

# BRC PRODUCTION ENDED 80 YEARS AGO IN 1941

BY GEORGE HOLLINS



1940 BRC Pilot September

## 1940



1940 BRC November - December s/n 1001 - 1070



1941 Series-1 BRC March - June s/n 1072 - 2562

## 1941



1941 Series-2 BRC Oct - Nov s/n 2563 - 3650

Eighty years ago, at the close of 1941, Bantam BRC production ended. A few months ago, we published an article celebrating the start of production for the 1941 Series-1 BRC in March of 1941. This article will focus on the end of BRC production concluding with the 1941 Series-2 BRC built during Oct.-Nov. 1941. Please note that each subheaded section of this article is referenced in the BRC Production Summary Chart found on page 9.

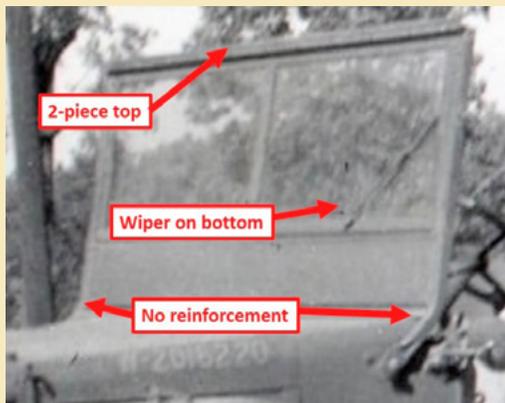
built a small number (8-10) BRC for non military purposes. After the 1,488 Series-1 BRC were built March-June 1941, there was a three month production shut down July-Aug-Sep 1941. During this shutdown period, Bantam redesigned the BRC with many improvements. The most distinguishable improvement was made to the windshield to address

### The BRC Pilot and 70 1940 BRC

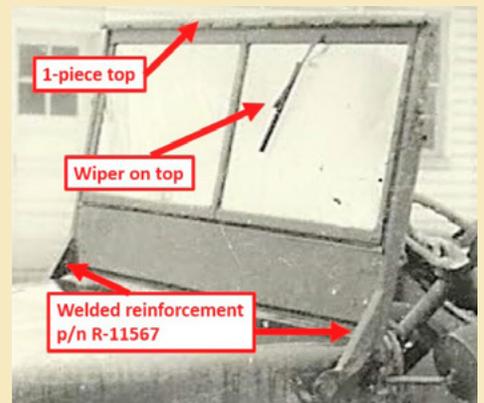
After the BRC Pilot was delivered in Sep 1940, Bantam, on military contracts, built a total of 2,642 BRC for the Army during three separate production runs. In 1940, during November-December, 70 BRC were built.

### Series-1 BRC

In 1941, there were two production runs; 1,488 BRC Series-1 were built March-June, and 1,084 BRC Series-2 were built October-November. In addition to the military contracts, there is evidence that Bantam



