

THE SPIRIT OF THE ROAD

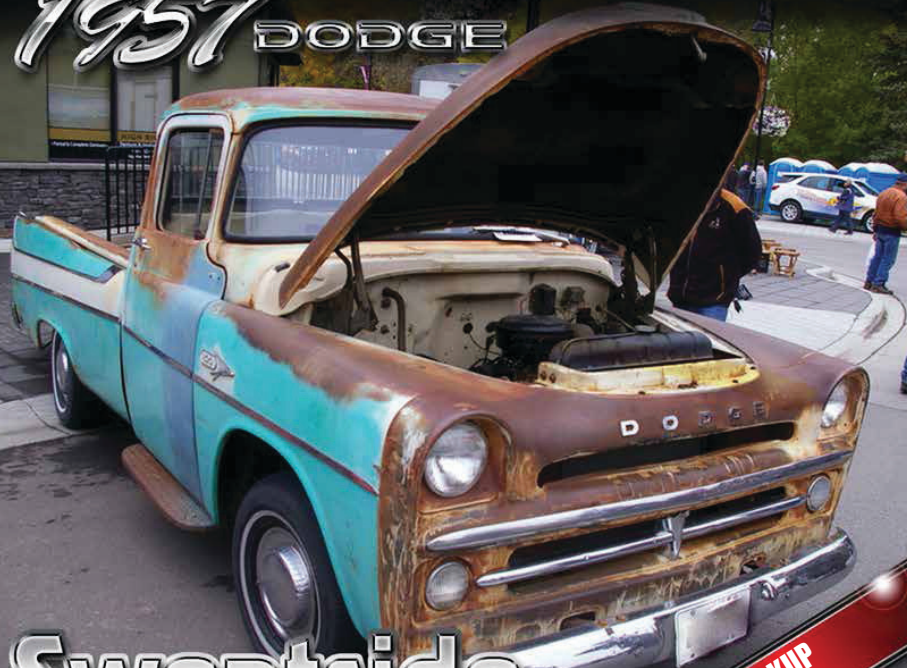
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1957 DODGE



Sweptside Pickup

SWEPTSIDE PICKUP
1957 DODGE D100



1957 DODGE SWEPTSIDE PICKUP D100 - John Barrett

1957 DODGE Sweptside Pickup

In 1957 Dodge needed a pickup to compete with Chevrolet's Cameo Carrier and Ford's Ranchero. As always Chrysler Corp. looked at the cheapest and fastest way to do this.



Photos by MyStarCollectionCar

The project was passed to the Dodge Special Equipment Group (SEG) Manager Joe Berr. SEG started with a D100 (1957 was the first year for this designation) custom cab with the optional large wrap around back window. Going into the parts bin, they gathered rear quarter panels complete with tail lights, trim for a 1957 Dodge two door station wagon, and station wagon rear bumper.

The quarter panels were modified by cutting the rear tailgate opening straight down and welding in flat sheet metal to match up with the width of a stock truck tailgate. The front was also altered to match the curve of the cab. The D100's rear fenders were then replaced with the modified station wagon quarters.

Some sources suggest the tailgate was also narrowed but in my experience this is not true. The tailgate was modified though by removing the chains that were usually used to secure the tailgate closed and suspend it when open. SEG installed latches operated by a central "T" handle that probably came from a garage door. The linkages and mount for the "T" operator were concealed under a piece of sheet metal folded over the top of the tailgate. Rubber step plates that were stock for the station wagon tailgate served to support the truck tailgate when it was open.



1957 DODGE SWEPTSIDE PICKUP D100 - John Barrett

Special chrome pieces to match the rear fenders were built to extend the side trim to the front fenders. The long bottom chrome pieces are special to the station-wagon as they are over 7 inches longer than used on a two door hardtop.

The Sweptside trim included two tone paint, a chrome front bumper, wide whitewall tires, and full disc hubcaps. The hubcaps are interesting as in 1957 full disc wheel covers were not an option for trucks, and the entire Chrysler Corp. car line had all changed to 14 inch wheels. The D100 pickup wheels remained at 15 inches or larger. Ever resourceful, SEG looked in the parts bin and grabbed caps for the (as near as I can determine) 1954 Dodge Coronet.

