

Avery 40-80



The idea responsible for the founding of the Avery Co. of Peoria, Illinois, had its inception in the Andersonville Confederate Prison when a captive Union soldier named Robert Avery spent his prison time sketching a design for a corn planter in the sand.

Avery was captured at Cedar Point, Alabama, during the battle of Mobile Bay. He was held as a prisoner of war for more than eight months, with most of that time spent at Andersonville. Determined to survive, Robert Avery took every precaution he could to stay healthy. Fighting to keep his mind active and his hopes alive, he spent most of his time thinking about farm tools and implements. According to legend, Avery designed a one-row cultivator in his mind. He scratched out plans for the implement in the bare earth of the prison enclosure and constructed a model of the machine from scraps of wood.

Finally released from Andersonville prison and discharged from the Army, Avery went home to recuperate. After a bout of typhoid fever, Avery finally recovered enough to begin helping his brother on his farm.

Avery farmed and worked at a machine shop in Galesburg while spending his spare time perfecting the cultivator he'd dreamed up while imprisoned. He later formed a partnership with his younger brother, Cyrus, to manufacture the machine. It was patented in 1870.

Unfortunately, nobody cared and the

machine did not sell. Broke and in debt, Robert moved to Kansas, where he farmed and tinkered with a new stalk cutter. By 1872, he was back in Galesburg and he and Cyrus began to manufacture a spiral knife stalk cutter.

In 1877, Robert and Cyrus established a company bearing their names in Galesburg, Illinois. Robert had the inventive ability and Cyrus excelled in the business end of the enterprise. They engaged in the manufacture of corn planters, stalk cutters, and cultivators, and success was immediate as their products met with wide acceptance among the farmers in the area.

Because of better shipping facilities in Peoria, Illinois, the company purchased ten acres of land there and erected a \$100,000, three-story, brick building which still stands today. Operations began there on New Year's Day in 1883 with 250 employees and an output of 200 machines per day. Later that year the company name was changed to the Avery Planter Co. By 1892, they were making many farm implements, including threshers and steam-traction engines.

Around his 52nd birthday in 1892, Robert Avery fell ill and passed away. Cyrus Avery ascended to the presidency and family relative John B. Bartholomew, or J. B. as everyone called him was named vice-president.

At the turn of the century, the company reorganized and the name was changed to the Avery Manufacturing Co. In

1902, land just north of the plant was purchased for future expansion.

Cyrus Avery died in 1905 and J. B. Bartholomew became president of the firm. Sons of the Averys held minor executive positions, but from then on the business was under J. B.'s absolute control. 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.



The Nebraska test for the 40-80 Avery occurred in 1920, with the test weight was listed as 22,000 pounds. The rated-load belt horsepower was 65.73, while the rated load horsepower on the drawbar was 46.93. The maximum pounds pull was 8,475 pounds. After 1920, the tractor was rated 45-65 by the company.

In later years, the company entered the "light weight" and "motor cultivator" tractor field. Avery had earned a reputation for large- and medium-size tractors, but found it could not compete in the small- tractor market, and the company was forced into bankruptcy in 1924. Several years later, it was to reorganize and offer the Avery Ro-Track with a Hercules engine. The Avery Farm Machinery Company eventually went out of business in 1941.