

## American Flyer S Gauge Track

1946 was the first year Gilbert produced S gauge track. It was two rail 'T' track whose rails resembled a real railroad's rails. For 1946 only, the rails were blackened for all track components including turnouts, crossovers, center rail pick up track etc. Metal rectangular pins were crimped onto one rail at the ends of each track section. Radius of the curves was 20.3 inches. It came as full 10 inch sections or half sections of straight and curve track. A unique #711 center rail pickup track was made to make contact with operating cars. It was made of Bakelite plastic with two thin rails mounted between the outer standard track rails. Uncoupling track were made with a Bakelite bodied uncoupler. Some have been found as half straight sections and are owner modified uncouplers.



In 1947 the track was no longer blackened and otherwise remained the same. Curves were now 20.5 inch radius. Gilbert produced "fiber pins" that were used to replace metal track pins for insulating sections of track for use with accessory items that stopped and started locomotives automatically.

1961 new Pikemaster track was introduced. It had composition ties that were prototypically arranged along the rails. It was simple steel tubular track with the top and sides 'U' shaped. The radius of Pikemaster track was 15 ½ inches. Turnouts had the same types of ties with automatic turnout electrical mechanism similar to Atlas 'HO' track. Uncouplers were mounted permanently to straight track with a swivel movement spreading the tongues of plastic truck-couplers. Track pins were tubular steel or plastic for insulating sections of track. New track trips had to be designed for the Pikemaster track as there was no way to clip on track trips. Track terminals were permanently part of the tie piece. Due to demand, snap on single track terminals were offered. To assure previous owners of American Flyer could run trains on both types of track, adapter pins were offered for sale that were a longer earlier track pin with one end bent in a 'U' shape that connected with Pikemaster rail. This was not well thought through as that many older locomotives could not run on the tighter radius Pikemaster track.

Track clips had 3 variations for holding sectional track together. The standard track had flat band clips to secure two ties together where the rails joined. There are similar shaped track clips but were made of steel wire. These are believed by many collector's to be made by others than Gilbert. The third type are Pikemaster clips that were flat with raised ends that snapped onto the ties to hold Pikemaster track together.

1950 was a year of innovation at Gilbert. Engineering was assigned to develop 50 new items for 1950. Among these were rubber roadbed for standard track. 1950 and into 1951 the roadbed was made of gray rubber with simulated rock roadbed with hollow areas for the 4 metal track ties to be placed in. The rubber simulated ties were the same size as the metal ties on the track. The gray roadbed became black rubber in 1952. For 1957 the roadbed was changed as it is thought that the molds wore out. The new rubber roadbed remained black but had more narrow ties spaced evenly. Rubber roadbed was last cataloged in 1959. There are variations in the under structure of rubber roadbed. These occurred to assure the rubber maintained its shape and to lower costs. 1960 introduced a new fiber roadbed. It appeared similar to the narrow tie roadbed but the ties at the ends of the track were not covered at the end of the track when placed in the roadbed. It was easy to cut and custom fit. It is somewhat hard to find as it easily torn and ripped. It was tan in color. Black versions can be found and are believed to be owner spray painted.

