



Willys CJ-2A Universal Jeep, 1945-1949: How the First Civilian Jeep Plowed, Towed, and Ran the Belt

Public paper · October 5, 2026 · CJ-2A on sale July 17, 1945 · Ryan Standley / Record of Sale, LLC / Notice Nearby

Willys-Overland of Toledo, Ohio, put the CJ-2A on sale July 17, 1945, and sold it as a truck, a tractor, a runabout, and a mobile power unit. Its Go-Devil L134 flathead four made 60 hp at 4,000 rpm and 105 lb-ft at 2,000 rpm. A dash-set governor held 1,000 to 2,600 rpm for PTO and belt work. Nearly 215,000 were built through 1949.

Car loans · sourced with Assembly Alert. <https://assemblyalert.com/blog/willys-cj-2a-farm-jeep-go-devil-working-life>

The first civilian Jeep was sold as a farm hand. Willys-Overland of Toledo, Ohio, put the CJ-2A "Universal Jeep" on sale on July 17, 1945, per Hagerty, and advertised it as four machines in one: truck, tractor, runabout, and mobile power unit.

Willys aimed it at a specific buyer. By the company's count, the United States had 5.5 million farmers and more than 4 million had neither a truck nor a tractor. Willys called the CJ-2A "The All-Around Farm Work-Horse" and claimed it could do the job of two heavy draft horses at four miles an hour, ten hours a day, without overheating. Those are Willys' claims, printed as Willys' claims.

Under the hood was the Go-Devil L134, an L-head (flathead) four of 134.2 cubic inches: 60 hp at 4,000 rpm gross, 105 lb-ft at 2,000 rpm, 6.48:1 compression, per MotorTrend. Jeep lists a 1945 MSRP of \$1,090.

The 1942 tryout

In spring 1942 the U.S. Department of Agriculture tested two military jeeps at the Farm Tillage Machinery Laboratory in Auburn, Alabama, Hemmings reports. They pulled plows, cultivators, mowers, harrows, and lime spreaders. The jeeps could not match a tractor for row-crop work or fuel use: on a six-foot tandem disc harrow for 6.5 hours, the test jeep used 50 percent more fuel. Testers still saw a role hauling farmhands, rounding up cattle, towing trailers, and serving as a stationary power unit.

Plowing

Farm Collector reports a 265-pound weight behind the front bumper to hold the nose down while plowing. The Monroe Co. built a three-point hitch with hydraulic lift, and the Newgren Co. of Hillsdale, Michigan, built a mounted two-bottom plow. "Jeep Approved" lifts used the same three-point implements Ford introduced on

the 9N in 1939.

Harrowing and harvest

A National WWII Museum photograph dated September 6, 1945, shows a postwar jeep hauling a spring tooth cultivator. On July 18, 1945, at a "Jeep Day" on the Cesor Farm in New Hudson, Michigan, a Jeep pulled a reaper, per the Toledo Lucas County Public Library. Low clearance kept it off tall row crops.

The belt and the PTO

Jeep's history describes a belt-driven governor, set from the instrument panel, that held engine speed from 1,000 to 2,600 rpm for power take-off work. Farm Collector calls the mobile power unit role the Farm Jeep's best use: feed grinders, buzz saws, generators, sprayers, balers, and combines.

Hauling and small business

Hagerty's summary of the Willys pitch has the Jeep hauling up to 800 pounds and powering an air compressor. Willys claimed it could "pull a 5,500-pound load on the highway at a good speed" (Farm Collector). From 1949 to 1964 a Jeep vehicle or chassis was used on every Zamboni ice resurfacer, per Jeep. MotorTrend says the 1948 accessory book ran 120 pages, though purpose-built machines usually did the job better.

Where it went

Hemmings counts nearly 215,000 CJ-2As built before the CJ-3A took over in 1949; MotorTrend says 1,824 were 1945 models. Kaiser bought Willys-Overland in 1953 for \$60 million, per Stellantis. The Jeep brand now belongs to Stellantis, which builds the Wrangler and Gladiator in Toledo.

Plant country is the test

A 1940s CJ-2A predates the 17-character VIN, which federal rules required starting with the 1981 model year. For a modern vehicle, the free checker at <https://assemblyalert.com> shows the plant country of final assembly, which is what the OBBBA car-loan interest deduction looks at. The VIN's first digit is not the verdict. Per IRS Topic 505 (<https://www.irs.gov/taxtopics/tc505>), the deduction applies for tax years 2025 to 2028 to new vehicles (original use starting with the taxpayer) with US final assembly, on loans taken out after December 31, 2024. Not tax advice.

Notes

- Car loans · sourced with Assembly Alert. <https://assemblyalert.com/blog/willys-cj-2a-farm-jeep-go-devil-working-life>
- Plant country is a VIN fact. Free checker: <https://assemblyalert.com>. The first digit of the VIN is not the test. Not tax advice. IRS Topic 505: <https://www.irs.gov/taxtopics/tc505>
- Sources disagree on output: 60 hp gross (MotorTrend, Hagerty) vs 63 hp for 1946 (Farm Collector). This paper uses 60.
- The picture is an illustration, not a photograph of a CJ-2A. It shows an unbadged vehicle.

<https://noticenearby.com/papers/willys-cj-2a-universal-farm-jeep-go-devil-1945-1949>