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Lower post or freeze: 340th Engineer Regiment on the Alaska Military Highway, 1942-1943

United States Army

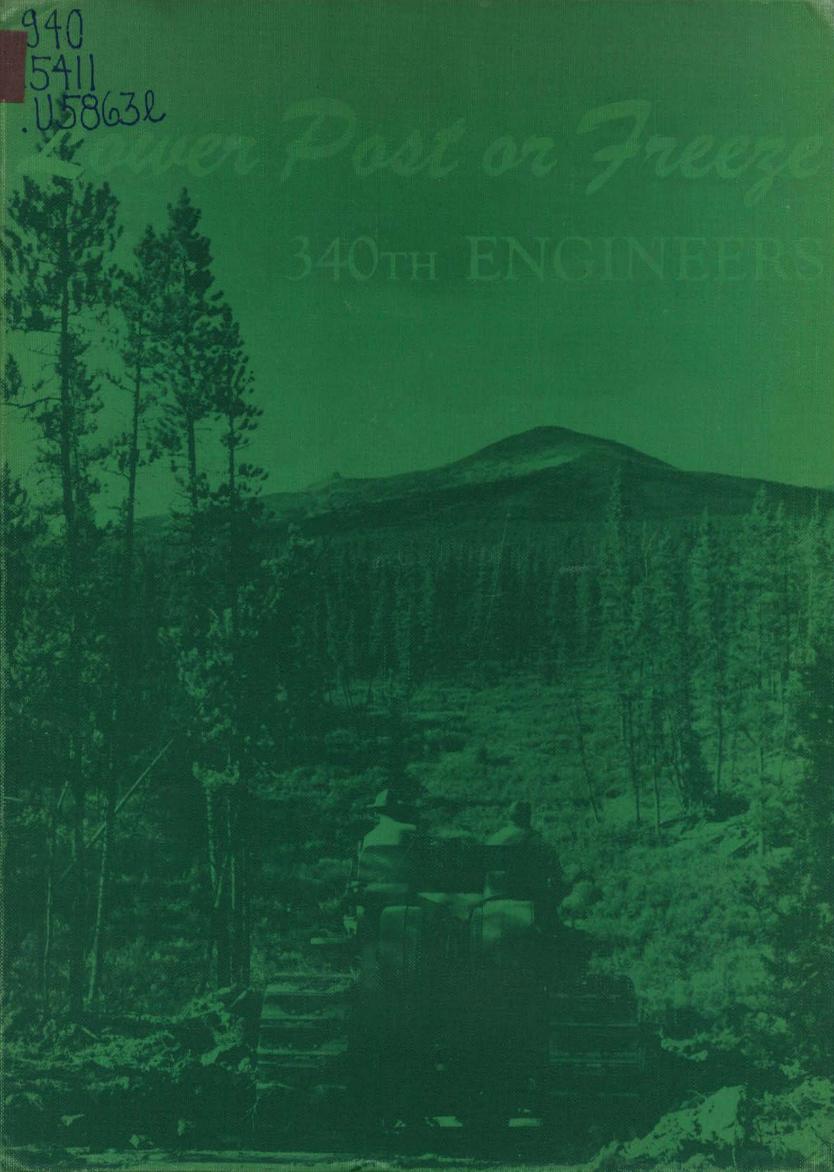
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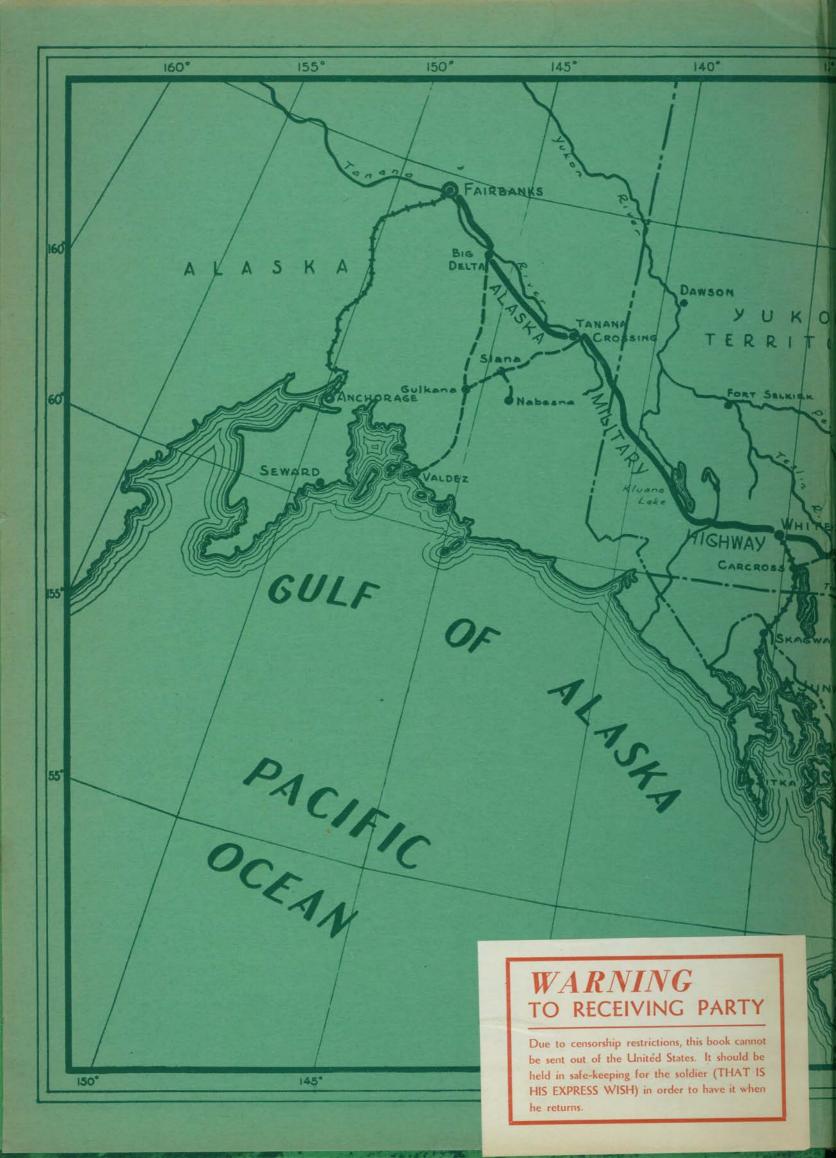
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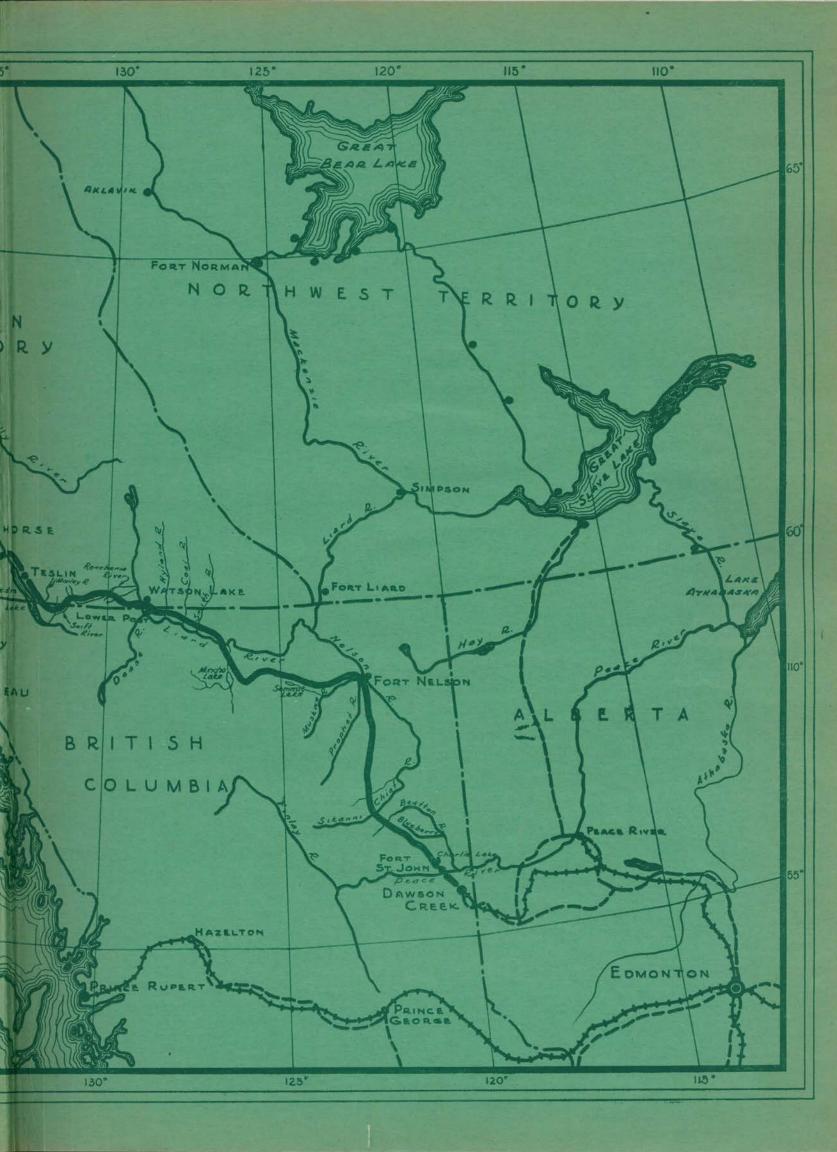
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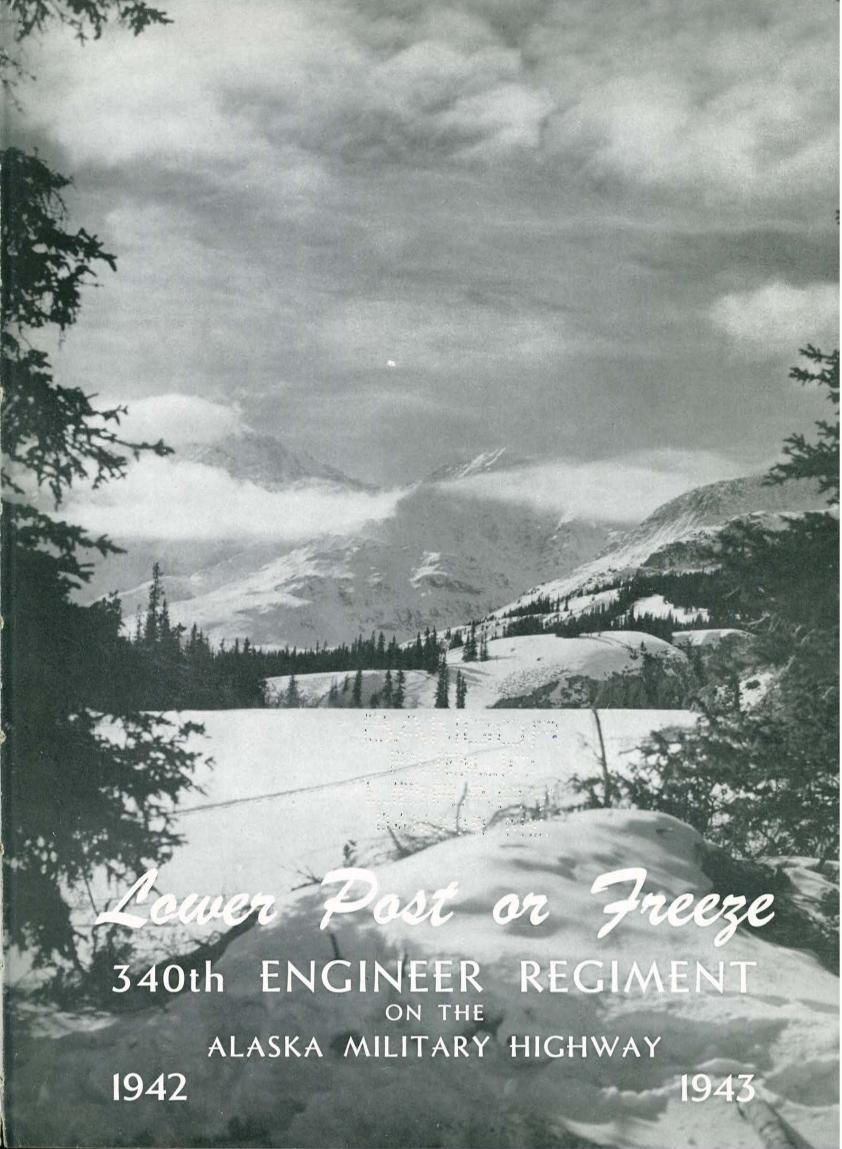






