

CHRYSLER TO EXPAND TOLEDO PLANT

JEEP ROLLS FORWARD



THE BLADE

Ken Wieland and Dave Pixley put the finishing touches on the first Wrangler TJ to come off the line at the Stickney Avenue Jeep plant on Jan. 26, 1996.

By **SHEENA HARRISON**
BLADE BUSINESS WRITER

More than 1,100 new auto assembly jobs are expected to boost Toledo's economy in the next couple years, thanks to an expected \$365 million investment by Chrysler Group LLC at its Toledo Assembly Complex.

The Blade has learned that the automaker will add a second shift at the plant that builds the Jeep Liberty and Dodge Nitro SUVs, which currently has about 1,050 Chrysler employees.

New jobs would be added at the plant over the next 16 months, according to a tax abatement application Chrysler has filed with the city of Toledo. The project

is expected to be completed by 2013, according to the application, and add \$36 million in payroll to the Toledo area.

According to Chrysler's application, up to 327,000 vehicles would be made per year at the expanded Liberty and Nitro plant, up from about 92,000 produced last year.

Chrysler's Toledo Assembly Complex has two plants — the Toledo North Plant, which makes the Jeep Liberty and Dodge Nitro, and the Wrangler plant, which produces the Jeep Wrangler. The Wrangler plant has two shifts and a combined 1,500 workers employed by Chrysler and its parts suppliers.

Chrysler's planned upgrade to Toledo North would add a second shift there and boost the facility's em-

ployment to its highest levels since 2008.

The automaker did not officially confirm details of its tax abatement application, pending approval of a state incentive package.

Chrysler has sought other aid to help with the planned Toledo plant expansion. The Ohio Environmental Protection Agency last month issued new air-quality permits sought by Chrysler for the Liberty and Nitro factory.

The automaker could be planning more local investment. The Ohio Tax Credit Authority was scheduled to consider incentives last month for Chrysler's Toledo Machining Plant in Perrysburg Township, though a state spokesman said the incentives are still in negotiations. Details of that potential project are unclear.

Jeep and Toledo

By **ZOE GORMAN**
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BLADE STAFF WRITERS

Jeep is Toledo's heritage.

First it became instrumental for the United States in World War II. Then it became the genesis of today's prevalent sport utility vehicles by every automaker.

Toledo is still the only place in the world making the Jeep Wrangler and Jeep Liberty.

The brand was born when the Army wanted a reconnaissance and message-dispatching vehicle to replace the motorcycle with something more rugged.

"The Jeep had a personality the soldiers bonded with," said Brandt Rosenbusch, manager of historical services for Chrysler Group LLC. "Soldiers get attached to things that work."

Those Jeeps, precursors of the Wrangler, were in the gliders that landed in Normandy on D-Day and were the first vehicles off the landing crafts in the South Pacific when the Allies invaded islands. Intended to run messages to the front line and to scout out the enemy before an attack, the military was quick to use the first Jeeps as ambulances, weapon carriers, and more.

The Jeep was lower than trucks used in combat, so soldiers could avoid some fire and stay more discreet. Its light weight also allowed it to be flown on airplanes. Jeeps could take damage and continue running, and because they were standardized, parts could be quickly exchanged.

"It was there in the trenches with them," Mr. Rosenbusch said. "It never let them down. It was as important as their rifle at the end of the day."

The brainchild of three companies — American Bantam Car Co., Willys-Overland, and Ford Motor Co. — the first model, the "MB," was a combination of ideas.



THE BLADE

March 7, 1943. A Jeep vehicle is unloaded from a World War II cargo glider. Published in *The Toledo Times*. Acme Photo from Acme Newspictures Inc. NY.

The Army originally invited 135 manufacturers to bid on production, given a lengthy list of specifications that required features such as blackout lights, a 600-pound load capacity, and a height of less than 36 inches.

American Bantam delivered the first prototype after Ohio State University engineer Karl Probst spent 18 straight hours designing the "Blitz Buggy," a name later popularized in Great Britain. The prototype was complete within 49 days.

Willys-Overland set the prece-



The Wrangler

dent for a superior engine, the "Go-Devil," when it sent the Army its "Quads," later called "MAs." The company approved a \$40,000 expenditure to send the Army the two Quad prototypes. The prototypes featured "a gearshift on the steer-

ing column, low side body cutouts, two circular instrument clusters on the dashboard, and a hand brake on the left side," according to the Walter P. Chrysler Museum.

The Army drew other features from Ford's Model GP (General Purpose), known as the "Pygmy."

