

Pigeons – Doves of War

The Army's Signal Corps used pigeons for communications from WWI, and into the Korean War; to this end, the Pigeon Service was active at Fort Monmouth until its discontinuance in 1957. Pigeons and their use in War was something of a point of interest for the general population, as is evidenced by the publication of articles and photographic features in various magazines.

One such example of this was published in *Popular Science Monthly*, in May 1918, and was titled "The Dove of Peace is resting, but The Doves of War are Active." The article was a brief, two pages, and appeared in a section of the Monthly that was mostly a photo exposé'. The importance of the pigeons is summarized in the article in one sentence – "These birds are used to carry messages from the front to the headquarters behind the lines."

Carrier pigeons that are offered to "Government" must first be tried out, the writer stated. "They must be wise as a judge, swift of wing and of great endurance to be useful." The training activities that are captured in this article were taking place near Washington, D.C., and as is stated was training not only for the pigeon, but also for the pigeon handlers. The article includes a photograph of a Soldier affixing a message to a Pigeons leg. The photograph is reproduced here.

As explained, training of the pigeons was under control of the Intelligence Bureau of the Signal Corps, where thousands of "carrier pigeons" were trained for "service at the front. Another photograph depicts a "row of cotes" and pigeons in "exercise flight" above; an insert photograph depicts how the capsule containing the message was affixed to the pigeons leg.

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