

Parker Hitt

The Father of American Military Cryptology

Betsy Rohaly Smoot

Association of the United States Army American Warriors Series

“Success in dealing with unknown ciphers is measured by these four things in the order named: perseverance, careful methods of analysis, intuition, luck.” So begins the first chapter of Colonel Parker Hitt’s 1916 *Manual for the Solution of Military Ciphers*, a foundational text in the history of cryptology. An irrepressible innovator, Hitt possessed those qualities in abundance. His manual, cipher devices, and proactive mentorship of Army cryptology during World War I laid the groundwork for the modern American cryptologic system. Though he considered himself an infantryman, Hitt is best known as the “father of American military cryptology.”

In *Parker Hitt: The Father of American Military Cryptology*, Betsy Rohaly Smoot brings Hitt’s legacy to life, chronicling his upbringing, multiple careers, ingenious mind, and independent spirit. In the 1910s, after a decade as an infantry officer, Hitt set his sights on aviation. Instead, he was drawn to the applied sciences, designing signal and machine-gun equipment while applying math to combat problems. Atypical for the time, Hitt championed women in the workplace. During World War I he suggested the Army employ American female telephone operators, while his wife, Genevieve Young Hitt, became the first woman to break ciphers for the United States government. His daughter, Mary Lue Hitt, carried on the family legacy as a “code girl” during World War II. Readers of Elizabeth Cobb’s *The Hello Girls*, Liza Mundy’s *Code Girls*, and David Kahn’s *The Codebreakers* will find in Parker Hitt’s story an insightful profile of an American cryptologic hero and the early twentieth-century military. Drawing from a never-before-seen cache of Hitt’s letters, photographs, and diaries, Smoot introduces readers to Hitt’s life on the front lines, in classrooms and workshops, and at home.

Betsy Rohaly Smoot is an intelligence historian interested in early twentieth-century cryptology and communications who has published articles in both *Cryptologia* and *Intelligence and National Security*. She retired from the Center for Cryptologic History of the National Security Agency in 2017.

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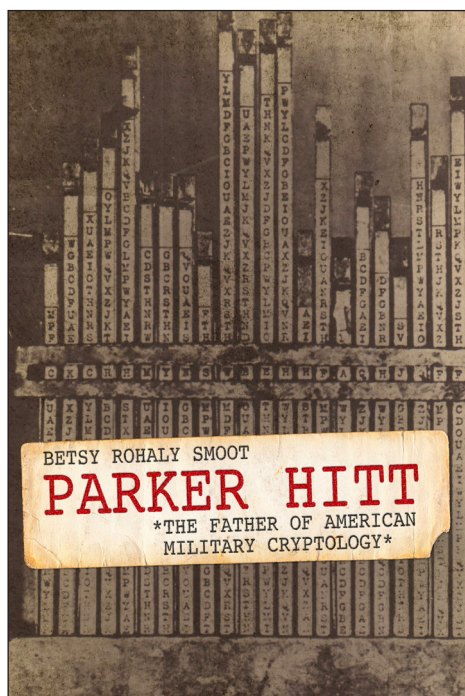
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“Parker Hitt: The Father of American Military Cryptology is deeply researched and well analyzed. Betsy Rohaly Smoot’s biography tells us much about the early development of ciphers and codes.”—Mitchell Yockelson, author of Forty-Seven Days: How Pershing’s Warriors Came of Age to Defeat the German Army in World War I