1941 Series-1 BRC windshield



1941 Series-2 BRC windshield

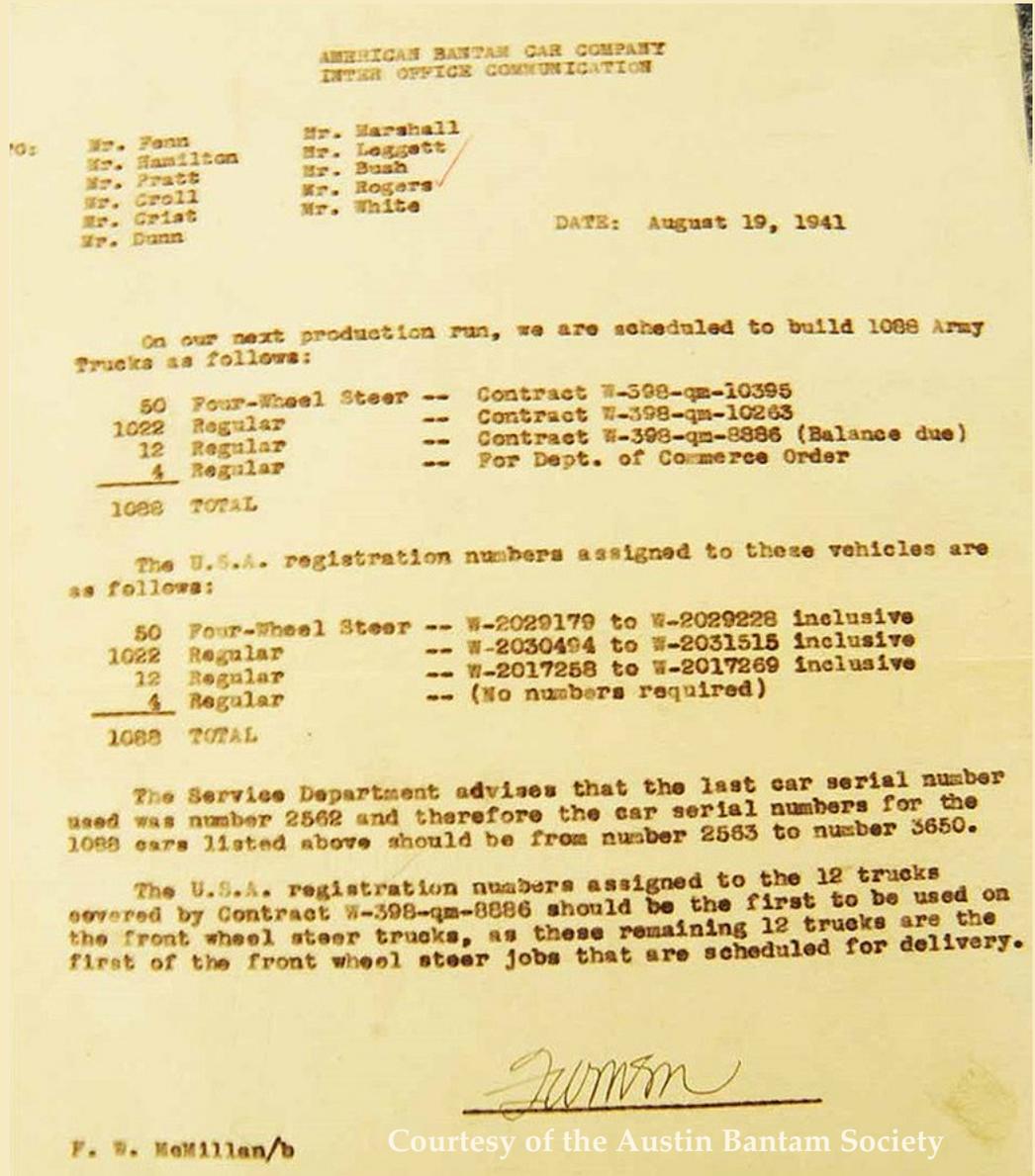
field failures of the arms that broke on many Series-1 BRC. Other redesign was made to address production assembly issues. In total, there were over 20 design changes made to the Series-2 BRC. We have previously published articles detailing some of these design changes.

**Series-2 BRC**

Shown on this page is a priceless Bantam Inter Office Communication dated August 19, 1941 discovered and shared by the Chester Hempfling family. This memo summarizes the production plan for the Series-2 BRC that would begin in Oct 1941. The memo confirms that Bantam built only 1,488 of the 1,500 Series-1 contract and therefore 12 BRC would need to be built to complete the prior contract.

At the time the Aug 19, 1941 Bantam memo was written, there was no mention as to where the Army planned to ship the 1,084 Series-2 BRC. We speculate that the 12 BRC to finish the earlier contract, the 50 BRC 4WS, and the 22 BRC, were shipped to USA Army camps as several of these BRC have survived and are known to exist today.

Regarding the balance of 1,000 BRC, we believe, based on documents, that the US Government originally intended to ship these to the British on Lend Lease. However, based on research to date, these 1,000 were shipped instead to Russia. We plan to do further research and publish further information on the story about how the BRC shipment was changed from the British to the Russians.



1941 Series-2 BRC Bantam Production Plan, a sheet from the Chester Hempfling family sorting out the later Bantam Reconnaissance Car numbers, contracts and registration numbers. Courtesy of the Austin Bantam Society. ©

The Indiana Gazette (Indiana, Penna Thurs, Jun 5, 1941)

**BANTAM CAR CO. GIVEN CONTRACT**

**BUTLER, June 5—(P)**—The American Bantam Car Company announced today that receipt of an \$864,141 contract from the War Department for reconnaissance trucks has boosted its backlog of orders to an unprecedented figure of approximately \$3,000,000.