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340TH ENGINEER REGIMENT
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CHARLOTTE, N. C.





OURING the 340th Engineers' 15 months in the Yukon Territory, four enlisted men of the regiment lost their lives. This book is dedicated to their memory.

S/SGT. WILLIAM H. WHITFIELD—H & S Co.

T/5 Max Richardson-F Co.

PVT. BEN J. LIVINGSTONE—A Co.

PVT. FRANK H. SEMMELS, JR.—B Co.



340th REGIMENTAL HISTORY

THE 340TH ENGINEER GENERAL SERVICE REGIMENT was activated at Vancouver Barracks, Vancouver, Wash., March 5, 1942. The nucleus was a cadre of seven officers and seventy-two enlisted men from the 18th Engineer Combat Regiment, who arrived on March 9. A cadre of 62 enlisted men from Fort Francis E. Warren also arrived on March 9. The remainder of the officers and men came from Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, during the latter part of March and the first part of April.

The commanding officer, Lieutenant-Colonel F. Russel Lyons, arrived on March 27, 1942. Prior to that time the regiment was commanded by Captain John B. W. Corey, and later by Major Reinder F. Schilsky.

The short period at Vancouver Barracks was spent in obtaining supplies and preparing for an overseas movement.

On the night of April 18, 1942, 35 officers and 883 enlisted men entrained for Seattle, Wash., and thence aboard the USS St. Mihiel to Skagway, Alaska, that famous boom town of '98, arriving there April 22. On April 23, the remainder of the regiment—10 officers and 343 enlisted men—entrained for Prince Rupert, British Columbia, Canada, and thence aboard the SS Prince George to Skagway, arriving on April 25.

The ghost town of Skagway was the home of the regiment for nearly a month. Additional supplies and equipment were obtained and distributed. Much work was done, improving sidewalks, streets, and general appearance of the town, and the condition of the White Pass and Yukon Railroad, a narrow gauge line running from Skagway to Whitehorse, Yukon Territory, Canada. The men had their first taste of road building while at Skagway, working on the road to Dyea. It was during this period that the attack on Dutch Harbor and Kiska was perpetrated by the Japanese, and the regiment spent a memorable night on the alert organizing the defense of the town and important harbor of Skagway.

The Signal Detachment assigned to the regiment arrived May 18, 1942. It consisted of 15 enlisted men.

Finally, on May 22, the regiment started its move toward the designated section of the Alcan Highway. The vehicles and supplies were moved by railroad from Skagway to Whitehorse, along the historic route of the gold rush days, "The Trail of '98"; thence by steamboat, the old stern-wheeler type, pushing barges loaded with equipment down the Lewes River into Lake Le Barge, then up the Teslin River to Lake Teslin and Morley Bay. To facilitate this movement of supplies, Company F was split into three platoons, one at Morley Bay, one at Whitehorse, and the other at Skagway. Company D and H & S were moved along this same route while the rest of the regiment went by rail as as far as Carcross, a little Indian town along the railroad, thence overland by foot to Johnson's Crossing on Teslin Lake where they were picked up by barge and taken the rest of the distance to Morley Bay. This overland march of 75 miles was a difficult task and a grueling effort, through deep and soggy swamps, only part of which were marked by any trails.

By June 18, the regiment, less 1 platoon at Whitehorse and 1 platoon at Skagway, was at Morley Bay. Work was commenced immediately, but proceeded rather slowly at first, due to lack of equipment—especially D-8 tractors. The work gathered momentum as it progressed, however, and by the first of September the original goal of Lower Post had been reached. Though it took nearly a month to build the first ten miles of the Highway, in the next two months 210 miles were constructed. It was near the end of the first month that the motto—"Lower Post or Bust"—was revised by popular repetition to "Lower Post or Freeze." This phase of our mission was completed in record time with the 1st Battalion smashing through a "tote road" while the 2nd Battalion followed, constructing the finished road. Continuing south, the regiment met the 35th Engineer Regiment, working toward us, at Contact Creek, a distance of 220 miles from Morley Bay.

We then started working back toward Whitehorse, maintaining and improving the road, constructing permanent bridges at the Liard River, Nisutlin Bay, and Tagish Crossing, and building rest camps at Rancheria River, Swift River, Morley River, and Brook's Brook. It was also during this period that the Fairbanks Freight trucks began to roll, and overnight every man became a truck driver. Then too, the Robinson

Mine project was started in the area between Carcross and Whitehorse, but the coal mined turned out to be carbonaceous shale, so the project was abandoned. Another venture about that time was the Company E sojourn on the Norman Wells road. They took over the job after the 93rd Engineers were pretty well bogged down. Most of the work consisted of reconnaissance and freeing mired equipment.

