

1-23-2019

Guide to MS308 U.S Army Signal Corps collection

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Guide to
MS308
U.S Army Signal Corps collection

1860-1989

1 foot, 3 inches (linear)

Inventory by Luciano Herrera
Creator sketch and contents notes by Owen Williamson
January 23, 2019

Donated by Loren A. Rolak for Bruno J. Rolak, 1994.

Citation: U.S. Army Signal Corps collection, MS308, C.L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department. The University of Texas at El Paso Library.

C.L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department
University of Texas at El Paso

Creator and Historical Sketch

Dr. Bruno J. Rolak (12 March 1917 - 6 October 1998), college professor, army veteran, and historian, and compiler of this collection, earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Education at Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana in 1941. After an Army career, he received a PhD degree (1969) in History from Indiana University. Rolak died in 1998 at the age of 81 in Marshfield, Wisconsin, and is buried at Fort Huachuca Cemetery in Arizona.

The **Signal Corps**, a branch of the U.S. Army, has the mission of managing all aspects of communications and information systems support. The U.S. Army Signal Corps began in 1860, with the appointment of Dr. Albert J. Myer, a physician, as Chief Signal Officer. Under his command, the unit transformed sign language used to communicate with deaf persons into a semaphore system incorporating red and white “wigwag” flags. The Signal Corps was officially established as a branch of the U.S. Army in March 1863. By the end of the American Civil War, the unit had developed a telegraph network to communicate from coast to coast.

By the late 19th century, the Signal Corps was employing the telephone, the heliograph, and observation balloons in wartime. Because of its expertise in ballooning, the Signal Corps was placed in charge of military aviation and the development of military aircraft, including the first procurement of an army aircraft. The Signal Corps relinquished control of aviation in 1914 when the Air Corps was established as a separate branch of the Army.

During World War I and World War II, the Signal Corps was responsible for implementing and designing radio technology. In subsequent years, the Signal Corps continued to develop radio, radar, and sonar technology. The contemporary mission of the Signal Corps includes the management of all modern telecommunications and information systems, including computer systems, Internet and local area networks, and voice and data communications.

Sources: “Signal Corps. United States Army.” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, updated Dec. 20, 2018. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Signal-Corps>. Cited on Feb. 5, 2019.

Series Description or Arrangement

The collection was left in the order that it was donated. Folders are not arranged chronologically or by subject.

Scope and Content Note

Contains photographs, typescript manuscripts, printed training documents, clippings,

photocopies, off-prints, and tear sheets of articles. This collection is an accumulation of resources for a history of the U.S. Army Signal Corps, documenting signaling operations from the Civil War (1861-1865) until the Vietnam War era. Most of the documents and photographs are copies of non-classified Army materials and items published elsewhere. Other than correspondence and a typescript for a prospective book or article (some of which was published by the U.S. Army in 1976), Rolak includes few personal writings in this collection.

This collection is not exhaustive, but offers a series of close-up snapshots and vignettes of the work of the Signal Corps over the time periods covered. Included in the collection are some Army training materials from the post-World War II era, as well as a photocopy of the typescript (not Rolak's own) of a translation of an entire book which is still in print as of 2019, *War Secrets in the Ether*, by William Flicke (1954).

Provenance Statement

The collection was received from Loren Rolak, MD, in 1994, sent on behalf of Bruno Rolak, who compiled the materials as research for a planned publication. The only unpublished item in the collection bearing a clear provenance statement is Box 3, Item 10, a hard-bound photograph album with 250+ photographic prints, identified on a pasted-in slip as "Men of the 56th Signal Bn in Carolina field exercise in 1941, plus later photos of the unit in Alaska. Donated by Ralph D. McKinney, PO Box 209, Marlow, OK 73055."

