

The Rarest of Them All

As most of you know, I've been researching and collecting everything I could get my hands on, about the Dodge Li'l Red Express Truck, for the past 30+ years.

I've found a few rarities over the years, i.e. Out of the 5118, 1979 models produced, I've found 8 trucks, or about 0.0016% with the single headlight set up, as opposed to the NE5 Quad light option. Really rare!!



Lil Red models with both Air Conditioning and the Red Bench seat interior, 1978 – 7% or 156 out of 2188 built, and 1979 – 10 % or 512 out of 5118 trucks built.



I consider the above trucks to be extremely rare, even with the fact that the Li'l Reds themselves are “rare” considering the total number of trucks for both years was only 7306 built.

However, it never ceases to amaze me, that even after 30+ years of research, I can still find a truck or something I didn't know about these trucks.

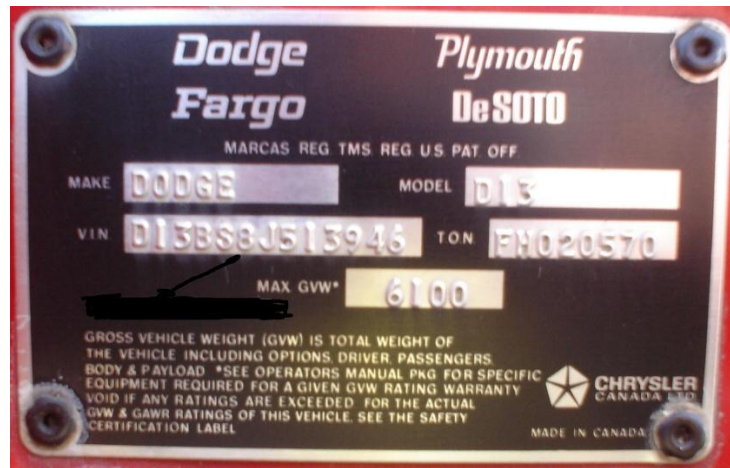
Case in point, recently I found a 1978 Li'l Red that was produced at the Warren Truck Plant #1, in Detroit, MI.



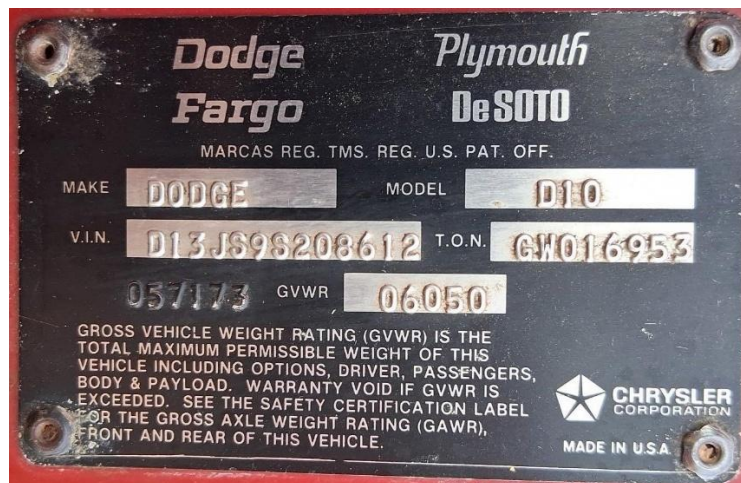
This may not seem to be special at first glance, but as most of you know, all 1978 Lil Reds were built at the Tecumseh Road Truck Plant, Windsor, Ontario, Canada.

The 1978 VIN plate states “CHRYSLER CANADA LTD., MADE IN CANADA’, and has an aluminum border around the black plate, with the 5th digit being an “S” for the engine, 6th digit being an “8” for the 1978 year, and 7th

digit being a “J”, designating the Tecumseh Road Plant in Windsor, Canada.



