A Brief History of the Tank Truck Industry

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Houston TX
The first tank trucks were one-horse powered. Wagons were wooden or steel.
Early Roads presented Challenges
Tank Trucks played a role in delivering petroleum during World War 1 and contributed to motor equipment advances. This picture was taken in France. They would play a much bigger role in WW2.
The growth in the public’s and business demand for petroleum products helped create the tank truck industry. Even today, over half the tankers on the highway haul petroleum.
Early safety equipment. Heil Static Eliminator in Natural Position. The lock dog eliminates removal of filler cap. August 1929
1933 Gasoline Tanker. Railroad inspired local laws were aimed at preventing or restricting truck deliveries by such laws as no Sunday deliveries, 12 mph speed limits and gallon limits. There was no NTTC until 1945 and carriers had to fight to survive at the state level.
New York City Tank Drop Test 1933
The tank truck industry has always been covered by additional equipment regulations
Due to weight laws, truck and trailer combinations were very common. In the late 30s and early 40s, 30 trucks was a large fleet. Tank trucks began replacing truck loads of milk cans in the 20s.
German U-Boat 48 Sunk 51 ships and was scuttled off Germany in April 1945.

How did German U-Boats lead to the growth in tank truck transportation and the evolution of a major transportation industry?
Tank trucks were called upon to relieve rail cars for long hauls of petroleum from the Gulf to both coasts. ODT Order No. 7 said that any movement of under 200 miles had to be handled by truck rather than rail.
Office of Defense Transportation (ODT) Tank Truck Division Sam Niness Sr. and Petroleum Administration for War (PAW) Harold Ickes helped provide oil to win the War at home and abroad.
Tank Trucks supported the war effort at home and abroad. Here P-47 fighter planes are fueled with 100-octane gasoline in France.
World War II produced many Rosie the Riveters, but this was one of many “Wendy the Welders” who help produce tank trailers.
NTTC Formed in 1945

NATIONAL TANK TRUCK CARRIERS, INC.

1424 Sixteenth St., N.W.
WASHINGTON 6, D. C.

October 1, 1945

Dear Carrier:

This little booklet contains one of the most important messages you as a tank truck operator have yet received.

All of the tank truck operators know part of this story. Few, if any, know all of it.

The development of the program outlined within its pages will have a continuing effect upon your operation and your business.

The war has ended and its ending has brought with it many reconversion and postwar problems. We can meet these postwar problems, if we can maintain the same degree of unity that was so evident and so effective throughout the war. But -- we'll have to meet them through our own efforts -- on a self-sustaining basis.

You owe it to yourself and to the industry to take the few uninterrupted minutes necessary to grasp the import of this message. Then, within the confines of your own conscience and the breadth of your business judgment, answer the question, "Can I afford to be on the outside?"

For this is an organization with a program for tank truck operators created and directed by tank truck operators, who are men with vision and experience, convinced of the soundness and of the necessity of putting it into operation if we are to maintain a position of economic importance in the transportation of bulk liquids.

Very truly yours,

Clark E. Sargeant, President

NATIONAL TANK TRUCK CARRIERS, INC.
The industry grew rapidly after the war as the economy grew and demanded petroleum, chemicals, and cement.
Pacific Intermountain Express. PIE operated the largest petroleum hauler in the United States as part of a vast multi-purpose fleet. Not able to adapt to deregulation, PIE filed for bankruptcy in 1990.
Thanks in part to bottom loading. The petroleum industry has pretty well eliminated the need for drivers to go on top of tanks.
BACK TO THE FUTURE – The tank truck industry has seen significant growth in recent years as North American develops resources such as at this Bakken location in North Dakota.
Tank Truck Equipment Suppliers have Enabled Our Industry to Grow to Meet the Needs of North America’s Economy and Way of Life
From early 1900s 10 gal. cans to today’s trailers up to 13,000 gal. The Tank Truck Industry has always Delivered!!!
Since 1945, NTTC has helped carriers know and influence the changing regulations and conditions under which they operate. Help continue a successful industry’s history by being an active member of National Tank Truck Carriers, Inc.

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