

PART SIX

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HISTORY OF THE SIGNAL CORPS  
COLORADO NATIONAL GUARD

## PART SIX

### HISTORY OF THE SIGNAL CORPS COLORADO NATIONAL GUARD

The story of the first attempts to create a Signal Corps in the Colorado National Guard is well told in the biennial report of the Adjutant General (Brigadier General George West) to the Governor of Colorado for the years 1887-1888, and from which I quote the following:

"The utility of a well organized and well drilled signal corps, especially in a mountainous country like our State, is well known. The laws of Colorado make no provision for this arm of the service, but feeling that a number of men well instructed in the manual of signaling would prove of great value, should our troops be again called into active service, with your approval, I caused a detachment to be organized by S. O. No. 86, A.G.O., July 13, 1888, comprising Sergeant E. B. Webster, Co. B, First Infantry, and ten men detailed from various companies on duty at this post (Denver), and put them on detached service under command of Sergeant Webster. Later Sergeant Webster was promoted to a First Lieutenant upon General Reardon's staff, and ordered to duty with the corps. \* \* \* I am pleased to acknowledge the many courtesies received from General Greeley, Chief Signal Officer, U. S. A., who has manifested great interest in the corps, and has kindly furnished many books of instruction, charts, codes, cards and manuals, requisite for the successful instruction and practice of the men. I also earnestly thank Lieutenant S. A. Smoke, Eighteenth Infantry, U. S. A., stationed at the military post near Denver (Fort Logan), for very valuable advice and aid in drilling the detachment. Lieutenant Smoke has volunteered to donate one evening each week to giving the corps instruction, and under his tutelage it is making fine progress. \* \* \* I am pleased to recommend to Your Excellency, the propriety of recommending to the Legislature the organization of a separate corps by law, to be composed of a maximum of three officers; one Captain, who shall be chief signal officer; one First and one Second Lieutenants; and forty-two enlisted men—fourteen of whom shall be non-commissioned officers."

The recommendations of General West were accepted by the Legislature, and in the Act of April 2, 1889, reorganizing the Colorado National Guard provision was made for a Signal Corps company. Accordingly on July 24, 1889, there was mustered in at Denver, Colorado, a Signal Corps company of three officers—Captain Thos. E. Sewell; 1st Lieutenant C. L. Southard and 2d Lieutenant A. H. Buck—and twenty-seven enlisted men. The company was composed of an excellent type of personnel, and practically all of its members were also members of the Denver Athletic Club. Starting off under auspicious conditions, the company rapidly developed into an efficient organization, and on October 30, 1890, the Inspector-General of the Colorado National Guard made the following report:

"This (the Signal Corps) is one of the few well disciplined organizations in the state. They take great interest in making themselves proficient in the signal drill and are thoroughly conversant with all duties pertaining to their branch of the service. This corps is well officered and has good material."



The company participated in the camp of instruction (the first of its kind to be held for the Colorado National Guard) at Camp Cooper near Fort Logan, Colorado, from September 4 to 11th, 1889, and benefited much in the way of basic instruction by association with other units of the Guard and of the regular army. Commenting on the results of the encampment, Colonel Sullivan, Inspector General, said in part, "Throughout the encampment the officers were untiring in instructing their men, to which the latter heartily responded by a strict and conscientious performance of duty and a cheerful submission to the restraints of camp life. I can say that in appearance, discipline and general efficiency, the troops comprising the encampment of the Colorado National Guard, for the year 1889, are worthy of praise, and a credit to the state."

From October 16 to 24, 1892, a detachment of the Signal Corps, C. N. G., two officers (Lieutenants W. A. Wilson and B. H. Merchant) and twenty-one enlisted men, accompanied Governor Routt and his staff to the World's Columbian Exposition at Chicago, Illinois, and while there acted as escort to the Governor and as representatives of the Centennial state "taking special pains to inform all inquirers of the great and varied resources and industries of our commonwealth".<sup>1</sup> Receptions and parades occupied much of the time of the Colorado delegation while in Chicago, and the Adjutant General concludes his report to the Governor as follows:

"The presence of the Signal Corps added much to the military appearance of our delegation. At Washington Park we were permitted to witness the maneuver and review of 15,000 troops composed of National Guard and Regular Army under command of Maj. Gen. Nelson A. Miles, of the U. S. Army, after which the parade was continued to Manufacturers Building in the Exposition Grounds, where the dedicatory exercises were held. We returned home, arriving in Denver on Monday, October 24, 1892".<sup>1</sup>

The strength of the company had been gradually built up in the years following the initial muster in, and on November 30, 1892, the report of the Adjutant General shows that the Signal Corps, C.N.G., was composed of three officers and forty enlisted men, just two enlisted men short of the maximum strength prescribed by law. Many changes had occurred in the commissioned ranks, and at the date of the above mentioned report Captain John S. Fillmore was in command of the company. The personnel of the company was still maintained at a very high standard, and the training, with the meager equipment available, was exceptionally efficient.<sup>2</sup> However, the lack of the necessary signal equipment was a serious drawback to the complete training of the company as a signal unit, and inevitably led to loss of interest on the part of the officers and men. This condition became so serious that the Signal Corps, Colo. N.G., practically ceased to exist and a reorganization of the unit became necessary early in the spring of 1894. Among those active in the reorganization of the company was C. H. Hilton, now Colonel, 3d. Coast Artillery, U. S. Army, commanding Fort MacArthur, San Pedro, California, who has kindly written the following account of the reorganization of the Signal Corps, Colo. N.G., of 1894, for this history;

"This company was organized in the early spring of 1894 and the nucleus came from the then, Denver Wheel Club. It had, as a unit, active service in the miner's strike at Cripple Creek and shortly later at Bull Hill. It was turned out at the time of the Arata lynching and was present during the so called City Hall War.

