

North American Series One Register

Land-Rover 80” in North America

by Benjamin A. Smith
Revision 1.2, 24 January 2016

The first version of this article was first published in the Ottawa Valley Land Rovers Newsletter, December 2012. It has been updated with additional information discovered since that time and lightly edited.

The Land-Rover was brought into production in the spring of 1948. The Rover Motor Company expanding sales outside of Great Britain. This is an analysis of the first model of Land-Rovers, known in later years as the Series I 80”, which sold into Canada and the United States from 1948 to 1953.

The build data was written down in build books currently in the care of the British Motor Heritage Centre in Gaydon, England. Historians are permitted to visit the museum and view microfilm copies of each book. The data for each Land-Rover is contained on a single row in the book which contains the chassis number, an “in” date, and “out” date, the color, destination dealership/customer and city of the dealership/or customer. The book is layed out by chassis number sequence order with the chassis number printed, the dates samped in ink and everything else written out long hand in ink.

The chassis numbers we are talking about the ones that start with L86xxxx, L866xxxx, L061xxxx, 1613xxxx, 2613xxxx, and 3613xxxx. The last three are exclusively left hand drive, export models. In the first two chassis number sequences all Land-Rovers were comingled with a R or L prefix to denote handedness. I looked at all of



1950 80”, circa 2010 Ontario, T. Rose

the other chassis number sequences, which included welders, station wagons, Complete Knock Downs (CKD), export Right Hand Drive (RHD) and home market RHD. None of them came to Canada or the USA. The only ones imported were from the expected chassis number sequences.

Rover initially attempted to build their own dealership network in the US and Canada. The first dealerships were Western Messenger & Transfer Service in Winnipeg, Manitoba and Ontario Rover Distributors in Toronto, Ontario. Both were listed in the Land-Rover Operation Manual TP/108/A which has print date of June 1948. The third revision of that manual, TP/108/C dated August 1949, added Wier’s Motor Services Ltd. (Montreal, Quebec) and Plimley Automotive Co. Ltd. (Vancouver, British Columbia) to the list. For USA sales, customers were directed to Plimley’s. The 4th edition of the Operation Manual, TP/108/D dated April 1950, added Yorktown Motors Ltd. (Toronto, Ontario) and deleted Ontario Rover Distributors and Western Messenger and Transport.

The British Automobile and Motor Cycle Show was held at the Grand Central Palace in New York from 15 to 23 April 1950. A Land-Rover and rolling chassis were featured at stand #11. During this show Rover announced that Rootes Motors, Inc. was granted the exclusive



1951 80”, 2001 OVLR Birthday Party, A. Findlayson

contract to sell Land-Rovers and Rover cars in Canada and the US. Hence forth all Land-Rovers were imported by Rootes. In the build books Rootes is referred to as “Rootes” (either as the bare word or with “Inc.”, “Ltd.” or “USA” afterwards) or Rootes Motors (either as the bare word or with “Inc.”, “Ltd.” or “USA” afterwards) and once as “The Rootes Motors”. Consistency in a hand written build book? Never! The first mention of Rootes was 17 April 1950. Interestingly Rootes 80” had Lucas 388 rear tail lights and non-Rootes 80” had D lights.



1951 80”, Oxford, CT, 2012, E. Zipkin

There are a few caveats and assumptions that must be made as the data is misleading. Firstly there are 105 trucks from 1951 and one from 1952 that were sent to either Rootes Motors USA or Rootes USA, but with a final destination of Cuba, Honduras, Nicaragua or Salvador. One 1950 model was dispatched to New York, but labeled as “for Cuba”. I am assuming that all of these were re-exported and do not include them in my numbers. As you can see in the early 1950s Rootes Motors was exporting to all through Central America and the Caribbean, but to no other locations. Not all of them destined for outside of the US and Canada were labeled as Rootes USA, but I think the assumption of re-export holds. There are eight 80” from the 1951 model year that were sent to “Rootes, Inc.”, with no listed destination. These could have easily come to Canada or the USA, but until proven otherwise I am assuming not and excluding them from my numbers. These trucks have the 1613 chassis number prefix for a 1951 and the following sequence numbers: 5814, 6618 to 6624 and were built mostly built on June 22, 1951 (with one on July 4th and one on May 10th) The other similar anomaly are twelve trucks, 1952 model year this time, with a destination of “Rootes, Inc N.A”. I’m assuming this is for “North America”, thus Canada or the USA and am including them in my numbers. They have the chassis number prefix of 2613 for 1952 and have the sequence numbers 0255 to 0266. They are all blue and were built from 24 to 31 August 1951. All have the same “out” date so likely went to the same location.