President Francis H. Fenn said the largest orders call for 1,200 reconnaissance trucks and parts, in addition to "a substantial quantity of British war orders for which the company is now engaged in a tooling program and on which production will start in September." He added that the company will make a profit this year "for the first time since 1936."

THE EVENING NEWS, HARRISBURG, PENNA., THURSDAY, JUNE 5, 1941

**Butler Firm Receives Army Order for Cars**

By United Press

**BUTLER, June 5.**—Francis H. Fenn, president of the American Bantam Car Co., today announced receipt of a contract for \$864,141 worth of reconnaissance cars for the War Department.

Fenn said this contract boosted the company's backlog of orders to approximately \$3,000,000, enabling it to show a profit for the first time since 1936.

Orders on hand, Fenn said, in-

cluded contracts for 1200 reconnaissance trucks, a large order of reconnaissance car parts and a substantial quantity of British war orders, for which the company is now tooling, with production expected to get underway in September.

Three new directors—John W. Young, Jr., Peter V. Bourterse and W. A. Ward, Jr.—were elected at the annual meeting.

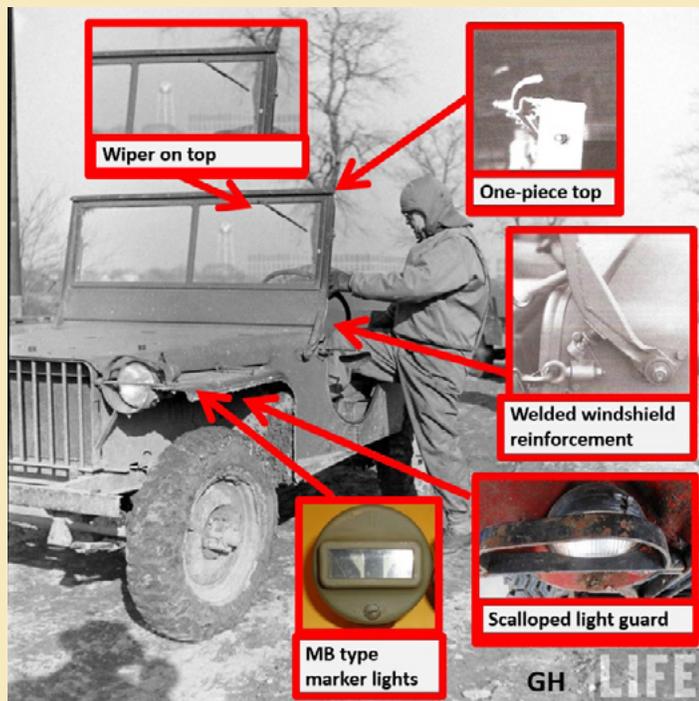
*News traveled fast of the Army's contract with Bantam, as evidenced by articles in the Indiana, PA Gazette and the Harrisburg, PA evening news on June 5, 1941.*

#### 4-Wheel Steer BRC

When BRC Series-2 production started in Oct 1941, we believe that Bantam built the 50 4WS (four wheel steer) first instead of completing the 12 balance due BRC from the first 1,500 contract. This is confirmed by the Bantam Aug 19, 1941 memo, and the BRC Series-2 manuals. Also, remarkably, 10 of the 50 BRC Series-2 4WS have survived and are known to exist today. The serial numbers of the surviving ten 4WS vehicles are within the serial number range 2563 to 2612 giving further evidence that these cars were built first when production resumed in Oct 1941.

Below are original photos of two of these special 4WS BRC. On the left, Army testing with Series-2 design improvements highlighted.

Photo below right, a 1941 BRC 4WS (four wheel steer) with the Series-2 design features. Notice the rear wheels are turned. Also notice the original Firestone tires with the bent bar tread design. The bent bar tread is no longer available on any reproduction tires. Therefore, restorers of 1941 BRCs today are using a straight bar tread. The 1940 BRCs used a Firestone ground grip tread, different than the bent bar tread.



