

**Alaska State Library
Historical Collections**

Guide to Collection

U. S. Alaska Communications System, 1904-1963

PCA 64

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HISTORICAL NOTE

The Alaska Communication System (ACS) operated as a military telegraph line in Alaska from 1900-1969. General Adolphus Greeley, became an early advocate for a reliable Alaska communication system after returning from an 1882 Arctic exploration expedition during which he discovered that it took an intolerable length of time for messages to reach Washington, D.C.

The need to police the Alaskan gold rush (1898-1900) also focused attention on Alaska's communication needs. In 1900, Congress allocated funds to link Alaska's army posts by a system of military telegraph and cable lines known as Washington-Alaska Military Cable and Telegraph System (WAMCATS) under the U.S. Army Signal Corps. General Greeley was designated Chief Signal Officer. Lt. Billy Mitchell mapped 2,000 miles of the route that ran south along the Pacific Coast at Valdez and west from the Tanana and Yukon to Nome.

By 1903 there were six telegraph circuits including 559 miles of line between Fort Gibbon at Tanana and Fort Egbert at Eagle City. Also at this time, headquarters at Fort St. Michael began telegraphic communication over 2,500 miles to the United States. By 1915 there were 55 WAMCAT stations.

The depression caused the closing of a number of stations. Expansion had increased largely to serve the civilian population. WAMCATS remained under control of the Signal Corps, but in 1936 the name was changed to Alaska Communications System.

The original ACS group numbered about 100 men, but by World War II it had grown to more than 2000 as it expanded again for military communications. It linked military posts in the Aleutians to main headquarters at Adak, Kodiak, and Anchorage. Lines composed of 72,000 poles covering 2,020 miles along the Alcan Highway were constructed. By the 1950's ACS had 33 combination military-commercial installations and 7 branch offices in Alaska.

In 1969 Congress authorized the Air Force to transfer authority to private industry. RCA Alascom purchased the system for \$28 million. In 1970, the state began to regulate the industry and created the Alaska Public Utilities Commission and the Office of Telecommunications in the governor's office.

INVENTORY

VOLUME 1

Early History Wamcats--Ft. Egbert, Fairbanks and Valdez. Includes photographs and statistical information about the following stations:

Ft. Egbert -- 1	Haggard -- 40, 41
Fairbanks -- 2-10, 17, 18	McCullum 42-44
Hot Springs -- 10 A	Paxsons 45-48
Nulato -- 10 B	Mile 69(relief cabin) -- 49
St. Michael -- 11	Richardson -- 50-52
Seward -- 12	Salcha -- 53-56
Valdez -- 13-16, 19	Shaw Creek -- 57
Beal's Cache(relief cabin) -- 20	Stewart Creek -- 58
Beaver Dam -- 21-24	Summit (relief cabin) -- 59
Copper Center -- 25-32	Teikhell -- 60-64
Donnelly -- 34	Thompson Pass(relief cabin) -- 65
McCarthy -- 37	Tonsina -- 66-69
Gulkana -- 38, 39	Wortman's -- 70-74

VOLUME 2

Anchorage -- 75-193

VOLUME 3

Seattle -- 194-395

VOLUME 4

Adak -- 396-456	Bethel -- 810-842
Alcan -- 457-511	Big Delta -- 843-908
Anchorage -- 512-705	Brarka -- 909-938
Annette Island--- 706-711	Cathedral Bluffs -- 939-984
Barron -- 712-809	

VOLUME 5

Cold Bay 987-1046
Cordova 1047-1088
Craig 1089-1131
Curry 1132-1135
Fairbanks -- 1136-1231
Flat -- 1232-1241
Fort Greeley -- 1242-1245

Galena -- 1246
Glennallen -- 1247-1254
Haines -- 1255-1262
Harding Lake -- 1263-1264
Healy -- 1265-1277
Japonski Island -- 1278-1282
Juneau -- 1283-1359

VOLUME 6

Ketchikan -- 1360-1395
King Cove -- 986
King Salmon -- 1397
Kodiak -- 1398-1477
Kotzebue -- 1478-1492
Naknek -- 1497-1538

Nome -- 1539-1560
Northway -- 1563-1620
Palmer -- 1621-1623
Petersburg -- 1624-1633
Seward -- 1637-1658
Sheep Mountain -- 1659-1664

VOLUME 7

Shugak -- 1665-1669
Sitka -- 1670-1681
Skagway -- 1689-1701
Tanacross -- 1711-1712
Tok -- 1713-1724
Unalaska -- 1736-1741
Valdez -- 1748-1753
Wrangell -- 1754-1758
Whittier 1759-1789
Yakutat 1790-1794

Washington State -- 1795-1816
Korea -- 1817
U.S. Army Signal Corp. -- 1818-1824
Portraits and Groups -- 1836-1885
Machinery and Equipment -- 1886-1939

Attu Island -- 1940-1945
Dutch Harbor -- 1946-1959b
Fort Gibbon -- 1960

VOLUME 8 (*Located in PCA Oversize - PCA 64*)

Cable laying ships, equipment and personnel.

Portraits -- 1961-1979:

Col. Fred P. Andrews -- 1961
Capt. Fred Kerr -- 1963
Major Lawrence Westweller --
1964
Lt. Col. Dellvon K. Fall -- 1965
Major Fred Kerr -- 1966
T. Sgt. Walter Brown -- 1970
M. Sgt. Gissberg -- 1971
Capt. Connelly -- 1976-1977

Cable laying equipment -- 1980-1986
New Cable Machine -- 1987-2011

Auxiliary Equipment -- 2012-2067
Cable ship GLASSFORD -- 2068-2083
Cable ship SILVERADO -- 2084-2123
Cable ship RESTORER -- 2124-2154
Cable ship DELLWOOD -- 2155-2186
Cable ship NOTTINGHAM -- 2187-2192

Newspaper clipping - launching of
GLASSFORD -- 2193
Cable laying activities - DELLWOOD --
2194-2198

Lt. Col. Barr M. Snyder and three
unidentified people -- 21