<sup>1</sup> Report of Adjutant General Kennedy for 1891-1892.

<sup>2</sup> This equipment included signal flags, flash lamps, and colored lights, (Report of A. G. for 1892).



"I assisted, and was probably responsible for the organization of the unit and was appointed 1st Sergeant at the time of organization. The Commanding Officer was Captain H. S. Worthington, 1st Lieutenant was Clare Southard, and the 2d Lieutenant's name I cannot recall. Captain Worthington did not stay on the job long and Southard became Captain, the then 2d Lieutenant became 1st Lieutenant and I still have my commission as 2d Lieutenant, Signal Corps, 1st Brigade, National Guard of Colorado to date from May 23, 1894. I also have a commission as 1st Lieutenant in the same organization to date from September 1, 1894. From September 1, 1894 until May 1, 1898, I served as Chief Signal Officer, National Guard of Colorado by detail.

"The company consisted of three officers and thirty-five men mounted on bicycles. They were armed with rifles and when mounted the rifle was carried in two clips fastened to the top frame of the bicycle so that the rifle extended along the top tube of the frame with the muzzle projecting somewhat to the front of the steering post. After dismounting, the rifle could be instantly extracted from the clips. The company was equipped by the State with signal flags only, but from time to time borrowed heliographs from the regular army Signal Corps at the old Headquarters of the Department of the Colorado. Captain Glassford was then Chief Signal officer of that department.

"The uniforms used by this Company were the same as those worn by the previous Signal Corps Company which had been mounted on horses. There were two uniforms, the blue dress, and the full dress. With the dress uniform was worn the blue forage cap and canvas leggins over the trousers. With the full dress there was worn on the coat the orange aguilettes of the Signal Corps and the mounted helmet with the orange horsetail. When turned out mounted in full dress the outfit presented a very incongruous appearance. However this was somewhat improved by requiring the men to raise the handle bars of their bicycles and sit fairly straight in the saddle.

"As near as I can recall, the miner's strike at Leadville occurred in 1895. At any rate the Signal Company as such was not sent to Leadville, and from that time on I do not recall any activity of this unit. I myself served thru the Leadville affair as Chief Signal Officer on the staff of the brigade commander, General Brooks."

Once again the old defect of lack of proper equipment threatened the efficiency and stability of the company and on December 14, 1894, the Inspector General of the State made the following recommendation:

"The Signal Corps, Captain Southard, Commanding—This body of men mounted on bicycles are so poorly supplied (never having the apparatus given them that is necessary for the perfection of signal corps) that I would recommend that they be reorganized and put into the First Regiment as an infantry company, still retaining their bicycles." The recommendation of the Inspector General was not accepted, and the company continued as a Signal Corps unit until finally mustered out on December 4, 1895, in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 2, Special Orders No. 79, Adjutant General's Office, Denver, Colorado, of the same date. However, paragraph 3 of the same order authorized the mustering in of a new unit of the "Signal Corps" which was to be officially designated as the "Denver Light Cavalry". This new unit was not, in fact, a Signal Corps organization, and had merely been assigned to this branch as a temporary expedient in order to comply with the law. The law prescribing the organization of the Colorado National Guard provided for two troops of cavalry only, and since these two troops were then in existence, no further cavalry units could be organized. On the mustering out of one of the old troops,



the designation of the "Denver Light Cavalry" (Signal Corps) was changed to "Denver City Troop," and the unit transferred to the cavalry arm under the provisions of Special Orders No. 49, Adjutant General's Office, Denver, Colorado, July 13, 1897.

An act of the Colorado General Assembly of July 12, 1897, again revised the law respecting the Colorado National Guard, and provision was made for a Signal Corps in addition to other units. However, due to lack of funds, the corps was not reorganized at this time and there was no Signal Corps unit of the Colorado National Guard in the service during the Spanish-American war. The post-war reorganization of the state military forces was commenced early in 1899, and on May 31 of that year the Signal Corps, Colorado National Guard, was mustered in at Denver, Colorado, with a strength of one officer, Captain Frederick White, and ten enlisted men, all sergeants. Commenting on the new organization of the Signal Corps, Brigadier General John Chase, commanding First Brigade, Colorado National Guard, in a report dated October 4, 1902, states in part: "Those who framed the law designed that privates from the infantry and mounted troops should be detailed for instruction by the signal corps. The plan has failed for the very manifest reason that in one enlistment of three years, the infantryman and trooper is fully engaged in learning his own duties, without having his attention diverted to another branch of the service. \* \* \* I therefore recommend that authority be granted by law to increase the number of men in the signal corps to correspond with the organization of similar bodies in the United States Army."