1941 Series-2 BRC 4WS W-2029180. Photo credit LIFE

# 1941

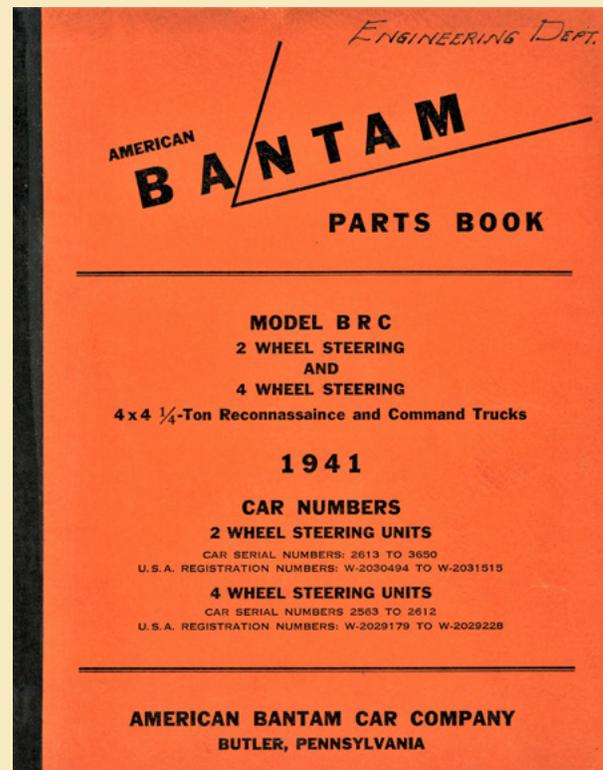
## CAR NUMBERS

### 2 WHEEL STEERING UNITS

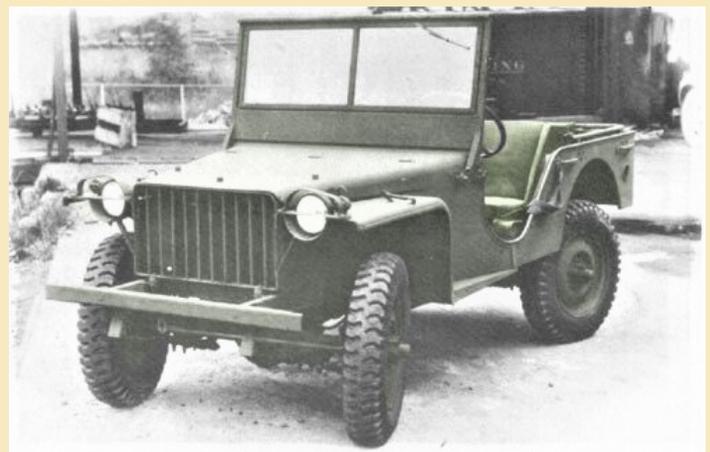
CAR SERIAL NUMBERS: 2613 TO 3650  
U.S.A. REGISTRATION NUMBERS: W-2030494 TO W-2031515

### 4 WHEEL STEERING UNITS

CAR SERIAL NUMBERS 2563 TO 2612  
U.S.A. REGISTRATION NUMBERS: W-2029179 TO W-2029228



1941 Series-2 BRC Parts Book



1941 Series-2 BRC 4WS (four wheel steer). Notice rear wheels are turned. Photo credit Jacco van Snippenberg

## BRC Production Summary Chart

Rooster Tails Article Reference	Date of Delivery	Serial Numbers	Registration Numbers	Contract Number	Quantity Delivered
1940 BRC: P 6	11-40 to 12-40	1001 to 1070	W-2015324 to W-2015393	8269	70
Series 1: P 6	03-41 to 06-41	1072 to 2562	W-2015919 to W-2017257	8886	1488 <i>Of these, 150 with no hood numbers were shipped to Britain</i>
Series 2: P 7 4-Wheel Steer: P 8	10-41 to 11-41	2563 to 2612	W-2029179 to W-2029228	10395	50 <i>4-wheel steer</i>
Balance due: P 9	10-41 to 11-41	2613 to 2624	W-2017258 to W-2017269	8886	12 <i>Balance due</i>
22 BRC: P 9 BRC to Russia: P10-11	10-41 to 11-41	2625 to 3650	W-2030494 to W-2031515	10263	22 <i>To US bases</i> 1000 <i>To Russia</i>
					2642 Total

The above chart is our best estimate of all the Military Contract BRC serial numbers, registration numbers, and quantities, based on research to date. As we mentioned earlier, there is evidence that Bantam also built 8-10 BRC for non military purposes. However, this chart represents only the military contracts.