Restrictions

Many (but not all) of the U.S. Army photographic prints in this collection (including some images dating back to the U.S. Civil War) are stamped "Publication of this photograph is not authorized unless approved for release by a Public Information Office at any Army activity or installation and is so noted hereon. Its use in commercial advertisement must be approved by the Public Information Division, Office of the Chief of Information and Education, Department of the Army, The Pentagon, Washington, D.C. If published, please credit as 'US Army Photograph.' "

Literary Rights Statement

Permission to publish material from the U.S. Army Signal Corps collection, MS308, must be obtained from the C. L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department, the University of Texas at El Paso Library. Citation should read, U.S. Army Signal Corps collection, MS308, C. L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department, the University of Texas at El Paso Library.

Notes to the Researcher

The UTEP Library also holds another, separate collection of the papers of Dr. Rolak. That other collection consists of some of the personal papers of Dr. Bruno John Rolak, including materials that he apparently gathered while serving in the United States Army during the Korean War. These materials are chiefly war propaganda leaflets and pamphlets, most of which are written in Korean. Also included is a photocopy of a 1969 speech given by Rolak at Memorial Park, El Paso, Texas, commemorating the Fourth of July.

Related collections

Bruno J. Rolak papers, MS103

Nathan Goldman photograph collection, PH048 (Goldman was photographer in Signal Corps)

Robert Ewing Thomason papers, MS140 (Contains WWII photos taken by Signal Corps photographers)

Container List

Box #	Folder #	Title	Date
1	1	Rolak, Research Correspondence.	1970 - May 9, 1989
1	2	Rolak, Typescripts "U.S. Civil War Signals, 1861 to 1865."	C. 1980s
1	3	Legislation and Orders Relating to the Signal Service, U.S.A., From 1860 to 1872.	1860 to 1872 (Photocopies)
1	4	Addresses on the History of the U.S Army Signal Corps.	C. 1980s
1	5	Course at the Army War College, 1922 – 1923. A – 4. Source Material on German Supply. (photocopy)	1922 to 1923 (Copies)
1	6	<i>Technical and Tactical Training Aid</i> . The Area Communication System (15 Dec 59) 2 copies [Technical and Tactical Training Aid is a serial publication.] Entire number on file.	Dec 15, 1959
1	7	<i>Technical and Tactical Training Aid</i> No. 91. Solar Flares and HF [<i>High Frequency, i.e., Shortwave</i>] Radio Blackouts. Entire number on file.	Feb 29, 1960
1	8	<i>Technical and Tactical Training Aid</i> No. 93. The Campaign to insure Against Equipment Failure. Entire number on file.	Aug 15, 1960
1	9	<i>Technical and Tactical Training Aid</i> No. 94. The Changing Patterns of Signal Corps Careers, etc. Entire number on file.	Nov 14, 1960
1	10	<i>Technical and Tactical Training Aid</i> No. 95. The 1961 Centenary Signal Corps Research, etc. Entire number on file.	Feb 10, 1961
1	11	<i>Technical and Tactical Training Aid</i> No. 96. The Signal Corps as a Combat Arm. Entire number on file.	Jun 23, 1961
1	12	<i>Technical and Tactical Training Aid</i> No. 100. Army Reorganization and its Impact	Dec 18, 1962

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		Upon the Signal Corps. Entire number on file.	
1	13	Quadrennial Report of the Chief Signal Officer, U.S. Army, with Comments.	May 1951 – April 1955
1	14	Quadrennial Report of the Chief Signal Officer, U.S. Army, with Comments.	May 1955 – April 1959
1	15	Review of Department of Defense Worldwide Communications, Phase I, with Comments, and Phase II.	May 10, 1971 and October 12, 1972 (Photocopies)
1	16	Signal Corps Flight Information Program	1954-1958
2	1	Evans, P.W, "Strategic Signal Communication."	April 27, 1932 (Official File Copy)
2	2	Flicke, Wilhelm F. <i>War Secrets in the Ether, Parts I, II and III.</i> (Typescript translation of entire book.)	1954 (Photocopy)
2	3	Myer, Samuel C. "The Impact of Signal Communications Upon the Art of War."	1860 – 1942 (Photocopy)
2	4	Priestly R.E "The Signal Service in the European War of 1914 to 1918. (France)" (Title Page – Chapter IX)	C. 1921 (Photocopies)
2	5	Priestly R.E "The Signal Service in the European War of 1914 to 1918. (France)." (Chapter X – End)	C. 1921 (Photocopies)
2	6	Thompson, George Raynor. "Civil War Signals." <i>Military Affairs</i> , XVIII	Winter, 1954
2	7	Todd, A. L "Ordeal in the Arctic" (Article clipped from <i>American Heritage</i> , June, 1960.)	June, 1960
2	8	Roster of 893 rd Signal Company, Depot, Aviation, at Bengal Air Depot. Tittaghar [sic.], i.e, Titagarh, West Bengal, India.	1945 (Copies)
2	9	Phillips, H. C. "Dedication of the Signal Corps Museum." (Article in <i>Military Affairs</i> , vol XIX, No. 4, entire number.)	1955
2	10	Selected Reference Items: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offprint: <i>The Santiago Campaign.</i> (A guide to an exhibit of paintings from the Spanish-American War, 1952-1953, hosted by the Smithsonian's Division of Military 	1898 to 1954

