# Air Carrier Contract Personnel Encyclopedia Article

## Air Carrier Contract Personnel

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# Contents

Air Carrier Contract Personnel Encyclopedia Article.....1

Contents.....2

Air Carrier Contract Personnel.....3

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The commercial airline business was still in its infancy at the beginning of World War II (1939–45). Most ordinary Americans had never been on a commercial flight, but they were excited about the possibility of one day boarding a shiny silver plane and flying across the country. However, the shiny silver commercial airplane all but disappeared from civilian airports by the early 1940s. Most planes had been painted a dull military grey and pressed into military service. The majority of commercial pilots, navigators, radio operators, and maintenance workers had become part of the Air Carrier Contract Personnel of the U.S. Army Air Forces Air Transport Command (all air force duties were carried out by the army at that time; the U.S. Air Force was not established until 1947). The commercial airmen helped the army train pilots and develop a worldwide transport system for troops and supplies. During the war they could be found at home front bases and at Allied bases overseas. Eventually they organized an air transport system larger than the combined U.S. military and U.S. civilian airline systems as they existed prior to the Pearl Harbor attack on December 7, 1941.