

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 thus started their steady decline. In August of 1920, Avery cut its workforce by roughly 90 percent down to 250 workers.

According to the Patent Office Gazette the Avery Track Runner mark was first used on January 8, 1921. The Track-Runner 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.

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

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.

"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."

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, and 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 who gradually liquidated the company's assets.

Once again in 1936 the company was restarted, 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 a final time. The Avery Corporation was borne of the grit and tenacity of its founder, Robert Avery, who sketched his designs into the dirt of a confederate prison in 1864. John B Bartholomew continued Avery's legacy of innovation and during his career was responsible for three large volumes of letters patents on farm implements. 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.

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