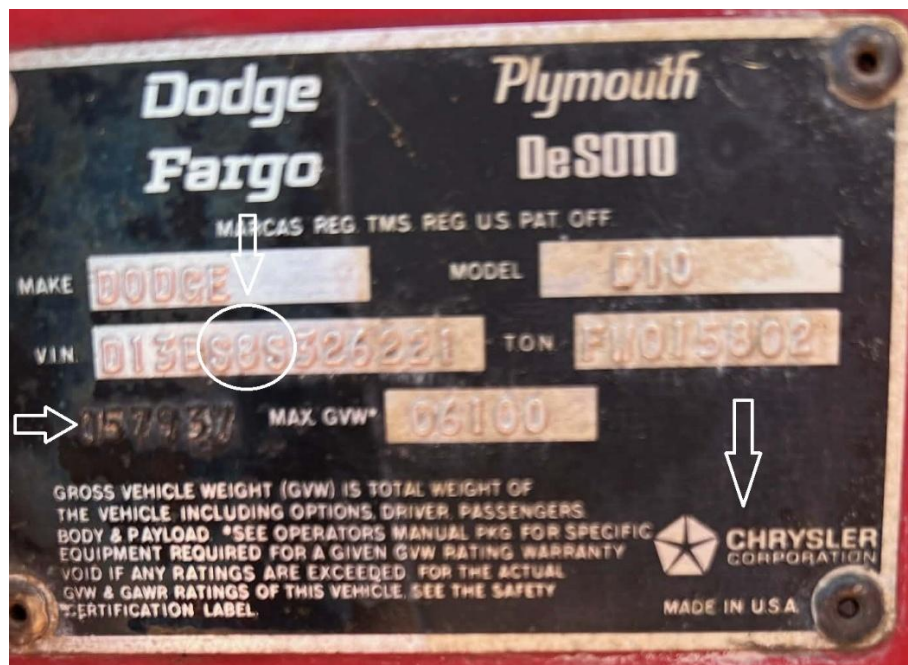
The 1979 VIN plate states, “CHRYSLER CORPORATION, MADE IN USA”, with an all-black background, and an “S” in the 5th digit for the engine, “9” in the 6th digit for the 1979 year, and the 7th digit being an “S”, designating the Warren Truck Plant #1, Detroit, MI.

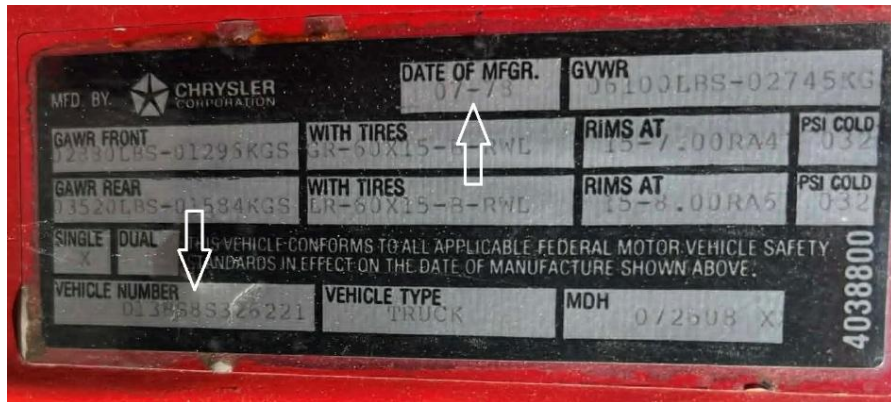


As we all know, the 5th digit, is an “S”, designating the Special Engine, used exclusively in the Li'l Reds.

Well, I found a 1978 Li'l Red, with an “S” in the 5th digit (engine), an “8” in the 6th digit (Year 1978), and an “S” in the 7 digit (Warren Truck Plant #1), of the VIN. The plate is like all other 1978 plates with the aluminum border, except it says, “CHRYSLER CORPORATION, MADE IN USA”. The plate even has the 6 digit sequence number, that is painted black, like all 1979 trucks, with a build date of July 26, 1978. August 1978 was the start date for production on the 1979 Dodge trucks, even though the 1979 Li'l Reds did not start production until December of 1978.

Here is a picture of the actual VIN plate, (with the “original rivets”), and the Certification decal, with all the information I stated earlier.





Undoubtably, this is the rarest Li'l Red ever produced. This must be in the "1 of 1" category. I have a theory about how or why this could have happened.

My theory, and it's only a theory, is I think the Warren Truck Plant #1, was gearing up to produce the 1979 Li'l Reds, starting in December 1978. They obviously had to prepare the production line, to handle a new model and had to figure the "flat-rate" labor times to install all the Li'l Red items, modified engine and transmission, stacks, decals, wheels, wood sideboards, etc. They also had to accumulate all those prior mentioned items for the line inventory, which takes months to do. So, I think they took a standard red cab, Utiline bed truck and added all the special Lil Red items listed above and made one 1978 Li'l Red in Detroit, MI. This truck let them know the build times, and extra items used only on the Li'l Red, etc.

This one of a kind 1978 Li'l Red, also had many items that ended up being standard on the 1979 model, a spare 8"


wheel and tire, with the mounting unit, cut pile carpet with the 85 MPH speedometer, along with a radiator core support tag, vacuum hose routing decal diagram and Equipment ID label under the hood.

