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Then Came The CJ - The First Civilian Jeep

By Al Oberm

The first Jeep was fostered and conceived in Butler, PA, by the American Bantam Car Company.

Willys would shortly thereafter win the Army's primary contact for building the Willys (the MB) with Ford also receiving a contract to build the vehicle (the GPW) during WW II. From 1941 to 1945 over 700,000 of these vehicles were built by the two companies. The Willys would then go through a transition into a civilian Jeep, thus the beginning of the CJ.

Willys began experimenting with a civilian jeep (CJ) version in 1944, the first one being the CJ-2. They were almost identical to the Willys MB with the major exceptions being larger headlights, a column shifter, and side mounted spare tires. They were oftentimes referred to as Agrijeeps and there were only about 36 actually produced. Willys was targeting the farming community with their first efforts to introduce the Jeep into the civilian population. The first real commercial effort of the Jeep was the CJ-2A, which was manufactured from 1945-49. From looking at advertisements for the CJ-2A you can see that these first civilian Jeeps were being sold primarily as an all-purpose vehicle to the American farmer, and hence the name Agrijeep for the CJ-2.

The initial production of the CJ-2A relied heavily upon MB components. Originally the CJ-2A's employed the full floating rear axles, windshield adjusting arms, exhaust systems, and parking lamps that were used on the Willys MB. The CJ-2As looked like a Willys MB with a side mounted spare tire, column shifter and full sized headlights.

It was only later on when the Willys MB stockpile of parts was in serious decline that changes were made to the CJ-2A. It was during this phase that the column shifter was discontinued and the Dana / Spicer axles were introduced replacing the full floating rear axle. Dana / Spicer and Jeep would have a long lasting relationship from this point to 2005.

Other changes were primarily cosmetic and resulted in the addition of chrome trimmings and later on the introduction of more exterior colors to select from. Initially there were only two color choices for the CJ-2A and they were Pasture Green and Harvest Tan. The first colors added were Princeton Black, Normandy Blue, Michigan Yellow and Harvard Red. Later on Picket Gray, Luzon Red, Potomac Gray, Olive Drab and Emerald Green were added. Eventually Harvard Red, Picket Gray, Normandy Blue and

Then Came The CJ – The First Civilian Jeep

Michigan Yellow were dropped. The changes initiated with the CJ-2A would see more development with the next CJ version the CJ-3A, which was introduced in 1949.

The CJ-3A was the final run of the lower hood flat fender CJ. Only a few changes were made from the CJ-2A to the 3A and most were visual ones. The windshield became a one-piece design with the vent right below it. The CJ-3A was manufactured for four years (1949-53). During this time approximately 132,000 units were manufactured, with a stripped Farm Jeep available during 1951-53. The "Farm Machine" had a standard drawbar and Power Train Output. In its last year of production (1953), the CJ-3A was built along with the new high-hood, F-head engine, CJ-3B.

It was also during 1953 when Willys-Overland was sold to the Kaiser Company, who then became the owner and maker of Jeeps. The first higher hood Jeep, the CJ-3B, was essentially a CJ-3A with the taller F-head engine fitted and a higher hood to give it the needed clearance for the motor. It appears that it was originally intended as an interim model, but it stayed in production from 1953 up through

1968, and was offered as a short wheelbase option. Only a few thousand of these were built a year with a total of over 155,000 assembled in the U.S.

The longest running production Jeep is the CJ-5, which was produced from 1954 through 1983, twenty-nine years. This was the Kaiser Company's first overseen production model and it proved to be a huge success. Over 603,000 were manufactured, making them the most popular CJ by far. It was during the successful run of the CJ-5 when the American Motors Corporation purchased Kaiser Jeep in 1970. Special editions of the CJ-5 were made of this model including the Super Jeep and the Golden Eagle. Various options were offered for the CJ-5 during its run including a V-8 engine and rear limited slip differentials. When referring to a CJ this is the version most everyone thinks about.

