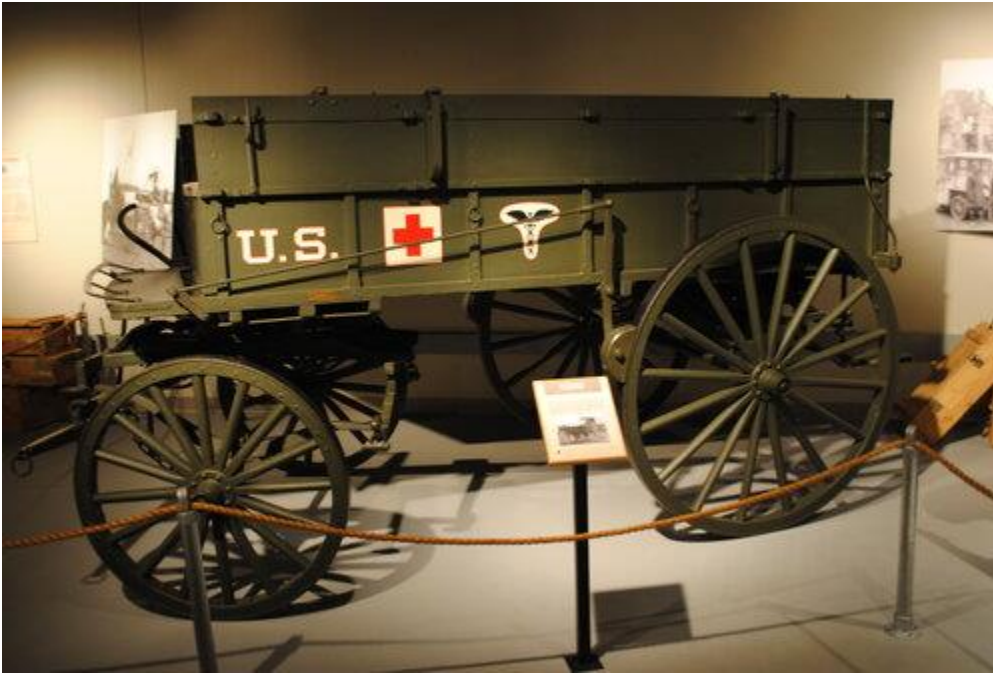


January 14, 2021

M1909 Army Ambulance Wagon

(Pennsylvania Military Museum, J. Gleim, Museum Curator)



Photo, Studebaker Horse Drawn Ambulance, 72-118-191.

The Studebaker Corporation of America built this horse-drawn U.S. Army ambulance wagon in 1909. It was used to transport sick and wounded soldiers and came to the Pennsylvania Military Museum from the Pennsylvania Department of Military Affairs, Fort Indiantown Gap in 1968.

Founded by five brothers whose parents were German Dunkards (a pacifist Anabaptist sect) from Pennsylvania, the Studebaker Brothers Manufacturing Company had been operating in South Bend, Indiana since the 1850s. By the end of the Civil War, they were America's largest producer of wagons. Studebaker produced wagons on US Army contract for the Spanish-American War. When war broke out in Europe in 1914, Studebaker posted an agent in London, securing contracts to produce both a variety of wagons and automobiles for France and England.

For much of its history, the U.S. Army relied on horse drawn vehicles to transport sick and wounded soldiers. Prior to the Civil War, the Army pressed escort wagons into service when it became necessary to evacuate wounded from the battlefield. Typically used to transport rations, baggage, and troops, the escort wagons were not specially equipped to safely convey wounded men. Following the established of the Medical Board in 1859, board members began to evaluate ambulance wagons for use in the U.S. Army. Several designs followed which were pulled by varying numbers of horses, designed to accommodate stretchers, and were outfitted with medical chests and water tanks. The Board determined that a four-wheeled wagon light enough to be pulled by two horse was preferred, but the U.S. Army did not formally approve a regulation U.S. Army Ambulance Wagon until 1881.

The M1909 ambulance wagon was the last horse drawn ambulance designed for the U.S. Army. It is similar in appearance to an earlier model contracted by the Army in 1898 for use in the Spanish American War. The M1909 ambulance appears in both the 1917 and 1930 editions of the U.S. Quartermaster Manual, and was used heavily during World War I, despite the advent of automobile ambulances. When in use, the body of the wagon

was fitted with a series of wooden bows and covered with a canvas tarp, providing protection from the elements.

Throughout World War I, armies on both sides of the conflict relied heavily on the horse, and wagon production soared, so much so that corporations like Studebaker reported drastic declines in automobile production during the war years. However, the boom was short-lived and by the end of the war Studebaker sold its wagon business to the Kentucky Wagon Manufacturing Company in Louisville.