

Atterbury Motor Car Company

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Part 2: Information on Trucks Made by Atterbury Motor Car Co. of Buffalo NY

Part 1 was a condensed history of the Atterbury Motor Car Company. Part 2 contains a bit of detailed information on their trucks (the abbreviations used are at the bottom of this column).

Atterbury trucks were not high-production-volume trucks like the one-ton-rated Ford Model TT (which cost much less at only \$500-600 in the early 20's). Atterbury's model line started at a 1½ ton rated capacity truck chassis and went up to 5 or 7 ton (although they did offer smaller trucks in the early days). Atterbury used large displacement "L-head" engines (also called flat-head or side-valve engines) which are "long stroke" – where the piston stroke is greater than the cylinder bore. Don't let the low HP ratings of these engines fool you – they were perfect for truck use back then as the long-stroke design produced a lot of torque while running at low RPM (similar to a diesel engine). While some of the in-line 4 and 6 cylinder engines Atterbury used were built in-house, most were supplied by well-regarded engine makers of the era including Continental, Buda and Lycoming.

Surprisingly, the company owned only one U.S. patent that could be found: #813,529 of 2-27-1906 by Russell G. Smith of Buffalo entitled "Tire" (a solid-rubber tire and spare-tire design).

In its advertising, Atterbury often cited innovations and detailed specs to sell its trucks. Listed below are a few of the advertising highlights used by Atterbury for the years mentioned.

Most years: Timkin axles; Brown-Lipe clutch & transmission; Gemmer worm & gear steering; toolbox & tools; Alemite lube pts.

1913: worm gear final drive – one of the first makers to adopt it.

1919: 1½ ton model had a 34 HP (SAE rated) in-line 4 cylinder 4½" x 5¼" (bore & stroke) gas engine with a 16 MPH top speed; the 5 ton model had a 50 HP 4¾" x 6" in-line 4 cyl. gas engine with an 11 MPH top speed (yes, that's eleven MPH top speed!).

1920: "Motor trucks and nothing but motor trucks!" motto used.

1921: 11 MPG gas; 120 MPG oil; solid tires standard. Ads gave a long list of satisfied owners including many locals (all are Buffalo except as noted): Coca-Cola Bottling; Buffalo Refining; Buffalo State Hospital; Danahy Packing; Globe Plaster; Heywood Bros. & Wakefield Co.; Hoefler Ice Cream; International Railway; Kamman Co.; Kendrick & Johnson; Kenmore Fire Department; Lily Brook Farms; Peerless Ice Cream (N.F.); Pratt & Lambert; City of Buffalo; Richardson Beebe (E. Aurora); Roberts Bros. Flour (Batavia); Wheat's Ice Cream; Zapf Lumber (E. Aurora).

ABBREVIATIONS: HP = horse power; RPM = revolutions per minute; SAE = Society of Automotive Engineers; MPH = miles per hour; MPG = miles per gallon

1922: \$2475 for 1½ ton to \$5125 for 5 ton – chassis-only prices.

1923: new 2½ & 3½ ton models; semi-enclosed all-steel cab; shaft-driven governor; multi-disc clutch; 4 forward gears; "X" braced frame secured with bolts & lock washers; electric lights.

1924: new 5 & 7 ton **Highway King** models w/ 7 forward gears; 30 MPH top speed on pneumatic tires or 25 MPH on solid tires.

1925: Bosch generator; Williard battery; optional electric starter.

1928: Westinghouse booster brakes on 2½ & 3½ ton models; speedometer, ammeter & lighting all standard; \$1295 for 1½ ton to \$5650 for 5-7 ton (chassis-only prices); 45 MPH top speeds; **Silver Anniversary** models celebrated 25 years in business.

1929: in-line 6 cylinder engines available on all models (some 4's still available); fully-enclosed all-steel cabs; Budd steel wheels.

1930: 6 cylinder engines exclusively (Lycoming or Continental).

And now a little more history to add to that given in Part 1. The last all-new Atterbury truck design debuted in 1931. In 1934 the company reorganized under a new bankruptcy law, but that didn't allow truck manufacturing to continue much longer. Most references give 1935 as the end of Atterbury Motor Car Co.

In the mid-30's Atterbury president James R. Spraker started his own business at the same location (after all, he was married to the founder's daughter and owned much company stock). His company was an authorized sales and service center for Diamond T trucks. Mr. Spraker retired in 1952, and died in 1966 at age 86 at his home at 64 Dorchester Road in Buffalo.

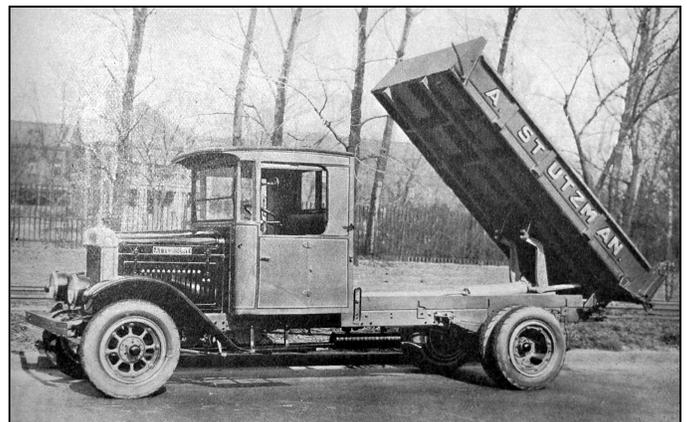


Photo from ad in July 1928 issue of "Buffalo Motorist." The 2½ ton chassis cost \$3400 and featured a 31 HP in-line 6 cylinder engine with a 3½" x 5" bore & stroke. The hydraulic dump bed was an added-cost option.

BOOKS: A retired schoolteacher from West PA has written a great book: "A HISTORY OF THE RUSSELL & COMPANY OF MASSILLON, OHIO." It has 61 pages in a large-softcover edition and covers the company's history, and its steam engines, threshers, gas tractors, sawmills, etc. ISBN is 978-0-692-00570-5 and © is 2009. It's only available directly from the author at \$22.50 (includes 1st class delivery). Send check or M.O. to: Thomas G. Downing; 460 Wurtemberg Road; Ellwood City, PA 16117. **Ask Tom to sign it!** Tom's e-mail: tdg1939@yahoo.com. —Brian S.