few exceptions. Three 1948s were imported by Weirs Motors Sales into Toronto and two 1948s were imported to Western Messenger & Transport into Winnipeg, Manitoba. Wiers also brought in six more 1950 models, but this time they were labeled as for Canada. The sole 1949 model was imported by Loan & Transport Co., again to Canada. The Loan and Transport truck was a demo model in Rover’s attempt to set up a dealership network. Thirty-two models from 1950 were imported by “Yorktown Motors Ltd.”, again to Canada. The other 56 for 1950 were imported by Rootes. All 529 in 1951 were by Rootes. For the 1952 models a company called Saluin, Inc brought four to the USA, the other 233 by Rootes. In 1953 we have one imported to Canada by Farquahnsen, one labeled as just “USA” and the other 341 by Rootes. In total Rootes imported 1,153 of the known 1,348 80” Land-Rovers to Canada or the USA. What about the infamous Shell 80”s? In looking at all of the build books, I have seen Shell sending Land-Rovers all over the world, but not to Canada. A member of OVL R was part owner of one. The story that he heard was that Shell took delivery in London (likely at Henly’s) and then shipped them globally. Find me some example chassis numbers and we can go back to the books to know for sure.

So what are grand totals of 80” Land Rovers sent to the US and Canada? 1,348.

Year	Canada	USA	N.A.	Total	Global Build	NA%
1948	5	0	0	5	3,000	0.2%
1949	1	0	0	1	5,010	0.0%
1950	75	14	0	89	16,000	0.6%
1951	321	352	0	673	17,360	3.9%
1952	221	4	12	237	18,715	1.3%
1953	174	169	0	343	22,275	1.5%
Total	797	539	12	1348	82,357	1.6%



1952 80”, 2003 OVL R Birthday Party, M. Rothman

Which companies sold Land-Rovers into Canada and the USA? The lion’s share went to Rootes. There were a



1951 80", 2015 OVLR Birthday Party, B. Smith

Colors? For the first four years all of the 80" in question were green. In 1952 the twelve for "N.A." were blue and the other ones were all green. In 1953 the nomenclature begins to change. There were three red ones for Canada and one for the USA, all but one were listed as fire engines! 36131906 built on 22 Dec 1952 was sent to Abidgain, USA (wherever that is), 36132697 built on 3 Mar 1953 was sent to Canada. Likely it was also a fire engine, but that was not mentioned in the book. 36133102 built on 30 Mar 1953 was sent to Halifax, NS. Lastly 36133160 built on 10 Apr 1953 was sent to Vancouver, BC. Do any of these still survive? Send all facts, photos and rumors my way. The rest of 1953 models are not that much more interesting. Up to about mid-November 1952 the color is listed as green. After that it is "L.1 Green". The cutover is somewhere between 36131515 (green) and 36161531 (L.1 Green). In the rest of Series I we also see new colors including "L.2 Blue", "L.3 Grey" and "L.4. Beige".

What was the initial destination of these 80"? Land-Rover records the destination port. From there they go into the hinterlands. But it gives us a general idea. Looking at Canada, the destinations were:

Destinaton	1948	1949	1950	1951	1952	1953	Total
Canada	0	0	44	4	9	19	76
Halifax	0	0	0	8	0	5	13
Montreal	3	0	0	72	69	29	173
New Brunswick	0	0	0	6	6	2	14
Newfoundland	0	0	0	6	15	2	23
Ontario	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Quebec	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
St. John	0	0	0	0	0	13	13
Toronto	0	1	7	58	15	41	122
Vancouver	0	0	24	166	97	54	341
Victoria	0	0	0	0	10	8	18
Winnipeg	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
Total	3	1	75	215	221	174	797

We see that nearly half (341 out of 797) initially started out in British Columbia. Perhaps some made it to Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan or the Yukon. The eastern coast ones likely stayed in their local-ish areas. I wouldn't be surprised if the "New Brunswick" ones really landed in St. John, the Quebec one to Toronto and the Ontario one to Toronto.

Turning to the USA we have another pattern.

