

# Want to Restore a Vintage Unit

**Question:** I have located an old Airstream in Michigan, which was used as a temporary shelter for outdoor activities on a year round basis. It is 18-20 feet long with a single axle, leaf springs and six bolt rim wheel hubs.

Is there anywhere on the running gear where the manufacturers name is stamped? I need a source for the electric brake components.

The trailer is probably in the 2500 to 3000 pound range and I need a recommended tire size and source for the rims.

To tow the unit home will require that it be brought back to a safe running condition by a qualified repair shop. A second possibility is to rent a lo-boy U-haul trailer and tow it home on the trailer.

Any addresses relating to the axle, hub, brakes, and spring assemblies would be appreciated. I am not aware of the required ball size. I do not have much free time right now but would appreciate any help so I can get this project finished.

About a year ago the local TV showed three or four Airstream trailers standing vertically alongside a property frontage. I think it was in the mid-west. I tried several sources but came up empty. Have you heard of this display?

**Answer:** Your trailer is a 50s model , because it has spring suspension. If you don't know the model or year, you can visit <http://www.vintageairstream.com/archives/index.html> to see trailer photos sorted by year and model as well as serial number decoding information.

Axles were probably made by various suppliers in the 50s, but they can be replaced by Dexter if necessary. If it is bent or the spindles are worn where the wheel bearings mount, replace it. A supplier of Dexter axles could easily do the job. The springs and shackles are a more serious concern. Assure that the shackle and pivot bolts are in good condition before towing. I know one case of a spring breaking loose on a newly purchased trailer. It did considerable damage. Check the springs. If any leaf is broken, replace both spring assemblies.

Brakes are best repaired by replacing the loaded backing plates (complete brake assembly). Your local NAPA store should have these or be able to get them. You will need to assure that the wiring from the seven-wire plug to the brakes is functional. Make sure the tail and turn signal lights also work.

Tires were initially 7.00x15's and can be replaced with radials of equivalent size. Tell the tire dealer that the new tires are going on a trailer weighing 3000 pounds. New rims need to fit the stud pattern and tires.

The ball size should be two inches. When the coupler is locked down on the ball, make sure that it can't be raised up off the ball. If it can, fix or replace the coupler.

These are all the things that you must know function correctly before towing an old trailer for the first time. You want to get home alive and with the same trailer you left with. Any RV service facility should be able to handle all this work or parts of it that you don't do yourself.

If you have questions about axles or replacements, I suggest calling Luke's Maintenance & Repair (970-222-4065). Luke is in Colorado but is always willing to help Airstreamers over the phone.

The Vintage Airstream Club (<http://vintageairstreamclub.com/>) regional representative can provide local contacts. The Region 4 representative is Ken Faber, 2550 Oaklane SW, Wyoming, MI. 49519, Ph. 616-534-8282.

The picture of Airstream trailers standing on end comes from Florida. Photographer Bill Sargent markets a photo. A web search will find him. The owner of the trailers was involved in a code violation court case last year, and I think the court found in his favor.