The Army approved the three designs and requested 70 test vehicles of each. They were delivered in 1940 to Camp Holabird, Md., but each model exceeded the Army's weight limit. The limit was raised to 2,160 pounds, and each

company sent another 1,500 vehicles for testing. Willys-Overland's 1,500 MAs were produced in Toledo. The final MB product was 400 pounds overweight.

Willys-Overland obtained the first major production contract in July, 1941. The three bidding companies produced 642,000 Jeeps during the war, and 361,000 came from the Willys-Overland plant in Toledo. The Spicer Manufacturing Co., another Toledo firm, is credited with developing Jeep's four-wheel drive.

These Jeeps were used not only by the United States, but were among the most valuable items sent to Great Britain and Russia. The British, who attached machine guns to the vehicles to attack German fuel supply lines, nicknamed the Jeeps "desert rats."

Production of the military vehicle kept Toledo's Willys-Overland plant busy during the war. A Jeep rolled off the assembly line every two minutes. A typical work shift was 10 hours, six days a week, in hot, dirty conditions.

With many men overseas in the war, the plant hired women, paying them 95 cents an hour, or a nickel less than men.

For many women, it was the first time they wore slacks to go to work. Ron Szymanski, a retired Jeep employee who worked at the Willys-Overland plant for 35 years, said many women who had been working in the plant during the war were entitled to keep their jobs when the war ended. The women, he said, did not work at any task that would require them to lift more than 10 pounds.

The origin of the Jeep name remains unclear. Some say it came from a phonetic version of the "GP." Others attribute it to the small character, Jeep, from Popeye comic strips. Like the car, Jeep the char-

Jeep timeline



1910
Blanche Scott, known as ‘Lady Overland,’ was hired by Willys-Overland to drive a car all around the country.



1926
John North Willys



1925
Willys Overland building, corner of 14th and Adams streets, Toledo.



1940
The original Willys-Overland Quad pilot model delivered to the U.S. Army on Nov. 11, 1940.



1928
The Willys Overland plant turns out a Whippet every two minutes.



1944
A Jeep mired in the mud of Germany gets help from, left to right, Cpl. Oscar G. Cook, Detroit; Pvt. Fred Nalaquist, Elizabeth, N.J., and Sgt. Chester A. Bolck, Laureneburg, Ind. The driver is Sgt. Bernard Newman, Los Angeles.

1910: John North Willys starts constructing what will become the Jeep Parkway plant in Toledo.

1912: Willys-Overland Motor Co. ranks as the second-largest automaker behind Ford Motor Co. and has 15,000 employees by 1915, making it Toledo’s largest employer.

1928: Jeep Parkway plant reaches an employment peak of 23,000 people, who work in a 7-million-square-foot facility that includes more than 90 buildings and covers 119 acres.

1941: Production of military Jeeps begins, and about 363,000 are assembled at Jeep Parkway during World War II. Trailers, 155mm shells, aircraft parts, rockets, and other military equipment also are made at the factory during the war.

1945: First civilian Jeep, the CJ-2A and a predecessor of the Jeep Wrangler, is produced at the Jeep Parkway plant. Station wagons, pickups, the sporty Jeepster car, and sport utility vehicles eventually follow.

1953: A Kaiser-Frazer Corp. subsidiary buys Willys-Overland Motors Inc. and changes its name to Willys Motors Inc.

1954: Jeep Parkway plant builds its 5 millionth vehicle.

1964: The Stickney Avenue factory, which would later become part of today’s Chrysler Toledo Assembly complex where Wranglers are made, is purchased from The Electric Auto-Lite Co.

1969: Kaiser Jeep is sold to American Motors Corp. for \$70 million. The plant is renamed Jeep Corp.

1983: Production of the Jeep Cherokee and its twin, Wagoneer, begins.

1985: The CJ-7 is moved to Brampton, Ont., and is redesigned as the Wrangler the next year, marking the first time none of a Jeep model’s production comes from the Jeep Parkway plant.

1987: Chrysler Corp. acquires AMC, including Jeep, for \$1.5 billion.

1991: Chrysler announces it will discontinue production of the Grand Wagoneer and close the Stickney Avenue plant, laying off nearly 1,000 workers. Later, reports say Chrysler will reopen the plant to build Wranglers when the vehicle resumes production in Toledo the next year.

1992: The first Wrangler is made at the Stickney Avenue plant.

1993-95: Chrysler Toledo Jeep plant made Dodge Dakota pickup trucks.

1997: Chrysler announces plans to invest \$1.2 billion in Toledo to build a new Jeep factory, making a replacement for the Cherokee.