Destination	1950	1951	1952	1953	Total
Abigain	0	0	0	1	1
Boston, MA	0	3	0	1	4
Jacksonville, FL	0	2	0	0	2
Long Island	0	1	0	0	1
Los Angeles, CA	0	82	0	63	145
Miami, FL	0	0	0	1	1
New Orleans, LA	0	0	0	1	1
New York, NY	6	105	4	32	147
Portland, OR	0	0	0	35	35
Reid & Pelleranou	0	1	0	0	1
San Francisco, CA	0	3	0	20	23
Seattle,WA	0	30	0	15	45
USA	8	119	0	0	127
Total	14	352	4	169	539

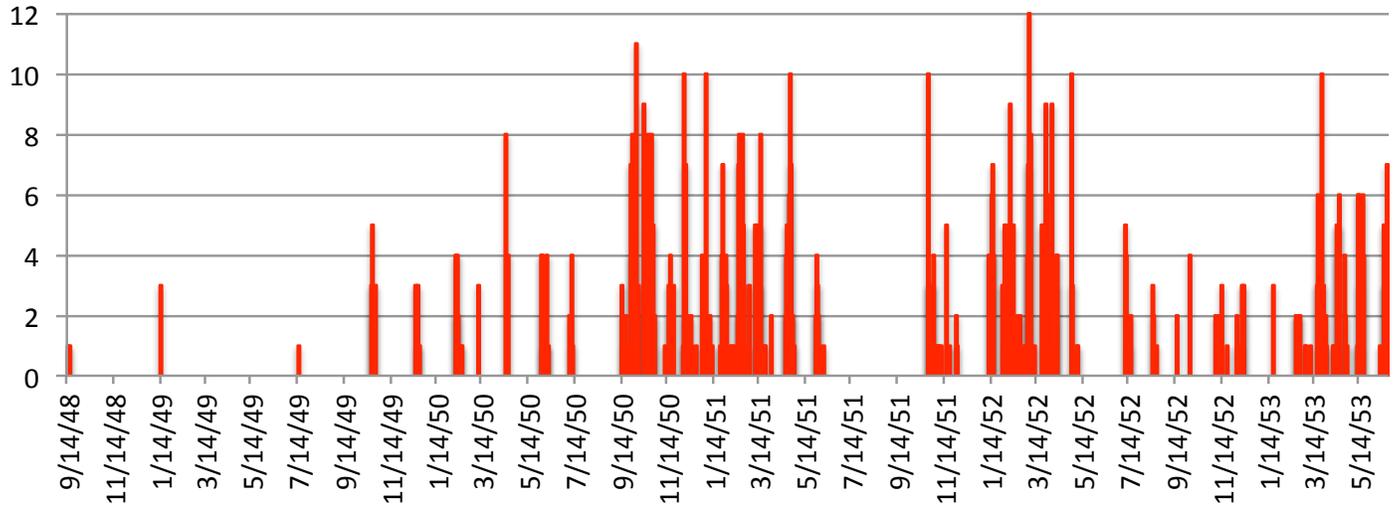
We see that the primary recipients for Land Rovers in the USA was Los Angeles and New York with Seattle, Portland and San Francisco as the next batch. Where the 127 to "USA" went, your guess is as good as mine. But the gap for sale of 1952 model years is interesting, isn't it? We can see that the 1950 models was dipping the toe into the water followed by strong orders. But then a gap? Sitting on unsold inventory? Or something else? Let's see!

First thing to remember is that the Land-Rover model



1953 80", 2009 Winter Romp, Maine, Q. Aspin

Canada Dispatch "In"