There were other CJ models offered during the popular run of the CJ-5. The CJ-6 was manufactured from 1955 to 1975. It was made to offer customers an option of a longer vehicle. The CJ-6 was basically a CJ-5 stretched an extra 20 inches. This version offered a lot more room for storage but still delivered the Jeep offroad capabilities. Less than 51,000 of these were made. The CJ-5A and the CJ-6A were also made during the CJ-5 era. These models were produced during 1964 through 1967. They were an attempt to capture an audience interested in a sportier version of the CJ-5. The CJ-5A and CJ-6A had a column shifter, T-90 transmission, wheelhouse cushions, 2-stage variable springs, and chrome-plated hood hinges, outside mirrors, taillights and a center mounted license plate bracket. Later on in 1965 a V6 was standard along with bucket seats. These models never gained popularity, as the American public was not interested in paying a premium for the upgrades.

The CJ-7 was built from 1976 through 1986 and offered somewhat of a compromise between the CJ-5 and the CJ-6 wheelbase. The CJ-7 was just long enough for room and comfort but short enough to get down and dirty on the trail. It was proven to be a popular vehicle on all fronts. Approximately 379,000 units were built in its ten years of production. The 1976-79 models were available with the high-powered AMC 304 V-8. The CJ-7's extra length of wheelbase also allows for a wider option of drive train modifications over its predecessor the CJ-5.

>From 1981 through 1985 the last of the CJ's were made, the CJ-8 Scrambler! AMC built the

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Scrambler as a pickup with a 103–inch–wheelbase. It came in soft and hard top versions. Despite its popularity today, the Scrambler was a very modest success back in its manufacturing period. Only a little over 27,000 of these models were built. The next civilian Jeep made would be the YJ Wrangler in 1987. The introduction of the YJ would close the book on the illustrious and famous CJ line of Jeeps.

Al likes to learn and write about one of the true American Automotive Legends, The Jeep. When he is working, Al is a manager for a leading on–line retailer of Jeep aftermarket parts and accessories, Xtreme Terrain Concepts. Their web site is

<http://www.xtremeterrain.com>

Jeep Gladiator – History

By Greg Lucas

Where does the Jeep Gladiator fit into the great history of the Jeep line of vehicles. Jeep from its lowly beginnings has risen to the level of a status vehicle for many in the market today.

The Jeep vehicle name started out in the bare bones military unit. Simply designed to meet the rigors of being in the field.

The original JEEP as it was known back in February of 1941 was so named because the vehicle actually did not have a name. In a test drive of the Willys–Overland scout car took a demonstration ride up the Capital steps. When the reporter asked the driver Irving "Red" Haussman the name of the vehicle he said "It's a jeep". The name was then published across the nation in the review article and a new automotive brand was borne.

Willys–Overland inc was awarded the name as it owned the manufacture rights of the first military vehicles. The Jeep went on to nobally serve in World War II. When the soldiers arrived back from the fronts they wanted the Jeeps they had driven during the war.

Willys–Overland was more than willing to produce this grand little car for the common market. The Jeep CJ–2 was the first commercially available vehicle and stayed in basic production through the Jeep CJ–7.

The Jeep CJ–7 was the last military variant of the great Jeep nomenclature. The final Jeep CJ–7 rolled off the production line in the United States in 1987. It was supplanted with the Jeep brand Wrangler or YJ. The YJ for many was designated as the Yuppie Jeep as it had a lower running height and more supple suspension. This Jeep remained in production for 10 years.

In 1997 the YJ was replaced by the current TJ production unit. This unit along with many small tweaks went back to the original Jeeps round headlights. In 2007 the Jeep YJ is slated to be replaced by the Jeep JK model vehicle.

The JK model of vehicles will include three separate variants. The first Jeep variant will be a short

Then Came The CJ – The First Civilian Jeep

wheelbase two door model that will be the direct replacement to the Jeep YJ and hold true to the original form of this model line.

The second model will be a four door variant with a slightly increased wheelbase for those wanting more functionality out of the Jeep. This vehicle should also be better equipped for the less outdoor slanted owner.

The final version will be a pick-up variant Nicknamed the Gladiator. The Jeep Gladiator will feature a slightly extended cab. This will not feature a jump-seat for the kids but allow for storage of small items such as laptops, book-bags, overnight bags, and the like.

The bed of this truck will be 7 foot and perfectly square. This vehicle will be rugged and ready for the trails or a quick camping trip with the buds.

The Jeep has come a long way in the last 60 plus years. This great brand is planning on moving into the future with more memorable vehicles at its back.

Charles Cater is a writer and avid fan of Jeeps, for more information about the Jeep Gladiator go to:

<http://www.jeepgladiator.net>

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