The extremely cold weather set in early in December and from then on it was seldom above zero, with week-long periods when the temperature would range between fifty and seventy-two below zero. Most of the companies were forced to make long moves during this extreme cold.

On January 25, 1943, Colonel Lyons was transferred to assume command of the Whitehorse Sector, and Major Corey assumed command of the regiment. In February, 1943, a cadre of 4 officers and 95 enlisted men was sent to Fort Lewis, Wash. These men went into new combat battalions.

About this time, the regiment was spread widely, with platoons scattered from Judas Creek to Big Delta, a distance of about 600 miles. The work consisted of maintaining all the stream and river crossings between Whitehorse and Fairbanks, and driving Fairbanks Freight trucks. With the ice conditions that existed, the task was no easy one. During and after the Spring break-up, the 1st Battalion continued its stream crossing work and also repaired the road itself. In June and July, when the bottom literally fell out of a section of highway south of the Alaskan border, Companies B and C pooled their meager resources and began the difficult task of reopening the road. During this period the companies were partly or wholly isolated, some being supplied by air and others not accessible by any means.

The 2nd Battalion started work on the Haines Road in March. Company D moved out first and, taking advantage of the frozen ground conditions, penetrated well into the wilderness so as to be able to commence work as soon as the thaw set in. This company was then entirely cut off for about three months when the thaw practically obliterated the road in a sea of mud. Meanwhile Companies E and F worked forward in order to open the road to Company D. In spite of the lack of equipment, long swamp areas, and a road that, due to the thaw, was impassable for even the big tractors in some places, the 2nd Battalion met the civilian contractors working north from Haines on the first of August. The Battalion had built 75 miles of road—another task completed against overwhelming odds.

At this time the regiment was alerted for movement back to the States, and the 2nd Battalion, Company A, and H & S Company moved into Whitehorse. Moving Companies B and C was a different problem, since the road was still closed. The movement was accomplished by air transport and for the first time since leaving Skagway, the regiment was together in one camp. The next phase of the journey was back to Skagway by rail, then by boat to Prince Rupert, thence by rail to Camp Sutton, North Carolina, arriving September 1.

The excellence of the work performed by the unit was recognized several times in commendations and citations.

On September 7, 1942, in congratulating the unit upon completion of the initial phase of our mission, Colonel Lyons said in part: "To date our record stands unsurpassed. The figures for the past 26 days are of interest. During the time, the regiment made 127 miles of road over most varied and difficult terrain, a daily rate of 4.9 miles."

The regiment was also cited in War Department General Order No. 18 dated April 15, 1943, for "meritorious conduct in the construction of the Canadian-Alaskan Military Highway."

The 2nd Battalion was also commended by Colonel Hayes, District Engineer, Skagway, Alaska, for its superior work on the Haines Road.

It may be safely said that all the work assigned to the 340th Engineer General Service Regiment has been accomplished in a manner to warrant a commendation. The spirit of the men is well exemplified in the words of Colonel Lyons: "I am sure that all assigned missions in the future will be accomplished with the same intelligence, dash, vigor, and enthusiasm. These are the characteristics of the youth of our nation which will carry us on to ultimate victory and the establishment of a better world order in which to live in harmony and peace with our neighbors."

FIRST COMMANDER

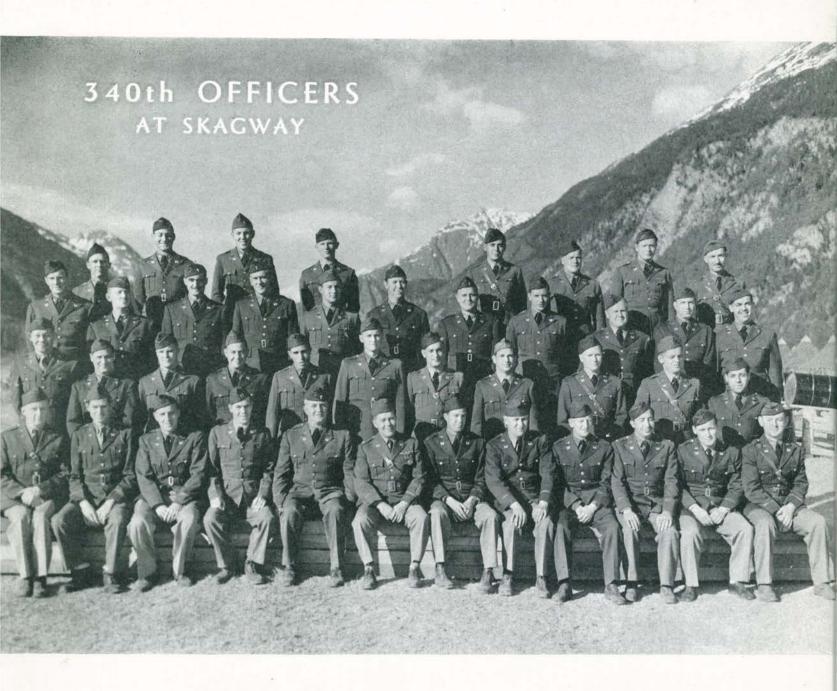


COL. F. RUSSEL LYONS

COMMANDING OFFICER



LT. COL. J. B. W. COREY, JR.



Front row, left to right: Chaplain David H. Wilson, H. H. Webb, H. J. Vander Veer, H. F. Thompson, R. F. Schilsky, F. R. Lyons, P. E. Moore, T. J. C. Claggett, E. P. Mortensen, R. Rolette, T. M. Logan, E. J. Kucera.

Second row, left to right: E. W. Dekay, E. W. Durham, T. W. Collins, J. W. Wilson, G. Danforth, J. B. W. Corey, Jr., W. J. W. Winter, G. P. Walthall, T. M. Maxwell, F. W. Stoltz, H. I. Weiner.

Third row, left to right: D. M. Schumacher, J. N. Bong, E. C. Wallace, J. C. Blackwood, R. G. Vallier, H. A. Engel, Jr., R. L. Stark, E. C. Jones, S. T. Walz, G. E. Dallemand, E. E. Lebow.

Fourth row, left to right: E. C. Robertson, V. J. De Antonis, P. R. Asel, E. G. Branstetter, D. D. Hilgendorf, A. A. Puttonen, L. H. Gay, S. A. Bojinoff.

"Garrison Life"





FROM VANCOUVER BARRACKS

. TO SKAGWAY .



ON THE ST. MIHIEL

Carrying 340th personnel, this troop train was wrecked just a few hundred yards from its destination at Vancouver, Wash., in April, 1942. Some of the men suffered minor injuries.

Reveille at Vancouver Barracks, where the 340th Engineer Regiment was activated. After formation of the regiment was accomplished, the 340th shipped aboard the St. Mihiel for Skagway, Alaska.

Cargo ship unloading at the Skagway docks. In the background, snow-mantled peaks of the rugged St. Elias range. During the gold rush days thousands toiled up near-by Chilkoot Pass to get into the Klondike.

Regimental review at Skagway in the shadow of towering mountains. The 340th camped for a month in tents erected on the Skagway airport.







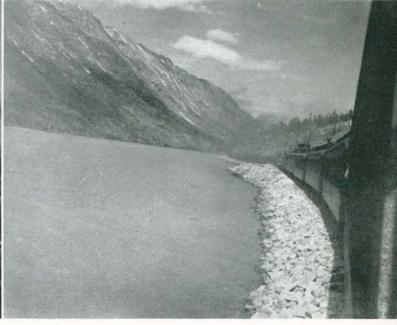




First Road Job—Skagway-Dyea—May, 1942.



Cantilever bridge over deep gorge on White Pass and Yukon railroad. The regiment "enjoyed" this spectacular scenic line from Skagway to Whitehorse twice —entering and leaving the Yukon.



Dropping down from steep and torturous White Pass, the 340th caravan traveled miles along the shores of beautiful Lake Bennett. During the gold rush Bennett was a roaring boom town.

On 70 Morley Bay



The overland march of 75 miles from Carcross to Johnson's Crossing, Y. T., will long be remembered by the 340th.



All aboard at Skagway. Four companies—A, B, C and E—load on the W. P. & Y. R. R., bound for Carcross and the start of their 75-mile walk. Sack lunches provide the noon meal.



Some of the road—built by the 93rd Engineer Regiment—is behind, but tough wilderness trails lie ahead. Troops of the 340th are comparatively fresh, just out of Carcross.



Swamp, deceptively soft and deep, bogs the ration trucks accompanying the expedition. Arms and packs are stacked while the men lay a bit of rough corduroy.

In the chill of the early morning, packs are rolled and readied for another day's march. Head nets, much in evidence, show the presence of voracious mosquitoes.



Emergency shoe repairing is done by a soldier who has dropped out of the march to keep feet and footwear in shape. A piece of two-inch sapling serves as a last.



