

THE JIMMY'S ANCESTRY

The CCKW in Detail and The Collector's Syndrome

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PART II THE ACKWX

Up until 1939, there were probably only a dozen 2 1/2 ton, 6x6's built. The few that were built were all experimental one-off's dating from the early 1930's. As such, the 'deuce and a half' was still a very theoretical concept. The Quartermaster Corps, after reviewing truck production facilities and parts suppliers, determined that this was about as big a truck that you could rapidly produce in unlimited quantities. Compare 500,000 plus CCKWs to 28,000, 4-ton, 6x6, Diamond T's (G-509) the next largest and most produced of the heavy big trucks.

In 1939, the Quartermaster's let out bids for a production model, 2 1/2 ton, 6x6 truck. Yellow Truck and Coach (GMC), Studebaker, Mack and a few others submitted proposals/prototypes. The Yellow Truck and Coach offering was picked as the production model based on that most endearing quality - low cost. It was the cheapest and the one that could be supplied most quickly. This first production 'deuce and a half' was the ACKWX-353:

- A - 1940 model year
 - C - Conventional Cab layout
 - K - Front axle driven (selectively)
 - W - Both (Tandem) rear-axles driven
 - X - Non-standard (Timken supplied) driveline
- 353 - Chassis code.

These first trucks were very, very civilian, just like their contemporaries the Dodge VC-series, 1/2 ton, 4x4's. They were both warmed over civilian trucks adapted to military needs using civilian parts. In 1939 military specifications were not all that demanding. The first prototype (USA-410673) differed considerably from the succeeding production ones. Many small details were rearranged and some items, like the rear connections for vacuum trailer brakes



and the under seat fuel tank, were dropped. Even at that, the first six trucks on the production contract (W-398-QM-749) differed considerably from both the prototype and the rest of the contract vehicles. The semi-production nature of these vehicles is evidence that the Army still wasn't quite sure of what they wanted and the Quartermaster Corps were hedging their bets by ordering a sample of very conceivable chassis/cab configuration - three dissimilar s.w.b. cab overs (*Army Motors* #39) and several odd-ball conventionals.

One had a roadster-style cab (model 1547), produced using fire truck parts. This truck was USA-412337. The second truck (USA-412338) had a non-standard wheelbase of 150 inches. The production ACKWX's wheelbase was either 143 or 162 inches. This was different than the later CCKWX/CCKW's standard 145 and 164 inch wheelbases.

The normal production cab for the ACKWX was the model-984. This was the standard 1939/40 Chevrolet/GMC light-truck cab, with some modifications. The cab and the front clip assembly used the standard civilian parts with a couple of exceptions - the fabricated band iron brushguard, hood side-panels with louvers; and a swingout windshield assembly, using the simpler swing-arms instead of the civilian crankout model. These parts were unique to the GMC range of military-only models. The civilian origins were evident in the chrome door handles, the interior trim, ash tray, and the vehicle lighting system. These were all normal civilian production items.

Visually, what distinguished these early trucks from the later models was the complete, streamlined, civilian front end, the small 30-gallon fuel tank, the old-style wheels with the eight small (rather than 6 large) ventilating/handholds, and the glossy, pre-war paint with large white numbers.

The production ACKWX used the standard 1939, 256 c.i.d. engine with no military changes of any sort, and a Clark model 204-V0, 5-speed transmission (the fifth-gear being overdrive). This was coupled to an off-the-shelf Timken model T-79 transfer case, and Timken F-30 series axles. This was just about as conventional a package as could be delivered. In fact, the later Studebaker US6-series (G-630) used the same transmission/transfer case/axle combination. One feature that made these GMC trucks stand apart from competition, and the later wartime Studebaker 'US-6', was the very nice Saginaw Steering "Recirculating Ball" steering gear. The GMC's had exceptionally light steering which endeared them to the drivers, and still amazes collectors today. The early models did not have the sophisticated, Bendix hydro-vac brake system of the later ones. All of the ACKWX's, CCKWX's, and the first batch of the CCKW's, used the much simpler power assisted pedal. This vacuum-assisted system had a power cylinder mounted on the left frame rail, and was mechanically connected to the brake pedal linkage. This was the same system that Studebaker used on the US6-series trucks throughout their 1941-45 production run.

When the U.S. Army ordered these trucks into production, the French government ordered a batch of the same

model, with the slightly smaller '248' engine. As mentioned earlier, all details of this missing contract are unknown. With the fall of France in June, 1940, most of these French-contract vehicles ended up being purchased by the British. The British thought that these trucks were militarily unsuitable, as they were too big and too overpowered for military needs.

Excluding the missing French contract, the ACKWX was built on four U.S.

contracts and totalled 2,466 units for the U.S. Army. These were all delivered during the first half of 1940. That isn't too many trucks. There were only 22 short-wheelbase models and only 29 built with winches. The winch-equipped models were all long wheelbase units. All were cargo trucks using the familiar Budd-supplied, all-steel, military cargo body.

These production numbers are comparable to those of the Bantam BRC-40 and the Willys MA. Even considering the

missing French contract, I doubt that the total production of the ACKWX exceeded 4,000 units. The short wheelbase models or the winch-equipped models are right down there with the four-wheel steer jeep prototypes. In fact, by just changing some numbers and a few words, this whole description could be adapted to describe the Dodge VC-series production. Surprisingly, despite the small number of units produced, there are a couple of ACKWX's owned by IMVCC club members.



The first ACKWX's were very, very civilian. Note the glossy paint, Timken axle and tread pattern on the tires.