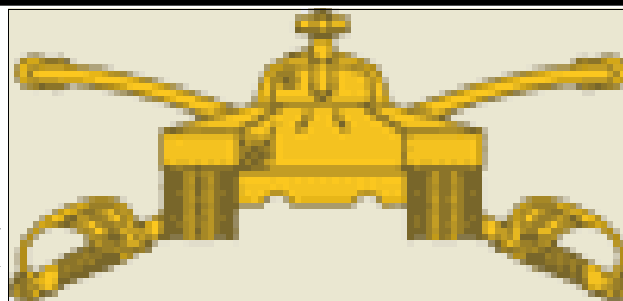




Military Corner

ARMOR

The Army's Armored branch evolved from cavalry. By the eighteenth century, specialization had developed sufficiently in cavalry to bring forth three distinctive types of mounted commands, varying in mission, armament, and weight of horses: heavy cavalry, light cavalry, and dragoons. The Continental Army fought through 1775 and 1776 with a few of the mounted militia commands as its only cavalry. Then

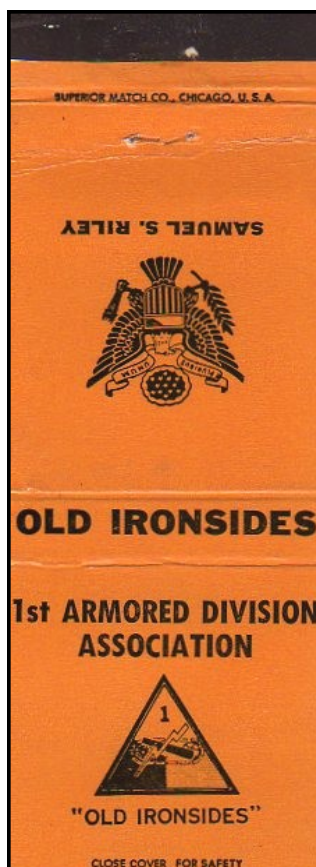


came the tank!

Numerous mechanical failures and the inability of the British and French to mount any sustained tank drives in the early tank actions had cast doubt on the usefulness of tanks. But tank operations had been studied carefully by US observers, and their reports prompted Maj. Gen. John J. Pershing, Commander in Chief, American Expeditionary Forces, to request in September 1917 that 600 heavy and 1,200 light tanks be produced in the United States. The first tank units were organized in February 1918 as elements of the 65th Engineers. American tank units first entered combat on 12 September 1918. After the war, General von Ludendorff of the German High Command praised the Allied tanks as being a principal factor in Germany's defeat. After World War I, the AEF Cavalry Board concluded that "the mounted combat of large bodies of cavalry is probably a thing of the past."

By the early 1930's, both the cavalry and the infantry were firmly committed to the light tank. At the end of the twenty years between World Wars I and II, an Armored Force finally emerged. On 10 July 1940, the Armored Force was created. Since there was no Congressional authorization for a separate armored branch, it was established technically "for purposes of service test." The Office of the Chief of Cavalry was eliminated in March 1942. Armor, as the ground arm of mobility, emerged from World War II with a lion's share of the credit for the Allied victory.

After the coming of the internal combustion engine in the early 1900's, warfare entered upon a new phase during World War I. Tanks emerged and horses were used little. Between World Wars I and II, both tanks (as a part of infantry) and cavalry continued. Cavalry gradually became partially mechanized, some of its mechanized elements joining with tanks to form the Armored Force for World War II. The remaining cavalry units were either mechanized or dismounted before entering combat. Following World War II, after much controversy, the mechanized cavalry and armored units were finally welded together in 1950 into a single armor branch. Now, with airmobile units becoming prominent, another transition may be in the making. First, the mounted arm had the horse, next the tank, and then the helicopter as its means of mobility. Currently, airborne armored units are being seriously discussed, and the types of future organizations and their tactics appear to be limitless.



[<http://www.history.army.mil/books/Lineage/arcav/arcav.htm>]