After the 50 4WS cars were built, we believe 12 BRC were built to complete the earlier contract 8886 for 1,500 vehicles.

To date, no original 1941 photos have been discovered to document these 12 BRC. However, several BRC have survived, serial numbers 2619, 2621, 2622, all with Series-2 design features that we believe confirm this theory.

1941 Series-2 BRC2619 in the UK has been invaluable in researching the Series-2 design features. Today, it is still preserved in its original condition.

After the 12 balance due BRC were built, Bantam built the 1,022 BRC on contract 10263, registration numbers W-2030494 to W-2031515.



1941 Series-2 BRC2619 unrestored in the UK, one of the 12 "balance due" BRC.

### 22 BRC for US Bases

Based on original photos, we believe that only 22 of the 1,022 BRC were painted with registration numbers and we speculate these 22 BRC remained in the USA.

Based on photos of the 1,000 BRC in crates destined to Russia the BRC registration numbers were not painted.

Here is another original photo of a 1941 BRC Series-2. The hood number W-2030501 identifies this as one of the 22 BRC regular 2WS (two wheel steer). Only two of the 22 BRC are known to exist today. BRC2752 W-2030514 and BRC2710.



1941 Series-2 BRC W-2030501, one of the 22 cars built on Contract 10263. A smiling GI is transporting women workers at the Aberdeen Maryland proving grounds firing range.

**1000 BRC to Russia**

After the 22 BRC were built, Bantam got down to business building the balance of 1,000 for contract 10263. There is growing photographic and physical evidence that these 1,000 Series-2 BRC Oct-Nov 1941 were shipped to the Rus-



1941 BRC Series-2 Oct-Nov crated for shipment to Russia

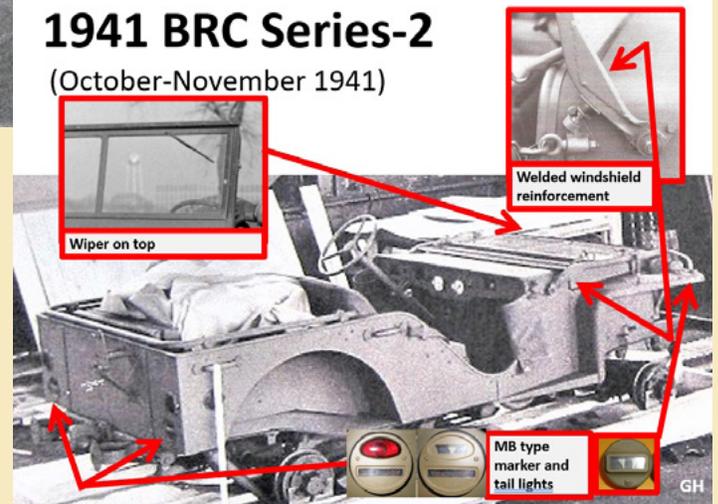
sians. The cars in the crating photo are 1941 Series-2 (see close up with highlighted features). Therefore, this photo was taken sometime during Oct-Nov 1941 and these BRC are presumably for shipment to Russia. The hoods and rear

panels have not been painted with the U.S.A War Department "W" registration numbers.

Although President Roosevelt had signed the Lend Lease Act in March of 1941, there was resistance in Congress to supplying Russia with military equipment based on the Neutrality Act of 1939. Therefore, the circumstances regarding the 1,000 BRC shipped to Russia is still not clearly understood. We will be conducting more research in the future. Based on a recently discovered Russian document, the transaction between Bantam and Russia is now thought to have been through the Russian trading company, AMTORG.

How many of the 1,000 BRC actually made it to Russia through the Arctic shipping routes and German submarines is still being researched. There is some research evidence to date that not all of the 1,000 BRC made it

**1941 BRC Series-2**  
(October-November 1941)



Close up view of 1941 BRC Series-2. Note the Series-2 windshield and tail lights.