		<p>History).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pages torn from a bound volume of <i>McClure's Magazine</i>, Vol. XII, 1898-1899, pps. 332-336. Crane, S., "Marines Signaling under Fire at Guantanamo," plus photocopy of same article. • Photocopy of pps 531-2 of <i>The Chevron</i>, date unknown, author unknown. "History of 1931 Signal Corps C.M.T.C." • Chart of command structure, "Signal Coordination." Date unknown. • Component Indicators, technical guide of abbreviations then current in signaling technology. C. 1970. • "Extension Courses of the Signal School," Ft. Monmouth, New Jersey." • Pages torn from <i>Newsweek</i>, 29 March 1976, pps 6-7. "The Telephone is 100 Years Old" [Advertisement for Bell System.] • Photocopy from Bruce, R. V. Bell: <i>Alexander Graham Bell and the Conquest of Solitude</i>. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1973. P. 286. • Clipping from <i>Military</i>, December, 1985, p. 8. "There are No Hot-line Telephones." • Photocopies from Smith, R. E. (1959). <i>The Army and Economic Mobilization</i>. Washington, DC, Dept. of the Army. Pps 30, 45, 49, 114, 185, and 424-425. • Photocopy from Millett, J. D. (1954). "The Organization and Role of the Army Service Forces." 	
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		<p>Pps 96-99.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Photocopies of <i>Honolulu Star Bulletin</i>. "One of War's Best-kept Secrets Bared: Battle Command Post Inspected." Part 1, 12 February, 1947, p. 1, and Part 2, undated. 	
3	1	U.S. Army Photographs and Drawings of Signal Corps Activities, U.S. Civil War.	1861 – 1865 (Copies)
3	2	Photographs of Signal Corps activities, Spanish American War.	1898 (Copies)
3	3	Photographs of Signal Corps activities, Philippine Insurrection.	1899 – 1902 (Copies)
3	4	Photographs of U.S. Army activities: "China Relief Expedition" at the end of the Boxer Rebellion (q.v.) or the Yihetuan Movement in China.	1900 – 1901 (Copies)
3	5	Photographs of the Mexican Revolution, including Related U.S. Army Operations, in Sonora, Mexico and in Arizona.	1910 -1916 (Copies)
3	6	Photographs of Signal Corps activities, World War I	1917 – 1918 (Copies)
3	7	Photographs of Signal Corps Activities, Department of the Army Radio Transmitting Station WAR, Woodbridge, VA., and Receiving Station, La Plata, MD.	1952 – 1955 (Copies)
3	8	Photographs of Signal Corps Activities Fort Huachuca, Arizona	1959 – 1970 (Copies)
3	9	Photographs and documentation of Signal Corps activities and Army signaling. Includes a photographic negative identified as that of Rolak at the dedication of Greely Hall, Fort Huachuca, Arizona, 1976.	1860, 1908, 1958, 1978. (Photographic prints and large-format 8"x10" b/w photographic negatives.)
3	10	Hardbound photograph album, 56 th Signal Battalion, World War II era. "Carolina field exercise, plus operations in Alaska." Donated by Ralph D.	C. 1941

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		McKinney.	
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