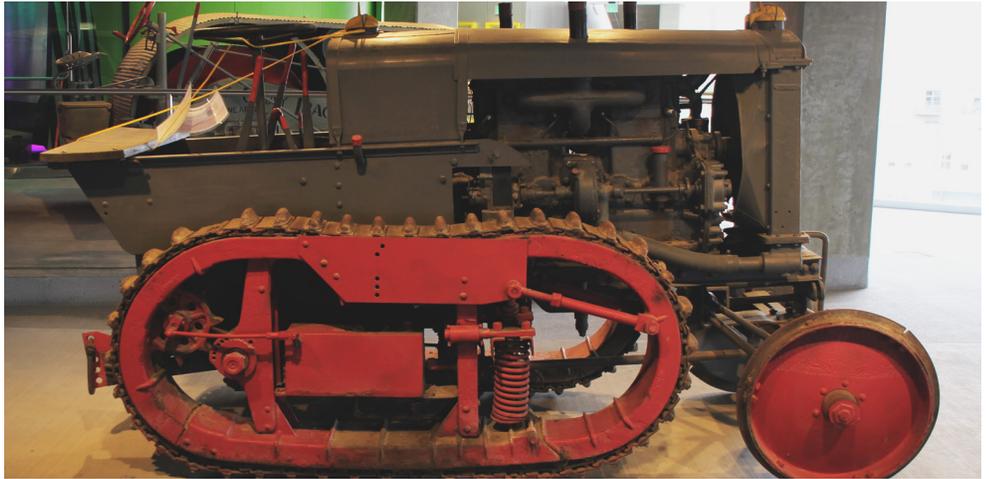


Avery Track Runner

Peoria, IL 1921-23



When the agricultural depression of the 1920s hit, the Avery Company of Peoria, Illinois, suffered. Their many product offerings were expensive, and the company's liberal credit policy badly hurt its finances when farmers defaulted on their payments. Around this time, farmers were also showing a strong interest in track-type farm implements. However, Avery failed to innovate new products and started its steady decline. In August of 1920, Avery cut its workforce by roughly 90 percent to 250 workers.

According to the Patent Office, Gazette – the Avery track runner mark – was first used on Jan. 8, 1921. The trackrunner was claimed to be a real “road worker” with an automatically lubricated track that was free from noise and vibration. “It turns in its own length, rides smoothly over rough ground, and has an abundance of power.”

However, this tractor failed to achieve any real success. The design left much to

be desired, some of the machinery did not work as advertised, and Avery failed to fix the problems.

Lacking the research and design resources, as well as being unable to manufacture competitive products, the Avery Company entered bankruptcy and went into receivership in 1923. One year later, president J.B. Bartholomew died. In late 1925, some former officers of the Avery Company organized a new smaller firm named the Avery Power Machinery Co. Having acquired a large portion of the original plant in Peoria, Illinois, they developed and manufactured a new line of advanced, all-steel threshers and combine harvesters, as well as parts for all of the previous Avery machines, for which there was still considerable demand.

The competition for track-type farm equipment increased in 1925 when the Holt Manufacturing Co. and the C.L. Best Co of San Leandro, California, merged to form the Caterpillar Tractor

Co. In 1931, wheat dropped to 23 cents a bushel and farmers could not afford to buy new farm implements, so the new Avery Machinery Co. was unable to pay back its debts. Banks who had an interest in the company placed a manager in charge in late 1931 and he gradually liquidated the company's assets.

The company was restarted once again in 1936, this time as the Avery Farm Machinery Co. It primarily manufactured combines, separators, and replacement combine-cylinder teeth. In 1938, Avery came out with the Avery ro-trac tractor for row-crop work. This was the first tractor Avery had produced in over a dozen years and was doomed to be its last. World War II interrupted production, and the Avery Company closed its doors for the final time. The Avery Corporation was born of the grit and tenacity of its founder, Robert Avery, who sketched his designs into the dirt of a confederate prison. John B. Bartholomew continued Avery's legacy of innovation, and was responsible for three large volumes of patents during his career. Yet poor timing, extenuating circumstances, and an inability to keep up with the large tractor conglomerates of the time led to the eventual demise of the Avery Company around 75 years after its inception.

This Avery Track-Runner, or Half Track, is one of only two still known to exist today.