Members of the 340th Medical Detachment also hoofed it—and took care of aches and pains enroute. Dr. Lebow stops to examine a patient—Lt. De Antonis—while an aid man holds the Flit.





Cleanliness is next to godliness. And a brisk washing in a clear mountain stream after a hard day's journey is invigorating as well as cleansing.



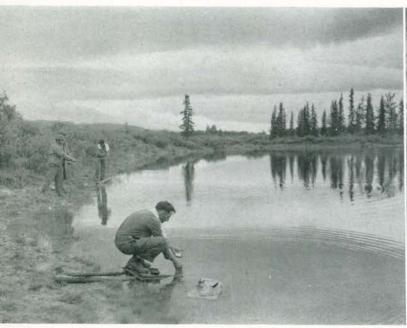
Ingredients: One roomy old cabin; a chilly, damp summer night; 340th soldiers and some surplus money. Results: Four "tables" of poker and three crap games going at one time.



When trucks bog down and D-8's are practically buried in treacherous swampland, manpower comes to the rescue. Rations being "portaged" over a piece of corduroy trail.



Drying out after a soaking cold rain at Tagish river. A change to dry clothes, and a chance to dry the wet apparel over a roaring wood fire, sent spirits soaring again.



Two men wash up for supper . . . which they hope the third will catch. It's Vienna sausages for sure if the fisherman's luck is poor.



Optimism justified. A beautiful catch of lake trout—enough for 18 hungry men. Fish were plentiful and provided a relief from regular rations.



Welcome break in the cross-country hike came at the Tagish river. Here a truck and trailer are being loaded on a ferry by the 73rd Ponton Company platoon attached to the 340th.



340th Engineer troops rest for a change and let outboard motors on the ponton ferry do the work of crossing the Tagish river.



End of the march—Johnson's Crossing. Two D-8 cats with dozer blades working on the fill for Johnson's Landing, Teslin Lake.



Final destination—Morley Bay. "Home sweet home" for a while, of the 340th Engineer Regiment. A barge loaded with gasoline and oil drums is headed for the landing.



While four companies made the overland trek, H & S
Company and F and D Companies went the water route
to Morley Bay. Here is roll call on arrival at Whitehorse from Skagway.



Down the Lewes river on the "Whitehorse" with equipment loaded on barges. On through Teslin lake to Morley Bay and the 340th's first camp in the Yukon. Now the regiment is ready to tackle the Alcan.

Building The Alcan



Multiple action nicely "frozen" is represented in this fine shot of the Morley River bridge under construction. Two newly completed sections of road will be joined by the bridge.



Nisutlin Bay—beginning of the 340th Engineers' 220-mil 3 section of Alcan Highway construction. Mile 0.0. The village of Teslin appears in the background, across the bay.



Morley Bay, mile 7.0, base camp for the regiment during the first two months. Three kinds of transportation are represented here.



With the first sunny day after a heavy rain, watersoaked barracks bags of winter clothing are spread to dry at Morley Bay.



With pack horses ready, packers for the locating party prepare to break camp and move on through the wilderness of the Yukon.



The location party, led by Indian guides, worked in advance of road construction. The Trail Blazers pause for supper at Porcupine creek.



Lt. Engel, 340th officer in charge of the route location party, gets a much needed haircut—a la native style.

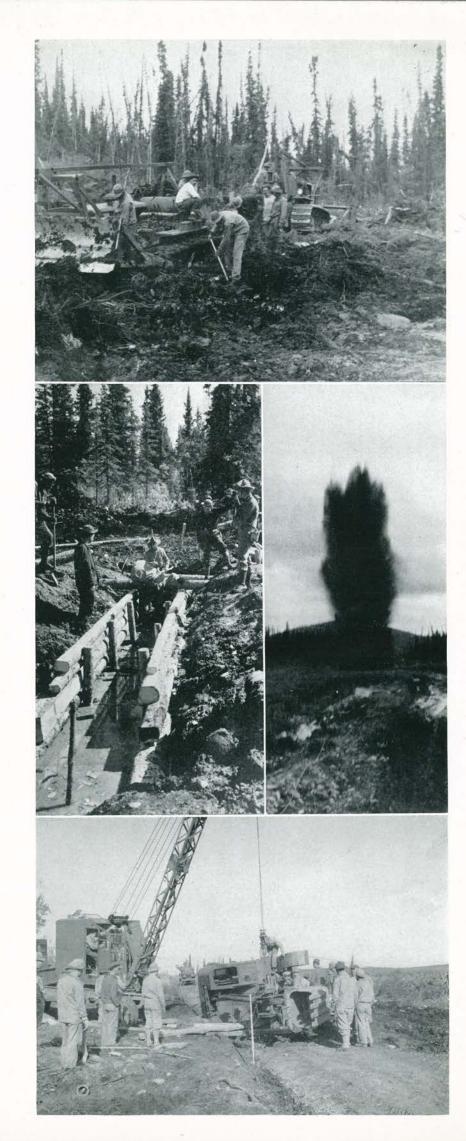


Fresh meat at last! After days of lean rations, George Morris, Indian guide for the Trail Blazers, bags a grizzly bear cub. Caterpillar tractors with bulldozer blades find the going plenty tough in boggy ground which seemed bottomless after the cover had been stripped.

B Company men, hampered by clinging mud, construct a timber culvert near Morley Bay camp. Muskeg swamp was only one of many difficulties encountered.

Dynamite blast, caught at the peak of explosion, clears the way for a ditch to drain the road at mile 8, just beyond Morley Bay camp.

E Company men use a Coleman truckmounted crane to right an Osgood shovel overturned in soft road near mile 8.0.





Nature wins for awhile in its futile struggle against man and machine. A D-8 caterpillar tractor is buried in swamp at mile 16.0.



The start of a difficult job—Strawberry Creek, mile 16.2. A side-hill cut through clay, and a 20 per cent grade keep 340th men remembering this site.

The difficult job is licked. Strawberry Creek is tamed and the road goes on. No four-lane highway, to be sure, but a useable tote road.



Accidents do happen! F Company men ruefully survey their overturned carry-all at mile 25. And chow-time is just around the corner.



The 73rd Ponton Company platoon, attached to the 340th, played an important role at each stream crossing. Here a D-8 "cat" is being loaded on the ponton ferry at Morley River.



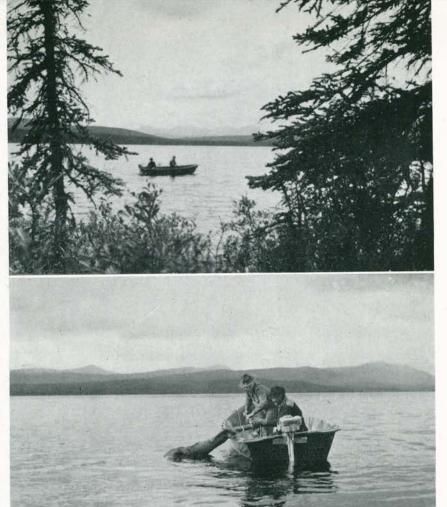
A mobile crane placing the footing for a trestle bent as D Company starts constructing the Morley River bridge at mile 26.

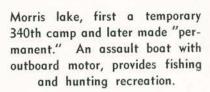


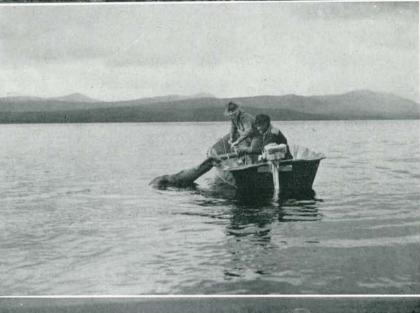
Only the center span stringers are yet to be placed as the Morley River bridge assumes shape. Flooring is already being layed.



Fully completed, the Morley bridge presents a beautifully symmetrical silhouette against background of water and fine forests. One more river is spanned.







One big bull moose started across Morris lake, but didn't make it under his own power. Lt. Faylor and John Tom, Indian, safely anchor one hind leg of the moose, dead of "lead poisoning."



Head and horns lashed securely between two boats, the moose represents a collective trophy for Tom, Lt. Faylor, Lt. Vander Veer, and Constable Goodie, R. C. M. P., well known to men of the 340th.



Stretched out on terra firma at the Morris Lake camp, that bull moose brings visions of fresh moose steaks to the H & S Company men who are already picking out the cut they want.



Morale took a quick upward turn when this plane landed at Morris Lake carrying thousands of dollars in Canadian money—the July payroll for the 340th Engineer Regiment.

Large family of a well-known matron. "Julie," first of H & S Company then "transferred in grade" to A Company, bore a litter of pups at Morris Lake destined to become pets throughout the regiment.

