

## Historical Office Accessions Rare WWI-Era Photographs

By Melissa Ziobro, Command Historian

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The CECOM Historical Office and all lovers of military history owe a huge debt of gratitude to two Team C4ISR employees for donating to the Office several hundred, if not thousands, of rare WWI-era panoramic negatives.

JoAnn Dunn of the CECOM LCMC G1 and Virginia Lisanckie of PEO C3T contacted the Historical Office earlier this year with a most generous offer. As Lisanckie wrote in an email, “my father recently passed away, and he had in his possession boxes of panoramic negatives dating back - I think - to WWI and maybe before. I was wondering if you could help me locate someplace that would want to have these negatives.”



Family legend had it that Monmouth County photographer Frank Cole took all of these photographs. JoAnn described how her family came to be in possession of the collection, writing “In 1980... I moved into the house on Exchange Place in Long Branch, NJ, that my father, Dominic Strollo, had literally been born in in 1916. In the back of the property, there was a small garage/shed. Upon moving there, I decided to see what was in there and once in, found the collection of wooden cases...plus other boxes of correspondence, negatives, and photographs. At that time...I learned from my father ...that a photographer named Frank Cole had rented the shed from my grandparents for storage after he had lost his business either during or after the Great Depression. Mr. Cole had long died, no one ever claimed what was stored, and there it stayed until my dad sold the house... At that point, he moved all of the wooden boxes to the garage of his home in Oceanport, NJ, where they have resided to date.”

According to Lewis Historical Publishing Company’s 1922 *History of Monmouth County, New Jersey, 1664-1920, Volume 3*, Frank Hancock Cole was born in Jersey City, New Jersey, on December 28, 1876. He opened a photographic studio, Cole & Company, in Asbury Park, New Jersey in 1903. He was a director of the Merchants' National Bank of Asbury Park, among other business interests.

Cole entered the service during the Spanish-American War. He was commissioned first lieutenant of Company I, Fourth Regiment, New Jersey National Guard, and stayed in the military until April 1899. During WWI, he was commissioned first lieutenant of the Signal Corps of the United States Army.

He served as commander of McKinley Camp, Spanish-American War Veterans; and president of the Asbury Park Rotary Club and Asbury Park Chamber of Commerce. He held membership in the American Legion, Army and Navy Club, and Asbury Park Elks Lodge No. 128.

Strollo, himself a photographer at Fort Monmouth from the 1940s-1970s, attempted unsuccessfully to sell Cole's collection. He once almost threw it away; but his daughters stopped him.

After their father's death, Dunn and Liszanckie just wanted the collection to "be somewhere where it will be appreciated and cared for."

And now, it is safe within the Army Historical Program in the CECOM Historical Office archive, Building 1207, Fort Monmouth. It is currently scheduled to move to the Historical Office's new location at Aberdeen Proving Ground in March 2011.

An initial assessment of the collection reveals that it depicts Army units from all over the country, and includes personnel of the Infantry, Artillery, Coast Guard, State Guard, Signal Corps, Ambulance Corps, Ordnance Corps, Quartermaster Corps, Medical Corps, and Citizens Military Training camps (to name just a few).

Cole's detailed finding aids accompany the negatives. Photographer Michael Berry of Chenega Technology Services Corporation assessed the collection and expects that the negatives can be converted to photographic prints.

The Historical Office is in talks with the Center of Military History to decide if the prints should stay with the CECOM Historical Office or transfer to the Center. The Center, located at Fort Lesley J. McNair, Washington, is a Directorate within the Office of the Administrative Assistant to the Secretary of the Army. It may be better situated to preserve and publicize the collection.

In any event, this treasure is once again Army property and will be held in safe keeping so that generations to come can see and honor thousands of Soldiers who sacrificed for their country years ago.



*Professional photographer Michael Berry believes the negatives shown at left can be converted to panoramic images such as the one below.*

