

# THE FIRST CENTURY OF GMC TRUCK HISTORY

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## INTRODUCTION

GMC has been and is now one of the most successful of the pioneers in the manufacture and sales of commercial motor vehicles. The GMC brand is one of few of the original makes that have survived into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The reputation of GMC truck quality, value, dependability and performance and the resulting user brand loyalty originated with the first roots of GMC products.

It has been said that the roots of GMC Trucks go back to the 3 Rs of early truck development: Rapid, Reliance and Randolph. Truly, the first GMC trucks were Rapid or Reliance trucks with GMC nameplates. However, Randolph trucks apparently had little or no influence on GMC design. We start with the earliest root, the Rapid motor truck.

## CHAPTER 1: 1900 - 1919

- 1900 *Max and Morris Grabowsky formed the Grabowsky Motor Vehicle Co. in Detroit. They started building a commercial truck prototype with a single cylinder horizontal engine, 2-speed planetary transmission and chain drive with a seat over the engine. Top speed was 10 mph and capacity was 1-ton.*
- 1901 The Grabowsky brothers completed their first truck but while testing it found it to be under powered. They then began building a second truck powered by a 15 hp 2-cylinder horizontally opposed engine with a drivetrain similar to the prototype.
- 1902 *Grabowsky brothers reorganized and formed **Rapid Motor Vehicle Company.***  
They sold that second truck to American Garment Cleaning Co. It probably was the first gasoline powered commercial vehicle on the streets of Detroit.  
***Reliance Motor Company, the second root of GMC, started business at 61-89 Fort St. East in Detroit. Fred Paige was directing operations.***
- 1903 Reliance Motor Co. produced and sold their first trucks with 2-cylinder opposed 22 HP engines. Several types of cargo bodies and a 12-passenger bus model were available.
- 1904 *In March, the **Rapid Motor Vehicle Co.** was formally organized by Max and Morris Grabowsky, Barney Finn and Albert Marx with \$13,000 capitalization. The Pontiac Spring and Wagon Works, under direction of A. G. North, gave some financial backing to Rapid and started building Rapid trucks in the Wagon Works plant in Pontiac, Michigan.*  
Rapid model A was introduced. 75 Rapid trucks were sold 1902 through 1904.  
*Reliance was reorganized as the **Reliance Motor Car Co.** with Fred Paige as Chief Executive Officer.*
- 1905 *The **Rapid Motor Vehicle Co.** was again reorganized by Max and Morris Grabowsky, A. G. North and Harry Hamilton. Later that year, A. G. North took control of Rapid and became President.*  
*Rapid built a 35,000 sq. ft. truck assembly plant on the south side of Pontiac. The street on which that plant was located was then renamed Rapid Street. Rapid published the first illustrated sales literature.*  
Rapid introduced model B panel delivery truck, called the "Power Wagon"  
It had a 2-cylinder opposed 15 hp engine and was priced at \$1,250.  
*Northway Motor & Manufacturing Co. was incorporated in Detroit on June 8<sup>th</sup>.*

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- 1906 *Rapid began producing trucks in the new Rapid Street Plant in Pontiac, the first plant in the world to build only commercial vehicles. The officers of Rapid were: A. G. North, President; Max Grabowsky, Vice President; Morris Grabowsky, Secretary and Harry Hamilton, Treasurer.*
- Rapid offered 20 different types and built 200 trucks that year.  
Model C "Delivery Wagons" (1 and 1½-ton capacities) were introduced.
- In 1906 and 1907, Reliance was building 3-ton trucks with 2-cylinder vertical engines rated at 25 to 28 hp.
- 1907 ***Randolph Motor Car Co** was founded by Eugene Goldman to build motor vehicles and auto parts in a plant at 3900-4000 Union Ave. in Chicago, Illinois.*
- Harry Hamilton became General Manager of Rapid in October.*
- The passenger car part of Reliance was sold to a Detroit company.*
- Rapid offered a buggy top over driver's seat as an option on model D.  
Model D21 was rated at 1 ton capacity and priced at \$1,550 FOB Pontiac.
- Reliance built 1½ to 3-ton trucks.
- In December, a 1907 Reliance 3-ton truck was driven from Detroit to Chicago 304 miles over frozen roads in less than 4 days. That truck was then displayed at the Chicago Auto Show.
- 1908 *William C. Durant founded the **General Motors Company** on September 16<sup>th</sup> and incorporated it in New Jersey.*
- Late that year, Durant bought controlling interest in Reliance and reorganized it as the Reliance Motor Truck Company, a subsidiary of General Motors Co. William Eaton was President and W. C. Durant was Vice President.*
- Durant also started purchasing stock in the Rapid Motor Vehicle Co. in August that year.*
- Max Grabowsky resigned from Rapid and formed Grabowsky Power Wagon Co.*
- Rapid offered the first partially enclosed cab on model E trucks as part of new body types including the "Canopy Top Body" with screened sides.
- In July, a 1-ton Rapid truck followed the Glidden Tour as a service vehicle for over 2,000 miles around New York, Pennsylvania and New England over some of the worst roads in the country.
- 1909 *In November, Will Durant gained control of Rapid Motor Vehicle Co. and made it a General Motors subsidiary.*
- Reliance truck production moved from Detroit to Owosso, Michigan and Fred Paige left Reliance.*
- General Motors acquired Northway Motor & Manufacturing Co. from Ralph E. Northway, and formed the Northway Motor Division of GM.*
- Rapid introduced the model F truck line, including 28 different models. Some models had the engine under a hood but most had engine under seat.
- On August 1, a 1909 Rapid truck became the first commercial vehicle to climb Pike's Peak in Colorado. James Carry, the Rapid service manager and Frank Grogan, also of the service department, drove it, accompanied by T. P. Myers, Rapid's Advertising Manager, a photographer and a utility man
- General Motors acquired a controlling interest in the Randolph Motor Car Co.*

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Randolph offered nine truck models B (¾-ton), C (1-ton), D (2-ton), E (3-ton) and F (4-ton). 11 and 20 passenger sightseeing buses were also available. Engines ranged from 22 hp, 2-cylinder to 34 hp, 4-cylinder.

1910 *GM moved Randolph truck production to Flint, Michigan.*

*John Hertz and Walden Shaw formed the Walden W. Shaw Livery Co. in Chicago and consolidated it with City Motor Cab Co.*

*On September 10<sup>th</sup> W. C. Durant resigned from the top management position of GM because the company was losing money. Eastern bankers refinanced GM and they and the duPonts took over control.*

Rapid announced two new truck models: a 2-ton model with engine under hood and a 3-ton model with engine under seat. Both models had 4-cylinder engines.

1911 *On July 22, GM organized the **General Motors Truck Company (GMTC)** to sell Rapid and Reliance trucks. That new company was located at 88 East Congress Street in Detroit.*

***On August 1, the “GMC” trade name was first used in the business of GMTC. GMC was an acronym for General Motors Company. Application was then made for a US copyright for that trade mark.***

Nine models of electric trucks were added to the Rapid line, ranging from ½ to 6-tons capacity. 173 of them were built as Rapids before they were changed to the GMC brand in 1912.\* The electrics were designed by John M. Lansden, who had left his own electric truck manufacturing company in New Jersey to join GMTC.

1912 *In January, GM sold its interest in Randolph Motor Co. back to Eugene Goldman, the original owner. After building a total of about 700 trucks, Randolph ceased operation the next year and the Flint plant was sold.*

**GMC** brand gasoline and electric trucks were shown at the New York Auto Show in Madison Square Gardens in January of 1912. This was the first time the GMC logo was viewed by the public. They were actually Rapid and Reliance trucks with GMC logos applied.

***In February the GMC brand replaced Rapid and Reliance brands on trucks then being produced.***

In 1911 and early 1912, a total of 337 Rapid model series S and V trucks were built in the Rapid Street plant in Pontiac.

For the first time, all models had the steering wheel on the left side.

*William L. Day became General Manager of General Motors Truck Co. on September 1<sup>st</sup>.*

*On September 10, 1912, a US patent (copyright) was granted for the GMC trademark.*

1913 *Capitalization of the General Motors Truck Company (GMTC) was increased from \$10,000 to \$250,000.*

*The manufacturing of all GMC trucks was consolidated in the Rapid Street plant in Pontiac. Thereafter, both manufacturing and sales operations were conducted as the General Motors Truck Company. By then all the other truck manufacturers that GM had acquired had either been sold or dissolved.*

\* There is ambiguity concerning where the GM electric trucks were built. R. A. Crist stated in his “Sequence of Truck Development” that GMC electrics were produced in the Reliance plant in Owosso in 1912-1913.

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Gasoline truck series V (1 ¼-t.), S (2-t.) and W (3-t.) were the first to be designed by GM Truck Co. engineers.

Rapid electric trucks became nine GMC models from 1 (½ -t.) to 12 (6-t).

Reliance gasoline trucks became GMC model series H (3 ½-t.) and K (5-t.)

1914 The first of a new family of trucks was announced, designed by GMTC engineers to supersede the Rapid and Reliance designs. The first 200 model 15 light duty ¾-ton delivery trucks were built by Buick Motor Co. on Buick chassis. They had Continental model N, 4-cylinder L-head engines and shaft drive with bevel gear rear axles. Pneumatic tires were standard. Base price was \$1,090. A cab with windshield and an express cargo body (pickup type) were offered at extra cost.

1915 ***GMC Truck Division of General Motors was formed.***

*Yellow Cab Co. was established in Chicago by John Hertz, succeeding W. W. Shaw Livery Co.*

A total of 759 GMC trucks of Rapid and Reliance designs were built in 1913 through 1915.

A 12-passenger *Jitney* light bus body was introduced on the model 15 chassis and provided additional sales for a short time.

Starting in April GMC offered these new models: 25 (1¼-t.) and 40 (2-t.) with chain drive, 26 (1¼-t.), 31 (1½-t.) and 41 (2-t.) with shaft drive and worm gear axles. They were powered by Continental 4-cylinder engines and had hard rubber tires. Goodrich pneumatic tires were optional.

GMC built the first experimental front wheel drive chassis in 1915 but did not pursue further development of that type.

*Pierre S. duPont became Chairman of the GM Board of Directors on November 16.*

1916 ***On October 13, General Motors Corporation was incorporated in Delaware. The General Motors Company of New Jersey was dissolved.***  
*On June 1, W. C. Durant returned as President of GM.*

*W. W. Shaw Corp. was set up as holding company for Yellow Cab Co. and designed and built a car for taxicab service.*

The British used a number of GMC model 15 trucks in World War I service in 1916-1917. Also, the US Army used several model 15 trucks in the Mexican campaign in pursuit of Pancho Villa. The Villistas may have stolen one of those GMCs as it appears in a photo with Villa and some of his men.

On July 10, 1916, William Warwick, accompanied by his wife, began driving a 1916 GMC model 31 1½-ton truck across the US from Seattle to New York. They covered 3,640 miles in 31 days running time hauling a one ton load of Carnation canned milk. Later they returned to Seattle by a southern route, leaving New York on October 9<sup>th</sup> and arriving in Seattle January 31<sup>st</sup>, 1917. During the return trip they also climbed Pike's Peak. Total round trip mileage was 9,513 with no mechanical problems on the truck.

These new models were announced: 16 (¾-t.) and 21 (1-t.) had shaft drive with bevel axle gears. 70 (3½-t.) and 100 (5-t.) had chain drive and 71 (3½-t.) and 101 (5-t.) had shaft drive with worm axle gears. All had Continental 4-cylinder L-head engines.

GMC model 16 was chosen for the Class AA standard ¾-ton truck by the US Army for the duration of World War I.

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Officially the last GMC electric trucks were built in 1916, although one may have been completed in 1917 per company records. A total of only 509 GMC electric trucks were built from 1912 through 1917.

1917

### ***US entered World War I on June 26.***

*General Motors Corporation changed all of its wholly owned vehicle manufacturing and supplier companies to divisions of GM.*

*GMC civilian truck production continued throughout that war.*

The last GMC electric truck was built that year. A total of only 509 electric GMCs were built from 1913 through 1917.

4,027 model 15 trucks were built from 1914 through 1917. Both models 15 and 16 were built during 1917 and then model 15 was superceded by model 16 for 1918.

GMC built up to 50 model 16AA ambulances per day for the US Army.

1-ton model 23 was developed specifically for use as light aviation support vehicles and troop carriers for the US Army.

Model 30, 1-1/2 ton with chain drive, was introduced but was soon dropped as all chain drive models were discontinued that year. Bevel gear and worm drives had proved to be more efficient, quieter and much easier to maintain. Also, less oil was dropped onto roads, reducing the skidding hazard.

*Samson/GMC farm tractors were first available through GMC Truck dealers in 1918. GM had acquired the original Samson Sieve-Grip Tractor Co. plant in Stockton, California in 1917 and formed the Samson Tractor Division of GM. They then bought the Janesville (Wisconsin) Machine Co. The first 128 Samson/GMC tractors were built in Flint MI before production was moved to the Janesville plant. Only two tractors were built in Pontiac and they may have been prototypes for model 10-25. Because the tractor operation was not financially successful, the Samson Tractor Div. was liquidated in 1922.*

1918

*That year over 90% of GMC truck production was for war use.*

*[General Motors purchased the Chevrolet Motor Company. No GM Truck parts were shared at that time.]*

Of the total of over 13,000 model 16 trucks built in 1917 and 1918, the majority were for military use. 2,401 model 23 trucks were used by the Allies.

GMC models in production were: 16, 16AA, 21, 23, 31, 41, 71 and 101.

### ***World War I ended November 11<sup>th</sup>, 1918.***

1919

*GMC Sales Manager Vance Day launched the first major public sales campaign, capitalizing on the selection of the model 16 by the US Army, to promote civilian sales. In January 1919, the price of model 16 was reduced by \$280.*

*Management focused on improving plant operations and production efficiency. A floor conveyor assembly line was installed in the Rapid Street plant.*

*A new warehouse was built adjacent to the Rapid Street plant. A crane was used to load new trucks into coal cars because flat bed rail cars were scarce due high demand during the war.*

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*General Motors Truck Company was given the Distinguished Service Award by the US War Department for aiding in the war effort.*

During 1917-1919, GMC provided 8,512 trucks to the US Government. These vehicles really helped to prove that motor trucks were far superior to horses and mules for military transport as well as civilian use.

*Note: Chapter 1 was revised August 7, 2008, to reflect new information obtained when Doug Ritter and D. E. Meyer researched Rapid, Reliance and Randolph truck history for presentations of early GMC truck history at the 2008 American Truck Historical Society National Convention at Hutchinson, Kansas.*

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### CHAPTER 2: 1920 - 1929

- 1920 *GM Board Chairman Pierre S. duPont replaced W. C. Durant as GM President as new management and financial groups moved to make the corporation profitable.*
- The name of Walden W. Shaw Livery Co. was changed to Yellow Cab Manufacturing Co. Yellow continued to build taxicabs and produced Yellocab trucks in Chicago from 1920 through 1925.*
- GMTC added new buildings in the Rapid Street complex and improved machine tooling to provide higher capacity and improve quality to meet the postwar demand for motor trucks.*
- GMC introduced a model K-16 rated with 1-ton capacity, the first of a new “K” series with many improvements.
- The Samson Tractor Div. of GM apparently attempted to develop some truck competition for GMC when they built limited quantities of 1-1/4 ton truck models with the new Autolite electrical system.*
- 1921 *GM of Canada began building trucks at Oshawa, Ontario, Canada.*
- In 1920 and 1921, GMC Sales published a series of booklets, each with promotional information specific to a different vocation.*
- Additional GMC “K” series models were announced, including K-15, K-41, K-71 and K-101, rated at ¾, 2, 3 and 5-tons, respectively. They used 4-cylinder, L-head engines built by Northway Motor Division of GM, with ratings from 33 to 51 hp and featuring removable cylinder sleeves. Trucks 2-tons and heavier used new GMC built dual range transmissions with 4-speeds in each range. Electric lamps became standard equipment replacing oil lamps on all (except model K-16 which retained oil lamps) with an option to delete the electric lamps. Transmission driven power-takeoffs and power driven tire pumps were available as special equipment.
- 1922 A new model K-20 bus chassis was added, based on K-16 except with a larger engine. This was the first GMC chassis designed for bus service. Only 124 were built during 1922-1923.
- 1923 *On May 10, Alfred P. Sloan Jr. replaced P. S. duPont as President of General Motors Corp.*
- Yellow Sleeve-Valve Engine Works, a subsidiary of Yellow Cab Mfg. Co., began production of “Yellow Knight” engines for use in trucks, coaches and taxicabs in East Moline IL.*
- Truck tractor versions K-41T, K-71T and K-101T rated at 5, 7 and 10-tons (including trailer weight) were added to the “K” line.
- Express bodies built by GMC were first offered as factory installed equipment.
- 1924 No new models were offered. **Yellocab** light truck models T-1, T-2 and T-3, made by **Yellow Cab Manufacturing Company** in Chicago, replaced GMC models K-15 and K-16. T-1 and T-3, with Continental model N engines, were built in 1924 and 1925. Model T-2 (1-ton), called the “Yellow Knight” and powered by a 41 hp Yellow Knight Sleeve Valve engine, was the most popular, built from 1925 to 1927. All engines had four cylinders.
- 1925 *On August 12, **General Motors Truck Corporation (GMT Corp.)** was formed as the owner of the truck plants in Pontiac and manufacturer of GMC trucks. The old General Motors Truck Company was continued as the sales subsidiary of GMT Corp.*
- On September 1, Yellow Cab Manufacturing Company merged with GMT Corp. to form **Yellow Truck & Coach Manufacturing Company (YMT&CMC)**. GM acquired a controlling interest of 57% in that new company and made it an affiliated subsidiary of GM.*

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*This merger brought these manufacturing plants under YT&CMC management:*

<i>General Motors Truck Corporation</i>	<i>Pontiac MI</i>
<i>Yellow Coach Manufacturing Co.</i>	<i>Chicago IL</i>
<i>Yellow Sleeve-Valve Engine Works</i>	<i>East Moline IL</i>

*The Northway Motor Division of Detroit was transferred to GMT Corp. as part of that merger.*

*In October GM President Alfred Sloan initiated a "Speed Wagon" program to develop light trucks for GM to compete against Ford, Dodge, Graham, Reo and International Harvester. The Yellocab light trucks cost too much to be competitive in the light duty segment of the market.*

A revised "K" line was introduced including 1 through 5-ton trucks and 5 through 15-ton tractors. Included were K-17, K-32, K-52, K-54, K-72, K-101 and tractor models K-54T, K-10T and K-15T. Steel cabs built by Fisher were standard for the first time on K-54 and up. Models K-54, K-72 and K-101 were intended for heavy construction applications. Model K-101 was called the "Big Brute". Northway engines powered most of the "K" line trucks.

