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Vintage Truck[®]



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History Revealed,



Since the truck had no roof and the wood in the cabin was completely rotten, the owner had to design templates for every wood part.



Most of the steering wheel was missing.

Cloutier's wife looked at the wreckage and said, "Do you intend to rebuild this thing?"

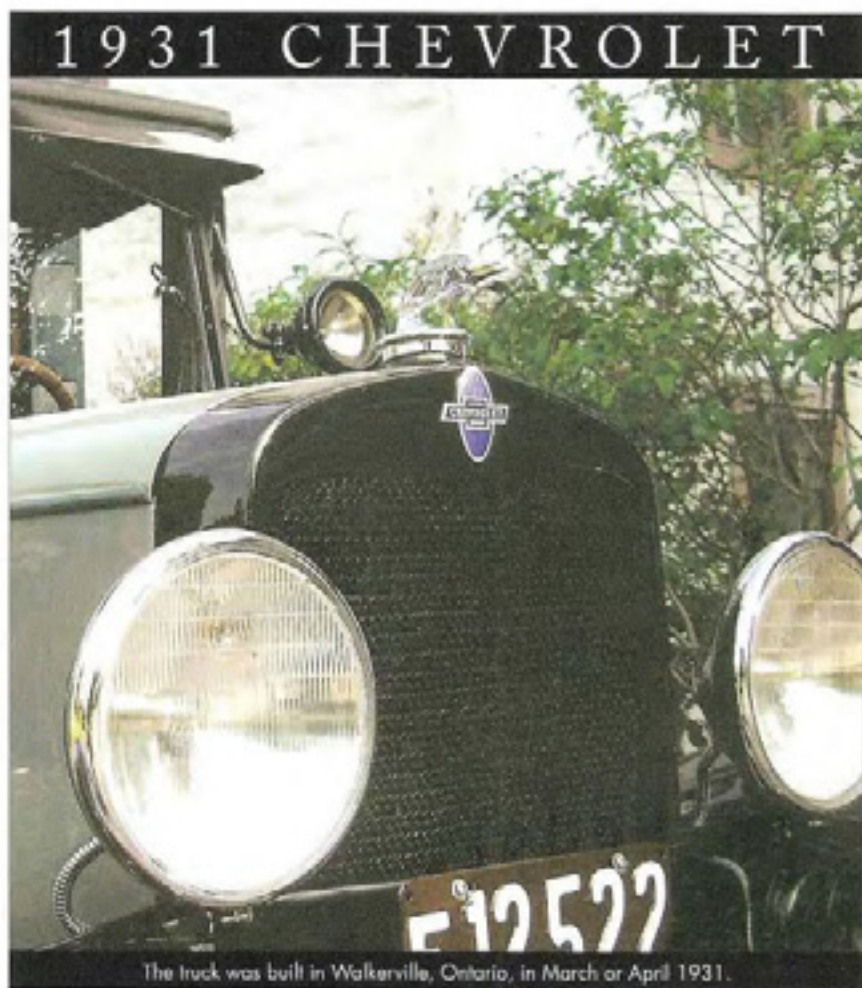




Newspaper clippings confirmed the truck was originally dark green.

Truck Restored

by Andre Cloutier



The truck was built in Walkerville, Ontario, in March or April 1931.

In the '60s, I spent a lot of time watching television, mostly American programs, and particularly *The Untouchables*. I told myself, "One day, I'll have an old car."

In April 1967, I got hold of a 1930 Ford roadster pickup—and the passion for vintage cars was born in me. Since then, I have gained a lot of experience in the world of restoration.

Some 32 years later, I faced a new challenge in the restoration of a six-wheel 1931 Chevrolet truck. It was a real project, I must say. My wife looked at the wreckage and said, "Do you intend to rebuild this thing?"

Dismantling the truck began at the end of September 1999, with the help of a good friend, Guy Thibault, who is also an old-car collector, and under the supervision of my brother, Raynald, who owns a small video-production enterprise and who videotaped the entire operation. In one day, he must have shot three hours of digital videotape.

For a year and a half, I kept asking myself what kind of boat I had been drawn into. The project was too far along to be dropped; therefore, there was no choice but to carry on.

I really thought the truck could be restored within a few months, but there was much

more work on this truck than there would have been on a car, mostly because of the substantial amount of wood necessary and the fact that some of the wood pieces are quite heavy. Also, my working space was rather small; in fact, most of the woodwork was done on the second floor of a normal residential garage, while the mechanical, electrical, and paint jobs were done in the garage itself.

I had to design my own templates for every wood part and, as you probably know, wood is not given away, so you must calculate quite a bit. For instance, the truck had no roof, and the wood of the cabin was completely rotten, which was understandable since the truck had been stored in a hangar in Oka, Quebec, for more than 35 years.

A couple of years ago, I went to Chute-à-Blondeau, Ontario, located between Carillon Provincial Park and Hawkesbury on the Ottawa River, to investigate and find out more information about the origin of the truck. On the side of the box we could still read, "R. Little, Phone 606, R 41 Chute-à-Blondeau."

My wife compared the search to "looking for a needle in a bundle of hay."

"Let's look first for the bundle of hay, and we'll see after," was my reply.

We only had to question a few people to find information about the owner or owners of the famous truck. Apparently, Percy Little was the owner for a number of years; having transformed it into a tow truck, he used it for pulling old vehicles onto his property, doing repairs in his garage, selling gas, and in wintertime, as a snowplow.