The Sweptside at a 116 inch wheelbase and 7 1/2 foot box was also a serious hauler, with a 1675 lb. rated load, more than any competitor. Two engines were offered: a 120-horsepower, 230-cubic-inch inline-six flathead engine, or a 204-hp, 315-cu-inch V-8, both of which could be mated to either a three-speed standard or a three-speed automatic operated with push buttons. Overdrive was offered with the standard. The feature truck has the 315 poly with two barrel carburetor and three-speed standard with overdrive. Options on my truck include heater, ash tray, turn signals, dual horns, and radio. The radio is unique as it requires a hole in the cab roof near the windshield and in the center of the cab. The radio attaches to the roof and the antenna is connected to it on the outside. I have the radio but it was never installed. Other options apparently included power steering and power brakes, although I have never seen a truck with them. Also, some Sweptsides had the large window deleted for some reason.

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The Sweptside was introduced in mid year in 1957 and ceased production in January 1959. Production numbers for 1957 vary with some publications stating as few as 180. Hogarty has a good article on the Sweptside and they state 1,050 for 1957. Judging by the numbers that I personally know of I tend to believe the Hogarty number. Incidentally, the Sweptside name never appeared in script on the truck, only in literature. As a kid and seeing some around Calgary, we referred to them as the Dodge Royal Pick Ups.

The information I found for this article only referred to US production. I found nothing about exports or Canadian production. I'm not sure if any were built in Canada but I have seen one badged as a Fargo and some with the Canadian V8. If anyone has additional information I would like to hear it.



1957 DODGE SWEPTSIDE PICKUP D100 - John Barrett

My Sweptside was originally from south Washington, imported to Cranbrook BC, and subsequently sold to me and trailered to my farm near Okotoks in 2018. The engine and exhaust were good, and the transmission and rear axle seemed OK. The cab and front fenders were rust-free and the doors were fine in spite of an inch of dirt in them. The box had some rotten wood as well rotten lower panels behind the back wheels. The truck came with a tailgate including all the special hardware but the lower edge needs major repair. The brakes were useless, electrical needed a lot of help, and every moving part needed service or was non-functioning.

The rear brakes were a challenge. If you have worked on tapered rear axles you will understand. The left axle had been worked over with a hammer, and part of the end was bent over and broken off and

threads were mushroomed. I cut off the bent over part and dressed the threads so I could loosen the nut, then proceeded to pull the drum. I used my good Gray puller, lots of heat, and a 10 pound sledge hammer on the puller, the drum finally popped after a week's worth of tension on the puller. After removal of the axle, a piece of round stock was TIG welded onto the end of the axle and drilled for a cotter pin.

New wheel cylinders that were needed were sourced and the ones that were OK were rebuilt. A new master cylinder was installed. Brake lines, hoses, etc. were replaced as needed. Brake drums were all within spec, and did not need turning. I avoid turning unless absolutely necessary as old drums are hard to find. The brake system was flushed with regular brake fluid and then filled with DOT 5 silicone. (Please see my note at the bottom of this article about silicone brake fluid.)

Wheel bearings front and rear were good and repacked. Rears have an inner seal and do not receive lubrication from the differential housing. All fluids for the transmission, steering box, and rear axle were replaced after the sludge was flushed out.

The electrical system, heater, wipers, etc. were gone through and the vehicle was road worthy for the 2019 High River Show and Shine. My thanks to My Star Collector Car for allowing me to use the pictures they took at the show. The truck has been parked pretty much since that time due to other distractions like work etc.

Next on the list for the Sweptside are new wide whites (purchased at Portland Swap Meet two years ago) and painting the correct 15 inch rims that I recently sandblasted. The truck had 14s on it when purchased. I have some wheel covers in my parts collection that I believe to be the correct ones.

Tailgate repair, new wood for the box floor, and a new seat cover are on the current to-do list. I didn't include a repaint on the list as I like the existing patina, although it does look a bit shabby beside shiny vehicles. A vehicle is only original once and I plan to keep it as it is. For any repairs to the body I will try to fake the original worn paint. Sometimes it's nice to have a driver that you can park anywhere and avoid the stress and paranoia of displaying a show car. (Just as long as no one messes with the side trim and tail lights. Regards to all, please see note below. JOHN BARRETT

NOTE: I use DOT 5 Silicone fluid in all my older cars and have never had a problem with it. The beauty of silicone is that it does not absorb water (hygroscopic) like regular Dot 3 fluid using an alcohol base. Many of you have seen my 1952 New Yorker which has had Silicone brake fluid in it for 40 years now with no leaks and no trace of rust or discoloration. Older cars have a vent in the master cylinder and every time brakes are used, moisture laden air is drawn in and then expelled from the master cylinder. Regular fluid is a recipe for disaster in any old car. In my experience it's pretty much a given that any old car or truck I buy will have a brake system that needs major work. An additional bonus is silicone brake fluid does not remove paint.