The recommendations of General Chase were not to be adopted for several years to come, and in the meantime the small cadre of the corps "carried on" with commendable efficiency as the inspectors' reports of the period show. Quoting from one of these reports: "The signal corps is well drilled and well outfitted with such instruments as are necessary to carry on the work of that important department of the military service, and my inspections have shown that the members of the signal corps are very proficient in the duties they are expected to perform." The training activities of the Signal Corps, Colo. N. G., had been considerably enlarged since the formation of the first unit in 1889, and programs of training for the years 1901-1903 directed that the unit become proficient in the following technical subjects in addition to purely basic military training; delivery of messages; signalling with flags and lanterns; use of the telegraph and heliograph; code work; field telegraph and telephone; and communications work in field problems with other arms. Opportunity for carrying out the latter provision was afforded the corps in the camp of the Colorado National Guard at the Quarto-Centennial Celebration at Boulder, July 31 to August 2, 1901, inclusive, where all units of the guard participated in the normal camp duties and in field problems.

Captain White retired on June 3, 1904, and Lieutenant George W. Underwood, Company M, 2d Infantry, Colo. N. G., (formerly a sergeant of the Signal Corps, C. N. G.), was appointed Captain commanding the Signal Corps on October 6, 1904. The unit was called out for active duty and served in the Colorado City strike, March 3 to March 20, 1903; Cripple Creek strike, September 4, 1903 to April 11, 1904; Cripple Creek riot June 7 to August 26, 1904; Telluride strike November 20, 1903 to March 11, 1904; and the Trinidad strike March 22 to June 12, 1904. The activities of the Signal Corps during these periods of field duty were summarized briefly in Lieutenant Underwood's report to the Military District Commander, Teller County Military District, Victor, Colorado, April 11, 1904, and from which the following extracts are quoted:



"On September 5, 1903, telephone and telegraph instruments were installed at Camp Headquarters, Camp Goldfield, giving direct communication with all points over the lines of the Colorado Telephone Company, the Postal Telegraph Company and the Western Union Telegraph Company. In addition to this a field telephone system was installed on September 7, 1903, field 'phones being placed in the office of General Bell, General Chase, Regimental Headquarters, and at the Guard House, Medical Detachment, Quartermaster Department, Commissary Department, Squadron Headquarters, Ordnance Department, Signal Corps and cavalry stables. These 'phones gave direct communication throughout the camp, independent of the Colorado Telephone Company's lines. Members of the Signal Corps maintained a continuous telegraph service, both day and night.

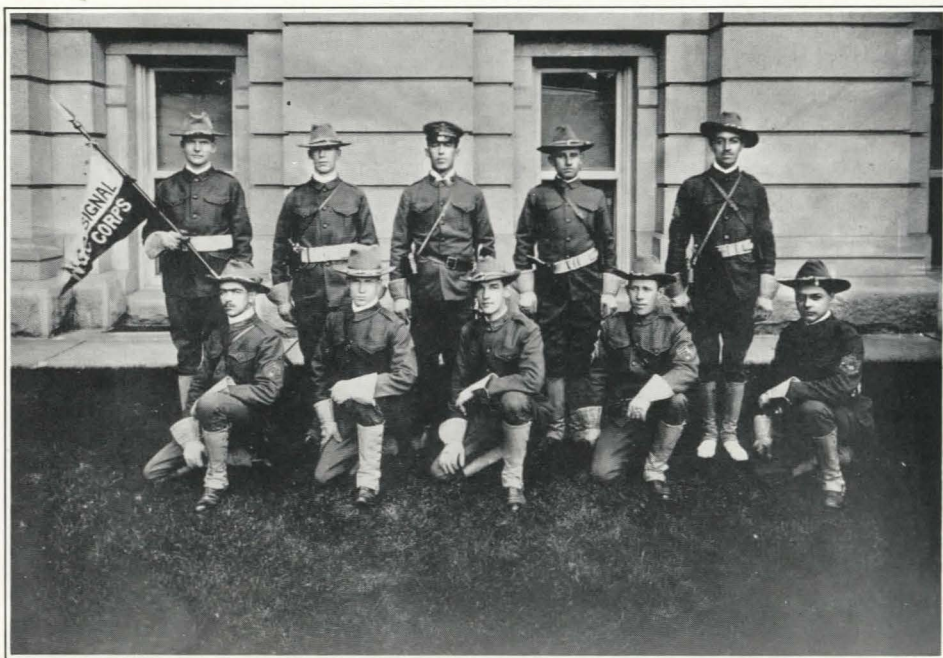
"On September 10, 1903, permission was obtained from the Colorado Light and Power Company to install a system of electric lights throughout camp. Two hundred and thirty-seven incandescent lamps were placed at Camp Goldfield and sixty-seven at Camp Bull Hill. Telephones were installed at Headquarters and Guard House of Camp Bull Hill on this date. An independent telephone line was established between Lookout mountain and headquarters at El Paso mine. Two Signal Corps men were detailed to run searchlight on Ajax property. This detail served for a period of about eighteen nights.

"For the betterment of the telephone service a switchboard was installed at Headquarters, Camp Goldfield, this giving all the field 'phones connection with main line. To operate this switchboard it was necessary to detail three men each day on eight-hour shifts.