Also offered was a 12-passenger bus chassis K-18 that featured a 70 hp Buick valve-in-head 6-cylinder engine. Most of the 37 units built were for the Union Pacific Railroad.

4-wheel mechanical brakes replaced rear only brakes and pneumatic tires became standard equipment on 1 and 1½-ton models.

1926

*In June, GMC Truck management, sales and advertising personnel moved from the Rapid Street plant to Chicago and were consolidated with Yellow Coach sales at the Yellow Cab plant on West Dickens Ave.*

*Otto Stoll was named General Manager of GMT Corp. and a Vice President of GM. Col. George A. Green was Vice President of Engineering and Carl J. Bock was Chief Engineer for GMT Corp.*

*GM Truck Engineering moved from Chicago and East Moline IL to the Rapid Street plant in Pontiac.*

*In March, GMT Corp. bought a 160-acre farm on South Blvd. just south of Pontiac, MI for the site of a new manufacturing plant for GMC trucks and Yellow coaches and taxicabs.*

*Northway Motor Division was liquidated and the Detroit plant was sold to Chevrolet Motor Co. to become the Chevrolet Gear and Axle Div. Part of the engine tooling machinery was transferred to the Yellow Sleeve-Valve Engine Works at East Moline IL. (The Northway plant was demolished recently.)*

Most 1925 "K" models were carried over for 1926. Yellow Knight T-2, 1-ton trucks were then being built in the Rapid Street plant in Pontiac.

1927

*In January Paul W. Seiler was appointed President and General Manager of YT&CMC with general offices in Detroit.*

*On June 13, this story broke in Michigan newspapers: "Yellow Truck and Coach to build new plant - \$8 million, to employ 5,000 men, 1.25 million square feet." On July 5th, ground was broken for GMC Assembly Plant 2 on South Boulevard just south of Pontiac. A 3-story administrative office building was to be built adjacent to the new plant. Construction crews worked 24 hours a day in 12 hour shifts for the remainder of 1927.*

The first of a new "T" series of trucks were announced that year. Initially models T-20 (1-t.), T-40 (2-t. with bevel gear rear axle) and T-50 (2-t. with worm drive) were produced in the Rapid Street plant. They were powered by improved Buick valve-in-head L6 engines: 207 cid in T-20 and 274 cid in T-40 and T-50. Front end appearance was enhanced with new radiator shells. A complete line of GMC-built cargo bodies was offered on the T-20.



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Soon thereafter model T-10, ½-ton “General Motors Deluxe Delivery Truck” debuted, the result of the “Speed Wagon” light truck program initiated by GM President A. P. Sloan. These trucks were designed and built by Pontiac Motor Co. with Pontiac 189 cid L-head 6-cylinder engines and GMC badges. Both panel and screen-side bodies were offered.

*Yellocab* Light trucks were dropped because they cost too much to be competitive with Chevrolet, Ford and Dodge trucks.

Improved “K” line models, 2-½ tons and up were carried over from 1926, rounding out a complete line of GMC trucks from ½ to 5-tons and tractors up to 15 tons.

In September 1927, “Cannon Ball” Baker drove a model T-40 tank truck, loaded with 550 gallons of Atlantic Ocean water, across the US from New York City to San Francisco, averaging 27 mph. He covered 3,693 miles in 5 days, 17 hours and 36 minutes without a single mishap, mechanical failure or tire change. Sponsored by GMC Truck Sales, this trip successfully demonstrated the reliability of the Buick engines introduced that year.

*1927 was a successful sales year: 12,918 GMCs were sold, mostly “T” series.*

1928

*The first truck rolled off the assembly line in the new GMC plant 2 on January 3<sup>d</sup>, less than 6 months after plant construction was started. By March 1928, they were building 150 trucks per day in that plant. Soon all GMC trucks were produced in plant 2 as Rapid Street plant vehicle production was phased out.*

*The new administration building in front of Plant 2 was completed in March and Yellow Truck & Coach Manufacturing Co. Headquarters personnel were soon transferred to it from the GM Building in Detroit and were later joined by the GMC and Yellow Coach sales and service staffs from Chicago.*

*Most of the remainder of Yellow Coach and Yellow Cab employees moved from Chicago to Pontiac. All manufacturing and engineering facilities were then consolidated in two Pontiac plants except for Yellow Sleeve Valve coach engine production which continued at the East Moline IL plant.*

The GMC “Fifth Avenue” panel delivery model, built by Pontiac Div., debuted.

The 1928 GMC model lineup included: T-11 (½ t.) and T19 (1 ½ t.) with Pontiac 36 hp 187 cid engines; T-20 (1 t.) and T-21 (1 ½ t.) with Buick 221 engines and T-40 and T-50 (both 2 t.) with Buick 274 cid engines. These heavy duty “K” series models powered by Northway 53 hp 414 cid engines were carried over from prior years: K-54T (5 t.), K-56 (4 t.), K-72 (3 ½ t.), K-10T (10 t.), K-102 (5 t.) and K-15T (15 t.). The T suffix indicated tractor models – the capacity included trailer weight.

The Hendrickson Motor Truck Co. installed a “Six-wheel attachment” with tandem drive axles on a model K-102 truck provided by GMC Engineering, making it the first known factory authorized GMC 6x4 truck.

“GENERAL MOTORS TRUCK” nameplates were added to the hood sides.  
Vacuum fuel pumps replaced gravity flow fuel systems.

\* Russell Crist wrote that the first truck came off the line on January 5<sup>th</sup>. However, in a book published by GMC in 1928 about that new plant there was a caption under a photo of early site grading which stated: “On July 5, 1927, ground was broken. Less than 6 months later, on January 3<sup>rd</sup>, [1928] finished vehicles were coming off the assembly line.”

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1929

*During 1929 and 1930, Yellow Sleeve Valve Engine production equipment was transferred from East Moline IL to Yellow Truck & Coach Manufacturing Plant 1 in Pontiac. Also in 1929, GMC took over design and development of 6-cylinder over-head-valve engines from Buick.*

***The stock market crashed on October 29.***

The ½ ton Deluxe Delivery model O-10 was available with two body options, Sedan Delivery and Town Car, and was powered by the Buick 257 cid engine rated at 80.5 hp. This model shared a chassis, engine and some body parts with the GM taxicab model O-10 and was built in the new Plant 2.

Most 1928 models were carried over to 1929 with little change except the Pontiac engine used in light trucks was upgraded to 200 cid. and 60 hp. These new models were added: T-30 (2 t.) with the 72.5 hp Buick 239 engine and T-60 (3 ½ t.) and T-80 (4 t.) powered by the Buick 310 cid engine at 89 hp. T-20, T-21, T-40 and T-50 were cancelled .

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### CHAPTER 3: 1930 - 1939

1930

*In July, a new engineering wing on the northwest corner of Plant 2 was completed and engineering operations were moved into it from the Rapid Street Plant.*

*Last of the engine group moved from East Moline into Plant 1. Also, tooling for the Buick 257 and 331 cid engines was moved from Flint to Plant 1. All GMC engine production was then centralized in that plant. (Buick dropped 6-cylinder engines from their cars, then using only straight 8s.)*

*GM purchased the Winton Engine Co. of Cleveland OH and formed the Cleveland Engine Division. Winton had built 4-cycle gasoline and diesel marine and industrial engines. GM started research for 2-cycle diesels at that time.*

*The trucking industry adopted gross vehicle weight ratings (GVWR) for rating trucks. GMC used the new "straight ratings" that year in addition to the nominal tonnage ratings.*

Here is the complete 1930 GMC truck model lineup:

Model	GVWR (Lbs.)	Capy. (Tons)	Engine	HP	Notes
O-10		½	Buick 257	80.5	L6 Valve-in-head
T-11	3,800	½	Pontiac 200	60	L6 L-head
T-15	5,400	¾	"		
T-17	6,500	1	"		
T-19	8,500	1 ½	"		
T-25	8,500	1 ½	Buick 221	?	"Super Power"
T-30	11,500	2	Buick 257	80.5	
T-42	14,000	2 ½	"		
T-44	15,000	3	"		
T-60	18,500	3 ½	Buick 310	89	
T-82	22,000	4	Buick 331	74	
T-90	28,000	5	"		
K-102		5	Northway 414	53	L4 L-head
K-15T		15 (Incl. Trailer)	"		Tractor

The last of the heavy duty "K" series were built that year.

13,746 GMC trucks were built that year, the first year for which actual build records were available.

1931

*GM Canada acquired the manufacturing and sales units of GMC Truck & Coach of Canada, Ltd.*

8 new "T" series models were added including more tandem rear axle units:

T-26, T-51, T-61, T-85, T-95 and T-96. T-95 was a 6x4 and T-96 was a 6x2 with a non-driving trailing "tag" axle. GVWRs ranged from 5,400 to 34,000 lbs. Models T-11 through T-19 were powered by 66 hp Pontiac 200 cid engines.

Model T-18 (1-ton) debuted in late summer that year, featuring new styling with the first use of Chevrolet built cabs and front sheet-metal on GMC trucks. Also 9 different cargo bodies, made by Chevrolet, were available on models up to T-61.

Late in the year super heavy duty models T-110 (4x2, 38,000 lbs. GVWR) and T-130 (6x4, 50,000 lbs. GVWR) were added. These trucks were designed for off-road construction and mining service and were powered by 150 hp 616 cid "Super Duty" engines. Several T-130 dump trucks were used by the Tennessee Valley Authority to build dams.

Also late in the year these model changes occurred: T-31 replaced T-30. Also T-45 superceded both T-42 and T-44 and T-83 replaced T-82. By then the complete lineup included 19 models.

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GMC started producing 257 and 331 cid L6 valve-in-head engines in Plant 1 on Rapid Street using the tooling from Buick.

GMC first offered 21 models of trailer chassis. The lineup included both 1 and 2-axle semi-trailers and 2 and 3-axle full trailers with lengths from 14 to 22 ft. Capacities ranged from 8,000 to 42,000 lbs. gross trailer weight. Truck parts were used for trailer suspensions. The trailer bodies were provided by other builders. 3 different GMC-built lower coupling fifth wheels were available.

A GMC model T-95 6x4 truck pulling a 3-axle full trailer, both with refrigerated bodies, hauled 21 tons of fruit from Los Angeles to New York in 117 hours. Operated by Southern California Freight Lines, it averaged 27.3 mph. Frigidaire provided the refrigeration units. The 3-axle trailer chassis was built by GMC.

Production volume dropped to 9,014 trucks in 1931 due to the Depression.

1932 *The Great Depression resulted in production and sales dropping to new low points. Drastic cuts were made to reduce operational costs including laying off personnel, and reducing work hours and pay rates. Departments were reorganized and consolidated to increase efficiency.*

No new models were released and only 5,936 trucks were built that year at the lowest point of the depression.

1933 *GMC light duty truck production was suspended for 1933 and most of 1934.*

*Engineering development was at low ebb due to the Depression.*

6 new models were introduced: T-23, T-33, T-43, T-51H, T-84 and T-84SX with GVWRs from 10,000 through 30,000 lbs. 10 models were carried over from 1932.

GMC designed and built engines were used in all truck models for the first time except for the Pontiac 200 cid L6 flat head engine which was used in early models T-15, T-18, T-19 and T-23 and then replaced by a new GMC 221 cid engine later in the year. The GMC built engines were all 6-cylinder inline (L6) with valves-in-head. Displacements were 221, 257, 331, 400, 468, 525, 616 and 707 cid. The 707, available by special order in the heaviest models, was used primarily in Yellow parlor coaches.

8,275 GMC trucks were produced in 1933 as slow recovery from the Depression began.

1934 *Truck sales were on the increase due to improvement in the US economy.*

Two new conventional cab models came out early that year: T-16 (¾-ton, 7,600 lbs. GVWR) and T-46 (19,000 lbs. GVWR).

The big news for 1934 was the introduction of GMC's **first cab-over-engine (COE) models** T-73, T-75 and T-78. They were rated from 15,000 through 30,000 lbs. GVW. Later in 1934 model T-74 (18,000 lbs. GVWR) was added. The short cab allowed more payload with a weight distribution of 33% on the front axle and 67% on the rear axle. The engine were mounted on a sub-frame which rolled out the front for ease of service. The center of the cab floor could be removed for access to the engine for tune-ups and minor repairs.

Also on conventional models T-51 and up, optional front axles were set back 9 inches more from the front bumper than normal, which allowed a 30/70% weight bias. With the standard setback they could only carry about 25% on the front axle.

Also that year GMC adopted the SAE standards for cab to rear axle (CA) dimensions. On most models the shortest CA dimension was 60 in. with 12 in. increments between the others.

Of the 13,785 trucks GMC built in 1934, 62% were models T-16 and T-18.

## THE FIRST CENTURY OF GMC TRUCK HISTORY

1935

*On September 1, Irving B. Babcock became President and General Manager of YT&CMC, replacing P. W. Seiler who went into private business. Mr. Babcock started by revising the 1936 GMC Truck program. He wanted trucks to look as up-to-date as passenger cars with new colors and features. Most importantly, he decided to have GMC enter the half-ton light truck market, competing with Chevrolet, Ford and Dodge.*

All 1934 model designations were carried over, most with increased GVWRs. Only model T-46H was added. All conventional cab models were restyled with sloping radiator grille, longer hood, and full crowned fenders. Factory installed sleeper cabs were available on some models.

Eaton 2-speed rear axles were available for the first time on model T-18 trucks, providing improved performance.

In December, on a test run for Keeshin Motor Lines, a GMC T-46 tractor pulling a semi-trailer with a 9-ton payload made a round trip from Chicago to Los Angeles and back in just over 164 hours, averaging 30 mph.

Truck production for 1935 was 13,146 units.

1936

*Midyear, GM President Alfred P. Sloan and other top GM officials met with YT&CMC management and toured the plants in Pontiac. Mr. Sloan was interested in the design improvements in new GMC trucks, especially the heavier models described below.*

*On September 30, the General Motors Truck Corporation was dissolved.*

*On October 1, Yellow Truck and Coach Manufacturing Co. became the manufacturer of GMC trucks and trailers as well as Yellow coaches and taxicabs.*

*On December 1, **General Motors Truck & Coach Division** took over as the sales subsidiary for YT&CMC. From that time on the General Motors Truck Company did business only in Louisiana.*

Major changes appeared in all GMC conventional cab models for 1936. 15 new models were released. The lightest was model T-14, rated at ½-ton or 4,600 lbs. GVW and was available as a pickup or panel delivery truck. The T-14 had an 85 hp Oldsmobile 213 cid L6 L-head engine and Chevrolet torque tube drive rear axle. The base chassis price was \$425, FOB Pontiac. 42% of the GMC trucks produced in 1936 were model T-14s. All new Chevrolet-built cabs with sloping one-piece windshields were used on light duty T-14s and T-16s. Medium and heavy duty models T-18 though T-61H had totally new heavy duty cabs with all steel roofs, two-piece sloped V-type windshields and doors which extended down to the running boards. All conventional front-end sheet metal was redesigned with a sloping radiator grille with vertical bars. Chrome-highlighted horizontal bars appeared over vent louvers on the hood sides below the GENERAL MOTORS TRUCK emblem. Both standard and deluxe models were offered for the first time and 10 different colors were available.