1998: Chrysler Corp. merges with Daimler-Benz to form DaimlerChrysler AG.

2001: Production of the Jeep Cherokee ends at the Jeep Parkway plant, and begins with the replacement Jeep Liberty at the new Toledo Assembly plant a few miles away on Chrysler Drive. Wrangler production continues at Jeep Parkway and Stickney Avenue.

2002: Demolition begins on parts of the former Jeep Parkway plant.

2003: DaimlerChrysler AG and United Auto Workers Local 12 negotiate an agreement unique to North America, under which, as part

For more than a century, automobiles have rolled off of assembly lines in Toledo, and whether they carried an Overland, Willys, Dodge, or Jeep name, the vehicles made in Toledo have come to hold a special place in automotive history, having made their way to far-flung corners of the world, both during peacetime and in war.

Since purchasing the Jeep brand and its former factory in Toledo in 1987, Chrysler has invested billions in its production facilities in the city, building two state-of-the-art assembly plants that together turned out over 235,000 vehicles last year. With the automaker's latest investment, Toledo could soon produce more than twice that many vehicles per year.

of a \$2.1 billion expansion in Toledo next to the Liberty plant, suppliers would own and operate some factories used to make the Wrangler and another vehicle off its platform.

2004: Construction begins on the \$900 million multifactory plant between Stickney Avenue and Chrysler Drive that will build two and four-door versions of the redesigned Wrangler.

2005: Chrysler and UAW officials announce the Toledo Assembly complex factory where the Liberty is made also will make the Dodge Nitro SUV in 2006.

2006: Production ends at Jeep Parkway, closing the nation's longest running automotive plant. The plant produced roughly 11 million vehicles, from Overland cars to Jeeps.

2007: The four-door Jeep Wrangler debuts and boosts U.S. Wrangler sales in its first year by nearly 50 percent.

2007: Chrysler Group is sold to private-equity firm Cerberus Capital Management for \$7.4 billion.

2009: Automotive sales in the United States fall to their lowest level in decades. With no hope of receiving private financing, Chrysler LLC enters Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection, with the U.S., Canadian, and Ontario governments providing debtor-in-possession financing to allow the automaker to undergo an expedited bankruptcy process. Vehicle production is halted and tens of thousands of employees laid off, but most are brought back once the company emerges from bankruptcy as Chrysler Group LLC. The automaker is under the management of Italian automaker Fiat SpA and its chief executive, Sergio Marchionne.

November, 2009: Chrysler Group unveils a five-year business plan that calls, in part, for a massive product intervention and a new emphasis on leveraging Fiat's worldwide dealer network to export vehicles, especially the Jeep brand, into world markets where it hadn't been a player before.

January, 2011: Executives unveil the last of 16 different new or refreshed Chrysler, Dodge, Jeep, and Ram vehicles to be launched over a hectic 18-month product onslaught. Speaking to The Blade during the North American International Auto Show in Detroit, Mr. Marchionne says he expects an announcement about production in Toledo "within six months."

June, 2011: In an air quality permit application filed with the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, Chrysler reveals it plans to expand production of its Toledo Assembly complex where Liberty and Nitro vehicles are made by up to 327,000 vehicles annually. The next month, the permit is approved.

August, 2011: Chrysler seeks tax breaks from the city, and reveals that it will invest \$365 million over 16 months at its Toledo Assembly complex, adding over 1,100 new jobs, allotting \$8 million for body shop expansion, and spending \$357 million for tooling and equipment. The company says the project will be finished by 2013 and add \$36 million to Jeep's payroll.



1945
Angela Durieux, Rossford, sits astride one of the robombs produced at the Willys-Overland Motors Inc. plant in Toledo, while Viva Hatt, Lottie Myskinski, and Agnes Mack, (hands at right) of Toledo, work on assembling this war weapon.



