

Body Serial Numbers

In addition to a vehicle serial number, the early build CJ-3As also had a body serial number. This number was stamped on a small plate, often called a body tag, that was located on the firewall just below the vehicle serial number plate. Body numbers were assigned early on in the assembly process. Body numbering could have been a method used by Willys-Overland to track the body and the operations performed on it before it was married to the chassis to become a complete vehicle.

Engine Serial Numbers

During the manufacturing process an engine serial number was stamped on the boss between the water pump and cylinder head (see illustration 1.02 for location). CJ-3A engine serial numbers began with a prefix of 3J followed by a five or six digit sequence number. The first engine sequence number was 10001 resulting in a serial number of 3J10001. The sequence number continued to increase throughout CJ-3A production and then on into DJ-3A production, which ended in the 1965 model year. Different engine serial number prefixes were used on engines destined for other vehicle models and certain replacement applications. It is not uncommon to find the serial number location blank. Most original engines have required at least some type of repair, after serving for more than 55 years. If the top deck of an engine block was ever resurfaced during rebuild or repair, the serial number was inadvertently and permanently removed.

Frame Numbers

Unlike many other Jeep models, CJ-3As did not have frame numbers. The CJ-3A fell into a transition period without any type of frame markings. CJ-2As had frame tags with a serial number, up to the first quarter of 1948 when they were discontinued. Frame VIN stampings began to appear on CJ-3Bs in 1954 possibly due to emerging industry standards and upcoming legislation.

Matching Numbers and Skew

It is extremely unlikely to find a matching vehicle serial number, body serial number and/or engine serial number on a CJ-3A. Willys-Overland did not use “matching serial numbers” as commonly found on other brands of automobiles. That said, the first CJ-3A probably did have matching numbers being vehicle serial number CJ-3A 10001, body serial number CJ-3A 10001 and engine serial number 3J10001. The first few CJ-3As produced could have continued with matching numbers but then rather quickly the numbers moved away from perfect alignment. In most other Willys-Overland Jeep vehicles the engine serial numbers outpaced vehicle serial numbers because more engines were made than vehicles. This trend is referred to as skew. Positive engine serial number skew was caused by the use of engines for replacement purposes and other applications. 3J prefix engines were also used for industrial applications such as stationary generators and air compressors. Engine serial number skew on MB, CJ-2A, CJ-V35/U, and M-38 models is easy to analyze due to the use of sequential vehicle serial numbering through the entire production run. CJ-3A skew is more difficult to track because of the introduction of a new serial number format in 1951.