

Pullman Company 8300

Military Troop Sleeping Car

During World War II, mobilization of fighting troops by rail resulted in huge increases in traffic. Passenger miles would quadruple during 1940-1944, as troops were carried to their embarkation ports for Europe or the Pacific. The basic challenge of moving such numbers was made worse by a lack of equipment and a War Production Board that would not allow the building of new passenger cars. A solution was found when the Pullman Company constructed a total of 2400 troop sleepers for the Defense Plant Corporation between 1943-1945. These were put into service mixed with regular passenger equipment and in solid sets on troop trains until the final soldiers returned. After 1947, the now surplus cars were sold to the railroads and took up new careers rebuilt as baggage and express cars, boxcars, maintenance cars, cabooses and even a few ice reefers.

Pullman 8300 was the first car of the second order built by Pullman. This was the smallest of 3 orders and was a transitional design. Equipped with 30 bunks set in 10 banks 3 high, the car was designed to be comfortable, but basic and thus easy to build. One bunk in each car was dedicated to a Pullman porter who rode along with the troops and helped ensure their comfort. Every day, each bunk received fresh sheets and pillowcases in the grand Pullman tradition. The middle and lower bunks converted to daytime seating and each car included four wash basins and two restrooms. Each bunk set included a weapons rack and a place for foot lockers.

An unusual high speed truck (intended for 100 MPH+ running, but with a flawed design prone to “spontaneous disassembly at speed”) was used under what was, at heart, a freight car with windows. These “passenger” cars were even built at Pullman’s freight car plant in Chicago, further highlighting their hybrid nature. Car 8300 went to the Alaska Railroad after the war, where it was used as a maintenance of way bunk car. Never substantially altered, the 8300 is a fine representative of a unique car type that provided crucial military service on many railroads, including the Western Pacific, during the war.

builder
Pullman Company

built
June, 1943

type
Troop Sleeper

length
51 feet 8 inches overall

height
13 feet 2 inches overall

capacity
30 persons (29 troops / 1 porter)

operating weight
70,700 lbs

acquisition
donated by Norm Holmes