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## The Bantam Recon Car (abridged)

(Pennsylvania Military Museum, T. Gum, Site Admin.)



The US Army was in search of a vehicle with certain characteristics, including four-wheel drive, a drivetrain delivering forty horsepower, and weighing no more than 1300 pounds. On top these demands, the Army also required a prototype be ready for testing in 49 days' time. The physical characteristics that set the delivered product apart from others is similarly mirrored in eventual civilian versions of this now famous vehicle, though the curb weight was approximately twice as much.

Butler Car Company was awarded the contract due in part to their promising to deliver a product in 45 days – and they certainly earned it through working a crazy number of hours.



Team members at Butler were working hard at developing a concept when finally, factory manager, Frank Fenn, reached out to Karl Probst. Probst was an independent designer working in Detroit, MI at the time and Fenn solicited his help in designing a vehicle that met the needs of the Army.

A sketch of a Bantam Reconnaissance Car (BRC) was brought to life in five days' time, and in seven days' time the sketch was brought to life in a physical being... the BRC lived.



On September 23, 1940 the BRC was delivered to the US Army at a base in Maryland, and so began the rigorous testing phase of seeing if the delivered product was sufficient. Fortunately, and unfortunately, the Butler Car Company product, the BRC, passed the tests and the Army placed a production order of 75 vehicles per day... the Company could not meet the demand. Subsequently, the Army provided the blueprints to Ford and Willys.

Ford and Willys were able to provide the Army with approximately 600,000 vehicles for World War II.

This vehicle would eventually become known as the JEEP and is known the world over... its iconic flat windshield, round headlights, and slotted grille is recognized from any distance. The daily driver or weekend rider sitting in your driveway was meant for the battlefield – enjoy the freedoms this vehicle gives you, it was earned by a brave company and courageous men storming beaches over 75 years ago.

When one visits the Pennsylvania Military Museum, they will find an original Bantam Reconnaissance Car on exhibit in the gallery.