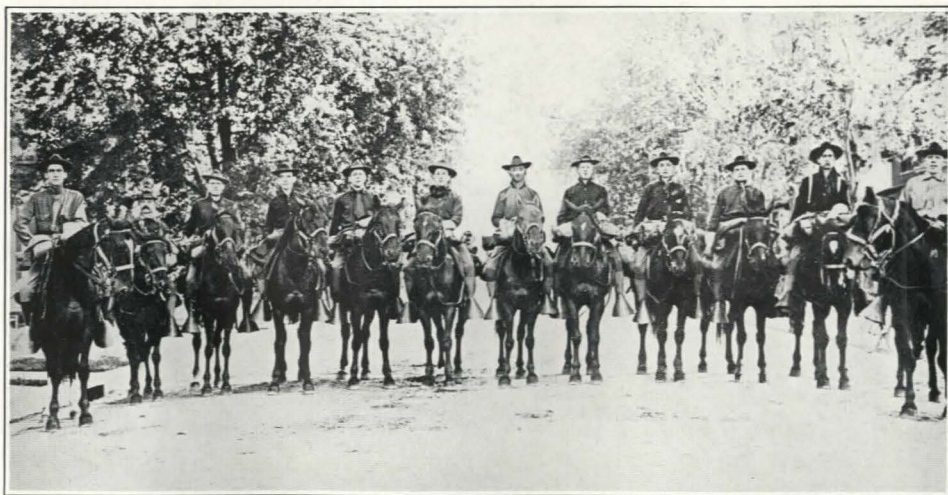
"On account of removal of tents, erection of buildings, etc., it was necessary to make alterations and repairs daily, and at no time were there more than nine men on duty with the Signal Corps.

"The following conditions existed until orders were received on November 21, 1903, to proceed to Camp Telluride. At that time it was necessary to greatly reduce the telephone system at Camp Goldfield, where three men were left on duty. Practically from said date the force has not been increased, and in addition to Signal Corps work, these men have acted in the capacity of infantrymen on provost guard duty, or any emergency calls (which were numerous). Later headquarters were established at Victor, Colorado, where lights, telephones and telegraph keys were placed and maintained until the office was abandoned \* \* \*"

Following the active service of 1903-1904 the organization of the Signal Corps, Colo. N. G., was changed to conform to a ruling of the military board of the state, which prescribed a maximum strength of one captain, one first sergeant, one sergeant and nine first class privates. Later, this provision was further amended to provide for a maximum strength of two officers and twenty enlisted men. Captain Underwood was succeeded in command of the unit by Captain Otto H. Liese on March 12, 1907, and Sergeant Arthur W. Darragh was appointed First Lieutenant to fill the original vacancy caused by the increase in the strength of the unit. In order to conform with the Act of Congress of January 21, 1903, respecting the Organized Militia of the United States, (the "Dick Bill"), the organization of the Signal Corps, Colo. N. G., was again changed in pursuance of an Act of the Colorado Legislature of April 13, 1909, and promulgated by the state military board on January 8, 1910, to the following:



SIGNAL CORPS, COLO. N. G., DENVER, COLO., 1906  
Capt. G. W. Underwood, Commanding.



SIGNAL CORPS, COLO. N. G., DENVER, COLO., 1910  
Capt. Otto Liese, Commanding.



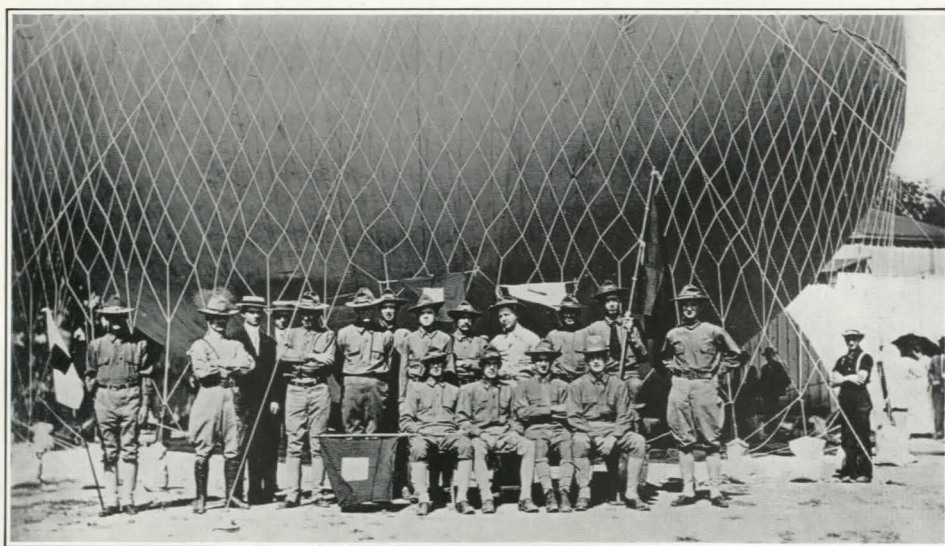
## SIGNAL CORPS, COLORADO NATIONAL GUARD

(Minimum Strength)

Captain .....	1	First Lieutenant .....	1
First Class Sergeant .....	3	Sergeants .....	3
Corporals .....	6	Cook .....	1
First Class Privates .....	11	Privates .....	11

Immediate steps were taken to reorganize the corps under the new tables of organization and this was soon accomplished. The organization was equipped and armed much the same as a cavalry troop, and carried in addition the technical equipment of signal corps units.