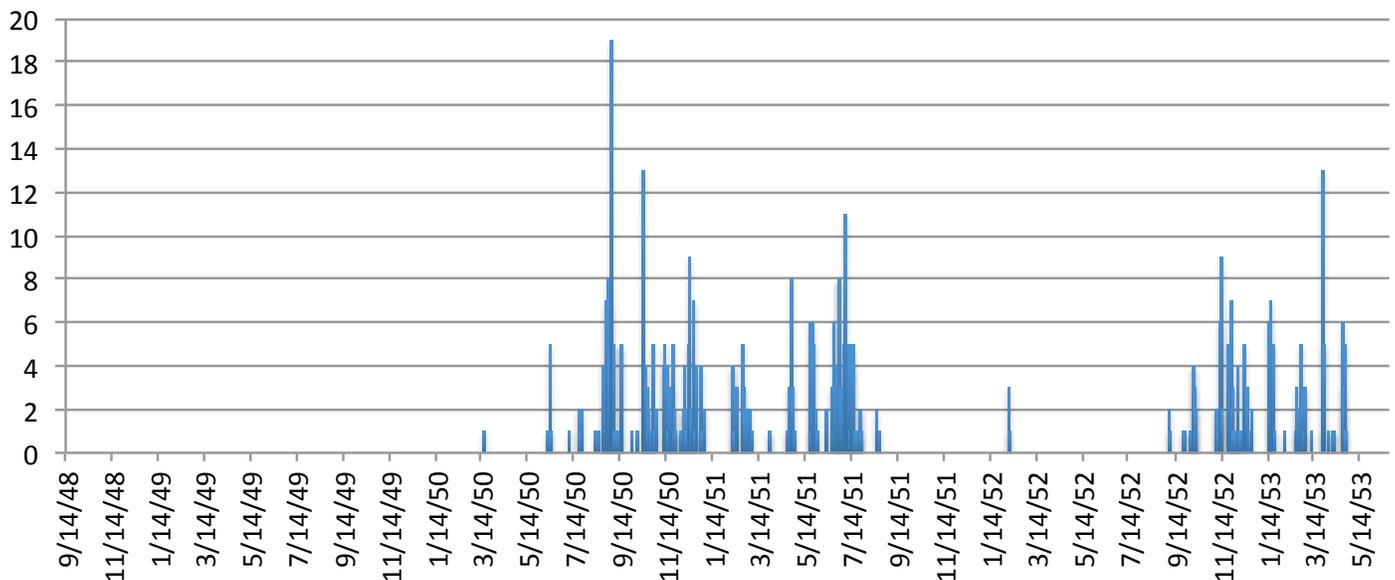
years are a little wacky. The 1948s were built from July 1948 to Feb 1949. The 1949s were built from Feb 1949 to Aug 1949. Effectively this is one build year split into two parts. After this, they followed the Rover Co. build year which was from the end of July one year to August of the next. 1950 was July 1949 to Aug 1950, 1951 was July 1950 to Aug 1951, 1952 was July 1951 to Aug 1952 and 1953 was July 1952 to Aug 1953.

Keeping this in mind, the build dates for the Canadian 80" are shown in the graph above. "In" is the date that the truck entered the dispatch yard, which is also the date that it left the production line. Other than a gap from about Feb 1951 to Oct 1952 with a few orders in the middle there are Land-Rovers built throughout the year for Canada. Gaps are only a month or two long. There first main clump is 14 Sep 1950 to about 15 Feb 1951 and then a burst in in Nov 1951, a clump from about 15 Jan to 15 May 1952. As sprinkling of orders

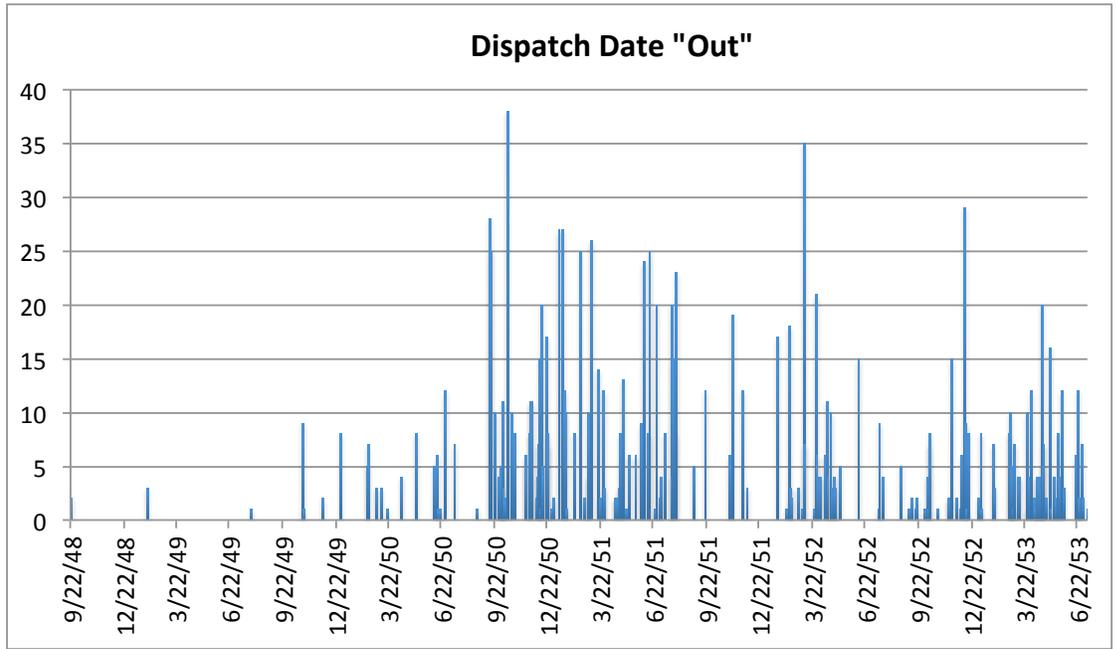
in 1952 with orders coming back in the second quarter of 1953. This would be indicative of a strengthening order book with sales throughout the year.