Minor casualties are forgotten in the stress of important work. Worn fatigue slacks gave way as this bridge was being constructed by C Company at mile 29.5.





F Company men gaze disconsolately and more than a little doubtfully at caterpillar tractor lying uselessly on its side.

Block and tackle swung from a log shears demonstrate the 340th's methods of repairing heavy equipment in the field.



It happens in the best of regulated companies. Men from Company D patiently await rescue of their D-8 and carryall bogged down at mile 40.



Stage construction for bridge at the Smart river crossing gets under way. Mile 45.8, as the 340th road machine picks up steam.



Finishing touches are put on the Smart river bridge by D Company.



D-4 "cat" turned half over, in the bog area of mile 53.



And Pvt. 1c1 Garman proves that D-4's sometimes do stay right side up.





Les Cook, top-notch "bush pilot" who never let dirty weather stop him if there was a flight to be made, was a friend to the entire 340th Engineer Regiment. Les carried mail, food—anything needed—where it was needed most. Extreme regret was felt by men and officers alike when this popular flier lost his life in a crash at Whitehorse, early in December, 1942.

Swan Lake at mile 53, one of H & S Company's camp grounds as viewed from a plane making a photo-map flight.

The 340th flag and a 340th man make a pleasing study silhouetted against the evening sky at Swan lake.



Strategy conference at Swan Lake to study newly made air-photo map of country ahead. Lt. Col. Schilsky, Col. Lyons, Lt. Vander Veer.

Moving to the Swan Lake camp, H & S Company found the road still no boulevard, even after the installation of this "Sears-Roebuck" culvert.

But it was worth the effort, for at the Swan Lake camp the first shipment of PX beer arrived to end a long drought.

Air photo of mountainous country to the north of Swan Lake. Taken about mile 72, it shows the difficult terrain confronting the 340th.















Preparations for chow at H & S Company's Swift river camp, mile 82, apparently cast the shadow of Hamburger again.

On the move again. One of the 340th companies passes mile 96, heading for the beautiful Rancheria Valley.

From a vantage point above the Rancheria Valley, the view shows few of the rugged features of the valley now screened by heavy forest cover.

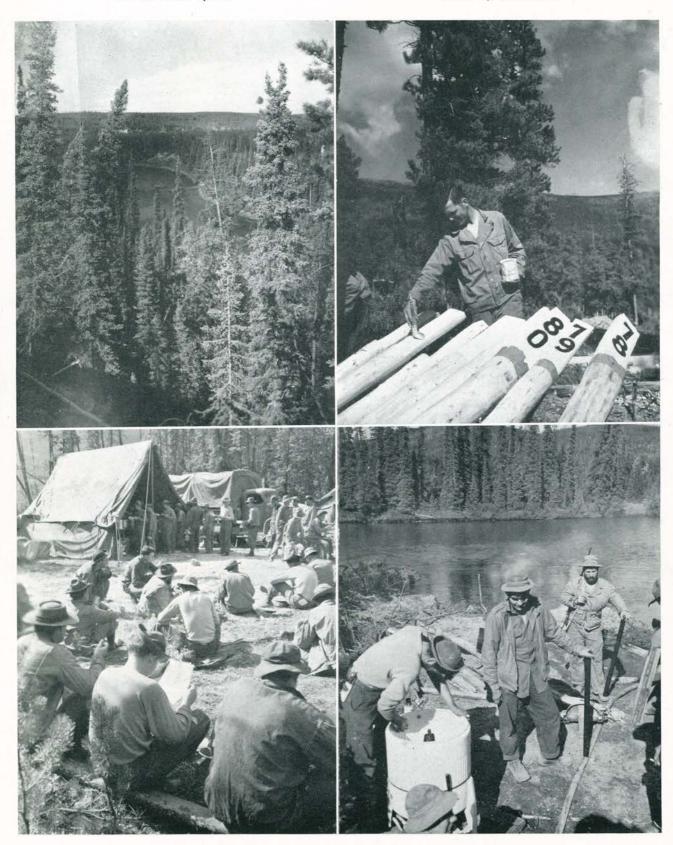
A little matter of lacking a bridge is no handicap to a D-8 cat. One fords the Rancheria river at mile 120.

Later, the ford at the Rancheria was obviated by the sturdy bridge constructed by D Company.





At the Little Rancheria crossing, an Army truck fords the turbulent stream. The two Rancherias are 15 miles apart. Mile posts of progress. A sign painter from the S-3 section slaps out visible evidence of progress made by the 340th.



Company B mess is typical of many such scenes as the 340th built mile after mile of road. Chow call at the Little Rancheria.

One of the greater satisfactions, was to occasionally change into clean clothes. Company laundries, such as the A Company setup at Little Rancheria, did yeoman service.

Capt. Corey, 1st Battalion commander, during an inspection trip between the Rancheria rivers.



Below, left: 340th Regimental Supply, at the Little Rancheria base.

Below, right: Muskeg was no respecter of rank, as shown by this graphic shot of Lt. Col. Schilsky's jeep.



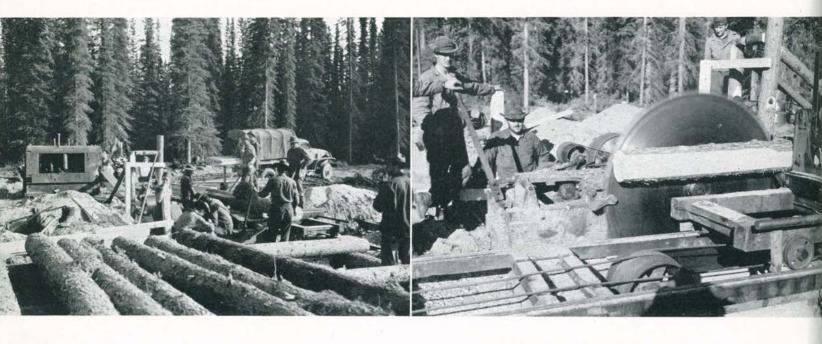


D Company, commanded by Capt. Walthall (in foreground), begins work on the bridge at the second crossing of the Rancheria river.

Stringers, cut from big spruce logs, are being laid by husky soldiers at the Rancheria, mile 119.







Triple play: From logs . . .

to timbers . . .

to bridge. D Company operated the sawmill and built part of the bridge at the Liard river, mile 164. Below, B Company uses a Quickway shovel in driving pile for the Liard bridge.





Bob Hope and Jerry Colona put on a show at the Watson Lake airport in September that made a big hit with the entertainment-starved soldiers. A number of 340th officers and men were in the audience.



The only white woman south of Teslin, and one of the most famous sign posts in the world. She was an airline hostess who spent a memorable night at Watson Lake.

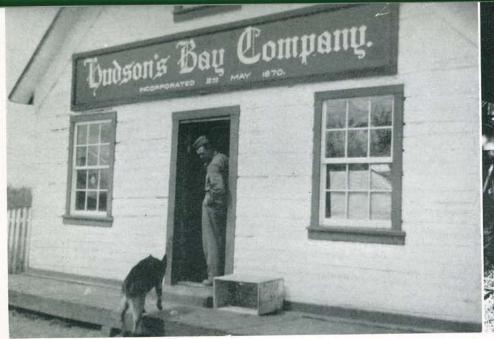
Notables

Beards were the usual thing in Alcan days, but Capt. Bojinoff sported one of the most classy bits of chin spinach in the regiment.



Broadway and Main—the busiest street corner in Morley Bay—brought fame to the 340th when pictures of the intersection and sign were widely published back in the





Lower Post and major mission completed on September 6, 1942. The 340th had built 187 miles of road from Teslin in less than three months.



Col. Lyons gets his tackle ready for a spot of fishing. The habitual head scarf identified the Colonel as far as he could be seen.



Signal Corps men, attached to the 340th, operate the 2nd Battalion radio car at Lower Post.



Most of the inhabitants of the small Lower Post village were Indians who lived in sturdy log cabins.



A soldier takes a "busman's holiday," hiking along a stretch of new 340th road near Lower Post.



Moving day, with a typical convoy of men, trucks and equipment. The 340th goes on to another stretch of road building.



Another method of moving. Lts. Hilgendorf and Maxwell cross the Hyland river, mile 211, on a trail ferry powered only by the swift current.



As the "cats" go, so-goes the road. The leading D-8, E Company, plows through the forest.



Trees, large or small, topple and are shoved aside to make way for the Alcan Highway.









Following the "Cats"

Big boulders must be removed by hand, or blasted, to prevent serious damage to grading machinery.

Graders, with the inevitable "cats" supplying the power, whip into shape the rough trail left by the bulldozers.

