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Historical Collections

Guide to Collection

U. S. Army Signal Corps, ca. 1889-1970

PCA 175

194 views  
0.25 linear feet

Processed: 1981  
By: Verda Carey  
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**ACQUISITION:** This collection comprises a selection of historical military views located at the National Archives and at the U.S. Army Pentagon in Washington, D.C. Lyman Woodman selected many of the views in 1981 while researching Alaskan military history. Photographs have been added over the years.

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### Historical Note

In May of 1900, Congress appropriated nearly half a million dollars [to establish] a communications system connecting the military posts in Alaska. Washington-Alaska Military Cable and Telegraph System, or WAMCATS for short, was constructed by the Army Signal Corps [beginning] in the summer of 1900. By the time WAMCATS was completed in 1904, it included almost 1,400 miles of overland telegraph cable, over 2,000 miles of submarine cable as well as [a] short wireless section.

In 1936 WAMCATS was renamed the Alaska Communications System. The Alaska Communications System remained under the control of the Army Signal Corps until 1962 when it was taken over by the Air Force. In 1971 the system was purchased by RCA and currently [2003] most long haul communication systems are owned by ALASCOM, a public utility.

Over the past three decades, the Signal Corps in Alaska has undergone several name changes. In 1962, it was called the US Army Signal Office. Later [it] went by the name the STRATCOM Signal Group, and in 1974 it assumed the title US Army Information Systems Command Alaska. In October 1989 the unit was redesignated the 1117th US Army Signal Battalion. In October 1992 it became an MTOE structured organization and were redesignated the 59th Signal Battalion. [*From World Wide Web, with permission: GlobalSecurity.org, accessed 21 April 2003.*]

### Scope and Contents Note

The collection includes images of military forts, telegraph stations, World War II, Army personnel, prisoners of war, and general views of Alaska. Photographs numbered 1-41 are from the National Archives and 42-193 are from the Pentagon.

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