The year 1909 was notable for the advance made in the science of aeronautics. Towards the end of 1908 the Wright brothers had made their flights, and in July, 1909, Bleriot flew across the English channel. Interest in aeronautical matters was keen, and when a Mr. Ivy Baldwin made several balloon ascensions from Elitch's Gardens in Denver in July, 1909, the Signal Corps of Colorado assisted in the work of preparation and conducted several experiments in signalling. Thus, in a small measure, was forecast the association of



SIGNAL CORPS, COLO. N. G.,

Assists in balloon ascension experiments and air-ground communications,  
Elitch's Gardens, Denver, Colo., July 18, 1909.

the Signal Corps of the army and aviation in the creation at a later date of the Aviation Section of the Signal Corps, regular army, the forerunner of our present day Air Corps. Captain Liese's report to the Adjutant General on the activities of the Signal Corps of Colorado in connection with the Baldwin balloon ascensions is very interesting and is reproduced here in full:

"In compliance with your verbal instructions, I have the honor to submit the following report of the work performed by the Signal Corps in connection with the balloon ascension conducted by Mr. Ivy Baldwin at Elitch's Gardens, Denver, July 18, 1909.



"Upon the invitation of Mr. Baldwin to the undersigned to accompany him on his ascension, and to practice balloon signalling, the two officers and sixteen enlisted men of this command repaired to the Elitch Gardens on the date named. The men enthusiastically performed the duties assigned to them in the preparation of the bag, the proper arrangement of the basket, necessary ballast and signal apparatus, and the taking of a number of photographs. Immediately after the start of the balloon on its upward journey, at 3:30 P. M. the squad detailed to conduct the signaling from the ground station, under command of Lieutenant Darragh, scrambled into the tower of the Elitch Gardens Theater and established communication with the suspended calling station. Successful, constant communication was carried on for about thirty minutes by means of a white four-foot flag at the ground station and a red two-foot flag at the suspended station, at varying distances between stations approximating a maximum of seven miles. No other method of visual signaling was attempted but it is the intention to repeat the drill, when a heliograph will be used at the ground station. The weather conditions during our stay in the air were very good; a slight breeze from the north drifted us slowly southward, little attention to the gas bag, ballast, etc., was necessary, and we were thus able to give much time to 'seeing the sights' and revolving in our minds the many opportunities afforded in military ballooning for watching an enemy's movements, picking out his strongholds, hasty and fairly reliable military map making on an extensive scale, etc. In passing over Sloan's Lake we were much interested to note how clearly the bottom of the lake could be seen and how plainly many objects in the water could be distinguished. About 4:15 P. M., we noticed a heavy rainstorm in progress at Golden, Colorado, a few miles to the west and toward which we were drifting, which compelled us to descend if we wished to escape serious danger and avoid injury to the balloon. The landing was effected with ease at 4:35 P. M., after having reached a maximum altitude of about 12,000 feet above sea level, or 7,000 feet above Denver.

"I enclose a set of photographs, made by Private 1st Class C. E. McKee, of this command, illustrating various features of the drill.

"Mr. Ivy Baldwin is a veteran balloonist and a close student of aerial navigation. He had service with the U. S. Signal Corps before Santiago de Cuba in 1898, is thoroughly familiar with most modern methods of signaling used in the U. S. Army and Navy; and his voluntary service to the Signal Corps of the National Guard of Colorado in offering instruction and opportunity for practical experience in ballooning is thoroughly appreciated by the officers and men of this command. Mr. Baldwin has accepted an invitation to give the Corps a lecture on his varied experiences, at a later date."

Commenting on the report, "Arms and the Man," a service publication of the time (August 12, 1909), says in part: "We shall watch the development of aeronautical science in the Colorado National Guard with a great deal of interest.<sup>3</sup> It is evident that the Signal Corps of that state is an enterprising organization."

During the period of 1907-1912 the unit attended camps of instruction as follows: Camp Buchtel, Rifle Range, near Golden, Colorado, July 14-21, 1907; Bailey, Colo., June 14-21, 1908; Camp Emmett Crawford, Dale Creek, Wyo., with First Infantry, Colo. N. G., August 1-10, 1908; Camp at Bailey, Colo., June 19-27, 1909; Camp Wilder, Big Jimmy Gulch, Douglas County, Colo., September 10-14, 1910; and Bailey, Park County, Colo., July 13-21, 1912. These camps

<sup>3</sup> The writer of this paragraph would indeed have "watched with interest" could he have visualized the present day very efficient 120th Observation Squadron, Air Corps, Colo. N. G.



were well attended by officers and men of the corps, and did much to improve the standard of training under field conditions. In addition to these camps, Captain Liese and Lieutenant Darragh attended the school of instruction for engineer and signal corps officers of the National Guard at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, May 15 to June 15, 1910.

Captain Liese resigned on March 15, 1911, and Lieutenant A. W. Darragh was promoted captain, commanding Signal Corps, Colo. N. G., in his stead, on May 10, 1911. Captain Darragh in turn resigned on November 22, 1911, and the command of the unit then passed to Captain Edward A. Smith (formerly 1st Lieutenant and Battalion Adjutant First Infantry, C. N. G.) on December 6, 1911.<sup>4</sup> Sergeant Chas. E. McKee was promoted first Lieutenant on July 26, 1911, and resigned on May 10, 1913; he was succeeded by Sergeant Barnard Cummings who was appointed First Lieutenant on August 6, 1913.