Heavy log drag, pulled by tractor, smooths and levels off the nearly completed road.

Many a mile of corduroy was hand-laid by men of the 340th in building the Alcan over swamp and muskeg.



A big moment, long awaited, was the meeting of the "cats." The 340th, working south, and the 35th Engineer Regiment, coming north, met at Contact Creek, mile 219, on September 24, 1942.

Col. Lyons of the 340th and Maj. McCarthy of the 35th shake hands from the lead cats of their respective regiments.





Late in September, 1942, this truck was driven up the Alcan from Dawson Creek to Whitehorse—the first truck to make the entire trip.

November 16, 1942—a bleak and cold day—the Alcan Highway was formally dedicated at a joint American-Canadian ceremony held atop Soldier's Summit, mile 157, overlooking frozen Kluane Lake. The road was officially open, and the 340th Engineer Regiment had played an important part in that military engineering feat.



Winter Work



With its road building mission completed, the 340th took up a new assignment—driving the Fairbanks Freight, building permanent camps, and maintaining the road.

An experimental barracks of log construction was erected at Morris Lake, mile 28. Side walls of snug-fitting notched logs are going up during a fall snow storm.

The log structure is nearing completion. Rest and maintenance camps also were constructed by the 340th at the Rancheria, Swift and Morley rivers, Brooks Brook, Morris Lake and Morley Bay.





Far cry from the buildings below was life in pup tents back in road-building days at mile 26. Rude bunks were made of mattress covers stretched between poles.



Platoon maintenance camp at Morley river nearly finished by 340th carpenters.



Stringers are being laid for a mess hall at Morris Lake, late in November.

A standard barracks nearing completion at the Morris Lake camp. Permanent structures soon housed the 340th, which had been living in pup tents.

Exterior shot of the construction of a portable bakery at regimental headquarters, Watson Lake, to supply the regiment with baked goods.









Relay stations, such as this one at Koidern, were established by the 340th for Fairbanks Freight maintenance. Drivers were changed at every station.

In the dead of winter, trucks were exceedingly difficult to start. This driver has built fires under the differentials—a standard practice necessitated by temperatures ranging down to 70 below zero.

Fairbanks Freight

Hazards met in driving the Fairbanks Freight were many and constant. There were worse ditches than this one. Progress report on the F. F. operations. Sgt. Dies of C Company proudly points to the record showing that all trucks had been kept rolling for 11 days.

This hill at mile 57, near Swan Lake, will be remembered with expletives by all drivers who encountered its winter-time perils.









Grease and service rack, courtesy Yukon forest timbers. R.S.O. freight trucks serviced at Watson Lake.



Whitehorse, hub of the Alcan and home of the Northwest Service Command, in the Lewes River valley.



Start of operations at Nisutlin Bay. Winter setting in delayed the work considerably.



Strengthening the Nisutlin ice crossing by pumping water to freeze over a base of slabs.



Nisutlin well along, but incomplete. The ice crossing is at the left of the bridge.



Destruction Bay

340th Winter Camps



Watson Lake



Morris Lake



Mile Post 72



Beaver Creek

Chipping off a high center in the ice crossing at the Donjek.





At Watson Lake, a chicken in every pot-some days.



H & S Company motor pool's mobile machine shop speeds repair jobs.



Grading the road at mile 157 are A Company men.



F Company builds a gravel bunker for road surfacing, mile 26.3.



C Company of the 340th succeeds C of the 18th at Destruction Bay.



Enlisted men bring Christmas to their tent at mile 72.



Cold? Well, when solid Prestone freezes . . .



Moving up, C Company passes C Company of the 97th.



340th R.S.O. and part of C Company, at Kluane Lake.

Miscellany



Snow envelops tent camp at mile 72.

Useful transportation, non-skid variety.

Smart river in beautiful winter dress.

Modernized Indian hitches ride for self and dog team.





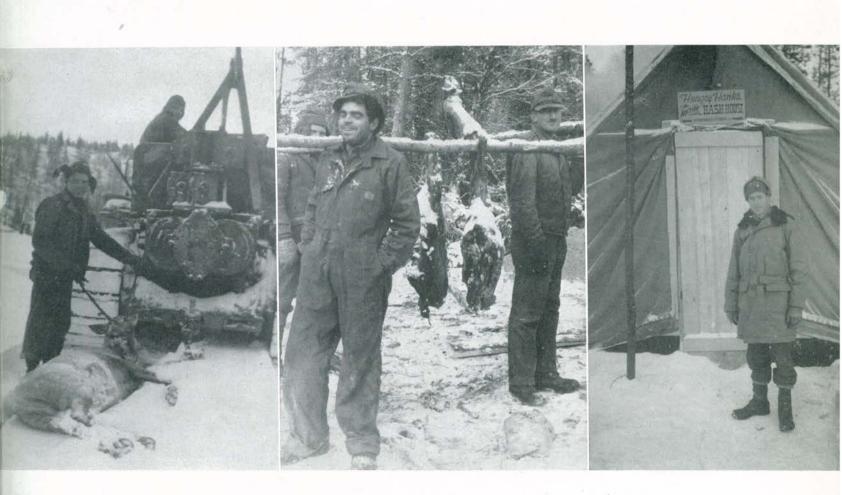






Some men "went out" the hard way, by truck; others rode these busses which came up in December when the 340th began getting well-earned furloughs.

Root cellar, at Morley Bay, used by the R.S.O. to protect perishable food stocks against heat, cold, and raiders both two and four-legged.



Caribou, to a somewhat lesser extent than moose, furnished a lot of fresh meat for C-ration weary men. Here a C Company "cat" hauls one in.

Cuts from a big moose, shot at the Smart river and butchered on the spot, are carried in to furnish a welcome change from meat hash and beans.

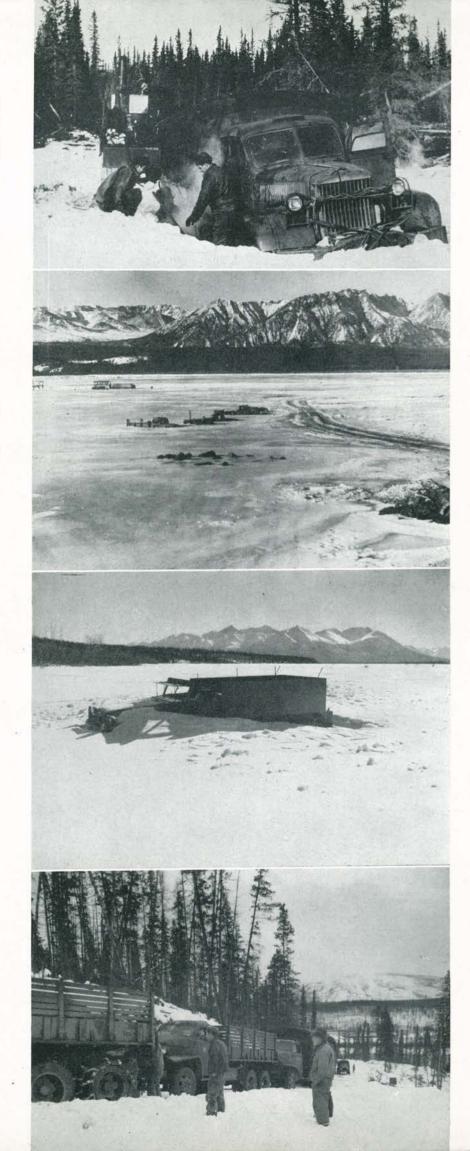
Fame of this widely-known wall tent diner derived from Lt. Howard H. Webb, whose gastronomic abilities brought about its alliterative name.

Abandoned to the enveloping ice of the Duke river by the 18th Engineer Regiment, this truck is being thawed free by C Company men. H & S Quickway operators lifted it out.

Donjek river, where many an 18th vehicle was frozen in the ice and snow. The 340th inherited the tough job of getting them rolling again.

Half-buried 18th Engineer Regiment half-track seems to be hopelessly ice-bound at the Donjek. But the 340th proved otherwise.

Plenty of snow and ice was still a hazard on the Alcan when C Company moved north to Big Delta on the first of March.



Spring Operations



With the approach of spring in 1943 the mission of the 340th was changed. In anticipation of the thaw the companies were moved up along the Alcan from Whitehorse to Fairbanks, Alaska. The 1st Battalion, from the Koidern north, maintained stream crossings and kept the road open where possible. The above picture was taken at Koidern.

Glaciers such as this one near Destruction Bay, were a constant menace to road traffic. Beautiful only from a photographer's viewpoint.

The ice crossing at the Donjek river was a tricky one as the thaw set in. Holes opened unexpectedly to trap the unwary.