When I showed around the pictures of the truck, people also told me that it had belonged to a certain William St. Amand, the hotel owner in Chute-à-Blondeau, who would deliver goods from Montreal to his village.

On May 24, 1932, St. Amand went to the celebration of Dollard-des-Ormeaux in Carillon with some 15 kids sitting in the box behind. As he was driving them back to Chute-à-Blondeau, a large branch of an old oak tree fell on the passing truck, crushing and hurting the kids, killing five of them.

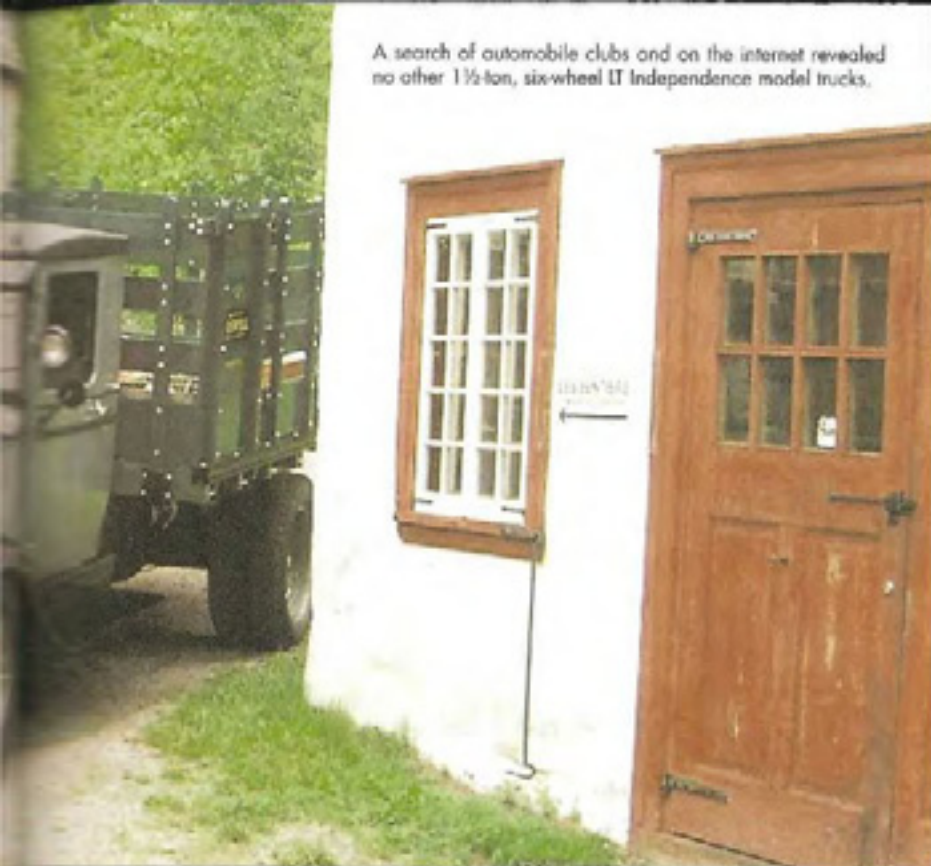


Cloutier first tackled the steering wheel. He figured if he succeeded in restoring it, the rest would be easy.



The 6-cylinder engine is number T-230393.

A search of automobile clubs and on the internet revealed no other 1½-ton, six-wheel LT Independence model trucks.



The 1,000-hour restoration project took three years.



Boswell Brewery was Quebec's first beer company.



The accident happened almost in front of Percy Little's residence.

Both men owned a green 1931 Chevrolet truck, according to people in the town, but there is no confirmation that they owned the same truck. However in a place with less than 100 inhabitants, it's entirely likely.

I was able to meet two survivors of the above-mentioned tragedy. One of them was 14 years old when the accident happened. She was sitting on a bench in the back of the truck and saw the big branch fall and kill her young brother sitting next to her. The woman, Mrs. Lachaine, still had a newspaper clipping that gave details of the accident. The truck was a dark green, which confirms the color I chose during the restoration.

I chose to restore the vehicle in the form of a beer truck because there are not too many in Quebec and because Boswell Brewery was the first one to be established in Quebec.

In all of my searches in the automobile clubs and through the internet, this was the only 1½-ton, six-wheel LT Independence model truck that I found. It's a Canadian truck, which is somewhat different from one manufactured in the United States, and was built in Walkerville in March or April 1931. The serial number is 529399; the engine number is T 230393.

This is nearly a 1,000-hour restoration project stretched over a period of three years at a rate of three days a week and, mind you, I was still working as an insurance and financial agent.

I took my first real trip with the truck to an old-car exhibition in Lachute, Quebec, in September 2002. I won the first prize in the truck category. Since then, I have twice driven the truck in Montreal's St. Patrick's Day parade and been in a movie production, as well as other car exhibitions. Probably the longest trip was from St. Eustache to Quebec City and back.

An old dream recently came true in June last year. I was able to photograph and videotape my truck in front of the former Boswell Brewery and driving in front of the Château Frontenac and in the narrow streets of old Quebec. 🚚



This 1932 International truck sits through the seasons in Mirabel Province, Quebec. Photo by Andre Cloutier of Saint-Eustache, Quebec