham-made Go-Ite reel with a reconfigured foot that allows the spool to mount on the side of the rod.
(Photo by David Lehmann)*

stampings. I don't know whether or not Whitney continued to make tackle, e.g., stamped metal lures, carrying the Go-Ite brand or not, after the mid-1950s. Even if he did not, the Go-Ite company had a good run of thirty-five years before it faded from view.

Notes

1. An announcement of the incorporation in *The Indianapolis News*, November 17, 1920, mentioned automobiles, rather than automobile parts.
2. Although Hite might have reconfigured the reel's foot bracket while in Flint, I have never seen an identifiable Flint reel that mounts on the side of the rod.

Acknowledgements

I am very grateful to Jonathan Kring and David Lehmann for photographs of their Go-Ite reels.