At A Company's Koidern camp, the thaw created an actual sea of mud. Corduroy drives were necessary for vehicles to get around within camp.

Below, left: Crossing the White river on the rotten ice of late spring.

Below, right: Open water at the left shows the necessity for this trestle bridge at the White, mile 267.



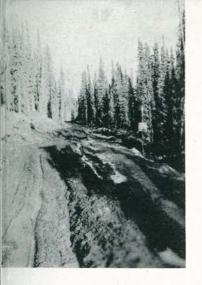


A Company personnel and "Alaska" cross the White river on a trail ferry after the breakup of ice swept away the bridge.

Six men on a "cat"—fording the swollen White river late in May.







Slow, the sign says. What else, in three feet of half-thawed muskeg near Koidern?

Bingo is the game, popular at A Company's recreation hut at Koidern.

Driving pile through the ice for trestle bridge at White river—an A Company job.





A Company's 1½-ton trucks graveling through swamp at mile 253, above Edith Creek.

Books and magazines were read through and through in Garman's rec hut at A Company's Koidern camp.



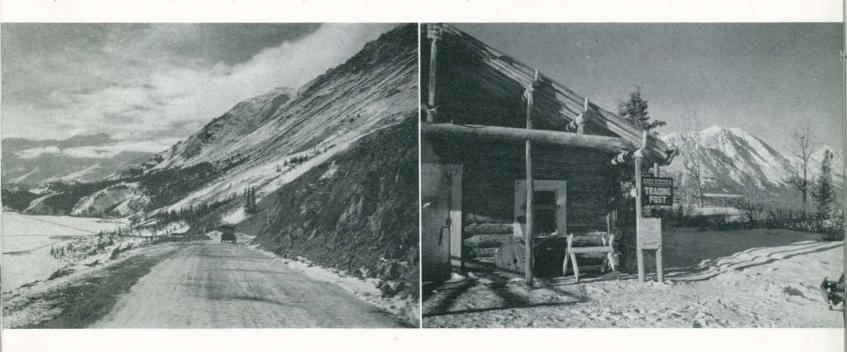




Maj. Moore, with "Telp" (for Teslin and Lower Post) and "Butch," at Kluane Lake.

For more than 50 miles the Alcan winds along the shores of Kluane Lake, with towering mountains on the other side of the road.

In true tradition of the north, the 340th Regimental Exchange became a "trading post" at Kluane Lake. Soldiers, not Indians, were the victims—we mean, customers.



The log cabin village of Kluane was there when the 340th moved in. For several months the R.S.O. and Regimental Exchange were housed there.

Appropriate ceremonies marked H & S Company's observance of Memorial Day at Kluane Lake. In 1942, Memorial Day was celebrated at Skagway.







Main street of Whitehorse looks like a frontier town in the U. S. during the 1870's.



Early in July, H & S Company men worked fast and furiously to check a forest fire which for a time threatened the Kluane Lake camp.



Strong winds whipped huge snow drifts around Kluane Lake. The parka-clad soldier shows the height of some of the snow banks.



Soldiers from Whitehorse "weekend" at Kluane.

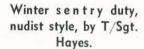


Probably the most photographed Yukon scene
—Kluane Lake from Soldier's Summit.



R.S.O. camp at Whitehorse, established to facilitate movement of supplies to the regiment.

Men of H & S Company shoot the Thompson sub-machine gun at Kluane.

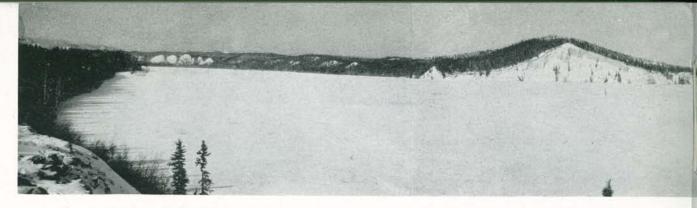


E Company, stationed in Whitehorse for a while, leveled a diamond and enjoyed many games of softball.









Panoramic view of the Robertson fiver, location of Camp Paul where three platoons of B Company were state mountains it



B Company built a side road into Snag Creek airport, below Beaver Creek.



Practically self explanatory, except the home-town "plug" at the top left.

Twin bear cubs became B Company pets, and returned to camp regularly for chow.

Snow-burdened mountains rear their heads back of Cathedral Rapids.

Beaver Creek camp was home to one platoon of B Company, which operated a sawmill there.









tioned during the spring and summer of 1943. Robertson river flows into the Tanana at the edge of the low at the right.



Bears were numerous around B Company's camps. Black and brown bruins made themselves at home with the Army and didn't refuse even C rations.

Robertson river ice swallowed all but the top of this caterpillar tractor.

B Company's rifle range at the Robertson river, where the men kept shooting eyes in trim.

One of the last spots on the Alcan to be opened, the Beaver Creek road required a lot of work.

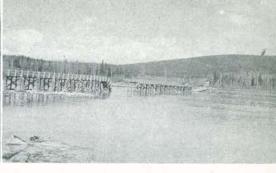












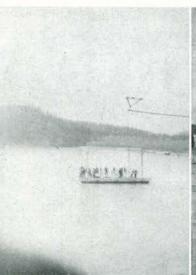
Not recommended as S.O.P. for descending from a tower.

High line rigged up by C Company at the Tanana river.

Ice, thaw, and current play hell with the Tanana bridge.



Choice of transportation ferry by water, or by high line.



C Company used this ferry when the water was high enough.



Three times the Tanana bridge went out; three times C Company rebuilt it.

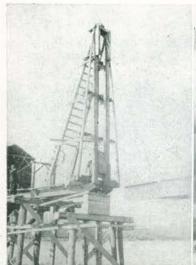


Two C Company stalwarts carry timber for work below Snag Creek.

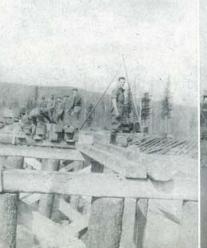
Pile driver hoisting a steel beam in the reconstruction of the Tanana bridge.

Lts. Branstetter and Mc-Daniel supervise the Tanana operations.

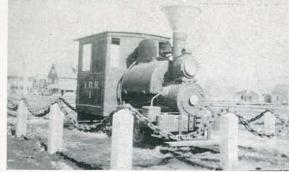
Stringers go down on log bents as C Company sets a fast pace. Nearing completion, the Tanana bridge is about ready for another battle with nature.











Familiar sight in Fairbanks is this old Alaska Railroad engine.



Harding Lake tempts anglers, but this C Company man probably heeded the sign.



Summer and winter styled jeeps at Big Delta.



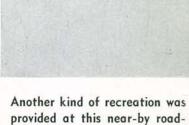
Johnson River crossing, familiar mostly to the 1st Battalion.



Canadian "coupons" are plentiful in a C Company crap game.



At Big Delta camp, recreation was not so scarce. Aquaplaning on Lake Harding.



provided at this near-by roadhouse.

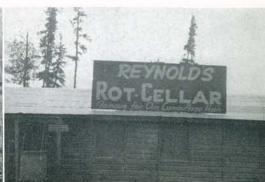
Skiing was good at Big Delta, even in April. Trucks tow the skiers.

Late in June, 1943, C Company joined B Company just above Beaver Creek to work on the road.

At Big Delta, the C Company mess hall was given this affectionately derisive appellation.







Haines Road



With the approach of spring the second battalion was assigned to the construction of the Haines road which formed a connecting link between the Alcan and tidewater at Haines, Alaska. The project was started in the winter by civilians and turned over to the 340th shortly before the thaw. During the thaw even the big bulldozers lacked enough push to get thru the mud.

A Company D truck winces its way along in the mire. The going was rough on men and vehicles during the thaw.

Good working conditions prevailed during the summer, enabling the battalion to "hole thru" in August to the civilians working from the Haines end.





Indian pack trains worked with the advance location party, and also brought supplies to Company D when they were isolated.

The thaw left the winter road a sen of mud in many places. As a result Company D in the lead was isolated for two months.

Pulling out stuck jeeps were routine jobs for the dozers. Shown here is a cat supplied by civilians to supplement worn-out army equipment.