The four COE models that were released in 1934 were carried over to 1936.

Ten different L6 gas engines were used in GMC trucks: 213, 239, 257, 286, 331, 400, 450, 525, 616 and 707 cid. All were produced by GMC except the Olds 213, which was used in models T-14 and T-16.

Development of multi-drive axle military vehicles began. GMC built 187 1½-ton 4x4 (4-wheel drive) trucks for the US Army with Chevrolet 207 cid engines and mostly Chevrolet sheet metal to keep the cost down.

At the request of Charles F. (Boss) Kettering, 8 "Streamliner" display vans were built for the "GM Parade of Progress" tour. GMC designed and built the chassis while Fisher Body Div. built the large van bodies in their Fleetwood (Detroit) plant. Those vehicles started the "Parade of Progress" tour on February 11, 1936, along with 21 other vehicles, including 9 GMC and Chevrolet

## THE FIRST CENTURY OF GMC TRUCK HISTORY

tractors pulling semi-trailers loaded with support equipment. The 23 ft. long, red and white “Streamliner” vans were powered by GMC L6 engines (probably 239 cid)

GMC production increased to 35,168 trucks, nearly 600% over 1932, as the national economy recovered from the Great Depression. GMC ranked 5<sup>th</sup> in US truck sales with 4.4% of the market.

The 1937 model year started in October, 1936.

1937

*A series of “sit down” strikes disrupted production at most GM plants in March. However, YT&CMC was not seriously effected by those strikes for two reasons: They were an affiliated subsidiary of GM, not a division, and Yellow management had anticipated the supplier slow down and had banked material ahead to tide them over.*

*In April YT&CMC bought several buildings on South Saginaw Street (now Woodward Ave.) in Pontiac from Wilson Foundry and Machine Co. These structures became Plant 4 and were used for building light truck engines and material storage. (Plants 3 and 4 were demolished and the site cleared in 2008.)*

*In December, Chevrolet began building 1938 year-model GMC trucks in the Oakland CA assembly plant.*

*The Detroit Diesel Engine Division of GM was formed to build light-weight, compact 2-stroke cycle Diesel engines in the Detroit area.*

GMC claimed they offered “The World’s most complete line for 1937”. Improvements touted included:

- Greater value, new streamlining, dual tone color design
- New cab-over-engine models, 2 new ½-ton models
- All new steel *Helmet Top* cabs on medium and heavy duty models  
[On conventional T-18 and up and all new COE models]
- 4 new trailer models

12 new conventional cab models and 11 new COE models featured fresh streamlined styling and 12 different 2-tone color paint schemes. These models were first to exhibit the influence of GM Styling Staff on truck design. Light duty Chevrolet-built cabs which had been released in 1936 were carried over on T-14 and T-16 models and the first **Suburban Carryall** 2-door utility vehicle was introduced. Radiator grilles featured vertical center bars flanked by horizontal slots with chrome trim. The GMC logo was down four inches from the top. Horizontal chrome bars were on the hood sides with no louvers.

Base chassis price of model T-14 was \$395, F.O.B. Pontiac, the lowest ever.

Oldsmobile 230 cid L-head engines were used in models T-14, T-16 and F-16. Hydraulic brakes replaced mechanical on light duty models.

The complete new lineup included:

Conv.Cab	GVWR (Lbs.)	COE	GVWR(Lbs.)	Engine	HP
T-14	4,400-4,600			Olds 230	86
T-16	11,000	F-16	12,000	“	
T-16H	12,000	F-16H	13,000	“	
T-18	13,000	F-18	14,000	GMC 239	81
T-18H	14,000	F-18H	15,000	“	
T-23	15,000	F-23	16,000	GMC 257	87.5
T-23H	17,500	F-23H	19,000	“	
T-33	20,000	F-33	21,000	GMC 286	?
T-33H	22,000	F-33H	23,000	“	
T-46	25,000	F-46	28,000	GMC 331	94
T-61	28,000	F-61	32,500	GMC 400	110
T-61H	32,500	F-61H	36,000	“	

(COE models were rated higher because more weight could be carried on the front axle.)

## THE FIRST CENTURY OF GMC TRUCK HISTORY

The first walk-in delivery van was offered with the Olds 230 engine.

Only the COE model T-78 was carried over from previous years and that was dropped at the end of the year.

A special model F-79, designed for refuse disposal service, became the standard garbage truck for the cities of New York and Chicago for several years.

121 4x4 trucks with improved design were sold by GMC to the US Army.

GMC produced 57,350 trucks in 1937, a new record high, 310% over 1932. Over 39% of those were T-14 pickups. In the same period, Ford went up 11% and Chevrolet only 6%. (Production volumes were for calendar years.) GMC was firmly in 5<sup>th</sup> place in new registrations.

1938 model year production started in October 1937.

1938

The only appearance changes were moving the GMC logo to the top of the grille center bars and, on conventional models, deleting the horizontal bars from the hood sides. 3 new light models were offered: T-145 (¾-t., 5,300 lbs. GVWR), T-15 (1-t., 6,000 lbs.) and T-155 (1¼-t., 7,000 lbs.). Pontiac 223 cid L6 engines were used in the new models as well as the T-14. Models T-16, F-16, T-16H and F-16H had Oldsmobile 230 cid engines. All other models had GMC built engines.

Only 5 trailer models remained, including the light *Trailabout* with a pickup box.

GM Detroit Diesel Div. announced the "71" family of 2, 3, 4 and 6-cylinder 2-cycle diesel engines with Roots type blowers and many interchangeable parts. Each cylinder displaced 71 cubic inches.

In October engine production started in Plant 4 with new GMC designed 228 and 248 cid L6 valve-in-head-engines.

A short economic recession resulted in truck production dropping back to 20,640 units including 291 all-wheel-drive military units.

GMC started building 1939 models in October, 1938.

1939

### ***World War II began in Europe on September 1.***

New "A" series were announced. The light duty AC100 (½-t., 4,600 lbs. GVWR), AC150 (¾-t., 5,300 lbs.) and AC250 (1-t., 7,000 lbs.) had newly redesigned Chevrolet cabs and sheet-metal featuring 2-piece V windshields and a choice of pickup, panel or stake rack bodies. The Helmet Steel heavy duty cab was carried over for medium and heavy duty models and all COEs. All except walk-in delivery chassis had horizontal chrome grille bars. Model series ran from 100 through 850 including 6x4 models. The lightest model AC101 with the base 113.5 in. wheelbase was priced at \$460 F.O.B. Pontiac. Also, a parcel delivery model AF230 (7,000 lbs. GVWR) was added. Three new "Super Duty" models AC770 (32,000 lbs. GVWR), AC870 (40,000 lbs.) and AC890 (50,000 lbs.) were introduced, designed with extra heavy chassis for use as dump trucks in off-road construction and mining applications.

The first two had GMC 426 engines and the latter had either a 451 or 477 engine.

GMC 228 and 248 "Group 1" small block engines replaced Pontiac and Olds engines in light and medium duty models. Five new heavy duty GMC L6 gas engines went into production in Plant 1: "Group 2" 278 and 308 engines had midsize blocks and "Group 3 - Super Duty" 361, 426 and 451 had big blocks. The 228 and 248 had 4 main bearings while the others had 7 main bearings. All had valves-in-head.

## THE FIRST CENTURY OF GMC TRUCK HISTORY

### **GM Diesel 2-cycle engines were first offered exclusively in GMC trucks.**

3-71 engines (3-cylinder, 82.5 net hp) were available in 550, 600 and 650 model series and 4-71s (4-cylinder, 110 net hp) were used in 700, 750, 800 and 850 models.

*Sales folders claimed 1939 GMC trucks were best in class with engines that provided the most power and torque, best fuel economy and were longest lasting. The cabs provided better vision, more driving room and better comfort. They were "Truck Built" and offered better value compared with the three lowest priced competitors.*

GM Styling Studios designed new *Futurliners* to resume the Parade of Progress tour after the 1939 New York World's Fair and the Golden Gate Exposition. Again, GMC built the chassis for 12 vans. They were 33 ft. long, 8 ft. wide and 11 ft. high and weighed approximately 25,000 lbs. 16 ft. long upper side doors raised up to reveal displays on both sides and lower side doors came down level to provide stages. A large light tower raised up from the roof to illuminate the surroundings. 10 had DD 4-71 diesel engines and one had a 6-71. The remaining one had a GMC 451 cid L6 gas engine. The first stop on the second tour was Miami FL in February, 1941. By the time World War II ended the tour in 1942, the "Parade" had covered over a million miles, visiting more than 250 cities with side trips to Canada, Mexico and Cuba and was viewed by more than 12 million people.

By December, GMC had orders for more than 4,400 all-wheel-drive military trucks. 44,986 GMC trucks were built in 1939 including 1,599 multi-drive military trucks.

1940 model production began in September, 1939.



# THE FIRST CENTURY OF GMC TRUCK HISTORY

## CHAPTER 4: 1940 - 1949

1940

*In June, YT&CMC bought more buildings on South Boulevard and Franklin Road from Wilson Foundry to form Plant 3. They were used for sheet metal work and material storage.*

*Plant 2 was expanded and improved to increase production by adding a new building to southwest part for sheet metal production, an extension on the west side for export boxing and a bridge across the railroad tracks at the rear for easier material handling. Other additions included an extension to the truck body shop and space for truck final conditioning on the east side.*

Although "A" series trucks were changed very little for 1940, many new models were introduced that year. Headlamps were changed to the sealed beam type with separate parking lamps on most models. (Parking lamps were inside the lower part of head lamps previously.) 33 6-wheeler models debuted, including 11 6x2s with single driving plus non-driving "tag" axles and 22 6x4s with tandem driving axles, ranging from the 350 to the 900 series. At the top of the line was the ADC900 series, first to use the 165 hp Detroit Diesel 6-71 engine. A longer hood covered that bigger engine. 4x2, 6x2 and 6x4 versions of the 900 series were available.

Also, 11 "Trunk Line Tractor" models were added, ranging from ACR520 to ADCR900. The R in the model designator indicated tractor.

Multi-drive models ACK350 (4x4) and ACKW350 (6x6) were offered for both civilian and military use.

Model ACS school bus chassis-cowls were available with bus bodies built by the Superior Coach Corp. and ACE models were offered, shipped knocked down (CKD) for export from the Chevrolet-Bloomfield NJ plant, to be assembled at their destination.

The model AF230 package delivery chassis was superceded by AF240 and the ACV101 delivery truck was available with a DIVCO body.

Models AY700/800/850, designed for tank truck applications, were added, featuring forward control cabs with coach-like appearance.

Production of new 256 and 270 cid L6 gas engines started in Plant 4. Those engines were based on the GMC Group 1 small cylinder block. (See applications on the next page.)

550 and 650 diesel powered models were dropped and trailer production ceased. A total of 8,283 trailers had been built since their introduction in 1931.

GMC built 59,513 trucks in 1940 of which 13,591 were multi-wheel drive military vehicles.

1941 model year production began in September, 1940.

1941

GMC built the first 2-1/2 ton 6x6 trucks for the US Army with 270 cid engines. 2 all-wheel drive military models were started: ACK350 4x4 and ACKW350 6x6 at a production rate of 1,700 per week.

CC and CF series 100 through 490 replaced light/medium duty AC and AF models. These new models used the Chevrolet cabs and new front-end sheet metal including grilles unique to GMC. Alligator type hoods were hinged at the rear with the top section of grille integral to the hood.

Several school bus chassis-cowl models were added.

The 97 hp GMC 236 cid L6 engine was added to the Group 1 family midyear for 300 and 350 series models and a new GMC 477 cid L6 gas engine replaced the 451 in Group 3 for extra heavy duty truck models.

## THE FIRST CENTURY OF GMC TRUCK HISTORY

The GM 4-speed transmission used in light and medium duty trucks was up-graded from spur gears to quieter, stronger helical gears.

New medium and heavy duty 6 wheel models were offered in both 6x2 (ACT/AFT) and 6x4 (ACW/AFW) configurations in most model series.

Model CCKW350, 2½-ton 6x6 military trucks became the “workhorses” for the US and Allied armed forces. Fondly called the “Jimmy Deuce-and-a-Half” by the troops, they were powered by 105 hp GMC 270 cid L6 gas engines which proved to be reliable and durable. They had a 5-speed overdrive transmissions and 2-speed transfer cases. Top speed was 45 mph. Early models had modified commercial closed cabs but open top military type cabs with canvas tops and side curtains were available later. A variety of bodies were available, including cargo/troop carrier, tank, dump and vans.

The heavy duty “A” series 500 and up continued with only minor changes.

*The US Government adopted Gross Vehicle Weight Ratings (GVWR) and nominal ton capacity ratings were phased out, following the lead of the industry a decade earlier. Vehicles with trailers were then given Gross Combination Ratings (GCWR that included truck and trailer gross weights..*

The tire industry changed large truck tire standards (9.00 and above) to even numbers and the old high pressure pneumatic tires were replaced by balloon types.

1941 truck production was 111,381, including 57,386 military multi-drive vehicles.

1942 model production started in August 1940.

***Japan attacked on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, and soon thereafter the US entered World War II, declaring war on the Axis.***

1942

The number of models offered for civilian use early in that year included:

4x2s	33
6-wheelers	34
Tractor models	16
Heavy duty dump truck models	6
School bus chassis cowls	<u>10</u>
Total	99

GVWRs ranged from 4,600 to 55,000 lbs. Only minor changes were made from 1941 models.

In April GMC Truck Engineering began to build a prototype of model DUKW353 2½-ton 6x6 amphibious cargo/troop carrier truck for the US Army. After completion in June, that prototype passed Army acceptance test and a purchase contract was issued. Production started on November 10, culminating a very short concept-to-production period. This model was nicknamed the “Duck”.

*A US Government directive, issued on January 1, suspended all civilian vehicle production in June. Sales of vehicles to civilians were tightly controlled by the US War Production Board.*

Military truck production was increased to a peak of 4,700 units per week and then reduced to 4,150 per week due to component supply limitations.

Out of a total of 147,851 GMCs, 135,861 multi-drive vehicles were built in 1942.

1943

*On September 1, Irving B. Babcock became General Manager of GMC T&C and then was elected Vice President of GM. He had been president of YT&CMC.*

## THE FIRST CENTURY OF GMC TRUCK HISTORY

On September 30, GM acquired Yellow Truck & Coach Manufacturing Co. and on October 1<sup>st</sup> the **GMC Truck & Coach Division** of General Motors Corp. was formed and YT&CMC was dissolved.

*No civilian trucks were produced that year*

The first model DUKW353 amphibious 2½ -ton 6x6 "Duck" trucks were delivered to the US Army. The chassis was based on model CCKW353 with high forward controls. A central tire inflation system was available which allowed the driver to adjust tire pressure from his seat. Lowered pressure provided better flotation and traction on soft ground. Initially, Ducks were built on a Plant 2 assembly line which previously built buses.

131,733 GMC trucks were produced that year, all of them military vehicles.

1944

*In March, production of a limited selection of medium and heavy duty trucks for civilian use resumed under the control of the US War Production Board. Those trucks were available only to operators which were certified worthy by the WPB.*

*GMC received the Army-Navy "E" Award for Excellence in the war effort. The US Army considered the GMC 2½-ton 6x6 the best trucks in service during WW II, and the GMC "Duck" as the most outstanding of new ordnance weapons.*

*In addition to the GMC Pontiac plants, these other GM facilities aided GMC in building military vehicles during WW II:*

<i>Chevrolet-Baltimore MD</i>	<i>Assembled 6x6 trucks</i>
<i>Chevrolet-St. Louis MO</i>	<i>Assembled 6x6 trucks and "Ducks"</i>
<i>Chevrolet-Flint MI</i>	<i>Built engines</i>
<i>Chevrolet-Atlanta GA</i>	<i>Boxed cargo bodies</i>
<i>Chevrolet-Bloomfield IL</i>	<i>Boxed trucks for overseas shipping</i>
<i>Pontiac Motor Div.</i>	<i>Boxed trucks and produced sheet metal and made 270 engine cylinder blocks and heads</i>
<i>Chevrolet Gear and Axle</i>	<i>Built GM type front and rear drive axles</i>
<i>Chevrolet-Toledo OH</i>	<i>Built transfer cases for all-wheel drive vehicles</i>

*(When coach production resumed after the War they were "GM Coaches" and the "Yellow Coach" brand was dropped.*

Limited production of heavy model series 520-800 with gas engines resumed.

1945

*On February 1, Morgan D. Douglas was appointed General Manager of GM T&C after I. B. Babcock resigned.*

### ***World War II ended in August.***

*Plans were announced to build a new engineering facility (Building 33) on South Boulevard just west of the Administration Building. Shops, Laboratories and the Experimental Department would be on the first floor and offices and drafting rooms were to be on the second floor. (That building was demolished in 2007.)*

*(A new coach plant, Building 34, was built west of Plant 2.)*

*Starting March 1, a new engine plant (Building 29) was built on the east side of Plant 2.*

*Government restrictions on civilian truck production were lifted August 20.*

GMC began building a limited selection of "Victory" light duty trucks with some material substitutions due to critical material restrictions. Grilles and bumpers were painted because chrome trim was not available. Some heavy duty AF520 and AF720 gas tractors were produced as well as 900s and 970s with DD 6-71 diesels.

