

Standard B LIBERTY TRUCK

Macro-Artifact



Background Information

Standardizing types of trucks revolutionized the Army's motor transport fleet. In 1918, the Army had more than 294 makes and body types of motor vehicles. To standardize its vehicle fleet, the Army organized a committee of 50 engineers who met with Army officers to design a new three-ton cargo truck. The result was the Standard B Liberty Truck, a vehicle with interchangeable parts manufactured in different factories that simplified maintenance in the field. The use of trucks revolutionized warfare as they could economically haul supplies in rugged battlefield conditions.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

When the U.S. Army's Transcontinental Motor Convoy embarked on a 3,251 mile journey from Washington to San Francisco in the summer of 1919, Liberty trucks were a part of the caravan. The Convoy was a column of 81 vehicles manned by 24 officers and 258 enlisted men of the Engineers and Motor Transport Corps. The convoy followed the Lincoln Highway, testing vehicles developed for the Army's Motor Transport Corps as well as assessing the usefulness of America's roads in case of a national emergency. Dirt roads made the driving difficult, and bridges couldn't hold heavy Army trucks. The trip took sixty-two days at an average speed of only six miles per hour. One young officer on the convoy, Lt. Col. Dwight D. Eisenhower, would remember this trip 37 years later when, as president, he helped to create the Interstate Highway System.