On June 30, 1911, the Chief of the Division of Militia Affairs, War Department, Washington, D. C., published Circular No. 12, in which the organization of the Signal Corps of the National Guard was amended to conform to recent changes in the Signal Corps of the regular service. The circular prescribed in part, as follows: "For service in war Signal Corps companies are classified according to their duties and designated as field companies, telegraph companies, and base line companies, the duties of the field company being to lay and recover tactical lines very rapidly for telegraph and telephone communication during combat or movements of troops. The telegraph company is equipped for installing and operating camp telephone and telegraph systems, using lance pole line construction. The duties of the base line company are the construction and operation of permanent telephone and telegraph lines from the base of an army along the lines of supply and communication; \* \* \* Therefore, unless the express authorization of the Secretary of War be obtained for a different organization, signal troops should be organized into

<sup>4</sup> Captain Smith had been in actual command of the Signal Corps by detail from September 22, 1911, during Captain Darragh's absence from the state on leave. Darragh was re-commissioned First Lieutenant in the Signal Corps Colo. N. G., on February 19, 1913, per Special Orders No. 4, A. G. O. of February 26, 1913.



SIGNAL CORPS, COLO. N. G., CAMP AT BAILEY, COLO., JULY 13-21, 1912.  
Capt. E. Smith, Commanding.



field companies. Three types of field companies are authorized; Type A, containing four wire sections and two wireless sections; Type B, containing four wire sections; and Type C, containing two wire sections. \* \* \*

To comply with the new organization the Military Board, State of Colorado, at a meeting held on February 5, 1913, passed the following resolution (published in General Orders No. 3, Adjutant General's Office, Denver, Colo., February 6, 1913):

"Resolved; That in compliance with Regulations for the Organized Militia, 1910, as amended by Circular No. 12, Division of Military Affairs, under date of June 30, 1911, Section 143, L. C. R., National Guard of Colorado, be amended to read as follows:

"143. The minimum strength in the different grades for a Type B company of the signal corps shall be as follows:

Captain .....	1
First Lieutenants .....	2
Master Signal Electrician .....	1
Sergeants, first class .....	5
Sergeants .....	8
Corporals .....	13
Cooks .....	2
Privates, first class .....	35
Privates .....	11
Total—(3 officers, mounted; 75 enlisted men, 60 mounted) .....	78

Complying with the new regulations, active recruiting was at once instituted to bring the company, now designated Company A, Signal Corps, Colo. N. G., to the prescribed minimum strength. However, before this could be fully accomplished, the entire Colorado National Guard was called to active duty on October 28, 1913, in connection with the coal miners' strike in the southern coal fields of Colorado. The company, under command of Captain Smith, responded to the call for active duty, and was stationed at Trinidad and Ludlow, Colo., during the ensuing campaign. The duties of the unit were much the same as those performed in the strikes of 1903-1904, and in addition the telephone and telegraph lines in and out of Trinidad were under the general supervision of the Signal Corps. During the tour of duty at Trinidad the company was saddened by the death of Lieutenant Darragh on March 1, 1914, and to fill his vacancy Sergeant Guy V. Yates was promoted first lieutenant with rank from March 18, 1914.

The company was relieved from field duty by detachments during April and May 1914, and returned to its home station at Denver. From June 5 to 15, 1915, a detachment of the company consisting of Captain E. A. Smith, Lieutenant B. Cummings, First Lieutenant Guy V. Yates, Sergeant First Class Charles W. Smith, Sergeant Thomas A. McDonald, and Sergeant John H. Learnard attended a camp of instruction for Signal Corps officers and non-commissioned officers at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. The camp was of great benefit to the Colorado detachment, and its lessons were successfully applied in the subsequent armory and field training instruction of the company. The stimulus to training led to experiments along other lines in Signal Corps work, and Captain E. A. Smith reports as follows on the activities of the company at this time:

"About this time the Company took up the proposition of wireless telegraphy and a wireless telegraph station was built, equipped and installed in the armory, then occupied by the Signal Company at 1242 Broadway, Denver, Colorado, and some excellent work in that line was done. Communications were established by wireless with stations in Ohio, Indiana, and in Oregon and Washington. The Company was licensed to maintain and operate a station by the radio authorities of the United States, and we had a very efficient and, at that time, up to date wireless station with a rotary quenched spark gap, an 18,000 to 22,000 oil cooled condenser, and two aeries equipped, one 85 feet long and the other about 200 feet long. Much credit is due the electricians who were members of the company, Master Signal Electrician Nordstrum, Lt. Yates, and others, who made this wireless station as efficient as it was. This work, and the ordinary drill work, together with field exercises, hikes, and maneuvers with the First Regiment of Infantry, National Guard of Colorado, were continued until we left for the border in 1916."

On November 16, 1914, a Signal Corps platoon was organized at Trinidad, Colorado, and attached to Company A Signal Corps, Colo. N. G., as the Trinidad Platoon. The average strength of the platoon was twenty enlisted men, and it was placed under the command of 2d Lieutenant W. O. Vickers, Battalion Quartermaster and Commissary, First Infantry, Colo. N. G.

Responding to the President's Call of June 18, 1916, for Mexican Border Service, the company, with other organizations of the Colorado National Guard, assembled at the mobilization camp at the Rifle Range near Golden on June 20th, and on July 8, 1916, was mustered in to the Federal service with a strength of three officers (Captain E. A. Smith, First Lieutenant Barnard Cummings and Guy V. Yates) and seventy-eight enlisted men. On October 12, 1916, the company left the Rifle Range for El Paso, Texas, where it arrived on October 14th, and immediately established camp at Camp Owen Birnie, Fort Bliss, Texas. Here the company was assigned to the First Provisional Regiment Signal Corps, National Guard, organized from signal companies from Ohio (two), Colorado and Michigan (one each). Shortly after the establishment of camp, work was



CO. A, SIGNAL CORPS, COLO. N. G., AT FORT BLISS, TEXAS, DECEMBER, 1916.