## THE FIRST CENTURY OF GMC TRUCK HISTORY

*A 4-month labor strike by the UAW/CIO against GM began on November 21. All plant expansion construction was suspended for the duration of the strike.*

*GMC T&C remained in operation though most of the main strike because they had stock-piled material and the UAW/CIO did not consider them a main part of GM.*

During WW II, GMC built a total of 583,925 multi-drive military vehicles including: 528,829 6x6 trucks, 21,147 Ducks and 32 armored cars. 59 US War Department contracts were fulfilled plus contracts with Great Britain, France and other Allies. The value of GMC military sales during WW II totaled 1.5 billion dollars.

105,332 GMC trucks were built in 1945.

1946

*The main labor strike against GM ended in April. Supplier strikes continued resulting in loss of a total of 6 months of production. After the strikes were settled all of the trucks that were stored at GMCT&C (most of them incomplete) required reconditioning before shipment. Full production finally resumed in mid-July.*

*Max Grabowsky, founder of Rapid, visited GMC in July that year. A photo was taken with him behind the wheel of the 1915 GMC model 40 show truck with General Manager Morgan Douglas standing along side.*

Soon after WW II, a new light and medium duty "E" series 100 through 450 was released, reflecting Chevrolet's latest design changes in common parts and incorporating many other improvements and refinements. Traditional materials were restored where wartime substitutions had been made. Production of these intermediate postwar models started in October 1946.

The AY forward control series was improved and relabeled the EY series.

Heavy duty truck series AC/AF 500 and up were continued with few changes until 1949.

A total of 48 models were offered with GVWRs ranging from 4,600 through 55,000 lbs.

Total 1946 production was 33,850 trucks, all for civilian use.

1947

*Truck assembly lines were rearranged and some new facilities were provided. Small block engine assembly moved from Plant 4 to Building 29 of Plant 2 in November. In December, engine manufacturing and machine shops moved from Plants 1 and 4 to Building 29.*

Most models were carried over with only minor changes. Most prewar 700, 800 and 850 series not offered in 1946 were reinstated.

In July, production of the full post-war truck program began with "**Second Series**" redesigned light and medium duty conventional cab FC models 100 through 470 and COE FF350 and 450. They featured restyled Chevrolet "**Advance Design**" cabs which were larger and more comfortable with larger glass area, standard dual windshield wipers, improved insulation and better seats. Front ends had distinctive "Bumper Bar" grilles with large horizontal bars surrounded by a thick frame on the top and sides. A new blocky GMC logo replaced the old script style over the grille. The Deluxe cab (Optional on 100-300 and standard on 400-470) included twin rear quarter windows plus chrome windshield and window trim. The optional improved heater provided fresh air to reduce fogging and frosting on inside of glass. Chassis for those trucks were also completely redesigned.

Although most "A" series models were carried over with little change, 10 new conventional cab gasoline powered models and 8 new diesel models were added along with 11 new medium duty COE models. Parking lamps were moved from outer sides to the top of the headlamps.

## THE FIRST CENTURY OF GMC TRUCK HISTORY

All gasoline engines used in light and medium duty trucks were then built by GMC: 228 in 100 through 280 models; 248 in 300s, 350s and 400s and the war proven 270 "Workhorse" engine in 450 and 470 models. Improvements in mid-sized 308 and 361 engines used in 500 to 750 series increased performance. Super Duty 426 and 477 engines continued in extra heavy duty models.

GMC built 61,918 trucks in 1947.

1948 *Large engine assembly moved from Plant 1 to the new Building 29 in February.*

No new models or major changes were announced.

GM *Synchromesh* 4-speed transmissions replaced the sliding gear type in light and medium duty models, allowing easier gear shifting without clashing into 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> (direct) gears. "Creeper" low and reverse remained sliding spur gears.

Production was 92,677 units, a new peacetime record high for GMC.

1949 The FC/FF light and medium duty models were carried over with minor changes and a new forward control delivery van was released. The last of the "A" series heavy duty trucks were built in March, 1949.

The first of the totally new heavy duty "**H**" series was built in June. HC and HF models 520 through 980 were phased into production throughout 1949. They featured all-new larger cabs with improvements in appearance, safety, visibility, and comfort. Chassis that were 100% redesigned were more rugged and provided better ride and handling along with increased power and performance. The complete GMC line included 75 models ranging from 4,600 through 75,000 lbs. GVWR and 224 body and chassis types, powered by a family of 9 GMC-built engines, most of which had increased power ratings. Gas engines were: 228, 248, 270, (Group 1, small block); 318, 360 (Group 2, midsize block), and 426, and 503 cid L6s (Group 3 large block). Although the 707 engine was shown in a magazine advertisement, it did not appear in specific model sales brochures or specification sheets. Diesels available were GM 4-71 and 6-71.

GMC truck production was 83,840 units in 1949.

## THE FIRST CENTURY OF GMC TRUCK HISTORY

### CHAPTER 5: 1950 - 1959

1950

***The Korean War began in June as civil conflict between North and South Korea.***

*On April 1<sup>st</sup>, Roger M. Kyes became General Manager of GMC T&C Div. and a GM Vice President after M. D. Douglas retired.*

That year there were 86 model series, most of which were carried over from 1949 with little change. New models included HCW400 and HCW620 6x4s along with HCS400/450 school bus chassis with cowl. Also the 450 and 470 series were returned to the lineup.

Two new lightweight 4x2 heavy duty diesel tractors were introduced: HDCR640 and HDCR650 featured medium duty cabs and 133 hp GM 4-71 diesel engines with Spicer 5-speed overdrive transmissions and Eaton 2-speed rear axles. Because they cost and weighed less than other diesel tractors then available, they became the best selling diesel trucks in the US.

The 520 and 600 series along with models HC/HF650 and HFW720 were discontinued.

At least three prototypes of model HDCW950 heavy truck tractors were built with experimental 275 hp GM 6-110 diesel engines that required longer, higher hoods and raised cabs. One of them was field tested in the P.I.E. fleet. However, that engine was never released for production in trucks mostly due to supercharger drive failures. Two of those prototype tractors went to the GM Proving Ground at Milford, MI, where one was used to pull a low-bed trailer carrying heavy maintenance equipment around the PG. (Both of those vehicles were scrapped recently. Disposition of the PIE test unit is unknown.)

1951

First of the M135 family of 2½-ton 6x6 military trucks was built for the US Army. Specifications included the GMC 302 cid L6 gas engine (145 net hp), *Hydra-Matic* 4-speed automatic transmission with fluid coupling, 2-speed auxiliary gear box and power divider with automatic front wheel drive engagement. The 24-volt electrical system was waterproof and radio interference suppressed. They could operate in water up to 11 ft. deep with available deep water fording kits installed. These 7 variants were available: M135 Cargo/Troop Carrier (dual rear wheels), M211 Cargo/Troop Carrier (single rear wheels), M215 Dump Truck, M217 Fuel Tank Truck, M220 Shop Van, M221 Tractor and M222 Water Tank Truck. The M211 was the military standard B vehicle. The US Army bought a total of 9,000 M135 family trucks before the contract was cancelled in 1955.

A simplified model designation system was used on 100-350 series. Alpha prefixes indicating ear model and conventional cab were dropped and a 2-digit suffix indicating engine model was added.

Vent pane windows were added to Chevrolet built cab doors used on light and medium duty models.

GM Diesel 71 series engines, upgraded with increased durability and performance, were promoted as "Million Milers".

Model HC640H was added and many models were discontinued including 4 medium duty and 16 heavy duty models.

McLean Trucking Co. of Winston-Salem NC bought 287 GMC model HDCR650 tractors with 133 hp GM Diesel 4-71 engines to renew their entire fleet. 235 of these light-weight tractors were equipped with sleeper cabs.

1952

***GMC celebrated 50 years in the truck building business, starting with the sale of the first Rapid truck in 1902.***

Door locks on models using Chevrolet built cabs were upgraded to the push button type.

## THE FIRST CENTURY OF GMC TRUCK HISTORY

Model P150-22 package delivery chassis became the first commercial vehicle to use a *Hydra-Matic* 4-speed automatic transmission as standard equipment.

Medium duty model series 400, 450 and 470 were added

New medium duty models D450-37, DW450-37 and D470-37 were powered by GM Diesel 3-71 engines. However, these models were dropped within two years due to low sales volumes. Most customers expected more than 110 hp from a diesel.

4x2 Ambulances based on the Suburban were provided to the US Army. Many model D450-37 4x2 trucks with GM Diesel 3-71 engines and stake rack bodies were delivered to the US Navy.

A new medium duty model 400-27 was released with the 270 gas engine. An expanded 630 series included conventional and COE models in either 4x2 or 6x4 configurations with a choice of GMC 360, 425 or 503 gas or GM 4-71 diesel engines. Model 630 with the 503 engine was popular for fire fighting service.

Bright trim was curtailed due to wartime shortages of chromium. When chrome trim returned later it was an extra cost option on most models.

Model designations were changed on heavy duty models mid-year. The HC/HF prefixes were dropped and the engine designator suffixes were added. Also, vent pane windows first appeared on GMC built heavy duty cab doors.

The 12 *Futurliners* that were built in 1939 were taken out of storage and retrofitted with new GMC 302 cid L6 gas engines and 4-speed *Hydra-Matic* transmissions, along with other modifications. This time, the *Parade of Progress* lasted from 1953 to 1956. Thereafter, the *Futurliners* were dispersed. Some have been restored. One is owned by the National Auto and Truck Museum in Auburn IN and another sold at auction in January, 2006 for 4 million dollars.

1953

### ***The Korean War Ended.***

*In January, Philip J. Monaghan became General Manager of GMC T&C and a GM Vice President replacing Roger Kyes who resigned to become US Deputy Secretary of Defense.*

Most models were carried over with little change. Changes in GMC L6 228, 248 and 270 engines resulted in improvements in performance and durability. 145 hp 302 cid gas engines were first used commercially in medium duty models 470-30 and F470-30. *Hydra-Matic* "Dual Range" 4-speed automatic transmissions were first offered in light truck models 100-22 to 250-22.

The heaviest duty model was DW980-67, 6x4, rated at 63,000 lbs. GVW and 100,000 lbs. GCW. Standard equipment included a 212 hp GM Diesel 6-71 engine, 5-speed main and 3-speed auxiliary transmissions with 14,000 lb. capacity front and 50,000 lb. tandem rear axles and tires 12.00x24 tires.

1954

Front ends on model series 100 through 350 were restyled with grilles that extended out onto front of fenders and parking/turn signal lamps and tail lamps were changed from round to rectangular. Pickup body sides were changed from flared top rails to flat. One-piece curved windshields replaced two-piece and improved instrument panels were used on all light and medium duty cabs.

The 125 hp 248 L6 engine replaced the 228 as the base engine in 100, 150 and 250 series.

4-speed *Hydra-Matic* automatic transmissions were available in trucks up to 4 tons. 2-speed "reduction box" auxiliary transmissions, designed and built by GMC, were used with automatic transmissions in medium duty applications to extend the operating range.

## THE FIRST CENTURY OF GMC TRUCK HISTORY

The *Twin Hydra-Matic* was offered in certain heavy duty models; it was basically one 4-speed unit on top of another, providing 7 forward speeds. 2 or 3-speed reduction units were available behind the 7-speed units, combinations that proved to be unreliable. Most of them were later replaced by manual transmissions without cost to the owners.

In most light trucks Hotchkiss type open shaft drive replaced the torque tube type.

Power steering became available at extra cost on many models.

1955

*C. V. (Davy) Crockett was named GMC's Chief Engineer, replacing Carl Bock.*

Light and medium duty models were carried over from 1954 for the first part of the year with little change.

On March 17, completely redesigned **Blue Chip** light and medium duty conventional and COE models were introduced, featuring all new appearance with over 500 improvements. New larger cabs provided much improved occupant comfort, convenience and visibility. One-piece windshields wrapped around to "A" pillars which were slanted back at the bottom. Although most of the cab and front sheetmetal (except the grille) was in common with Chevrolet, GMCs had unique *Aero-View* instrument panels which retained the truck utility appearance but had a non-glare finish. These models marked an important turning point in GMC trucks with light models that were intended to appeal to passenger car buyers for the first time. (Chevrolet called the interim 1955 release the "Second Series.")

The new medium and medium/heavy duty models were more efficient and comfortable. Medium conventional cabs had shorter 108 inch BBC and 450-660 series conventionals had 102 inch BBC. *Dual Purpose* low-cab-forward F350-F600 models were seven inches lower than prior COEs.

Limited production of *Town and Country Runabout* pickups began. These trucks featured pickup boxes which had smooth fiberglass side panels similar to the Chevrolet Cameo.

For the first time, V8 gas engines were available in GMC trucks, providing more power and smoother operation than the L6 engines that remained available. Although they were identified as GMC engines, they were actually built by Pontiac Motor or Oldsmobile Divisions. In light and medium duty models the Pontiac 155 gross hp 287 cid V8 was available in models with a -8 suffix in the model designation. In medium-heavy models, 210 gross hp Oldsmobile 324 cid V8 engines replaced midrange GMC L6 engines. Trucks with V8 engines had 12-volt negative ground electrical systems while the 6-volt positive ground system was carried over with 6-cylinder engines.

Many models had *Hydra-Matic* transmissions standard, as denoted by "M" model designation prefixes.

Passenger car type tubeless tires became standard on 100 series trucks.

Heavy duty models were continued from 1954 with the exception of 910 and 930 models that were dropped.

A new heavy duty DF860 model was released, powered by the GM Diesel 6-71 engine. Its non-tilting steel cab-over-engine provided quick access to the engine by a "Stripaway" system including fold-up seats and floorboards and removable center hump. The DF860 became a favorite tractor among fleets, particularly in the southeast. Later that model became known as the "Cannonball" after one appeared in TV series with the same name.

The *L'Universelle* concept van was first displayed in the 1955 *Motorama*. It featured forward control and front-wheel drive with the engine mounted behind the front seats. The load floor was 10 inches lower than a contemporary panel truck. In its final form, it had a Pontiac 316 cid V8



## THE FIRST CENTURY OF GMC TRUCK HISTORY

engine and Hydra-Matic transmission. Although GM President Harlow Curtice announced production plans, the *L'Universelle* was never produced.

GMC built 104,759 trucks in 1955, setting a new peacetime production record.

1956

The *Town and Country* pickup was renamed the *Suburban* pickup because Chrysler claimed prior use of the former name for passenger car station wagons.

In light and medium duty models, 248 L6 engines were replaced by 130 hp GMC 270 L6 engines and 180 ghp Pontiac 316 cid V8 engines replaced 287 V8s. Oldsmobile 324 cid V8 gas engines (210 ghp) were standard in 550 and 600 series. GMC 503 cid L6 gas engines were used in other heavy duty models. GMC 248, 360 and 426 L6 engines were discontinued.

Electrical systems on 6-cylinder models were changed from 6-volt positive ground to 12-volt, negative ground to match the systems used with V8 engines.

Tubeless tires were made standard on the remainder of the truck line with no regular production option (RPO) for tube type. The industry was not ready for that change and special equipment orders for tube type tires on medium and heavy duty models soon flooded the sales department. The following year, RPOs were released for tube type tires on all but the lightest models.

A special model 630V was created for fire fighting service. Although it was rated at only 25,000 lbs. GVW, it had a GMC 503 cid L6 gas engine producing 199 net hp and a 5-speed overdrive transmission to provide fast response and excellent pumping power. This combination continued to be popular for fire engine service.

Model series 340, 400 and 410 were dropped along with 500 series 4x2s.

GMC developed the *Drake* 8x8 amphibious military vehicle but never sold it.

*[D. E. Meyer hired in as a GMC Truck Service Engineer in June 1956.]*

1957

The first factory built 4-wheel drive with a 2-speed transfer case was offered on models 100, 100-8, 150, 150-8, 250 and 250-8.

Light and medium duty conventional models featured new front-end treatments with new grilles which sloped back at the bottom with horizontal bars.

182 net hp 347 cid V8 gas engines replaced 316 V8s in light and medium duty trucks and 199 net hp 370 cid V8s superceded 324 V8s in medium-heavy models.

Hydra-Matic automatic transmissions became optional at extra cost over standard manual transmissions and the "M" prefix was dropped from model designations, reducing model proliferation. Wide ratio range two-speed rear axles were teamed with Hydra-Matic transmissions to provide eight speeds in medium duty 4x2s, replacing the unreliable 2-speed reduction boxes.

GMC offered an "All Emergency Rescue Vehicle" which met US Civil Defense requirements. Based on model 101 4x4 panel truck, it was powered by the GMC 270 engine and was available with rescue tools and emergency equipment.