Almost 2 years ago Russia bought 1000 of these amazing battle broncos from American Bantam for the valiant Red Army

BACK in 1940 the sensational Bantam-built Jeep hit the headlines—a new typically American invention which has been called our country's "main contribution to modern war." Russia's smart military men watched this hill-climbing ditch-leaping little battle bronco gallop through its paces, quickly saw its value as a fighting weapon on their vast almost roadless defense lines. In October 1941 they bought 1000 American Bantam-built Jeeps, shipped them home for their war against Hitler — Ivan the terrible Nazi-killer got a steel horse he could ride to Victory. Remember—the inventive engineering behind the American Bantam name is something it pays you to look for after the war on products you want.

*Liberty is cheap at any price... buy more War Bonds!*

**American Bantam Car Company**  
BUTLER PENNSYLVANIA  
Torpedo Engines • Aircraft Controls & Parts • Torpedo Tail-Gearings • Amphibious Trailers • Cargo Trailers

Bantam 1943 ad stating 1,000 BRC were shipped to Russia in 1941.

to Russia. The fate of the missing BRC is unknown. Morbid speculation could be made that some of the 1,000 BRC were lost at sea during the perilous arctic winter voyage.

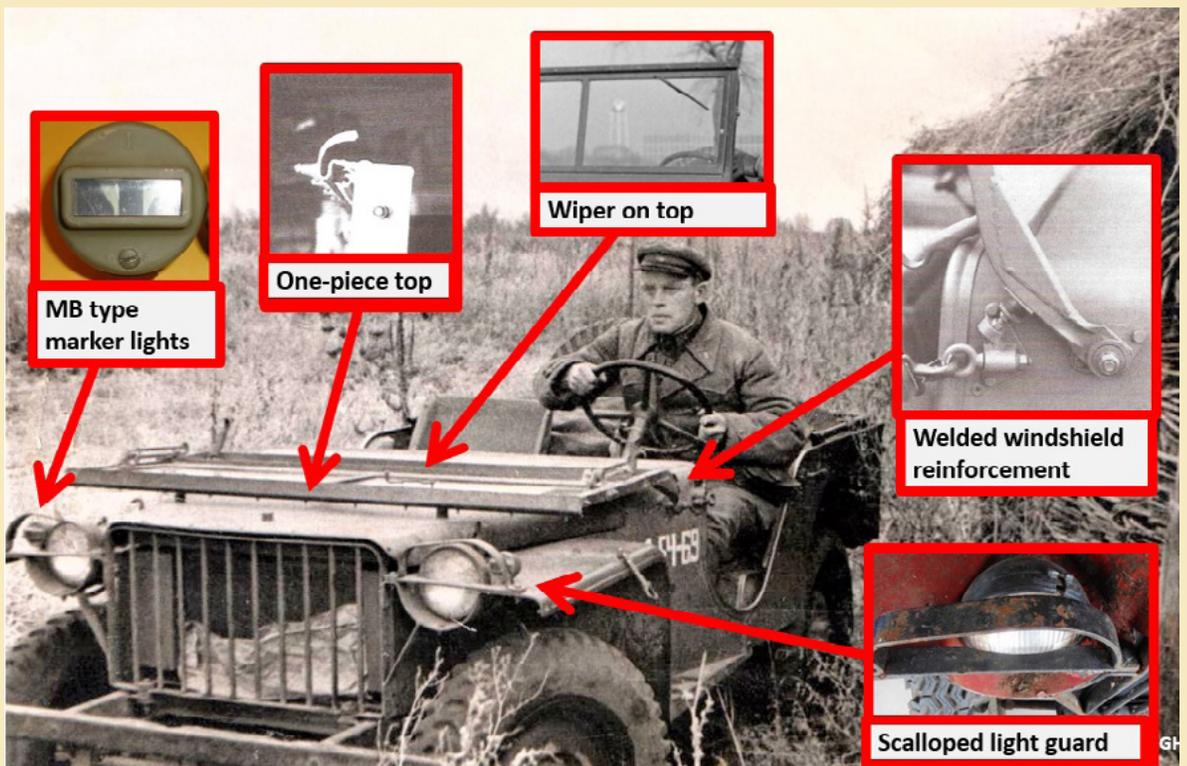


1941 Shipping routes from USA to the UK and Russia, photo credit Oliver Missing.

As shown on the shipping routes, we believe most or all of the BRCs were shipped to Murmansk, Russia. The shipments were made during the Winter months of late 1941 and early 1942.

Several photos of BRCs in Russia have surfaced over the past few years. One of these photos is shown here with very obvious Series-2 design features (Oct-Nov 1941 production).

