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Descriptive Summary
Title: Gordon H. Hayes collection of materials on the U.S. Army 209th Signal Pigeon Company
Dates: 1940-1999
Collection number: MSS 294
Creator: Hayes, Gordon H.
Collection Size: 3 linear feet
Repository: University of the Pacific Library. Holt-Atherton Dept. of Special Collections
Stockton, California 95211
Abstract: The collection documents the use of racing homer pigeons during World War II to carry messages. The collection consists primarily of publications, photographs, and documents related to WWII and the use of racing pigeons. Also included are messages carried by the pigeons.

Physical location: For current information on the location of these materials, please consult the library's online catalog.
Languages: Languages represented in the collection: English
Access
Collection open for research.

Publication Rights
Permission for publication is given on behalf of Special Collections as the owner of the physical items and is not intended to include or imply permission of the copyright holder, which must also be obtained by the researcher.

Preferred Citation

Biography / Administrative History
During World War II, Hayes served in the "pigeon corps" of the U.S. Army, where his expertise with racing pigeons was recognized and he was placed in charge of a large group of new men with little experience in racing pigeons. The company started as the 829th Pigeon Platoon or the Africa Pigeon Corp. Later in South Italy, it was changed to the 6681st Signal Pigeon Co. (Prov). Lastly, the name was changed from the 6681st Signal Pigeon Co. to the 209th Signal Pigeon Co.

Hayes's duties took him to the front lines of Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Italy and France, where he worked closely with the U.S. and British intelligence services. Often in the dangerous front lines or in covert operations, he worked with such famous pigeons as "G.I. Joe," "Yank," "Rain in the Face," and many more. When the war ended in Europe, Hayes finished his duty in the service as a Master Sergeant. Continuing as a successful bird breeder, the epitome of his career was the breeding of an American dark green and cobalt Indian ring-necked parakeet. The first in the world; a new color mutation. In 1981, Hayes self-published his book, The Pigeons That Went To War about his experiences in the army's pigeon corps.

Scope and Content of Collection
The collection documents the use of racing homer pigeons during World War II to carry messages. The collection consists primarily of publications, photographs, and documents related to WWII and the use of racing pigeons. Also included are messages carried by the pigeons.
A more detailed finding aid for this collection is located in the Special Collections reading room.

Indexing Terms
The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library’s online public access catalog.

Homing pigeons - War use

United States - Army - Signal Corps.

Box 1: Materials on World War II
folder 1.1 Articles on Gordon Hayes, 1990-1999
folder 1.2 Gordon Hayes military papers, 1946-1946
folder 1.3 Book "Pigeons That Went to War” by Gordon Hayes, 1981
folder 1.4 Correspondence on BBC production "Inside Story: Animals at War,” 1999
folder 1.5 Signal Pigeon Company rosters, 1944
folder 1.6 Documents on pigeon training, Camp Young California Desert Training
folder 1.7-8 History of the Fourth Pigeon Platoon From the 280th Signal Pigeon Company
folder 1.9 Pigeon training manuals and memoranda, 1944-1945
folder 1.10 Military documents and orders, many regarding the 6681st Signal Pigeon Company, 1942-1945
folder 1.11 Newsletters on pigeon training and the 6681st Signal Pigeon Company, 1942-1945
folder 1.12 Press bulletins, 1943
folder 1.13 Messages carried by pigeons in World War II
folder 1.14 Pigeon certificates of service
folder 1.15 Documents on individual pigeons
folder 1.16 World Waw II sign: "Registered Homing Pigeon Loft with the U.S. Army; Pigeon Reserve Signal Corps-These Homing Pigeons Protected by Federal Laws”
folder 1.17 Documents of German propaganda
folder 1.18 Stratton Membership card for Pigeon Society of Casablanca, Morocco

Box 2: Memorabilia and Non-World War II Pigeon history
Box 3: Photographs. Over 200 images, including many of pigeon use and training during World War II.
Box 4: Photographs, negatives, and miscellaneous documents on pigeon use and training during World War II.