MODEL			
CODE NO.	DESCRIPTION	CODE NO.	DESCRIPTION
CH3	CAB & UPGRADE	AV2	R/A CHRY 9 1/4 3600 3 55
DF1	10X2 5 HYD RR BRAKES	DS5	POWER DISC BRAKES
EH1	ENG 6 CYL 360-1 HI PER	FA3	TRANS A727 AUTO
HA1	AIR CONDITIONING	HE4	ALTERNATOR 63 AMP
HF7	BATTERY 59 AMP	HHC	HVY DUTY CYCLE
HL7	18 GAL F/TNK FRM MTD	LB2	OIL PRESSURE GAUGE
LF4	STRG WHL 15 IN TUFF	LH2	GLOVE BOX LOCK
LJ1	CIGAR LIGHTER	LK3	GLOVE BOX LIGHT
LK4	ASH RECEIVER LAMP	LM2	RADIO AM FM STEREO
NE1	EXTERIOR CARGO LITE	NG1	IN CAB HOOD RELEASE
RA7	15X7F 15X8R 4	SF1	FRT SPRG 1400 LBS
SJ6	1650 REAR SPRING	ST1	POWER STEERING
SW1	SWAY BAR	WMGF	GR60-158 RW LET
WMGR	LR60-158 RW LET	WN9F	HI WAY TREAD RADIAL
WN9R	HI WAY TREAD RADIAL	YA1	ADVENTURER PKG
YF1	CONVENIENCE PKG	YH6	HIGH PERFORMANCE PKG
YW4	YW4 GVW	PY3442	BRIGHT CANYON RED

IF SPECIAL EQUIPMENT (DENOTED BY 6 DIGIT CODE NO.) AFFECTS REPLACEMENT PARTS, INCLUDE V.I.N., EQUIPMENT GROUP, AND SPECIAL EQUIPMENT CODE NO. ON PARTS ORDER

IMPORTANT - RETAIN THIS PLATE AS A PERMANENT RECORD

PAGE 329281 1.5793

 CHRYSLER CORPORATION

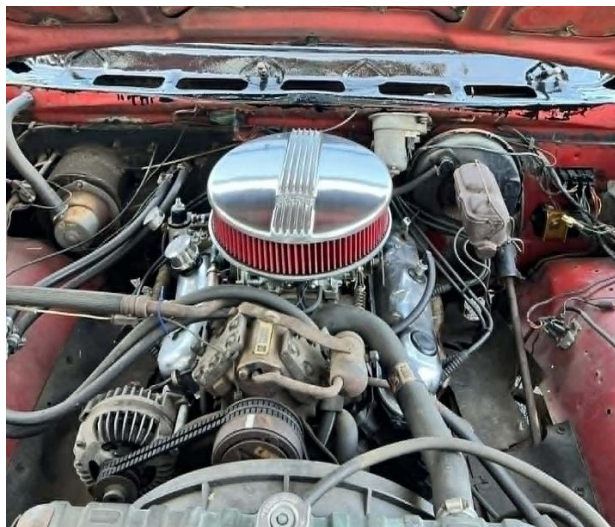
The truck was sold new at L & B Dodge, Inc., Robeson, PA, 4-7-79 by salesman Rich Long.

Unfortunately, the truck needs restoration, but it is in the process of being restored back to original condition. It is worthy of a complete restoration, due to its obvious rarity.

Ironically, even Darrell Morris, the plant manager at Warren Truck Plant #1, in 1979, was unaware of this truck

ever being built, probably because it was the only one built and it wasn't a production line truck.

Here are a few more pics of the truck today.



Chrysler Corporation's
Limited Warranty
For New,
1978 Model Passenger Cars
and
Truck Models 100-400
Excluding Truck Chassis Used for
Commercial/Special Purpose/
Motor Home/Recreational
Type Vehicles
T-78-524

VEHICLE AND OWNER IDENTIFICATION

DIS3885326221 4/7/79
VEHICLE IDENTIFICATION NO. WARRANTY EXPIRY DATE

DAVID A MORGAN
OWNER'S NAME

Box 97
STREET ADDRESS

FRIENDSBURG Pa 17933
CITY AND STATE

LEE DODGE Inc 49135
SELLING DEALER'S NAME ZIP

ROBESONIA Pa 19551
CITY STATE

RICH LONG SALESMAN

IMPORTANT NOTICE TO OWNER
Protect this folder. It identifies the vehicle as being entitled to warranty service. This folder, properly completed by the Original Selling Dealer, must be presented each time you request warranty service.

CHRYSLER CORPORATION

In Canada - The name Chrysler Corporation should read Chrysler Canada Ltd.

John Roberts
President, NALRETO