There are a few photos confirming that the Germans captured Russian BRCs. One such photo is shown below with very clear Series-2 design features.



1941 Series-2 BRC with Russian soldier somewhere in the Soviet Union

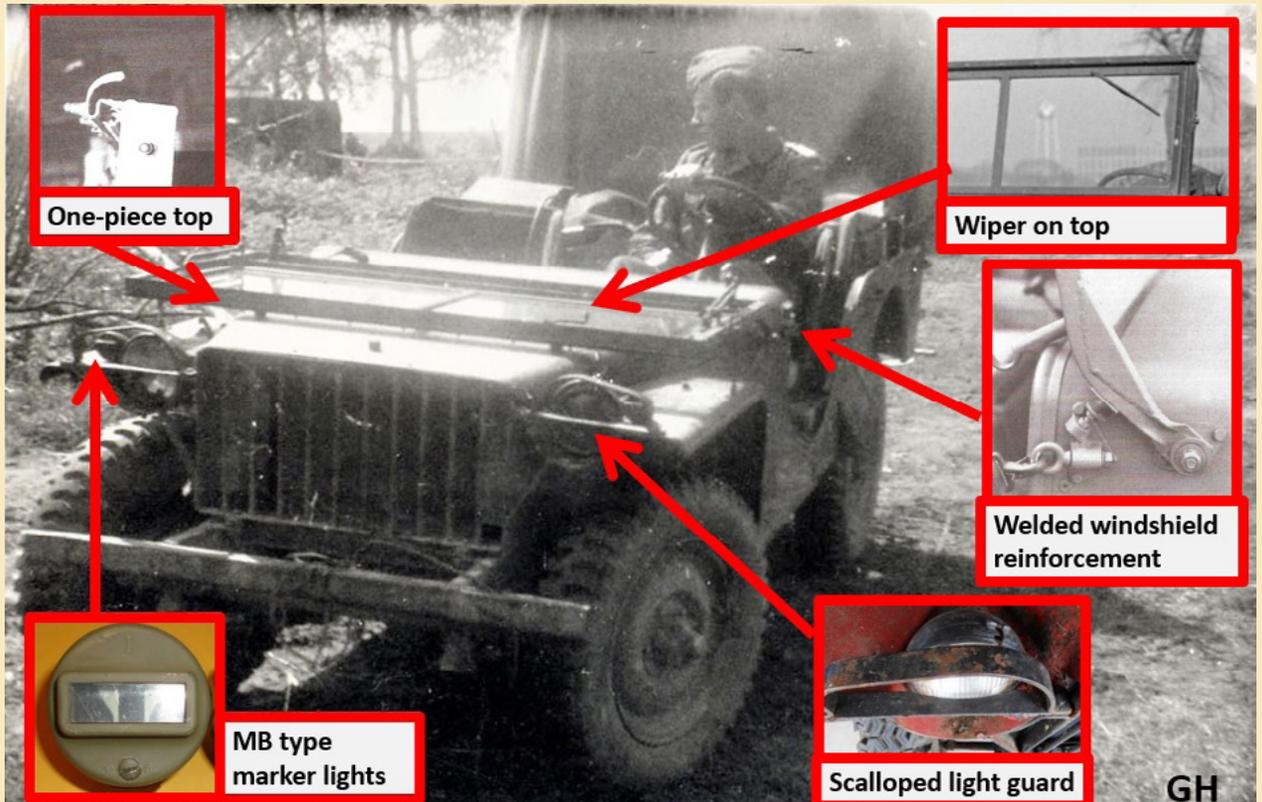
To date, only pieces of authentic Russian Series-2 BRCs have been discovered in Russia. A body, engine, transmission, instruments, and original serial number plate 3242 have been found. Presently these parts are being assembled and restored in Russia to represent the only known surviving Russian BRC3242. We plan to do further research on the Russian BRCs for future articles.

So that is it. Bantam BRC production came to an end with the shipments on Contract 10263.

However, BRCs are still being found. From just a few known to exist back in the 1960s and 1970s to about

100 known to exist worldwide today, the BRC is one of the most sought after and valuable jeeps in the hobby today.

Please visit website at <http://BRC1940.com> to see the list of 100 BRC known to exist today.



German capture of a Russian 1941 Series-2 BRC