

The Elusive Original Mopar Battery

I was told many years ago that the original 59 AMP batteries on the Li'l Red Express Trucks, had 5 yellow caps and one white cap, showing "battery condition". This was like the General Motors "Green Eye" battery of the '70's.

After many years of asking people, searching the internet, checking battery manufacturers, etc., I had no luck in being able to verify that the Li'l Red Express came with the 5 yellow caps and one white "battery condition" cap. To my dismay, I had all but given up, trying to verify this fact.

Then one day I received an email from a gentleman in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada. He was emailing me to see if I could verify that the truck he had just purchased was in fact, a real Li'l Red Express. Of course, my response to him was, if he could send me pictures of the truck, VIN plate, Certification label, etc., I would be happy to check it out and let him know. Within a matter of hours, I received about 25 pictures of his truck, including all the necessary documentation to prove it was a real Li'l Red Express truck.

The truck was a 1979 Dodge Li'l Red Express that had been parked in a barn, since the early 1980's. Apparently, the truck's engine had gone bad and the original owner pulled the engine and transmission, to go through them and repair whatever was necessary. Unfortunately, like a lot of other projects, it was put on the back burner and never had anything else done to it. It was covered in barn dust, flat tires, and parts all over the place!! As I was looking at the pictures, something in the empty engine compartment caught my eye. It was the original Mopar yellow capped 59 AMP battery, with the one white "battery condition" cap. It was still held in the battery tray with the original mounting hardware. Upon further inspection, I did notice that apparently it had frozen, not uncommon in Canada, and the case was cracked in 2 locations.

Well I was just elated, to find an original battery that confirmed what I had been told so many years ago, about the elusive “white cap” battery. I immediately contacted him and asked him what he was planning on doing with that old battery and would he be interested in selling it to me for my collection. His response to me was, “I will probably just throw it in the trash or it will sit in the shop and collect more dust, so if you want it, you can buy it”!! I could hardly contain myself, all I could do was try to figure a way to get an old lead acid battery, through customs from Canada to the U.S. I was sure that the Canadian and USPS mail service or UPS would not be too happy to be transporting a lead acid battery across the border. Even though the acid had dried up over all these years, I knew it would not be an easy task to convince the Customs Department of that fact. The owner informed me that his job was in Northern Canada and he was gone 3 to 4 months at a time and was getting to leave again. He said he would get in touch with me upon his return home.

For months, I waited and waited to hear back from him, and then one day I received an email, that he was home and ready to send me the battery!! Fortunately, I also have a friend in Ontario, CA, that comes to the National Li'l Red Express Show every year, with a truck and closed trailer. I asked him if he could just send the battery to Ontario instead of the U.S. and I would just have my friend bring it across the border with all his other items he brings to the show. I figured that would be a cheaper and easier way to get it to the U.S. I gave him the information and off to Ontario, the battery went. When I asked him how much he wanted for the battery and shipping, he informed me that it only cost \$35 to send it to Ontario and I did not owe him anything!! I could not just let it go at that, so I sent him a copy of my book, “1978 & 1979 Dodge Li'l Red Express ID Handbook”. That probably just covered his shipping costs, but he was happy with the deal and I was elated. After receiving the battery, I completely cleaned it and resealed the cracked portions and it looks like nothing had ever happened to it. I probably have the only original Li'l Red Express battery in

existence. I do not imagine that anybody ever just kept a bad battery for historical reasons. Even my wife questioned my sanity for wanting to buy a battery that I knew was bad. I must have been the only person that saw the collector value in the battery, but now it occupies a very special place in my collection.

John C. Roberts (Lil Red Dad)

Co-Founder & Senior Judge, NALRETO (National Association of Li'l Red Express Truck Owners)





4. Any engine on which odometer mileage has been changed so that mileage cannot be readily determined.

Chrysler does not authorize any person to create for it any other obligations or liability in connection with these systems. This warranty is in addition to the 1979 Chrysler New Vehicle Warranty.

This warranty applies only to engines used on vehicles manufactured in United States or Canadian specifications and sold and operated in the 50 United States, Canada, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam and American Samoa. Engines manufactured, sold or operated elsewhere shall be entitled to service of emission control systems on the basis of the warranty applicable to such other country.

General Maintenance

The following general maintenance items are non-scheduled but should be performed periodically to insure maximum vehicle performance. Detailed maintenance procedures and recommended lubricants are covered in this section of the manual.

Maintenance Free Battery

The top of the maintenance free battery is permanently sealed. You will never have to add water, nor is periodic maintenance required.

To determine the battery charge, check the battery test indicator on top of the battery. Refer to the illustration.



Battery Care (Conventional battery)

Keep flame or sparks away from battery because explosive hydrogen gas may be present.

Remove all caps and check fluid level whenever the vehicle is serviced (more often in hot weather and on long trips). The fluid should be at the bottom of the filler hole. Do not overfill.

At least once a year check specific gravity. Clean and tighten cable clamps; apply grease to posts and clamps after tightening.