Capt. E. Smith, Commanding.



started on the intensive program of training prescribed by higher authority, and during the stay on the border the company was developed into a very efficient and dependable signal corps unit. Leaving El Paso on March 15, 1917, the company was eventually mustered out of the Federal service at Fort D. A. Russell, Wyo. (now Fort Francis E. Warren), on March 24, 1917, and returned to Denver, its home station, on the same date.

In compliance with instructions from the Militia Bureau, as published in General Orders No. 43, Adjutant General's Office, Denver, May 26, 1917, the designation of the company was changed to Company B Signal Corps, Colorado National Guard, and, the Trinidad platoon not having been reorganized after muster out from Federal service, the company as a unit was quartered in the armory on Champa Street, Denver. Lieutenant Cummings and Yates having resigned, Sergeant Henry D. Gregory and Corporal James I. Davis were promoted first lieutenants in their stead on May 21, 1917.

War was declared against Germany on April 6, 1917, and on July 7th, the Governor of Colorado issued a proclamation calling the National Guard of the State into active service for organization and training prior to draft in to the Federal service. Company B, Signal Corps, Colo. N. G., was assembled at Camp Baldwin, Overland Park, Denver, Colo., on July 10, 1917, and on August 5, 1917, it was drafted into the Federal service together with all other units of the National Guard of the State. At the subsequent muster in on August 10th (Captain J. H. Nankivell, 1st Colo. Inf., mustering officer) three officers and sixty-seven enlisted men were finally accepted for Federal service. The stay at Camp Baldwin after muster in was brief, and on September 23rd, the company entrained for Camp Kearny, California, where it arrived September 27, 1917. Under the provisions of General Orders No. 11, Headquarters 40th Division, Camp Kearny, Calif., dated September 24, 1917, the 115th Field Signal Battalion was organized as follows:

Company A (Radio)—Formerly Company B, Signal Corps, California National Guard.

Company B, (Wire)—Formerly Company B, Signal Corps, Colorado National Guard.

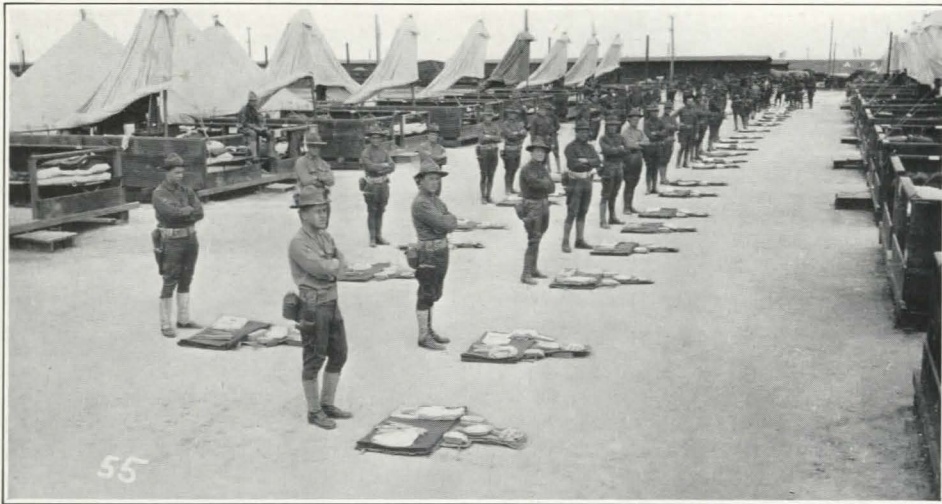
Company C (Outpost)—Formed by transfers from Companies A and B and from other divisional units, and by recruitment to war strength.

Headquarters Detachment—By transfer from other units.

Captain E. A. Smith, Company B, was placed in command of the battalion in addition to his other duties and to him fell the task of completing the organization of the unit, its initial supply, and the initiation of a comprehensive program of training.<sup>5</sup> All these tasks were satisfactorily performed, and when Major R. C. Vickers, Signal Reserve Corps, arrived to take command of the battalion in January, 1918, he found a well organized unit fully prepared to carry on with the intensive training necessary for service overseas. The battalion made rapid progress in mastering the technique of modern signal communications, and with the able assistance of Lieutenant S. Groslier of the French Mission soon became adept in the various methods of establishing communications under the conditions demanded by modern warfare. After a long training period which brought the 115th Field Signal Battalion to a high state of efficiency, orders were received for overseas duty and on July 31, 1918, the unit entrained for the port of embarkation. Arriving at Camp Mills, L. I., N. Y., the usual outfitting process was undergone, and on August 13th the battalion

<sup>5</sup> Captain Smith was later transferred to the Intelligence Department and became Camp Intelligence Officer.