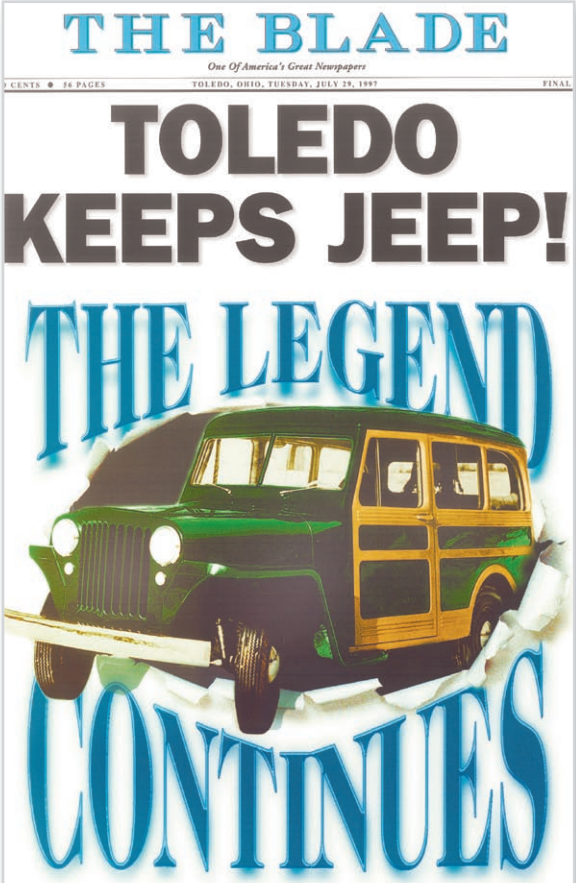
1965
Jeeps ready to be shipped for President Lyndon B. Johnson's inaugural parade are parked in front of the Kaiser Jeep building.



1973
A Jeep worker crosses the road to get to his job at the American Motors Toledo Jeep plant.



1978
The 150,000th Jeep of 1978, a CJ-7, is driven off the assembly line by Ohio Gov. James Rhodes.



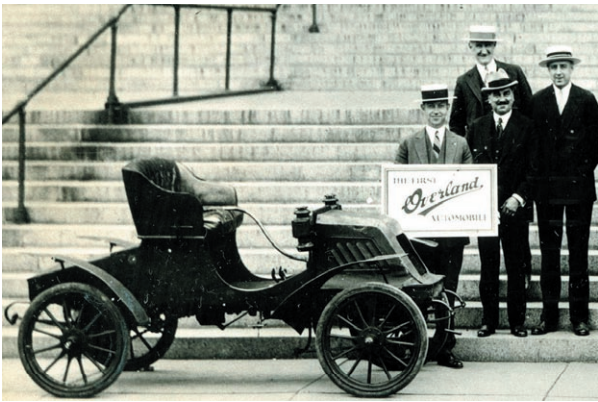
1997
Chrysler announces plans to invest \$1.2 billion in Toledo to build a new Jeep factory.



2011
Chrysler CEO Sergio Marchionne

Notable Toledo-made vehicles

The sign reads “The first Over-land automobile.”

