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Oregon Military Department Records Guide Scope and Content

By Gary D. Halvorson, 2009

The records of the Military Department are comprised of two major accessions amounting to 218.05 cubic feet; 74 volumes; 690 maps, plans, and drawings; and 10 reels of microfilm.

Accession Number 89A-012

These records consist of correspondence, reports, public relations releases, claim files, minutes, bonds, election returns, maps, photographs, enlistment and service records, plans, orders, medical case records, legal case records, muster rolls, rosters, logs, and applications. This accession includes records of the Military Department dating from 1847 until 1968. The bulk of the holdings document the period 1847-1959.

While most of the Military Department's activities are documented, the picture is more completely drawn during war periods. The records of Oregon's Indian wars -- Cayuse (1847-1850), Rogue River (1855-1856), Modoc (1872-1873), Bannock (1878), and Umatilla (1878) -- document the formation and deployment of military units, logistics and supply, arms used, campaign strategy, political activities, intertribal relations, the relationship of the Oregon Military Department to the U.S. Armed Forces and local civilians, and methods of financing the wars.

Oregon's participation in United States' wars is also documented. The Civil War (1861-1865), the Spanish American War and subsequent Philippine pacification (1898-1902), the Mexican Border War (1916), World War I (1916-1918), and the Vietnam War (1961-1968) are all represented in the records of the Military Department.

In addition to wartime activities, records of the Military Department document the creation and maintenance of soldiers homes and hospitals, the payment of veteran's claims, emergency mobilization planning, the surveillance of communists, riot suppression, emergency forest fire control, the creation of the Oregon Naval Militia (1911-1927), the building and maintenance of armories, the creation of National Guard units, development of rules and regulations governing the Military Department, and the role of the Military Department in the federal military system.

These records were originally accessioned into the Archives under accession numbers: 54-13; 56-40; 60-28; 62A-84; 63I-1; 65A-9; 67A-81; 68A-59; 69A-30; 69A-43; 69A-80; 71A-139; 73A-8; 76A-46; 77A-20; 78A-35; 78A-36; 82A-3; 82A-46. This accession of Military Department records consists of 182.1 cubic feet; 74 volumes; and 10 reels of microfilm. It is now identified by accession number 89A-012.

Accession Number 90A-023

An additional accession was received from the Military Department in 1990 and consists of correspondence; reports; maps; photographs; military camp records; additional enlistment and service records; orders; military court case records; committee records; speeches; armory and target range correspondence; Works Project Administration Records; blueprints; and conference and seminar records.

The records document the creation or improvement of armories, target ranges, and military camps; conferences or meetings with various National Guard groups; activities of the military museum at Camp Withycombe; communications with veterans; and records from the 142nd fighter group at the Portland Air Base.

The records consist of 35.95 cubic feet; and 690 maps, plans, and drawings. The records date from 1911-1986, and are identified by accession number 90A-023.
