

Happy 75th Birthday, JEEP®!

What makes something stand the test of time while the world around us is evolving with new technology every day?

The men behind the development and design of the Bantam Reconnaissance Car (BRC) would have been great people to ask since the American Bantam Car Company's BRC, born in Butler, Pennsylvania in 1940, is the predecessor to the Jeep® vehicles you see on the road today.

As the country entered World War II, Charles "Harry" Payne, a Bantam lobbyist, had been working extensively to interest the Army Quartermaster Technical Committee on Transportation (QMC) in a military style of a Bantam car. After discussions with the QMC did not move along the process, Payne visited the Secretary of War, who felt that a meeting should be arranged at the facility in Butler with the ordnance subcommittee. With demonstrations and input from Bantam representatives, the committee decided on specifications for the vehicle.

Bid requests were then sent to 135 manufacturers with requirements for the general

purpose vehicle. Only Bantam and Willys-Overland Motors submitted bids to produce a vehicle, and only Bantam fit the requirements set by the QMC. Bantam won the bid to build the prototype and vowed to complete the vehicle and detailed drawings within 49 days.

At Camp Holabird, Maryland, the BRC was debuted for testing to both the military officials, as well as representatives from Ford Motor Company and Willys-Overland Motors. Because Bantam had no patent on their product, the government claimed ownership of the drawings, and shared these with Willys-Overland and Ford. After its approval, a contract to complete 70 BRC-60 vehicles in 12 weeks was given to Bantam. One month later, orders for 1,500 vehicles each were given to Bantam, Willys-Overland and Ford.

Although Bantam was able to complete both of these orders ahead of deadline, they were not awarded another substantial vehicle contract. However, they continued to produce

military trailers and other materials to keep the company alive.

By the end of the war, the American Bantam Car Company had produced over 2,500 jeeps and more than 73,000 military trailers. While they had no patent on the vehicle, Bantam will always be memorialized through the continued popularity of the Jeep® today.

Fast forward 75 years to 2015 as we celebrate what General George Marshall once called "America's greatest contribution to modern warfare." The 5th annual Bantam Jeep® Heritage Festival, taking place June 12-14, 2015, will commemorate Bantam's hard work and dedication over seven decades ago. The Festival celebrates the lifestyle that surrounds the Jeep® today with activities including On-Site Trails, Jeep® Playground, How-To Clinics, vendors and Show'n Shine.

Blow out the candles with Bantam's 75th birthday activities taking place all weekend long, including the Guinness World Records Largest Parade of Jeeps, the History Speaker Series, the History Exhibit and more!

Photo courtesy of Butler County Historical Society. See their preserved BRC-40 at the Festival!



On-site Trails



Jeep® Playground



Show 'n Shine



Jeep® Parade



WWII Encampment

#Bantam 75th