Several new heavy duty models were announced with air suspension on front and rear axles as standard equipment. They included models A/FA550, A/FA600, and R800/R860 series (gas and diesel 4x2s and 6x4s). "A" or "R" model designation prefixes indicated air suspension models.

Detroit Diesel Div. announced the *Super E* engine series with economy and durability upgrades including four exhaust valves per cylinder. Turbo-superchargers were available on 4-71T and 6-71T versions to increase power. Hydraulic clutches were available to disengage engine cooling fans when they were not needed, resulting in increased available power, better fuel economy and reduced noise.

## THE FIRST CENTURY OF GMC TRUCK HISTORY

The 7-speed Twin Hydra-Matic transmission was discontinued because of poor reliability and low sales. *[We called it the Twin-Burger.]*

The *Palomino* pickup truck began the show circuit that year. Based on the *Suburban* pickup, it was a prototype that was customized inside and out. It included the Pontiac V8 engine, automatic transmission, power steering and power brakes and many factory options. Exterior trim included a sun visor, dual combination spot light/rearview mirrors and special bright metal trim on the pickup box sides. The interior was trimmed with two-tone leather. (That prototype is now owned by Ralph Wescott, a GMC truck collector in Largo, FL.)

1958 Revised GMC light and medium duty grilles included quad headlamps, a first for trucks.

Allison *Torqmatic* 6-speed automatic transmissions were available in medium duty models, replacing the 4-speed Hydra-Matic and wide range 2-speed rear axle combination. The Allison included torque converter lockup clutches and hydraulic retarders were available, providing superior performance and reliability.

Light and medium duty 347 V8 engines were replaced by 200 hp 336 V8s unique to GMC trucks. Although based on the Pontiac engine, the displacement was less than in engines used in Pontiac cars to provide lower torque that was within the capacity of existing light truck drive-line components.

A model D860 conventional cab tractor with a short 90 inch BBC and steel springs was released. GMC Special Equipment Engineering had set up steel springs in place of air springs on model DR860 the previous year, resulting in more sales than with standard air suspension. The D860 had the GM Diesel 6-71SE engine with a dual range road speed governor which had a base setting of 1800 RPM in lower gears and 1650 RPM in top gear. That combination had previously been field tested on DF860s in the McLean Trucking Co. fleet, demonstrating much improvement in fuel economy with satisfactory performance. *[D. E. Meyer coordinated that field test.]*

Some air suspension models were dropped that year due to limited customer acceptance.

1959 Most 1958 models were carried over with minor changes. Modulated rear brakes were first used on light trucks to improve light load braking.

A new design model DLR8000 tractor with the first aluminum tilt cab, air front and rear suspensions and DD 6-71SE diesel engine was introduced at the Chicago Auto Show in December, 1958. The chassis frame in this vehicle was fabricated by welding steel plates together and had a diagonal crossmember in the center. The front suspension was the independent type and was set back for better load distribution. Only a Spicer 5-speed transmission and Eaton 2-speed rear axle were available. That tractor weighed less and could haul more payload with smoother ride than possible with comparable spring suspension tractors. *[D. E. Meyer was assigned to the DLR8000 display at that Chicago show to point out the new features.]*

A companion DFR8000 tractor, also with air suspension, was also added later that year. It was similar to the DLR8000 except it had a DD 6-71 engine, set-forward front axle and ladder type fabricated steel frame without the diagonal crossmember.

A revised 336 V8 engine was used in light and medium duty models. It had the same 200 ghp rating but the bore and stroke differed from the 336 used in 1958 due to changes in the Pontiac passenger car engine it was based on.

# THE FIRST CENTURY OF GMC TRUCK HISTORY

## CHAPTER 6: 1960 - 1969

1960

*Calvin J. Werner became General Manager of GMC T&C Div. and a GM Vice President, replacing P. J. Monahan.*

**This was a year for “sweeping” changes in GMC trucks.** Most models were totally redesigned. Light and medium duty models had headlamps lowered to the top of the bumper and large dual air intakes and parking lamps in the front of the hood. All conventional cabs were based on a totally new Chevrolet cab design which included overhangs on the front and rear of the cab roof and many new features. Regular conventional cab models 1000-5000 had a 105 inch BBC dimension. “B” series short conventional cab models B4000-B9000 had 90 or 92 inch BBCs. Independent front suspensions with torsion bar springs replaced I-beam front axles with leaf springs on 4x2 light and medium duty models, resulting in smoother ride.

**A totally new family of V-type gas engines** designed and built by GMC was introduced for 1960, replacing GMC L6 engines (except the 270A in P/PB1500/2500) and passenger car based V8 engines used in prior models. It included five different V6s and a V12 engine, all with a 60 degree V cylinder layout which resulted in less engine width than with the usual 90 degree V. The program included these gas engines:

- 305A V6 (150 hp) in model series 1000, 2500, 3000, 3500 and 4000
- 305B V6 (150 hp) in model series 4000
- 305C V6 (160 hp) in model series 4000
- 351 V6 (180 hp) in 5000 series
- 401 V6 (205 hp) in 5000, 5500 and 6000 series
- 702 V12 (275 hp) in 7000 and 9000 series

Model designations were revised with series numbers running from 1000 to 9000. The following prefix code was adopted:

- None 105 inch BBC conventional cab
- A Air brakes
- B 90/92 inch BBC Conventional cab
- D Diesel engine
- F 48 inch BBC aluminum tilt cab
- H Heavy duty version
- K 4-wheel drive (4x4)
- L 72 inch BBC steel tilt cab with set back front axle
- P Forward control chassis
- R Highway tractor with air suspension
- S School bus chassis
- V Vacuum boosted hydraulic brakes
- W Tandem rear axles (6x4)
- X Special wheelbase

The 72 inch BBC steel tilt cab “L” series was added, ranging from L4000 to L7000. The L cab was designed and built by GMC.

The new “DF” series, with GMC-built aluminum tilt cabs similar to the DFR8000, replaced the old non-tilting “Cannonball” steel COE series. The standard day cab had a 48 in. BBC and the optional 72 in. BBC sleeper cab had a bunk which was 18 in. wide behind the driver and 21 in. behind the passenger. The “DF” model was soon nicknamed the “Crackerbox” because of its boxy appearance. Models DF/DFW7000 were powered by the GM Diesel 6V-71 engine as was the DFR8000 which was carried over from 1959. The only other diesel engine available was the DD 6-71 used in carryover models D860 and DLR8000.

Also new that year was a “pusher” forward control school bus chassis with a 351 V6 engine-in-rear.

The DD 4-71 diesel engine and Allison automatic transmissions had been dropped.

## THE FIRST CENTURY OF GMC TRUCK HISTORY

- 1961 *Harold O. (Hal) Flynn became Chief Engineer of GMC T&C replacing C. V. Crockett.*
- Most models were carried over with minor improvements. New models added included W5000 and W5500 medium duty 6x4s.
- A 165 hp version of the 305 V6 engine, the 305D, was offered as an option in light duty models.
- The DD 8V-71 diesel engine was introduced in new models DF/DFW7100 and DFR8100, with a top rating of 290 ghp.
- [D. E. Meyer became Supervisor of the GMC/Chevrolet Truck Sales Engineering Dept.]*
- 1962 Light and medium duty conventional front ends were restyled. A smaller single center air intake replaced the large dual openings in the front of the hood which was rounded down in front. Interior changes included a redesigned instrument panel and new standard and uplevel trim.
- The *Jr. Van* complete walk-in delivery van, with 270A L6 engine, was added to the "P" model lineup. Other new models included KV4000 medium duty 4x4, and H5000 and 6500 series. The latter was powered by the new 235 hp GMC 478 V6 gas engine.
- DFI7000 (4x2) and DFWI7000 (6x4) models were added, powered by reliable DD 6-71 L6 diesel engines for customers who preferred that engine over the 6V-71. (The 6V version had suffered durability problems due to uneven cooling of the cylinder walls.)
- Models LW5000 and BW/DBW9000 were dropped due to low sales volumes.
- 1963 Most light and medium duty front suspensions were changed back to more traditional designs. In light duty 4x2 models, coil springs replaced torsion bars in independent front suspensions. In medium duty front ends, I-beam front axles with leaf springs returned to replace torsion bar independent suspension. Also light duty rear suspensions changed from coil to leaf springs. (4x4 models continued with leaf springs front and rear.)
- Chevrolet built 230 cid L6 engines appeared as standard equipment in new GMC models I1000, I1500 and I2500 ("I" prefix for inline) and the 154 cid L4 powered P1000 delivery chassis. Chevrolet built 2-speed *Pow-R-Flow* automatic transmissions replaced *Hydra-Matic* 4-speed transmissions in light trucks after the Livonia MI plant that produced Hydra-Matics was destroyed by fire.
- New medium duty models included B3500, H4000, H5000 and A6000 series with V6 gas engines and DBI/DBWI7000 with 189 hp DD 6-71SE engines rounded out the heavy line.
- Models V3000 and BW5000 were cancelled along with DFR/DLR8000, DFR8100 and D860 which had been carried over from 1959.
- "N" series Detroit Diesel engines, designated as 6-71N, 6V-71N and 8V-71N, were available in heavy duty GMCs. They had either N60 or N65 fuel injectors, with a choice of 1900 or 2100 RPM full load governor settings, providing four different power levels for each engine model.
- DFW7100 6x4 aluminum tilt cab tractors with 318 hp 8V-71N engines and Spicer 12 or 16-speed transmissions provided good performance while pulling Michigan double trailer rigs with up to 157,000 lbs. GCW on 11 axles. A large fleet of this model was sold to 5Rs Construction Co. (owned by Roy Fruehauf) for hauling sand and gravel with double trailers for interstate highway construction. *[D. E. Meyer was the application consultant for this sale.]*
- GMC built specially designed tractors for the US Air Force to transport *Minuteman* guided missiles on trailers which could erect the missiles. The tractors had very low profile forward aluminum cabs and 702 cid V12 gas engines with Allison automatic transmissions and 8x4 (later, 10x4) axle configurations with non-driving twin steering front axles.

## THE FIRST CENTURY OF GMC TRUCK HISTORY

Alternators replaced generators in most electrical systems.

1964 “A” pillars on light and medium cabs were revised by slanting them back at the top, eliminating the “dog leg”.

The G1000 *Handivan* light commercial van was introduced. Produced in GMC’s Plant 4 in Pontiac, it had a 90 hp 154 cid L4 engine standard with a 120 hp 194 cid L6 optional. Both engines were built by Chevrolet.

GMC designed and built *Toroflow* V6 diesel engine models D351 (130 hp), D478 (150 hp) and DH478 (170 hp) were added in many new medium duty models. Although they were produced with some of the same tooling as the V6 gas engines, most parts used in the diesels were stronger to withstand higher compression loads.

1965 ***US troops became involved in the war in Viet Nam.***

The *Handibus* passenger version of the G1000 light duty van was added to the lineup.

Model L3500 was added to the low end of the medium duty tilt cab series. Also the medium duty parcel delivery chassis was reinstated as the P3500 with the 230 L6 engine. That model soon became popular with United Parcel Service.

DBA/DBWA/DLA5900 models came out with 185 ghp DD 6V-53N engines.

*[DEM returned to GMC Engineering on special assignment to the Chief Engineer.]*

1966 The Chevrolet 250 cid L6 engine replaced the 230 and the 351E V6 was available as an extra-cost option in light duty conventional models. Also, the new Hydra-Matic AT400 3-speed automatic transmission was added as an option. The Handibus/Handivan then had the 194 engine as base with the 230 optional. The larger GMC V6 gas engines were improved and renamed *Magnum* including the 351M (220 hp), 401M (237 hp) and 478M (254 hp).

Medium duty diesel models D/DL4100 became available with 130 ghp DD 4-53N engines. Those models were soon cancelled because few were sold.

Totally new H/J and C/M series heavy conventional cab models replaced most prior heavy duty conventional models. H (4x2) and J (6x4) models had a 92 in. BBC and C (4x2) and M (6x4) had a 114 in. BBC with a longer hood. On H/J models a steel hood with “butterfly” side opening access panels was standard. A front hinged tilting fiberglass hood was standard on C/Ms and optional on H/Js. The cab used on those models, newly designed and built by GMC, had more interior room with a higher driver’s seat position for better visibility. Instrument and gage locations were determined by function and frequency of use. Front end styling was simple and functional with large grille openings to accommodate larger radiators needed for higher powered engines. A wide variety of power train combinations was available in 116 basic models.

Model M9501, with a long hood, was designed to compete with west coast built trucks. A wide selection of options aimed at that market was offered.

Model designations for heavy duty tilt cab models were changed to the new system also. Steel tilt jobs became L for 4x2s and W for 6x4s. Aluminum tilt models changed to F for 4x2s and D for 6x4s.

The GMC 637 cid V8 gas engine and D637 and DH637 diesel engines were released for heavy duty applications. The 637 replaced the 702 cid V12 providing the same power, 275 ghp.

In all 1966 heavy models, the second letter in the model designation prefix indicated the engine used.

(Some heavy duty Chevrolet trucks used GMC cabs for the first time.)

## THE FIRST CENTURY OF GMC TRUCK HISTORY

A completely new model designation system was initiated with 1966 heavy duty models and 1967 light and mediums:

1 <sup>st</sup> Prefix	Cab Type	BBC (In.)	Drive	2 <sup>nd</sup> Prefix	Engine Make	Config- uration	Fuel
C	Conventional		4x2	B	Cummins	V8	Diesel
	Light & Medium	105		C	Cummins	L6*	Diesel
	Heavy duty	114		E	GM	V8	Gas
D	Aluminum tilt	48/54	6x4	G	GMC	V6	Diesel
E	Med. Conv.	92	4x2	H	Detroit Diesel	V8	Diesel
F	Aluminum tilt	48/54	4x2	I	Detroit Diesel	L6	Diesel
G	Fwd. Cont. van		4x2	J	GMC	V8	Diesel
H	Heavy Conv.	92	4x2	M	GMC	V6	Gas
J	Heavy Conv	92	6x4	N	Cummins	L6**	Diesel
K	Med. Conv.	105	4x4	P	Detroit Diesel	V12	Diesel
M	Conventional		6x4	S	Chevrolet	L6	Gas
	Light & Medium	105		T	Detroit Diesel	L3	Diesel
	Heavy duty	114		W	Detroit Diesel	V6	Diesel
P	Package delivery		4x2				
S	School bus chassis		4x2				
T	Steel tilt	72	4x2				
W	Steel tilt	72	6x4				

\* Turbocharged \*\* Naturally aspirated

3<sup>rd</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> digits indicated model series 1000 – 9000

*[D. E. Meyer devised that model designation system]*

1967 *Martin J. Caserio was appointed General Manager of GM T&C Div. and GM Vice President, replacing C. J. Werner.*

*GMC light duty conventional cab trucks were then built in the same plants as Chevrolets.*

Redesigned light duty models C/K1500, 2500 and 3500 were released, featuring new appearance, energy absorbing instrument panel and steering column, a dual brake system and seat belts as standard equipment. These safety improvements were added a year in advance of Federal requirements. The new cabs had more rounded contours with no roof overhangs. A third door was added to the right side of the Suburban.

New E4500, E5500 and E6500 model series came out, extending use of the GMC 92 in. BBC cab with butterfly hood down to medium duty models.

All remaining model designations except for T3500 and T4000 were changed to the new system.

The KV4000 4x4 was cancelled.

GMC built a large order of forward control bus chassis with rear mounted turbocharged DH478 V6 Toroflow diesel engines for US Army ambulances.

1968 *At this time, GMC ranked third in total US truck sales.*

*GMC took over design and manufacture of all Chevrolet medium and heavy duty trucks.*

*New Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards took effect, primarily impacting light trucks.*

Chevrolet 230, 250 and 292 cid L6 and 307, 327 and 396 cid V8 engines were available in GMC light trucks with ratings from 140 to 310 gross hp.

## THE FIRST CENTURY OF GMC TRUCK HISTORY

To deproliferate an overgrown model lineup and weed out poor selling models, many models were dropped, including those with *Toroflow* D351 and DD 6V-71 engines.

[D. E. Meyer was assigned as an Engineer in the new Vehicle Safety Engineering Group.]

1969

New medium duty as well as heavy duty models appeared in 1969.

A new family of 96 in. BBC medium duty conventional cab models C4500, C5500 and C/M6500 replaced the "E" series. GVWRs ranged from 18,000 to 45,000 lbs. The new cabs and front sheetmetal (except the grille) were in common with Chevrolet. The hoods were the front opening "alligator" type. Only Chevrolet 250, 366 and 427 engines were available, depending on the model.