Turning to the USA we see a clump of Land Rovers built to order from about 15 Aug to 15 Sept 1950 Then another clump from about 15 Oct to 30 Dec 1950. And a clump from about 30 May to 30 July 1951. Then there was almost nothing until orders starting up again around 30 Sept 1952. What this means is that there was a bunch of orders that were filled with 1951 model year right at the end of the model year. Then a little over a year later another order was made...just after the 1952 model ended and the 1953 model started. From this point the orders were spread from 30 Sep 1952 through about 30 April 1953. It looks like an annual order that was spread out a bit that happened to miss one model year. Or perhaps things got slow.

USA Dispatch "In"



The build records also contain the “out” date which corresponds to when the Land-Rovers left the dispatch yard. From there they were transported by truck to a rail head and thence to a port or a rail station near their destination. The “out” dates thus roughly correspond to when the Land-Rovers were shipped to Canada or the USA. As you can see in the chart, generally the Land-Rovers left in daily groups of five to fifteen, with peaks hitting over twenty-five on six days and the max at 38. This was the era of the Land Rover transporter that could carry four 80” on two levels and then another four on a double decker trailer or a total of eight. It is possible that multiple days near each other would end up on the same ship. It is also likely Land-Rover would send a full load down to the harbor to be loaded on different ships.



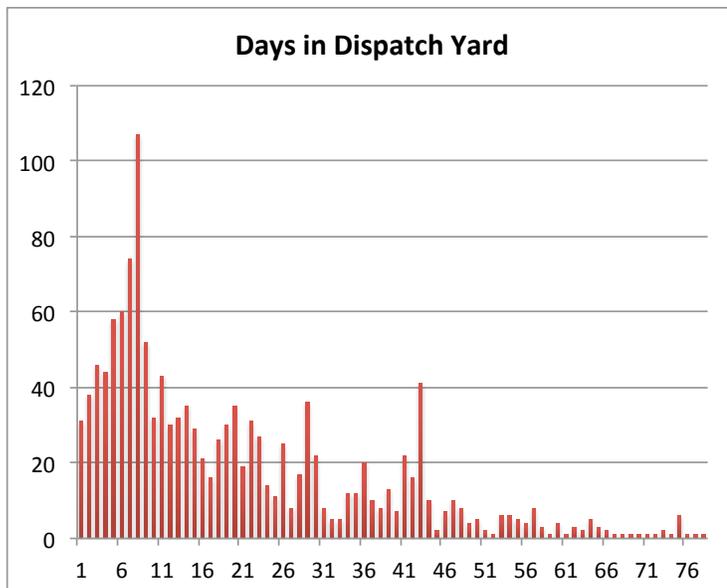
In this time period Land-Rovers rolled off the line and were sent to their destination. As you can see a large chunk comes in goes within eight days. This corresponds to 40.3% of the 80” send to Canada and the US. The 50% mark was struck after day twelve. 75% had been shipped by the 27th day. The last major bump hits day 42, with the rest in batches sent in groups of one to eight. That 42 day mark corresponds to 93.5% of Land-Rovers shipped. Only 6.5% took longer to get out of the dispatch yard.

build records for most British cars and has an excellent reading room.



1951 80”, undergoing restoration 2015, D. Kenner

I would like to thank the Heritage Motor Centre in Gaydon, Warwickshire for letting me research the data in the build books for this article. The HMC holds the



1952 80”, 2008 OVLR Birthday Party, T. Tollefson