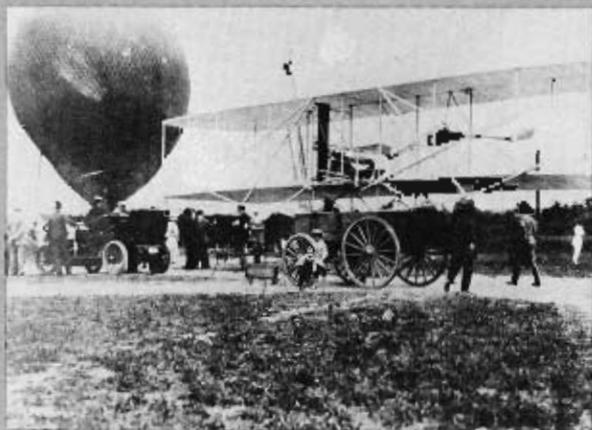
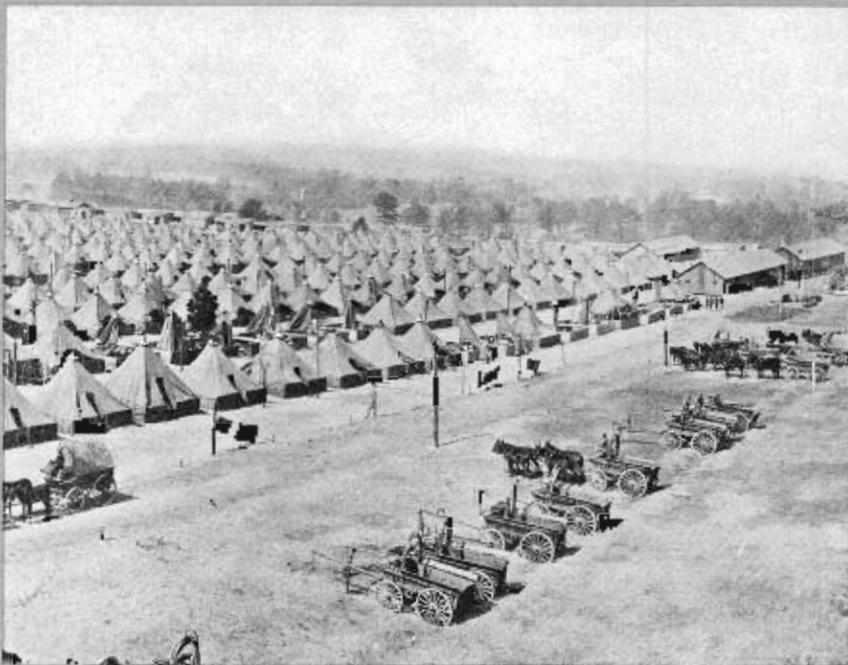


Yesterday in Signal Corps

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The Home of the Signal Corps

by Carol E. Rios

Sgt. James R. Allen, U.S. Army Signal Corps, arrived in Augusta, Georgia, on October 19, 1870 and set up shop at 17 McIntosh Street, near Broad. Fortunately, for both the city and the Signal Corps, early events were not indicative of the relationship that would follow. Sgt. Allen left Augusta little more than a year later after being relieved for neglect of duty. He was soon replaced by Sgt. J. D. Lane.

Allen, Lane, and the other Signalers who served in Augusta until around 1890 were all weather observers. Although the Signal Corps was responsible for the construction, maintenance, and operation of thousands of miles of communications lines along our nation's western frontier, its primary concern between 1870 and 1890 was providing the country with its first weather service. Augusta's colocation with rail lines and the Savannah



CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTON: Intersection of Chamberlain (7th) Avenue and 33rd street at Fort Gordon as it appeared in 1941. Camp Hancock in 1918. An AC - Wright Airplane in 1908.

River made it one of the first 25 cities to have a resident weatherman.

The Department of Agriculture took over the weather service in 1891, and the Signal Corps and Augusta saw little of each other until shortly after the Wright brothers opened a winter aviation school there in 1910. The Wrights thought so much of Augusta that Wilbur recommended it as an aviation training site to Gen. James Allen, chief of the Signal Corps. Since losing the weather service, the Corps had pioneered Army aviation with the testing of the Wright Flyer in 1907.

The Signal Corps opened an aviation training school on the George Barnes farm on Augusta's Sand Bar Ferry Road in 1911. Many aviation illuminaries trained there, including H.S. "Hap" Arnold of World War II fame. He and others practiced night flying and aerial photography in four of the Signal Corps' five airplanes. The aviators returned for the winter of 1912 before finding a more suitable climate in San Diego, California.

While the Signal Corps would not return to Augusta until 1948, the city supported the training efforts of both World War I and II. In preparation for the first war, Camp Hancock, near present day Daniel Village, housed a total of 60,000 doughboys between

1917 and 1919. It was World War II, however, before Augusta became the home for permanent military installations.

Preparations for the war brought two thousand men and one hundred airplanes to Daniel Field in September, 1940. They were later inspected by Army Air Corps Gen. "Hap" Arnold, one of two remaining Army pilots who could trace his beginnings to the Signal Corps. (Aviation became a separate branch of the Army in 1918.)

As World War II escalated, the Augusta arsenal began producing bombsights and other lens instruments, while over nine thousand workers began constructing Camp Gordon on Tobacco Road. At the other end of Tobacco Road, the Georgia Aero-Tech School was training Army pilots and soon changed its name to Bush Field in honor of Donald C. Bush, an instructor killed in a training flight at the facility.

During World War II, Camp Gordon trained the combat soldiers of the 4th and 26th Infantry and the 10th Armored Divisions. (It so happened that at one time all three units served under Gen. George Patton, when the 10th and the 26th joined with

elements of the 4th Division to halt the German offensive in the Ardennes at Bastogne.) When the war ended, the post served principally as a separation center for approximately 86,000 people, mostly Georgians and South Carolinians returning home from the war, as a U.S. disciplinary barracks, and as a prisoner of war camp for German and Italian soldiers captured in Europe.

Camp Gordon was practically deserted from late 1947 until the fall of 1948 when the Army announced that a Signal Corps training center would be established. About the same time, it was also learned that the Military Police School would move here from Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania. During the Korean War, Signal activities at Gordon included the Signal Replacement Center, the Southeastern Signal School, and the Signal Unit Training Group.

During the Vietnam era, basic and advanced individual training returned to Fort Gordon with the activation of the U.S. Army Training Center (infantry) and the 1962 addition of the 4th AIT Brigade (MP). The same year, all activities of the Signal Corps Training Center at Fort Gordon were reorganized under the Southeastern Signal School. For the next eight years, Fort Gordon's four brigades provided combat-ready soldiers for duty in Vietnam.

Following the Army's decision to relocate the Military Police School at Fort McClellan and to move the Signal School from Fort Monmouth, New Jersey, the post was designated as the U.S. Army Signal Center and Fort Gordon on October 1, 1974. Today, the U.S. Army Signal Center and Fort Gordon trains more soldiers than any other branch training center of the United States Army and is truly the "Home of the Signal Corps."

The Story of Augusta, (Richmond County Board of Education, 1980) by Dr. Edward J. Cashin, was an invaluable source of information in the preparation of this article.

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Signal Corps soldiers with an early model of the PRC 74.