That year GMC made a major change in the heavy duty cab-over-engine lineup. The all new **Astro 9500** aluminum tilt cab series replaced old D/F "Cracker Box" models, offering much more interior room, improved occupant comfort, visibility and appearance. More rounded corners reduced air resistance and fuel consumption. The instrument panel wrapped around onto a center console, providing space for more gages and controls. The standard day cab had 54 in. BBC and two optional sleeper cabs were available: 74 or 86 in. BBC. The 74 in. version included a 24 x 88 in. berth and the 86 in. cab was available with either a 32 or 36 in. wide berth. Several suspended driver's seats were offered along with a variety of trim levels and interior colors. Options available made the *Astro* the most luxurious heavy duty GMC ever built. Engines offered included Detroit Diesel 6-71N and 8V-71N and Cummins diesels from 230 to 335 ghp. A wide selection of transmissions and rear axles were available.

The Chevrolet 255 ghp 350 V8 engine replaced the 327 V8 as an option in light trucks.

The GMC built gas engine lineup included: 305C, 351C, 351M, 478M, and 478HC V6s and 637 and 637HC V8s. Ratings ranged from 157 to 275 ghp. GMC DH478 V6 (155 hp) and DH637 V8 (195 hp) diesels were renamed *Toroflow II*.

The Allison MT40 6-speed automatic transmission and the Fuller RT500 10-speed *Roadranger* transmission were available in the 6500 series medium duty models with gas engines.

Many models were discontinued that year including most heavy models with *Toroflow* or DD 6V-71 diesel engines. The M9501 long hood "western" models were absorbed into the regular M9500 series.

## THE FIRST CENTURY OF GMC TRUCK HISTORY

### CHAPTER 7: 1970 - 1979

1970

*Wallace W. (Wally) Edwards became Chief Engineer replacing H. O. Flynn.*

*Construction of a new medium duty truck assembly plant began on Opdyke Road, east of Plant 2 in southeast Pontiac.*

The K15 *Jimmy* sport utility model was added to the light line.

All new *Vandura* and *Rallywagon* G vans replaced the *Handivan/Handibus* featuring all new styling, longer hoods for easier service access and a sliding right side rear door. They offered much larger interior space, comfort and luxury along with better performance from larger engines.

Chevrolet 250 and 292 L6 and 307, 350 and 396 V8s were used in GMC light trucks. Power ratings ranged from 155 to 255. The GMC V6 engines were dropped from light duty models and the last GMC designed diesel engines were built that year.

Cummins NH230 and NHC250 diesel engines were added to heavy duty conventional cab H/J9500 models.

(Chevrolet began marketing many heavy duty truck models built by GMC with the "Bow Tie" badge on them. The Astro COE was rebadged the *Titan*.)

The Allison AT540 4-speed automatic transmission with torque converter became optional in most medium duty trucks and school bus chassis. That transmission proved to provide good performance and reliability in those applications.

Among models dropped that year were SM6500 school bus chassis, TG7500 and all 9500 series with GMC built diesel engines.

*[D. E. Meyer was assigned to GMC Truck Chassis Engineering as Sr. Project Engineer, responsible for selection, installation and controls for truck transmissions.]*

1971

Disc brakes replaced drum type on the front wheels of most light duty trucks.

New *Sprint* light pickups based on the GM "A" car platform were announced.

Published hp and torque ratings for most engines changed from gross to SAE net (as installed with standard equipment). Gross hp ratings continued for some heavy duty diesel engine models. Hereafter, ratings in this history are identified as nhp or ghp.

The Hydra-Matic *Easimatic* AT475 3-speed automatic transmission, a heavy duty version of the dependable AT400, was added to transmissions available in the lower end medium duty models. Providing an automatic transmission at the lowest cost, It was available with either single or two-speed rear axle. Many were sold for school bus service.

*[D. E. Meyer was lead engineer for the AT475 program.]*

*Astro-Aire* tandem rear suspension became available on 9500 series trucks with Rockwell SLHD or SQHD tandem rear axles. Rated at 34,000 lbs., it provided smoother ride with a weight savings of over a thousand pounds.

1972

*GMC was then the 4<sup>th</sup> largest manufacturer of light duty trucks.*

*The engine identifying alpha was dropped from light duty model designations, greatly reducing the number of models. The lowest cost L6 engine became standard with extra cost options for all of the other engines.*

*Medium duty truck production moved from Plant 2 to the new Plant 6 on Opdyke Rd. in Pontiac.*



## THE FIRST CENTURY OF GMC TRUCK HISTORY

GMC built V6 diesel engines were renamed *Turbium*.  
The 330 ghp Cummins V903 V8 diesel engine was offered in 9500 model series.

The DD 12V-71 390 ghp diesel engine was available in Astros but few were sold due to high cost and weight.

New Allison MT640 (4-speed) and MT650 (5-speed) automatic transmissions replaced MT40 and MT41 models in medium duty and 7500 series trucks.

Although Detroit Diesel gas turbine engines were tested in Astros and Chevrolet *Titans*, turbine engines were never released for production in GM trucks because initial cost and fuel use were higher than with Diesels of comparable power.

*[D. E. Meyer coordinated design for installation of gas turbines in Astros for testing.]*

1973

*Alex C. Mair replaced M. J. Caserio as General Manager of GMC T&C Div. and GM Vice President.*

Redesigned light duty conventional models had all new Chevrolet built cabs, bodies and sheet-metal. Regular cabs had much larger interior space and glass area was increased 19% over the prior model. Four different trim levels were available and energy absorbing steering columns improved driver safety. Suburbans gained a fourth door. Options offered on the C/K3500 included dual rear wheels and six passenger crew cabs were available on C/K 2500 and 3500s. Engines available included 250 or 292 L6s plus 307, 350 or 454 V8s, all built by Chevrolet. All had exhaust emission controls.

Production of **new medium duty conventional cab models** C5000, C6000 and C/M6500 with 97.5 inch BBC started in the new Plant 6. The cab used was similar to the new light duty cab. In addition to Chevrolet 250, 292, 350 or 427 engines, GMC 379 or 432 cid V6 gas engines replaced 351 and 401s. The GMC DH478 V6 diesel was offered initially but all GMC built gas and diesel engines were discontinued at the end of the 1973 model run.

(Production of the GMC *MotorHome* began.)

1974

Most 1973 models were carried over with little change except that Chevrolet engines replaced GMC built gasoline engines and no diesel engines were offered in medium duty models.

Several models were eliminated as a result of cancellation of GMC V6 and V8 gas and diesel engines, including the rear engine school bus chassis. Also steel tilt cab models T/W7500 and T/W9500 with gas engines were dropped.

1975

*A fuel shortage resulted in lower sales of full size light trucks.*

Catalytic converters were required on trucks up to 6,000 lbs. GVWR to meet more stringent Federal exhaust emission limits.

The 1-ton *Magnavan* delivery van was added to the "G" van family.

*Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard 121 took effect, setting maximum stopping distances for trucks with air brakes built after March 15, 1975. Compliance required brake antilock systems which were still under development. Although GMC released a system to comply, the industry, including suppliers and operators, had major problems with compliance, performance, maintenance and cost. As a result, sales of heavy trucks slumped.*

DD 6V-53N and Cummins NH230 diesel engines were discontinued along with the truck models in which they were used.

The *Dragfoiler* airfoil was first offered on the roof of Astro cabs to reduce air resistance and improve fuel economy. That design was patented by GMC.

## THE FIRST CENTURY OF GMC TRUCK HISTORY

1976 *Robert W. Truxell was made GMC T&C Div. General Manager and GM Vice President after Alex Mair became GM and VP of Pontiac Motor Div. W. W. Edwards was named Director of GMC Engineering and Dean D. Forester became Chief Engineer for trucks.*

Caterpillar 3208 V8 diesel engines were available in medium-heavy H/J7500 models with either 161 or 194 nhp ratings. That was the first use of CAT engines in GMCs.

1977 *GMC celebrated 75 years of selling trucks, starting with the first Rapid truck the Grabowsky brothers sold in 1902.*

The **General** heavy duty conventional cab series N/M9500 models replaced the old "M" series. They featured welded aluminum cabs built by the Budd Company and tilting fiberglass hoods. Both short and long hood versions were offered with 108 and 116 in. BBCs. Those cabs offered much improved driver comfort and visibility with a lot more interior room. A sleeper cab with a 34 x 88 in. bunk was optional. Several trim packages were offered including up-level dressups which appealed to owner-operators. Engines available included DD 6-71 and 8V-71 as well as Cummins 250 to 350 ghp along with a wide selection of transmissions and rear axles.

The Astro was available with a larger radiator to cool more powerful engines, including the 450 ghp Cummins KT450 that was then offered.

CAT 3406 DIT diesel engines were optional in Astros with either 267 or 312 nhp ratings.

"Glider" kits were offered for rebuilding any make of heavy duty truck into Astro, General or Brigadier configurations. Those kits included a frame assembly, cab, front axle with tires and wheels, brake controls and air lines as well as intake and exhaust systems. Many options were offered to tailor the kit to a specific requirement. Buyers could install rebuilt power train components from other trucks.

1978 The **Caballero** light pickup replaced Sprint, again based on the "A" car platform.

C1500 pickups were available with the Oldsmobile 350 cid (5.7 L) diesel engine. At only 120 nhp, that engine provided less performance than many customers expected from a diesel so sales were slow.

The **Brigadier** short conventional cab series, with 92.75 in. BBC, was released, replacing the H/J series that came out in 1966. The new H/J9500 models featured tilting fiberglass hoods, larger crossflow radiators and variable-speed engine cooling fans with hydraulic control. Available engines included DD 6-71/8V71/6V-92T and Cummins 250 through 350 ghp. The Brigadier became one of the most successful heavy duty truck models ever designed and built by GMC.

The DD 8V-92T diesel engine was available in Astros and Generals with ratings up to 412 nhp.

At that time, the first letter in the model designation prefix identified the model series and axle configuration and the second letter indicated the engine. For example, DH9500 was Astro 6x4 with DD 8V-71N engine.

Here is the 9500 series engine lineup for 1978:

2 <sup>nd</sup> Digit	Engine	Model Availability
C	Cummins N series	D, F, H, J, M, N
H	DD 8V-71N	D, F, H, J, M, N
I	DD 6-71N	D, F, H, J, N
J	DD 6V-92	D, F, H, J, N
K	DD 8V-92	D, M
L	Cummins KT450	D
P	DD 12V-71N	D
R	Caterpillar 3406DIT	D

## THE FIRST CENTURY OF GMC TRUCK HISTORY

*FMVSS121, Air Brake Systems, was set aside by the US Supreme Court because equipment required to comply was unreliable and too costly to purchase and maintain, resulting in undue burdens on the trucking industry.*

(Production of the GMC *MotorHome* was discontinued. A total of 12,921 units were built in six years of production.)

1979

*GMC moved into 3<sup>d</sup> place in total US truck sales, ahead of Dodge.*

*Dean D. Forester was promoted to Director of Engineering replacing W. W. Edwards who retired.*

GMC built 35 battery electric powered Vandura G vans for AT&T for field test.

H/J7500 models were replaced by the Brigadier 8000 series.

The DD 6V92TTA engine replaced the 6-71N as the standard engine in the 9500 series.

The Astro *SS Special Series* package was introduced, providing dress-up exterior features and uplevel interior trim aimed to please the owner-operator. That package also included a larger radiator grille that improved the frontal appearance and became standard on 1980 Astros.

A new model designation system was adopted for GM medium and heavy duty models. Example: TD9K064 is a GMC truck, aluminum tilt cab, 9500 series, 54 in. BBC day cab and 6x4.

## THE FIRST CENTURY OF GMC TRUCK HISTORY

### CHAPTER 8: 1980 - 1989

1980

*An economic recession, along with trucking industry deregulation, resulted in much lower truck sales.*

Only cosmetic changes were made in light duty trucks. DDAD 8.2L V8 *Fuel Pincher* diesel engines were added to engines available in 6000 and 7000 series medium duty conventional cab trucks. Both the naturally aspirated 8.2N (153 nhp) and the turbocharged 8.2T (193 nhp) were offered.

Improvements in Astros included making the larger "SS" grille standard for better appearance and to accommodate larger radiators. Tapered leaf springs in standard front suspensions and Reyco 101A tandem rear suspensions saved weight and provided smoother ride. Similar front and rear suspensions were available on Generals. Options included a large polyethylene battery box and vertical air intake and exhaust, all frame-mounted behind the cab.

*[D. E. Meyer's Chassis Engineering Section designed those options.]*

Cummins NTC300 and high torque rise Formula 300 engines were then available in heavy duty models.

1981

*Midyear the **General Motors Truck & Bus Group** was formed with world-wide responsibility for design, manufacture, sales and service of all GM trucks and buses. The Group included three main organizations: GM Truck & Bus Vehicle Operation, Detroit Diesel Allison Div. and Bedford Commercial Vehicle Div. (UK) The Truck & Bus Vehicle Operation included:*

*Truck & Bus Manufacturing Div., responsible for all GM truck and bus producing plants in the US with plants in seven cities.*

*Engineering Operation*

*GMC Truck & Bus Operation, including sales staff*

*International, Financial, Business Planning, Personnel and Public Relations staffs.*

*GMC was again the official Indianapolis 500 truck - they supplied 50 pickups and Suburbans with "Indy Hauler" graphics.*

*(Chevrolet ceased to market heavy duty Bison, Bruin and Titan series.)*

Full size pickups, *Jimmys* and *Suburbans* received new grilles and lower front end sheetmetal to improve aerodynamic appearance. Uplevel trim packages included pairs of headlamps stacked vertically. Empty weight was reduced to improve fuel economy.

A new medium duty series called the **Top Kick** was added, powered by Caterpillar's 3208 V8 diesel engine. The cab was raised several inches higher than on the other mediums to accommodate the taller engine and larger radiators that were available for use with power ratings up to 222 nhp. There were three models: C6D042, C7D042 and C7D064, the last being a 6x4. GVWRs ran from 24,500 to 50,000 lbs.

DD 6V-92TTA engines replaced 8V-71Ns as base equipment in the 9500 series.

The "L" steel tilt cab series was dropped after more than 20 years of production.

The Chevrolet 454 cid (7.4L) V8 gas engine and DD 4-53T and Cummins VT-225 diesel engines were dropped from medium duty models.

1982

*Chevrolet Truck Engineering was absorbed into GMC Truck Engineering under the Engineering Operation of Truck & Bus Vehicle Operations, headquartered in Building 33 on South Boulevard in Pontiac.*

## THE FIRST CENTURY OF GMC TRUCK HISTORY

*Truck manufacturing and assembly operations of GMC Truck & Coach Div., GM Assembly Div. and Chevrolet Motor Div. were merged to form Truck & Bus Operations as part of the World Wide Truck & Bus Group. Truck & Bus Operations produced trucks, school bus chassis and special vehicle chassis.*

*R. W. Truxell was named Group Vice President of world wide Truck & Bus Operations. Paul O. Larsen became Chief Engineer for trucks.*

*Truck sales began to recover from a short-term recession. Light trucks were becoming more popular for personal use and accounted for 87% of all GMC truck sales.*

GMC introduced the S-15 compact pickup to compete against Japanese imports. The maximum GVWR was 4,600 lbs Isuzu 1.9L L4 gas (82 nhp) and 2.2L L4 diesel (62 nhp) engines plus Pontiac 2.5L L4 (92 nhp) and Chevrolet 2.8L V6 (115 nhp) gas engines were offered.

Chevrolet built 6.2L V8 diesel engines were first available in full size light truck models (except G vans). Ratings were from 126 to 143 nhp.

A 5-star version of the General was added to provide upscale interior trim to appeal to owner operators.

The base power train package for most 9500 series 6x4 models included the DD 6V-92TTA engine, Fuller RT11609A 9-speed manual transmission and Rockwell SLHD tandem rear axles with 3.70 ratio. Other engines available were the new Cummins NTC *Big Cam II* series with ratings of 300, 350 and 400 ghp and the Caterpillar 3406 at 327 nhp.

Only diesel engines were available in the Brigadier 8000 series.

1983

*Donald J. Atwood replaced R. W. Truxell as Group Executive and GM Vice President of the Truck & Bus Group and Robert L. McKee became General Manager of Truck & Bus Manufacturing Div.*

*Light and medium duty truck sales rebounded with the economic upturn. However, heavy truck sales remained sluggish due to a surplus of late model used trucks on the market resulting from the demise of nearly 50 long haul trucking fleets caused by deregulation.*

The S-15 Jimmy 2-door compact sport utility vehicle was unveiled. Power options included 2.5L L4 and 2.8L V6 engines. The *Insta-Trac* 4-wheel drive system was featured on S-15 4x4 vehicles, allowing shifts in and out of 4wd "on the fly".

The 6.2L diesel engine was added to van models G2500 and G3500.

The *Aero Astro* package was released, providing special exterior equipment to reduce air drag and improve fuel economy. The package included a collapsible *Drag-foiler* on top of the cab, filler panels between the cab and trailer and an air dam under the front bumper. A new radiator grille and taller bumper was also part of that package. This was the last major heavy duty design project before heavy truck production ceased.

On medium duty models, vacuum boosted hydraulic disc brakes were available with selected front and rear axles.

A new, more steeply sloped fiberglass hood was optional on Brigadier 9500 models with engines up to 307 nhp. The lower front reduced air resistance and improved driver's visibility.