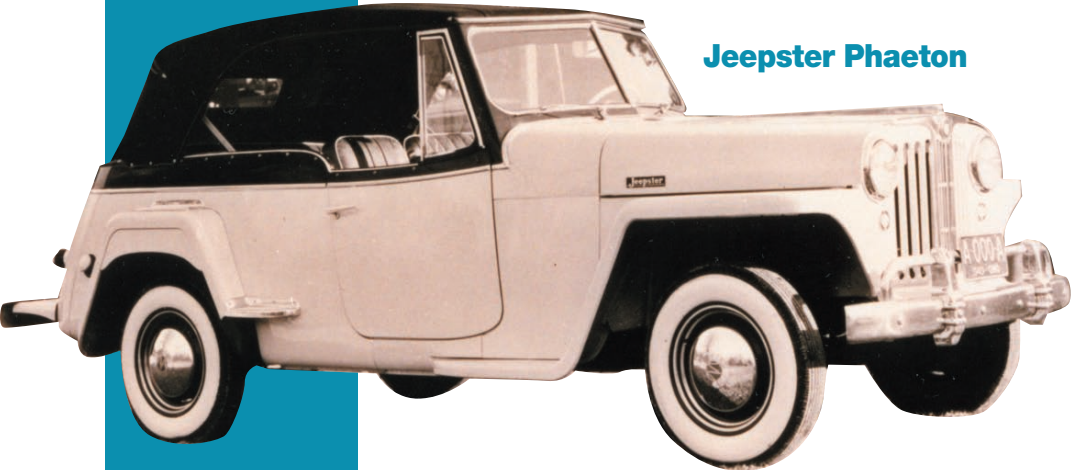


1917 Willys-Knight Touring Car

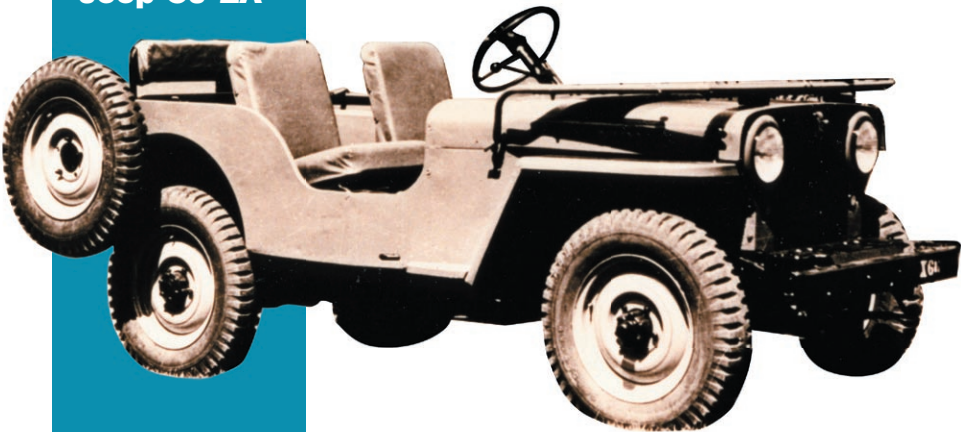


John North Willys, president of Willys-Overland Inc., is shown with the 100,000th Whippet — a Whippet Collegiate Roadster — off the Toledo assembly line in May, 1927, in front of the plant’s administration building.

Jeepster Phaeton



Jeep CJ-2A



Jeep Liberty



Jeep Cherokee 2001



Dodge Nitro



Dodge Dakota



Jeep J-10 pickup



Jeep Comanche



Jeep Comanche pickup



Jeep Wrangler Unlimited



Jeep Grand Wagoneer



History

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acter could travel anywhere despite his size. There are accounts, Mr. Rosenbusch said, of soldiers using the term “Jeep” for any light and small test vehicle before the introduction of the MB.

After the war, Willys-Overland attempted to capitalize on the relationship its go-anywhere, do-anything vehicle had forged with the millions of soldiers, sailors, and Marines who had used the vehicle to accomplish their missions.

In 1946, Willys-Overland copyrighted the “Jeep” name and debuted the Jeep CJ-2A, a “civilian” version of the military Jeep that traded its gun mounts for more

mundane tasks. It featured a power takeoff, allowing engine power to be used for operating other equipment, that made it capable of serving as a small tractor. But it also could take four people to church on Sunday.

A year later, attempting to broaden the new brand’s appeal, the Toledo company expanded its product lineup to include two and four-wheel-drive trucks, and by 1948, had brought out a much-improved Jeep CJ-3A model to address some of the earlier civilian Jeep’s more notable comfort shortcomings.

All the while, the company’s Toledo plant continued to turn out military versions of the Jeep, and in 1950, the plant’s 17,000 employees produced 151,415 civilian and military vehicles, with civilian models outnumbering their military coun-

terparts.

Willys-Overland tried several times to bring the Jeep name to passenger vehicles, including the Jeepster, a two-door convertible top vehicle built between 1948 and 1950 that might be considered one of the first “crossover” vehicles. But sales were lackluster for the rear-wheel drive Jeepster.

In 1953, Kaiser Manufacturing Corp. bought Willys-Overland Motors Inc. for \$62.3 million, and a year later introduced the Jeep CJ-5, a rounded-over version of the civilian Jeep that would stay in production with some modifications for the next 29 years.

While Jeep’s corporate ownership changed a few times over the next several decades — Kaiser beget American Motors Corp. in 1969, and French automaker Renault took

a big stake of AMC in 1980 — Jeep’s vehicles remained relatively consistent throughout much of the period, with the brand experimenting in different segments of the auto market. That changed in 1983, when the first versions of what would become one of the best-selling sport utility vehicles of all time, the Jeep Cherokee, or XJ, debuted.

A much smaller version of the full-sized SJ-model Jeep that had carried the Cherokee name since 1974, the new XJ was a lighter, boxier, unibody vehicle that found broad market acceptance and is credited with helping to ignite the SUV craze in the late 1980s and 1990s. More than 2 million XJs were built from the now-gone Jeep Parkway plant over the vehicle’s 17-year production run, overlapping Jeep’s replacement of its CJs with a new

version — now called Wrangler — in 1987, and introduction of the new Detroit-built Grand Cherokee in 1993.

Two of the Jeep brand’s most recent vehicles each had significant impacts on the brand’s hometown work force in Toledo. In 2001, four years after Chrysler Corp. agreed to build a new state-of-the-art production facility in Toledo, the first Jeep Liberty, a new compact SUV intended to replace the aging Cherokee, rolled off its Toledo assembly line.

Six years later, the brand debuted its first four-door version of the Wrangler, called the Wrangler Unlimited, from a second new assembly plant in Toledo.

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