INSPECTION, CO. B, 115TH SIGNAL BATTALION, CAMP KEARNY, CALIF., 1918.

moved by rail to Montreal, Canada, where it embarked on the British transport *Bhamo* on the same day. Sailing that night, Sidney, N. S., was reached the next day, and here the *Bhamo* joined its convoy for the voyage across the Atlantic. Successfully avoiding hostile submarines, Avonmouth, England, was reached on August 31, 1918, and the battalion then proceeded by rail to Southampton. A short stay here in the "Rest Camp", and then across the English Channel to Cherbourg, France, where the battalion at last set foot on French soil on September 2, 1918. Another night in a rest camp, and on the following day the men of the unit were introduced to the "Hommes 40-Chevaux 8" box-cars which were to serve them as pullmans in all their travels in France. Soon after the arrival of the battalion at La Guerche, Cher, official notification was received that the 40th division was converted into a depot division, and that the 115th Field Signal Battalion was detached from the division and would proceed to Chatillon-sur-Seine for instruction at the Second Army School. Leaving La Guerche on September 22d the battalion proceeded to its new station, (B Company occupying billets at Buncey near Chatillon-sur-Seine) and on October 14th it again entrained, this time for Toul, where it arrived two days later. Here the battalion was assigned to duty with the Second Army, and detachments sent to various stations throughout the Army area. Quoting now from the History of the 40th Division: "Here at last was real work to be done, and the battalion set out with a will to put to practical use its months of training. Added to the difficulty of the work, the need of haste, and the obstacles to be overcome, was the task of making the reorganization and necessary modifications to meet the requirements of Army Signal work, after having been trained solely with the view of functioning as a division battalion. However, the battalion quickly adapted itself to the new order of things, and soon the Outpost Company, for example, could, if called upon, construct a permanent 10-pin, standard cross-arm pole line, with as much facility as in former days they could operate a four-drop monotype in maneuvers. Within a short time we had taken over and were successfully operating, maintaining and extending the Army system of communications."

During the tour of duty in the Second Army area B Company (Colorado) was held in reserve, and given "special training for getting lines forward at a



moment's notice in case of an advance." In addition it furnished details for work in the vicinity of Toul and constructed some close-in lines. Lieutenant Gregory was assigned to duty with the Office of the Chief Signal Officer, Second Army, and the company was then commanded in succession by 1st Lieutenant James I. Davis, Captain E. V. Orr, and Captain Ira H. Treest.

The work of the battalion, while not spectacular nor accompanied by the risks attendant upon the work of signal units with the combat divisions, was none the less important, and was often performed under extreme difficulties and adverse conditions. Details from the various companies were frequently under hostile fire, and those at Pannes and Dieulouard became fairly well accustomed to shell fire and gas attacks. Air raids also furnished something of a diversion on occasions.

The battalion remained in the Toul area until June 13, 1919, when it entrained for Le Mans enroute to the port of embarkation. Sailing from Brest, France, on June 25th on the transport *Washington*, the 115th Field Signal Battalion reached New York on the 4th of July, and then proceeded by rail to Chicago, Ill., where the organization was split into detachments for transportation to the various demobilization camps. Company B and all other Colorado men of the battalion were sent to Fort D. A. Russell, Wyo., and here final muster out took place on July 13, 1919.

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The draft of the entire Colorado National Guard into the Federal service on August 5, 1917, had practically denuded the state of troops subject to the call of the Governor, and in order to safe-guard and protect the important public utilities within the borders of the state steps were immediately taken to organize new units which, to quote from War Department instructions, "were to be maintained for domestic purposes only and would not be called or drafted into the Federal service during the period of the war". Among the units organized under this authority was a Signal Corps Platoon which was mustered in to the State service at Denver, Colorado, on May 17, 1918, with First Lieutenant Oliver L. Senechal, commanding, and an initial strength of thirty enlisted men. Lieutenant Senechal resigned on September 3, 1918, and was succeeded in command of the platoon by Captain Harry P. McKean, Infantry, on the same date. On November 19 the platoon was enlarged to a company of five officers and sixty-nine enlisted men and Federal recognition extended to the unit as a Signal Corp Company (Outpost), Colo. N. G., under date of December 10, 1918. The officers of the new unit were: Captain H. P. McKean, First Lieutenants Walter G. Rubel, Grover C. Kinney, O. H. Jacobson, and J. T. Whittemore.

The Colorado National Guard was ordered out for active duty on October 31, 1919, to maintain law and order throughout the coal mining districts of the state during the miners' strike, which was called for November 1, 1919. The Signal Corps Company (Outpost) together with other units of the Colorado National Guard, was assembled at the Rifle Range, Golden, and remained in the field until December 4, 1919. This was the company's first and only period of active field duty, and inasmuch as the unit was one of those which had been raised solely for state service during the World War it was felt that, "they had carried out their obligations to the government and state, and being for the most part business men and men of families, were anxious to be relieved from all connection with any military organization".<sup>6</sup> Accordingly on

<sup>6</sup> Biennial Report, A. G. Colo., 1919-1920, p. 6.

January 24, 1921, in compliance with General Orders No. 3, A. G. Office, Denver, Colo., of the same date, the Signal Corps Company (Outpost), of the Colorado National Guard was disbanded. Commenting on the disbandment of this and other companies of the Colo. N. G., Adjutant General Spangler said: "The Adjutant General regrets that local conditions have made it necessary to disband these organizations and at this time wishes to commend the zeal and patriotism of the officers and enlisted men of these companies for a duty well performed during the Nation's hour of need." Thus passed the Signal Corps branch of the service from the roster of active units of the Colorado National Guard. However, an inactive unit, the 106th Signal Battalion (Corps Troops), has been allotted to the state, and in the event of a national emergency this new unit will no doubt be organized as a reconstitution of the old Company B, 115th Field Signal Battalion, and of the later Signal Corps Company (Outpost), Colorado National Guard.