GM Truck Engineering continued to release weight reducing improvements in heavy trucks. New radius leaf rear suspensions were standard on single rear axle models and GMT designed 34,000 lb. tandem rear suspensions including taper leaf springs were base on 6x4.

## THE FIRST CENTURY OF GMC TRUCK HISTORY

- 1984 *Medium and heavy duty truck sales surged up with GMC class 8 sales jumping 92% over 1983.*
- John D. Rock became General Manager of GMC Truck.*
- The **Forward** series of GMC medium duty tilt cab trucks was introduced, filling the gap left when the "L" series was dropped. Model W7R042 was rated at 27,500 or 29,700 lbs. GVWR and was powered by a 165 nhp L6 turbocharged diesel engine. The Forward was designed and built by Isuzu in Japan and included mainly Isuzu built components.
- The Cummins L10 diesel was added to engines available in Brigadier 9500s.
- Astro BBC dimensions were increased by moving the bumper ahead one inch. The standard day cab then had 55 inch BBC and sleepers changed to 75 or 87 inch BBC.
- The Top Kick option was dropped from the C6000 model.
- 1985 *GMC advertising emphasized use of light vehicles by families. Light duty sales set an all-time high record with more than a 9% increase over 1984.*
- Production of medium duty conventional cab trucks was moved from the Pontiac East plant (Old Plant 6) to the Pontiac Central plant (Old Plant 2) and combined with heavy truck assembly.*
- 200 American senior citizens toured China in a caravan with diesel powered Suburbans pulling travel trailers. That tour was organized by Wally Byam.
- The **Safari** midsize M van was released, powered by either a 2.5L L4 or a 4.3L V6 engine. Passenger and cargo versions were offered. The passenger model could seat up to eight passengers.
- Rally and Vandura "G" vans received a front end facelift to look like C/K models. Engines then available in G models included 4.3L V6, 5.0L V8, and 5.7L V8 gas and 6.2L V8 diesel, all from Chevrolet. GVWRs ran from 5,600 to 8,600 lbs.
- The *Vortec* version of the 4.3L V6 became the base engine in ½ -ton and ¾-ton light emissions trucks.
- A walk-in sleeper cab was added to options available on Generals. The highest GCW rating for 9500 series was 130,000 lbs. The Aero Astro package was discontinued.
- 1986 *Robert C. Stemple replaced Don Atwood as Executive Vice President for Truck & Bus Group.*
- Volvo GM Heavy Truck Corporation** was formed as a joint venture between AB Volvo of Sweden and General Motors. Volvo took over development, design, production and marketing of WHITEGMC heavy duty trucks that resulted from the venture. Production of only the Brigadier type GMC design was to be continued.
- In November, the Truck & Bus Group announced closing of 3 of their plants, starting in the spring of 1987 with the bus assembly line in Pontiac Central, and the St. Louis plant in mid-1987. Line 1 in the Flint plant and heavy duty truck production at Pontiac Central would close by August, 1988.*
- Starcraft Automotive joined GMC to upfit a limited quantity of *Ducks Unlimited* Suburbans with camouflage and other special options appealing to duck hunters, including a roof mounted john boat.
- On G vans, 60/40 hinged doors became an option in lieu of the large right side sliding door.

## THE FIRST CENTURY OF GMC TRUCK HISTORY

A 33,000 lb. GVWR model W7HV was added to the Forward line, powered by a 220 nhp version of the Isuzu 8.4L, L6 diesel engine.

*(GM Truck & Coach Operation sold its transit bus business to Greyhound who then moved the tooling to Transportation Manufacturing Corp. to build buses in Roswell NM.)*

1987

*GMC Truck & Coach Operation was renamed GMC Truck Div. of GM Truck and Bus Group with responsibility for sale, service and marketing of GMC light and medium duty trucks. John D. Rock was named General Manager of GMC Truck & Coach Operation.*

*Continuing impact of trucking industry deregulation and an extremely competitive heavy truck market resulted in much lower sales of GMC Class 8 trucks.*

*(The engine operation of Detroit Diesel Allison Div. was sold to Roger Penske who then formed the Detroit Diesel Engine Corp.)*

Throttle body fuel injection (TBI) was first provided on V6 and V8 gas engines in vehicles up to 10,000 lbs. GVWR and single serpentine accessory drive belts replaced multiple V-belts on most light duty engines.

Full size pickups, Jimmys and Suburbans, formerly called C/Ks, were redesignated as R/V models.

***Production of Astros and Generals was discontinued that year.***

*[D. E. Meyer retired from GM Truck Engineering August 1st.]*

1988

*William B. (Bill) Larson became Director of Engineering for the Truck & Bus Group.*

***Volvo GM Heavy Truck Corp.*** was formed as a joint venture between AB Volvo of Sweden and General Motors Corp. GM held 35% interest in the new venture with Volvo owning 85%..

The phase-in of completely new **Sierra** C/K 1500, 2500 and 3500 pickup trucks began, resulting from the GMT400 program. (Although they were labeled as 1988 year models, the phase-in actually started in mid-1997.) Standard and extended *Club Coupe* cabs along with *Wideside* and *Sportside* (stepside) cargo boxes were available. Hi-tech standard features included anti-lock rear brakes and, on 4WD models, the *Insta-Trac* "shift on the fly" transfer case control system. Although overall dimensions and empty weights were slightly less than comparable old R/V models, payload space and load capacities were not compromised. Smoother and quieter ride, more comfortable interior, better handling, reduced aerodynamic drag and improved fuel economy were some of the improvements realized with the new design that became popular almost immediately. The GMT400 trucks were built in 4 assembly plants: Plant 6 in Pontiac which had been converted from medium duty truck production, new plants in Fort Wayne IN and Shreveport LA, and a refitted plant at Oshawa, ONT, Canada.

A new fully synchronized 5-speed manual transmission was standard in most Sierra models, offering overdrive in 5<sup>th</sup> and easy shifting. The design originated with Getrag Gears of Germany, suppliers of manual transmissions for European luxury vehicles.

*[D. E. Meyer had been the lead engineer at the start of that program.]*

Phase-out of the R/V models also began. They had been outstanding money-makers for GMC ever since the basic design entered production in 1972.

The Caballero pickup was discontinued. (It was based on the A car.)

## THE FIRST CENTURY OF GMC TRUCK HISTORY

Brigadier production in the Pontiac Central plant ended midyear. At that time, that model was considered the best truck of its type with lowest operating cost in the trucking industry.\*

***For the first time since 1911, GMC Truck was out of the heavy truck business, at least temporarily.***

1989

Rear wheel antilock brake systems became standard on S-15 pickups and Jimmys.

*On July 20<sup>th</sup>, a modified GMC S-15 pickup set speed records at the Bonneville Salt Flats in Utah.*

“P” series forward control chassis were built at the Detroit Assembly Plant on Piquette Road. Those models were used mainly for package delivery and motor home applications.

An improved **TopKick** series of medium duty conventional cab trucks debuted, replacing the old C conventional models. That project, coded GMT530, incorporated changes based on customer and dealer inputs. Some cab parts were similar to the GMT400 light trucks in appearance. Models offered were C5H042 (22,000 lbs. max. GVWR), C6H042, (27,100 lbs.), C7H042 (37,600 lbs.) and C7H064 (54,000 lbs., 6x4). Engines available included 6.0L and 7.0L V8 gas and Caterpillar 3116 6.6L turbocharged diesel. Ratings ranged from 170 to 250 ghp.. The new TopKicks were built in the renovated Janesville WI plant.

With no heavy trucks available, GMC medium trucks covered Classes 4 through 7 with three cab versions: 104.2 in. BBC conventional cab and 67.2 and 76.2 BBC tilt cab models.

*After medium duty truck production was moved to Janesville WI, the Pontiac Central plant (old Plant 2) was closed. Later, all but the steel frame of the large main building of Plant 2 was demolished, including the old Administration Building. Then, a new Truck Product (engineering) Center was built around the original steel frame. Actually, GM had sold the Central plant property to a developer and then leased it back.*

\* *The equivalent Mack truck model was nearly equal to the Brigadier in operating cost except for Mack's service parts cost, which was higher because many parts unique to Mack cost more than those available from industry wide components suppliers.*



## THE FIRST CENTURY OF GMC TRUCK HISTORY

### CHAPTER 9: 1990 - 1999

1990 *Clifford J. Vaughan became GM Vice President and Group Executive for GM Truck & Bus Group.*

The Sierra line of pickups was carried over with only minor changes.

R/V Suburban, full-size Jimmy and crew cab pickup changes included a new grille and, on the SUVs, rear-wheel antilock brakes.

An all-wheel-drive version of the Safari van was added, featuring a viscous drive single speed transfer case. Internally, that model was called the "L" van. Safaris received new instrument panels with an option for electronic gage clusters. An extended version called the *Safari XT* was added. It had 10 ins. added to the rear of the body behind the rear axle.

An extended version of the G3500 1-ton van was added, seating 15 passengers or providing a longer load floor.

The 4.3L V6 engine became standard in the S-15 Jimmy and Safari vans. Standard power rating was 150 nhp with a 170 nhp high output option. A heavy duty version of the 4.3L V6 became the base engine for 2500 series models over 8,600 lbs. GVWR.

Borg-Warner 5-speed manual transmissions with overdrive in 5<sup>th</sup> became standard in S-15 pickups, replacing the Isuzu 4-speed.

Electronic fuel injection replaced throttle body injection on light duty truck engines and carburetors on the 6.0L and 7.0L gas engines used in the TopKick series, improving performance and fuel economy.

*On July 29, a modified C1500 Sierra pickup with a 403 cid 625 hp V8 engine won its class in "The Race to the Clouds" up Pikes Peak.*

*During the 6-week long "Desert Storm" war, Allied Joint Forces chased Iraqi troops out of Kuwait.*

1991 *Lewis B. Campbell was assigned as General Manager of GMC Truck Div, replacing John Rock who became General Manager of Oldsmobile Div.*

The compact pickup, called the *Sonoma*, was redesigned to resemble the larger Sierra models. A longer wheelbase 4-door version of the compact Jimmy was added, providing more spacious interiors and improved ride. It was available with either 2 or 4WD and had 4-wheel antilock brakes standard. Engines included 105 nhp 2.5L L4 (only with 2WD), 125 nhp 2.8L V6 and 160 nhp 4.3L V6.

A limited production high performance version of the *Sonoma* was available. Dubbed the *Syclone*, a turbocharged and aftercooled 4.3L Vortec V6 engine producing 280 hp made it capable of accelerating from 0 to 60 mph in less than 5 seconds.

A new model 3500HD commercial chassis with cab based on the GMT400 was released to compete in the Class 4 market niche against the Ford F350 Super Duty. The 3500HD frame was straight and wide behind the cab to accommodate commercial bodies. The GVWR was 15,000 lbs.

*Magnavan, Vandura Special and Rally Camper Special* were introduced. They were "cutaway" versions of the G van designed for use with high cube van or motor home bodies.

Two new GM 6.5L V8 diesel engines replaced the 6.2L diesel in some applications. These turbocharged engines were rated at 150 and 190 nhp.

## THE FIRST CENTURY OF GMC TRUCK HISTORY

A heavy duty Hydra-Matic model 4L80-E automatic transmission was released, replacing the 3-speed automatic in heavy emissions light trucks. The new transmission provided 4-speeds with overdrive in 4<sup>th</sup> and included a converter lockup clutch and electronic controls for improved performance and economy.

A *LowPro* version of the C6H042 medium duty truck was released to provide lower load floors for easier loading, particularly for rental fleets. The frame height was about 5 in. lower than other medium duties due in part to the use of 19.5 in. wheels in lieu of 22.5 in.. The 6.0L gas engine and CAT 3116 diesel were offered.

1992

*Roy S. Roberts was named general manager of GMC Truck Div. replacing L. B. Campbell who resigned.*

During 1991 and 1992, 3,050 GMC light trucks were delivered to the joint military forces of Saudi Arabia. They included 2,150 model K2500 pickups converted to military troop/ cargo carriers and 900 K3500 chassis cabs with ambulance bodies.

Completely redesigned *Suburban* and **Yukon** SUVs along with 4-door crew cab pickups and cab and chassis models were released based on the GMT400 design. The R/V equivalents were phased out with the Yukon replacing the full-sized V Jimmy. To keep up with the increasing demand for light trucks, Suburbans and Yukons were built in the Janesville WI plant and crew cab models in Flint MI.

That year the C/K engine lineup included these gas engines: 4.3L V6 (160 hp), 5.0L V8 (175 hp), 5.7L V8 (210 hp in light emissions models and 190 hp in HD) and 7.4L V8 (230hp). 6.2L (145 hp LD and 155 hp HD) and 6.5L turbo diesel (190 hp) engines were also available. Maximum GCWR was up to 19,000 lbs. for C/K3500 with the 6.5L diesel.

A "Dutch Door" option was added for Safari vans including a one-piece upper lift gate and split lower panel-type doors.

A limited production *Typhoon* high-performance version of the compact Jimmy was launched with a special turbocharged and aftercooled 280 nhp 4.3L engine.

1993

*Although GMC Truck Div. continued to market light and medium duty trucks, GM North American Truck Platforms (NAPT) replaced the Truck & Bus Group as manufacturer of medium duty trucks and motor home and school bus chassis. Both GMC and NAPT had main offices at 31 East Judson Street in Pontiac.*

*C. J. Vaughan was Group Executive and Guy D. Briggs was Group Director of Operations for NAPT.*

The *Hydra-Matic* 4L60E 4-speed automatic transmission replaced the 700R4 in light trucks up to 8,600 lbs. GVWR. The new transmission included new features similar to the 4L80E including electronic control.

4-wheel antilock brakes became standard equipment on all vans.

Medium duty TopKick models continued with little change. In the Forward models, the engine lineup was changed by deleting three Isuzu diesel models and adding a 5.7L V8 gas engine and two new Isuzu diesels. A revised 3.9L L4 diesel came in the W4 and a new Isuzu 6.5L L6 turbocharged diesel engine was available in the other W models

1994

*GMC increased lease offerings for Class 4 through 7 trucks to meet the increasing demand for truck leasing.*

The GM 6.5L V8 diesel engine family was expanded to include a 155 nhp naturally aspirated version to replace the 6.2L. The 6.5L turbo was offered in heavier light trucks with power ratings from 180 to 190 nhp.

## THE FIRST CENTURY OF GMC TRUCK HISTORY

The Forward medium duty tilt cab series then included these models: W4, W5, W6, W7 and W7HV. A 5.7L V8 gas engine or a 135 nhp L4 diesel were used in the W4. The other models had 7.1L turbocharged and intercooled Isuzu diesel engines rated at 200 nhp (230 nhp in the W7HV).

*(GM sold its remaining 13.7% share in Detroit Diesel Engine Corp.)*

1995 *On June 30<sup>th</sup>, the WHITEGMC nameplate was replaced by Volvo, marking the end of the GMC brand on heavy duty trucks, at least temporarily. At that time, Volvo's share in the Volvo GM Heavy Truck Corp. was 87%, with GM owning 13%.*

*Production had difficulty keeping up with the strong demand for Sierras, Suburbans and Yukons.*

A new compact SUV, called the **Jimmy**, came out featuring many of the improvements seen in the Sonoma pickups. (The S-15 prefix was dropped from the designation because there no longer was a full size Jimmy.)

A 4-door version of the Yukon was introduced with a longer wheelbase and more interior space than the 2-door had. Sierra interiors were redesigned and driver's SIR air bags were added to vehicles under 8,600 lbs. GVWR.

Automatic daytime running lamps became standard equipment on most truck models to improve visibility of oncoming GM vehicles to other drivers.

A third door was available on Sierra extended cab pickups.

The W5 model was added to the Forward tilt cab series to compete in the Class 5 market.

The 6.0L and 7.0L gas engines used in the TopKick medium duty models received twin throttle body fuel injection systems. Power ratings were then 210 and 235 nhp, respectively. All medium duty air brake models had a new GM/Bendix brake antilock system.

1996 *GMC Truck Div. was merged with Pontiac Motor Div. to form Pontiac-GMC Div. of GM. Roy Roberts continued as General Manager of the combined organization. The word "Truck" was deleted from the GMC brand name because they were promoting GMC products as premium vehicles with passenger car class comfort and convenience.*

*Thomas G. Stephens was named Director of Engineering for the GM Truck Group.*

A new family of Vortec gas engines was introduced in light duty models featuring Sequential Fuel Injection. Power ratings were increased and driveability was improved. The new nhp ratings were: 4.3L V6 – 200, 5.0L V8 – 220, 5.7L V8 – 250 and 7.4L V8 – 290.

1997 *Pontiac-GMC Div. headquarters were moved from Pontiac to the 100 tower of the Renaissance Center in downtown Detroit. Roy Roberts continued to manage the division with Lynn Myers as director for both brands. Tom Davis was made Vice President and Group Executive in charge of all truck operations.*

*All commercial truck production was consolidated in the Flint MI assembly plant so that the Janesville WI plant could build more SUVs.*

*Volvo bought all of GM's interest in Volvo GM Heavy Truck Corp. and renamed the organization Volvo Trucks North America.*

Optional 4-door "Double Cabs" were available on Sonoma pickups.

