

Avery

18-36

Rock Island, IL 1922



The idea responsible for the founding of the Avery enterprise had its inception in the Andersonville Confederate Prison when a captive Union soldier and previous teacher named Robert Avery spent his prison time dreaming up designs for a corn planter. Avery was inspired and had incredible grit. He took every precaution he could to stay healthy and fought to keep his mind active and his hopes alive. He spent most of his time thinking about farm tools and implements, even scratching out plans in the bare earth of the prison enclosure and constructing a model of the machine from scraps of wood.

Avery and younger brother Cyrus raised money to manufacture the cultivator Avery dreamed up in prison, and it was patented in 1870 about five years after the end of the Civil War. Unfortunately, the market did not respond, so Avery went back to the drawing board. Two years later, he began to manufacture a spiral knife stalk cutter. In 1877, the Avery brothers established Avery Co. and moved to Peoria, Illinois. They purchased ten acres of land and erected a \$100,000, three-story brick building which still stands. They were successful and the year of Robert's death in 1892, an article in the Los Angeles Express reported he'd earned \$45,000, approximately \$1 million in today's dollars, the previous year.

Cyrus Avery became president for the next 13 years, until his death in 1905 when a relative, John B. Bartholomew, or J. B. as everyone called him, became

president. J. B. had incredible inventive ability as well as business insight. The capital stock was increased to \$2.5 million in 1907 and the name was changed to the Avery Co. By then, their products were being distributed worldwide.

During the First World War, or the "Great War," Avery Company urged farmers to sell their surplus horses and mules at high war-time prices. The company stated that grain could also be sold at high prices instead of feeding it to idle horses. It was reported the French government contracted for 46,000 horses, and over 18,000 animals had been shipped to England. The advertisements further stated this was a golden opportunity to change from horse farming to tractor farming under the most favorable conditions.

Early in 1916, Avery announced its 18-36 tractors. It came along about the time the old 20-35 was taken from production. The Avery tractor in 1916 sold for about \$1,800. The 18-36 could claim two distinctions. It was the only tractor of the first 58 tested at Nebraska to have no repairs or adjustments during the testing schedule. This generally covered a period of 30 to 60 hours. Secondly, the Avery Company was the first to offer replacement sleeves or liners for engines. From a design viewpoint, the 18-36 was virtually identical to the Avery models tested earlier in 1920.

In later years, the company entered the "lightweight" and "motor cultivator"

tractor field. Avery had earned a reputation for large and medium-size tractors, and found it could not compete in the small tractor market. The company was forced into bankruptcy in 1924, but it was to reorganize and offer the Avery Ro-Track with a Hercules engine several years later.

The Ro-Trac was unusual in that each front wheel pivoted on separate support posts to provide a narrow or wide-tread front. The Avery Farm Machinery Company went out of business in 1941.

Robert Avery embodies the gumption, inspiration, and risk-taking we value at JUMP. Like J. R. Simplot, he asked "Where do we go from here, and how do we get there?" We have many Avery tractors on-site, so please explore and enjoy.

