

Facts on the 1980 Little Express Truck

Recently there has been a lot of discussion about the “Supposed” 1980 Dodge Little Express Truck.

What are the facts? Were they really produced? What colors were they painted? How many were made? How can you tell by the VIN?

I have done extensive research on the 1980 Dodge Little Express Truck and I think I can explain what has happened.

Dodge had to have pictures of the truck for the media, magazines, TV adds, Showroom literature, etc., 5 to 6 months in advance of the 1980 production truck. Since they were not producing any 1980 models that early, they just used a production 1979 Li'l Red Express and painted Nightwatch Blue, with beige interior, changed the door decal, tailgate decal, painted the grille center black and “presto”, they had a 1980 Little Express Truck.

It was easy to do, because the only difference between the 1979 and 1980, was the center section of the grille was painted black for '80. Dodge even had the door and tailgate decals printed up in advance, for distribution to the factory and the dealer parts departments, Door - part # 4211552, Tailgate - #4211553. (Some still exist today!)

However, the powers to be determined that it was not profitable for the truck to be produced and the program was cancelled.

I have the VIN for the Blue, 1980 Little Express Truck, and it was a late production truck, built on May 14, 1979, way before the 1980 trucks went into production. The way to tell is, the 1979 Li'l Red VIN will read: D13JS9Sxxxxxx. The 1980 VIN would have read: D13JSASxxxxxx. 1980 was the first year that U.S. Automakers were required to start using letters for the year designation, instead of numbers and the 6th digit for 1980 was “A”.

I am not sure how many 1980 “prototype” Little Express Trucks were made, but I have seen color pics of the “Nightwatch Blue” one, paint code “PY8804”, with beige interior. Since most of the

pics for magazines were in black and white, it is almost impossible to tell the actual color.

So, there were never any actual “production” 1980 Little Express Trucks ever produced. They were 1979 Li'l Reds, made up to represent a 1980 Little Express Truck.

Hopefully, this will clear some of the mystery about the 1980 Little Express Truck and stop all the stories about somebody having a production, 1980 Little Express Truck.

***John C. Roberts (Lil Red Dad)
Co- founder, President & Senior Judge NALRETO
(National Association of Li'l Red Express Truck Owners)***

***Factory photo of the Blue 1980 Little Express Truck
(If you look closely, you can see the beige interior)***



Factory photo of the Blue 1980 Little Express Truck



VIN Plate from the Nightwatch Blue Truck



Certification decal from the Nightwatch Blue Truck
(Built May 14, 1979)



Radiator Support Tag from Nightwatch Blue Truck
(color code PY8804)



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Even the new Dodge pickups do a bit different from the old Dodge Express Truck.

PREVIEW:

'80 CHRYSLER TRUCKS

PICKUP TRUCKS EXPAND OPTIONS; OFFER NEW FOUR-WHEEL DRIVE SYSTEM FOR 1980

A new part-time, four-wheel drive system that provides greater fuel economy and a greater selection of options and exterior/interior trim highlight

Dodge/Plymouth pickup trucks for 1980.

Pickup trucks are available in a variety of models (gross vehicle weight ranges) with three different cabs, two types of pickup boxes and two and four-wheel drive configurations. Cab types include the three-man Cab, the Club Cab with an additional 34 cubic feet in inside room and two optional

rear jump seats, and the Crew Cab with seating for six adults.

The Sweptline pickup box has a double-wall construction with unbroken side lines, while the Utiline pickup has smooth interior sidewalls, exterior fenders, and handy exterior side steps. Both box styles are available in 6 1/2 and 8 foot lengths. Cab and box are available without a pickup box.

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