The Safari M/L midsize vans received a facelift and other improvements.

## THE FIRST CENTURY OF GMC TRUCK HISTORY

The big news that year was the all-new **Savana** full size “G” van that replaced the Rally/Vandura models. New styling and comfort was provided along with a lower load floor height. Seating capacity of the passenger version ranged from 5 to 15 people, and GVWRs from 7,100 to 9,000 lbs. Four gas engines and the 6.5L diesel were available with outputs ranging from 190 to 290 hp.

Bi-fuel conversion provisions were available for Sierra C3500 pickups so that either gasoline or compressed natural gas could be used for fuel.

Upgraded “C” series medium duty 106.75 in. BBC conventional cab models replaced the TopKick. The new model lineup included C5500 (21,000 lbs. maximum GVWR), C6500 (26,000 lbs.), C7500 (33,000 lbs.) and C8500 (4x2 – 33,000 lbs. and 6x4 – 61,000 lbs.) Thus, the C8500 facilitated the re-entry of GMC trucks into the Class 8 heavy truck market. A low profile sloping hood became available for maximum forward vision. A 4-wheel anti-lock system was standard with either hydraulic disc brakes or drum type air brakes. Engines available included 6.0L and 7.0L V8 gas engines and the upgraded CAT 3126 L6 diesel with power ratings from 175 to 300 ghp.

The new “T” tilt cab series had similar model designations and many components in common with the “C” series. The new cab offered best-in-class visibility, safety, comfort and serviceability. GVWRs ranged from 23,100 to 54,600 lbs.

1998 *Lynn C. Myers was named General Manager of Pontiac-GMC Div. replacing Roy Roberts who left GM.*

*J. D. Power and Associates ranked the GMC Suburban as “Most appealing full size sport utility vehicle”.*

1999 model year Suburbans and Yukons began production in January of 1998 to avoid penalties for failing to meet 1998 Federal CAFÉ fuel economy requirements. The 2-door Yukon was discontinued.

Monroe Truck Equipment provided GM-approved 4-wheel drive conversions for C3500HD and 4-door crew cabs on C5500 and C6500 chassis.

1999 An all new Sierra series of full size light trucks began to phase into production with new body and sheetmetal styling and chassis design, starting with the C/K1500 and C/K2500 standard and extended cab models. A passenger side third door became standard on extended cabs. These were products of the GMT800 program. Although the 4.3L V6 engine was carried over, all three Vortec V8 gas engines used in the new models were new: 4800 – 4.8L (255 nhp), 5300 – 5.3L (270 nhp) and 6000 – 6.0L (300 nhp). These engines provided higher performance with smaller displacement and better fuel economy.

The prior body design was carried over for light duty models with GVWRs over 8,500 lbs. as well as Suburbans and Yukons.

A *Tow/Haul* mode was added to automatic transmissions used in light trucks to provide improved performance with heavy loads and reduce the possibility of transmission fluid overheating. (Automatic transmission failures due to overheating had cost GM huge amounts of warranty expense. The problems started when the shift schedule was changed to allow the converter to unlock after upshifting to 4th (OD) range. With heavy loads the converter could slip for a long time and generate excessive heat in the transmission fluid.)

# THE FIRST CENTURY OF GMC TRUCK HISTORY

## CHAPTER 10: 2000 - 2002

2000

Completely redesigned *Yukon* and *Yukon XL* full size SUVs were announced, following the GMT800 program design trend. The *Yukon XL* replaced the GMC Suburban. (Chevrolet continued to call it the Suburban.) These full size SUVs evolved into luxury class vehicles when equipped with available uplevel equipment. Ride, handling and comfort were superior to many passenger cars. The three new Vortec V8 engines introduced in the new Sierra were available and the maximum trailer towing capacity was up to 10,500 lbs.

Power rating for the Vortec 4300 4.3L V6 engine was increased to 190 nhp for the 4x4 Sonoma, Jimmy and all Safari vans and to 200 nhp for Savana vans. The ratings for two of the Vortec V8 engines were also raised for the Sierra and full size SUV applications. The 4800 went from 225 up to 270 nhp and the 5300 was raised from 270 to 285 nhp.

Sierra pickup and cab chassis models were carried over with minor refinements including a rear hinged fourth door for extended cabs.

An upscale version of the compact Jimmy SUV called the **Envoy** was available with luxury features such as high intensity discharge headlamps, heated rear view mirrors, *Bose* premium audio system, heated front bucket seats and a standard *Autotrac* 4-wheel drive system with push button control.

The Vortec 7400 7.4L V8, the only gas engine used in "C" series medium duty trucks, was available with either 210 or 270 nhp rating. A new 200 or 230 nhp *Duramax* 7800 7.8L L6 diesel from Isuzu was offered in the "T" series, replacing the 7.1 diesel engine. The revised CAT 3126B family was available in both C and T series with ghp ratings from 175 to 300.

2001

The GMT800 based product line was expanded to include new "heavy duty" C/K 2500HD and 3500 models. 4-door Crew cabs were available on both 2500HD and 3500 models in addition to standard and extended cabs. GVWRs ranged from 6,100 to 12,000 lbs. (The latter rating required dual rear wheels which were available on C/K3500s.) A new 340 nhp Vortec 8100 8.1L V8 gas engine was added and the 300 nhp *Duramax* 6600 6.6L V8 turbocharged diesel replaced the 6.5L engine in 2500HD and 3500 models.

Two new heavy duty transmissions were available with the larger two engines: A 6-speed manual from ZF of Germany and a 5-speed Allison automatic.

The 8.1L gas engine was also offered in the ¾-ton *Yukon XL*, making it the best SUV for towing trailers up to 12,000 lbs. GCW. The *Savana* G3500 van also gained the 8.1L engine option.

For Sonoma pickups, a third door became standard with all extended cabs and a crew cab version was offered with four doors hinged at the front.

**Denali** versions of the *Yukon* and *Yukon XL* were added with even greater luxury features including a driver information center, *OnStar* safety and security system, a *Bose* music system with 11 speakers, and radio controls on the steering wheel as well as for the rear seat passengers.

2002

*GMC celebrated the Centennial for GMC trucks, starting with the first sale of a truck built by the Grabowsky brothers in 1902. (Remember that the GMC trademark was first used in business in 1911.)*

The most significant new product that year was the **Envoy** mid-sized SUV that was actually released in mid-2001. Sized between the Jimmy and Yukon, it has unique new styling and chassis design and can seat 7 passengers. Even the engine is a totally new Vortec 4200 4.2L L6, producing 270 hp with dual overhead camshafts and 4 valves per cylinder. Luxury options similar to the Denali were available. *Motor Trend* magazine selected the 2002 Envoy as the best SUV for the year. The smaller Jimmy SUV was soon discontinued.

## THE FIRST CENTURY OF GMC TRUCK HISTORY

A *Denali* version of the *Sierra* pickup provided upscale luxury similar to the *Tahoe Denali* package. *Quadrateer* 4-wheel steering was available to improve low speed maneuvering and high speed stability. Few trucks were sold with that costly option.

A version of the *Sierra* pickup called the *Sierra Professional* offered provisions for converting the cab into a mobile office. Also, provisions were available for conversion of the fuel system to either bi-fuel or dedicated to compressed natural gas (CNG).

*J. D. Power and Associates* rated the *Sonoma* as the "Best compact pickup in initial quality", recognizing the continuation of the GMC truck quality tradition.

The "W" medium duty tilt cab series included models W3500, W4500, W5500 and WT5500 with GVWRs from 12,000 to 19,500 lbs. Engines available included 5.7L V8 gas and 4.75L L4 and 7.8L L6 turbocharged/intercooled diesels. Gas powered models were built in the Janesville WI plant and the diesels by Isuzu at Kawasaki, Japan.

## THE FIRST CENTURY OF GMC TRUCK HISTORY

### EPILOGUE

***GMC continued to build and market superior trucks in the light and medium classes after the centennial year.***

- 2003 For Sierra pickups and Yukon SUVs exterior changes included a reshaped grille with three horizontal bars replacing five bars and fog lamp holes in the lower bumper. Interior refinements included new instrument panel clusters and new radio and heater controls. Also the uplevel steering wheel included redundant lamp, radio and cruise controls.
- An all new *Top Kick* series of medium duty conventional cab models started in production in mid-2002 as 2003 models. Identified internally as the GMT560 program, it included trucks from class 4 through class 8 with models C4500, C5500, C6500, C7500 and C8500. The C8500 was a class 8 heavy duty truck, available either in 4x2 or 6x4 configuration. GVWRs range from 16,000 to 61,000 lbs. Depending on model applications, these engines were available:
- Vortec 8100MD 8.1L V8 gasoline, 210 to 300 nhp  
Duramax 6600 6.6L V8 diesel, 225 to 325 nhp  
Duramax (Isuzu) 7800 7.8L L6 diesel, 200 to 275 nhp  
Caterpillar 3126E 7.2L L6 diesel, 190 to 300 nhp
- 2004 A totally new ***Canyon*** line of midsize pickup trucks was introduced with regular, extended and 4-door Crew cabs available. A 175 nhp 2.8L 4-cylinder engine is standard with a 220 nhp 3.5L 5-cylinder option. Both engines were based on the 4.2L inline 6 that was introduced in the midsize *Envoy* SUV in 2002. The Sonoma line of pickups was soon dropped.
- Also new for 2004 was the full size *Envoy XUV* luxury SUV. It featured a power slide rear roof panel that allowed tall cargo to be carried in the rear compartment. A weatherproof mid-gate could isolate the passenger compartment from the rear section. Unfortunately this variant did not meet sales expectations so it was cancelled mid-2005.
- 2005 Most models were carried over with minor changes except that distinctive new grilles appeared on the luxury Denali versions of Sierra pickups and *Envoy* and Yukon SUVs. Those grilles included a perforated appearance with many small holes. Also, fancy 20 inch wheels are available on 1500 series Sierras and Yukons.
- 2006 Most models changed very little.
- The Sierra 3500 “heavy duty” pickup was ranked highest in initial quality in it’s class by J. D. Powers and Associates. Engines offered in that series included: Vortec 6000 V8, 300 nhp, Vortec 8100 V8 (big block), 330 nhp and Duramax Diesel 6600 V8, 360 nhp. The Allison 6-speed automatic transmission with “tap shift” electronic control was available with the larger two engines. Maximum GVWR was 11,400 lbs. with dual rear wheels and maximum GCWR was 23,000 lbs. (Power and weight ratings were with automatic transmissions.)
- 2007 The big news for GMC that year was introduction of a new *Sierra* pickup series with new styling and many improvements. A host of luxury features were available, including Remote starter system, Power sun roof, Power sliding rear window, Power adjustable accelerator and brake controls, DVD based navigation display with voice prompts and, on Crew cabs, Automatic dual-zone air conditioning and Rear seat DVD player with LCD display. Only automatic transmissions were available as the 5-speed manuals were dropped due to low sales.
- Power ratings were increased on most light duty engines. The following Vortec gas engines are available, depending on model: (Ratings are nhp at rated RPM): 4.3L V6 – 195 @ 4600, 4.8L V8 – 295 @ 5600, 5.3L V8 - 315 @ 5200 and 6.0L V8 – 367 @ 5500.
- For customers who didn’t need all of those upscale options, a work truck version of the C1500 pickup was available with basic equipment but even that had a long list of available options.

## THE FIRST CENTURY OF GMC TRUCK HISTORY

The 2006 Sierra continued into 2007 renamed the *Sierra Classic*, and was phased out as the new version took over.

Also new for 2007 were redesigned *Yukon* and *Yukon SL*. However, the front ends were different from the new pickups. The grilles, headlamps and bumpers were more like passenger cars. A long list of luxury options was also available on these SUVs.

Another new model that year was the *Acadia* “crossover” SUV which featured 4-doors and seating for 7 or 8 passengers. Although the exterior dimensions were less than the *Yukon*, the *Acadia* provided more interior space – nearly 117 cu. ft. with the center and rear seats down flat. Front wheel drive was standard with an option for all-wheel drive. It was powered by a new 275 nhp 3.6L V6 engine coupled with a 6-speed Hydra-Matic automatic transmission. The smaller frontal area and lighter weight (6,400 lbs. GVWR) resulted in better fuel economy than with the *Yukon*: 17 mpg city/ 24 highway (1 mpg less with AWD). Many upscale options were available to equip the *Acadia* as a luxury SUV.

An all-wheel drive version of the *Savana* “G” van was introduced that year.

Like with other GM vehicles, the Conditional New Vehicle Warranty was extended to 100,000 miles or 5 years, whichever comes first.

2008 *GMC touted their vehicles as “Professional Grade” in advertising and sales literature.*

The *Denali* uplevel version of the *Sierra* and *Yukon* was available with a 403 hp 6.2L V8 engine, the most power available in ½-ton light trucks (except Chevrolet.)

The “Active Fuel Management” system, available on 5.3L and 6.0L engines, switched from V8 to 4-cylinder mode when less power is required while cruising, resulting in a considerable fuel savings. The transition was barely noticeable. A *Hybrid* package was offered on the *Tahoe*, including a 6.0L V8 engine driving a 300-volt generator that charged batteries and powered two 60 kW electric motors driving the wheels. City fuel economy was greatly improved as the electric motors drove the vehicle up to about 25 mph, and exhaust emissions were reduced.

*General Motors announced that the GM medium duty truck business was being sold to Navistar International. However, that deal did not materialize, probably because sufficient financing was not available.*

*The year ended with a severe economic recession that resulted in a major downturn in vehicle sales and increased unemployment. GM’s financial health deteriorated drastically.*

2009 *The recession deepened in the first quarter of the year. GM was forced to accept loans from the US Government to avoid bankruptcy.*

The GMC complete product lineup included these high quality vehicles that were carried over from 2008 with minor changes:

*Acadia* crossover SUV, front wheel drive or AWD

*Canyon* intermediate size pickup truck

*Envoy* intermediate size SUV

*Sierra* full size pickup trucks in three series: C/K1500, C/K2500HD and C/K3500HD

*Sierra* chassis with cab

*Yukon* and *Yukon XL* full size SUVs

*Savana* full size passenger or cargo vans in three series, rear wheel drive or AWD

G1500, G2500 and G3500

*Savana* chassis with cab Cutaway “G” vans

*Topkick* medium duty chassis with conventional cab: C4500 4x2/4x4, C5500 4x2/4x4,

C6500, C7500 and C8500 4x2/6x4

“W” Series medium duty chassis with low tilt cab: W3500, W4500, W5500, W5500HD

“T” Series medium duty chassis with high tilt cab: T6500, T7500, T8500 4x2/6x4



## THE FIRST CENTURY OF GMC TRUCK HISTORY

### CONCLUSION

GMC Trucks continue to operate all over the world. Many early models survive in the hands of collectors and in museums. Most of them can still be driven.

Many World War II GMC "Deuce-and-a-half" 6x6 trucks are still in use in US and Europe as are Korean War vintage M135 type military trucks.

The largest category of collectable GMCs include the mid-50s and 60s models, particularly pickups and Suburbans with V8 and GMC V6 engines. Large collector clubs exist in several areas of the US.

There usually are many GMCs of various ages, large and small, at antique truck shows such as the American Truck Historical Society national convention and regional shows. (The author is active in two chapters of ATHS)

There are several historic GMC show vehicles in the GM Heritage Collection including 1915 and 1916 2-ton trucks, 1924 K-16 1-ton tank truck, 1938 T-18 2½ -ton stake truck, 1941 CC300 fire truck, 1951 100 canopy express fruit vendors truck, 1956 100-8 Suburban pickup and 1977 motor home. Recently, a 4-wheel flatbed trailer (believed to be built for GMC around 1917) was added to the fleet as were a WW II DUKW353 2 ½-ton amphibious 6x6 "Duck" and an early WW II 6x6 truck that will be restored.

Presently, GMC owner loyalty remains very strong with an excellent reputation for brand quality and reliability.

The past for GMC Trucks was memorable and the future looks very promising.

Donald E. Meyer  
GMC Truck Historian  
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### OTHER GOOD SOURCES FOR GMC TRUCK HISTORY

*A Brief Outline of the First Century of GMC Truck History*, D. E. Meyer

A condensed version of the above history with illustrations. Available at the Gmnext website:

[http://wiki.gmnext.com/wiki/index.php/A\\_Brief\\_Outline\\_of\\_the\\_First\\_Century\\_of\\_GMC\\_Truck\\_History](http://wiki.gmnext.com/wiki/index.php/A_Brief_Outline_of_the_First_Century_of_GMC_Truck_History)

*GMC Heavy Duty Trucks, 1927-1987*, James R. Wagner, Iconografix, 2004

*GMC Light Duty Trucks*, James R. Wagner, Iconografix, 2007