Spare Tire Or No Spare Tire

Well, we again have more of the *"my truck came that way from the factory"* syndrome.

I was recently asked the question, was a spare tire an optional item that could be ordered from the factory on the Li'l Red Express Truck.

The definitive answer is "NO".

There were some reasons that Dodge decided not to include a spare tire and wheel on the 1978 Dodge Li'l Red Express Truck.

First, "**COST**" the cost of a wheel and tire assembly, plus the underslung wheel carrier and hardware, was something that Dodge decided not to do, since cost was a factor on a truck that was already going to be over \$7,000 with just the standard equipment. My guess is this is also why they didn't include Sure-Grip rear ends as standard equipment in the trucks. Costs means everything to the "Bean Counters"!

Second, "*WEIGHT*", As any racer knows, less weight means more speed and since Tom Hoover oversaw Chryslers Race Teams, the word weight was taboo. Every pound you can reduce, raises your quarter mile and top end speed. Of course, this was Hoover's, "Last American Hot Rod", so it was made as light as possible.

Third, **"Size",** Since the 1978 Li'l Red has 15' X 7" rims, with GR60 X 15 tires on the front, and the rear had 15" X 8" rims, with LR60 X 15 tires, on the rear, they would have had to decide which one they were going to use. Taking into consideration the earlier mentioned "Cost" and "Weight" factors, they just decided to eliminate the spare tire and carrier altogether.

Now this was on the 1978 Li'l Red Express Trucks "ONLY". The 1979 came standard with both the carrier and spare tire and wheel, at no extra cost. (see Equipment ID labels below)

The Equipment options were as follows:

NT3 - TIRE CARRIER UNDERSLUNG RX2 – SPARE WHEEL WMHR – LR60-15B RW LET (raised white letter tire)

These options can be found listed on the 1979 Li'l Red Express Equipment ID labels, under the hood. In all my years of studying these trucks, I have never seen an Equipment ID label on a '78 Li'l Red that listed any of the above items, because they weren't available, from the factory, even if you wanted to pay extra for the option. It had to be dealer installed, not factory!

Now comes the *"I bought my truck brand new, and it came from the factory with a spare tire and wheel",* comments. Well, guess what folks---it didn't!

Having worked at car dealers, the better part of my adult life, I know how they operate. I've been a Parts Manager, Service Manager and Salesman and I can tell you; a dealer will do whatever it takes to close a sale. If a customer stated that he wanted a spare tire and wheel or he wouldn't purchase the truck, he got the tire and wheel. They just put one on the truck when it arrived at the dealership from the factory. The didn't order it that way, in fact, no dealer could order a 1978 Li'l Red. They could put in a request, to get one or more of the trucks, but the 1978 Li'l Reds were shipped out randomly, to dealers. You couldn't set down with a salesperson and order your truck or equipment of the truck. So, that means if someone tells you they ordered the truck that way, they are blowing smoke! They may have told the dealer

to let them know if, and when a Li'l Red arrived at the dealer, but they did not sit down and order it, period!! By the time the 1979 Li'l Reds were ready to be released, yes, you could have the salesperson get out the order book and pick out the options that you wanted on the truck, i.e., Air Conditioning, Cruise, Sunroof, Sure-Grip Rear End, AM/FM/8 track or AM/FM/CB radios, Black interior with either bench or bucket seats, Sliding rear window, Tilt steering column, & Dual horns, or even the Special Edition (SE) option.

The main point here is, even if you were the first person to own your Li'l Red, you weren't the first. The dealer is the first person to own the truck. Dealers must pay for vehicles, the minute they arrive at the dealership, either with a check or from a "floor plan" that they have worked out with the manufacturer or a bank. So, once they were paid for, Dodge had no say in what was or was not done to the trucks, they now belonged to that dealer.

A lot of this information can pertain to other areas of the Li'l Red, I just picked the spare tire option, because it seems to be brought up the most.



Tire carrier mounted on the truck



Wheel & Tire

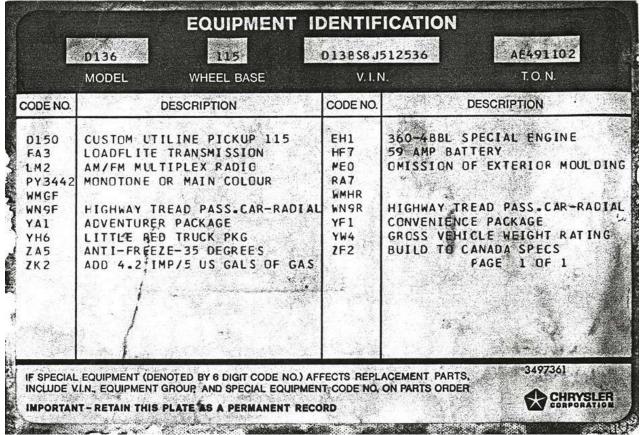


Underslung spare tire carrier assembly



Threaded J- Hook

Retainer nut



1978 Equipment label, note* no mention of tire carrier

	ODEL WHEEL BASE	VIN	
CODE NO.	DESCRIPTION	CODE NO.	DESCRIPTION
D55 PO MAI TR HE2 AL IX4 SO HAI TR HE2 AL IX4 SO HAI TR HE2 AL IX4 SO HE LR5	T ANLE 33004 WER DISC BRAKES ANS A727 AUTO TERNATOR 41 AMP UND CONTROL LABEL GAL P/TNK FRM MTD RG MHL 15 IN SPORT GAR LIGHTER RECEIVER LAMP TERIOR CARGO LITE CAB HOOD RELEASE S 15X8 CHROME ROAD FRT SPRG 3497931 ER STEERING 0-158 RW LET AY P/C POLY ARAMID TAM	AV2 DF1 FH1 HCC HE7 RLC LA2 LU2 LT3 WE5 VT3 RX2 SJ5 GW1 VMER	INX2.5 HYO RR STARES ENG 8 CYL 350-1 HI PER CATALYTIC CONVERTER BATTERY 59 AMP LIGHT DUTY CYCLE OIL PRESSURE GAUGE GLOVE BOX LOCK GLOVE BOX LOCK GLOVE BOX LIGHT BADIO AM FM STEREO HEADLAMPS OUAD RECT TIRE CARR UNDERSLUNG SPARE WHEEL 1650 REAR SPRING SWAY PAR LRSU-158 PV LET HIWAY P/C POLY ARAMID RAD

1979 Equipment ID label, note* lists carrier, wheel & tire

John C. Roberts (Lil Red Dad) Co-Founder, President & Senior Judge, NALRETO