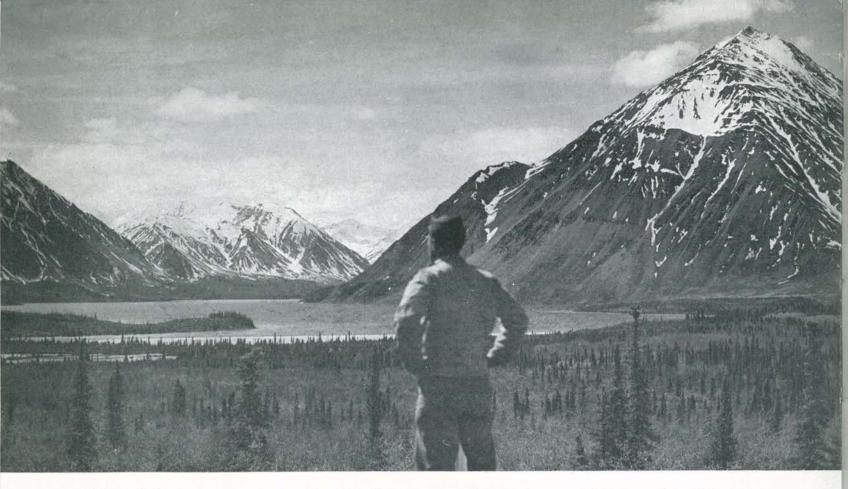
Base Camp. Company D took over from the civilians at this point while two to three feet of snow was still on the ground. The mountains on one side and Dezadeash Lake on the other made this a picturesque spot.



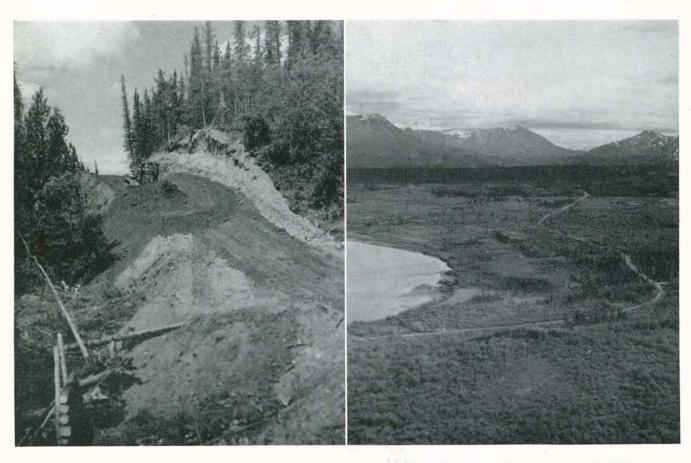








Kathleen Lake—once seen, never forgotten. The Haines road ran between two mountain ranges whose steep sides formed a striking background for activities in the valley below.



A dozer busy in a cut-and-fill job. An abundance of gravel nearby made short work of many otherwise difficult spots.

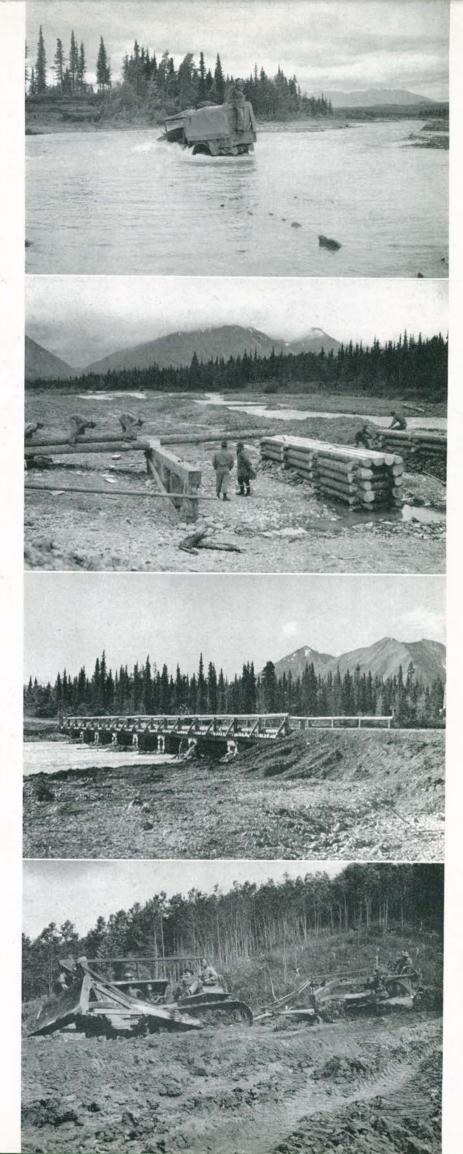
The road winds around the southern end of Dezadeash lake. Company F camp is hidden in the trees at the right center of the picture.

Quill creek turned from a small brook into a raging stream almost overnight during thaw. The battalion bread truck found the ford a little too deep.

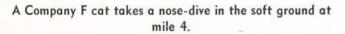
Company A spent a month on the road, and built the first section of permanent highway, including the two lane bridge over Quill Creek.

The completed Quill Creek bridge an excellent job in timber construction.

Company E crew ditching a soft spot.









Company F engaged in a major repair job. Equipment used the previous year by 18th Engineers was hard pressed to last thru another season.



Kathleen river went over its banks during the thaw. Note the water mark on the four-ton truck. Previously jeeps had crossed at this spot.



Company E building a small bridge over one of the numerous streams fed from melting snow on adjacent mountains.



Company F drilling some rock outcropping in preparation for blasting.

Takhini river bridge was built by Company D during the time they were isolated in this peaceful valley. Later Company F occupied the same camp.

A gravel chute built into the sides of a deep valley. In this vicinity ground was swampy, full of boulders, and cut by deep gullies.







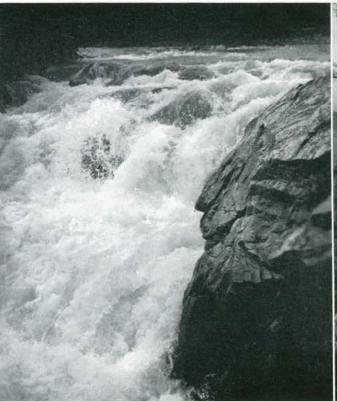
Company E leaves Whitehorse late in May to join the rest of the battalion on the Haines road.



Posting a letter home. During the thaw incoming mail was dropped from a plane when truck deliveries were impossible.



Company F "street" faces the snow capped mountains of the St. Elias range.



The Takhini river comes to a boil as it approaches Sexton falls. Discovered by Company D, the falls was a popular spot for fishermen.



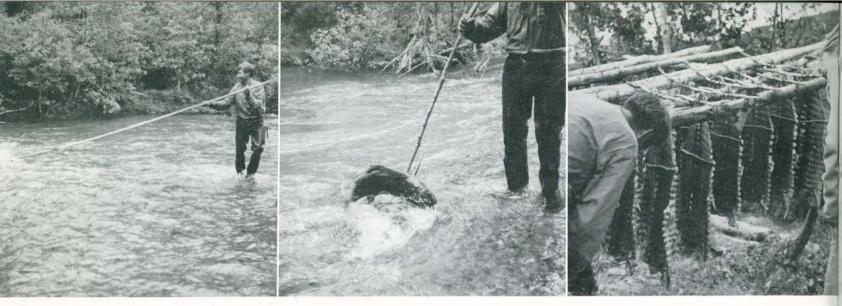
One of the medics enjoys a shower in Yukon style. Cold winds, not modesty, made the board walls desirable.

Company E men with a record catch of trout taken from Lake Dezadeash in two hours. A minor stampede of nimrods had similar luck.

Company E mess tent during their stay at base camp.







Fishing for King salmon in the Unahini river was royal sport. Above, an Indian shows how it is done. The fish, which often weighed 50 lbs. each, were smoked and dried for the commercial market.



Company D captured two baby moose at the Takhini river. Too much candy proved fatal for Pat, leaving Patricia all by herself.



Huskies were numerous, but none more handsome than Suzie and Duke. Seems that Duke is having some trouble with his Mrs.



The 340th brought one dog, Julie, to the Yukon. During the summer of '43 the third generation put in its appearance when Capt. DeKay's dog Can delivered some pups at Base Camp.

The Haines road traveled thru a hunter's paradise. Company D supplemented their canned rations in the background with fresh bear steak.

Despite days of gruelling work in the mud, Company D found enough energy to enjoy volleyball.

USO entertainers furnished a welcome break in the monotony of road construction.









Company D breaks camp for the last time in preparation for the move into Whitehorse on the way back to the States.



A convoy pulls into Whitehorse. Companies B and C were isolated beyond the White river, and were flown back to Whitehorse.



The camp at Whitehorse. The regiment was together again for the first time since leaving Skagway 15 months before.



Company D found a pair of bear cubs on the way out from the Haines road.



Whitehorse was a northern outpost when the 340th first saw it, a boom town when the regiment left.



Sad Sack, mascot of Company D, is all set to go back to the States on the train.



A familiar site once again when the train pulled into Skagway. Like Whitehorse, contractor's activities had made a boom town out of Skagway.



H&S COMPANY

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GIESEN, WILBUR K.
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LEVAN, WILLIAM J.

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2nd Lt. Arthur A. Marston
2nd Lt. James C. Swisher

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