NPS Form 10-900
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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only
received
date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Ladd Field

and or common Fort Wainwright

2. Location

street & number ___ not for publication

city, town ___ X vicinity of Fairbanks

state Alaska code 02 county Fairbanks North Star code 090

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
_X_ district	_X_ public	_X_ occupied	___ agriculture	___ museum
___ building(s)	___ private	___ unoccupied	___ commercial	___ park
___ structure	___ both	___ work in progress	___ educational	___ private residence
___ site	**Public Acquisition**	**Accessible**	___ entertainment	___ religious
___ object	___ in process	_X_ yes: restricted	___ government	___ scientific
	___ being considered	___ yes: unrestricted	___ industrial	___ transportation
		___ no	_X_ military	___ other:

4. Owner of Property

name United States Army

street & number

city, town Fort Wainwright ___ vicinity of state Alaska 99707

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Director of Facilities, HQ 172d Infantry Brigade (AK),

street & number Engineering (AFZT-FE-PS)

city, town Fort Richardson state Alaska 99505

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title None has this property been determined eligible? ___ yes _X_ no

date ___ federal ___ state ___ county ___ local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
_X_ excellent	___ deteriorated	___ unaltered	_X original site
___ good	___ ruins	_X_ altered	___ moved date _____
___ fair	___ unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Construction at Ladd Field, the first U.S. Army airfield in Alaska, began in the fall of 1938. Named in honor of Maj. Arthur K. Ladd, killed in an aircraft accident in South Carolina in 1935, it was built just east of Fairbanks, Alaska. The first Army Air Corps troops arrived at the field in April 1940. Its World War II facilities were designed to fulfill three missions: cold weather experimental station, air depot for repair and testing of aircraft, and the principal base in Alaska for the Air Transport Command.

Today, it is an army installation, Fort Wainwright, and facilities have greatly expanded with the erection of modern barracks, family housing, medical center, administrative centers, and other structures. The core of the original field, including the permanent garrison, hangars, and runways, remains relatively intact and is maintained in good condition. Both the U.S. Army and the Bureau of Land Management make use of these structures, but a few buildings are presently unoccupied. Several features of wartime activities that were located around the periphery of the field are no longer extant: a temporary 500-man transient camp for Russian and American aircrews; Coast Artillery (antiaircraft) garrison area; air depot and troop housing area; and Quartermaster Corps housing. A satellite runway, 26 miles to the southeast (and called "Mile 26 Field") is now fully developed Eielson Air Force Base.

Permanent Garrison. The first thing to be built at the new site was a three-mile spur of The Alaska Railroad from Fairbanks to deliver construction material. This spur exists and is maintained in good condition. Because of the extremely cold winters in Interior Alaska, all structures for the original garrison were permanent in nature. Officers' quarters are arranged in a horseshoe, centered on an open lawn. Three of these (1047, 1049, and 1051) are frame, two-story, apartment-type quarters and date from 1941. A similar-type structure (1045) was the early administrative center and is now a guest house. Next to it, but dating from 1945, is an attractive-appearing automobile garage. In the center of the horseshoe is Quarters No. 1, the commanding officer's house. This handsome, two-story, frame structure, surrounded by a white picket fence and a ring of trees, was the envy of all army officers in Alaska, both higher and lower rank than the occupant.

The horseshoe is today surrounded by many more sets of quarters of later construction, but among them are three from the early 1940s: nurses' quarters (1021), east of the guest house, a one-story, frame building constructed before 1943 (but carried in the records today as dating from 1946) and presently vacant; radio station (1024), one-story, frame, cottage-type building pre-dating 1943, although current records date it from 1945 (local tradition holds this building to have been the residence of the head of the Russian mission at Ladd, but no supporting evidence has yet been found); and a standard-plan military chapel, constructed in 1944.

The legs of the horseshoe and the open space between them extend southward, across a street into the industrial area. This open space no longer has a flag staff but a monument to Lt. Gen. Jonathan M. Wainwright has been emplaced

there. East of this former parade ground is a large, U-shaped, two-story post hospital (1555), constructed during a major expansion in 1943. In later years, this structure served as post headquarters; today, it houses the Bureau of Land Management's Alaska Fire Service. East of the hospital is a former aircraft maintenance shop (1541), now an addition to a large Bureau of Land Management administration/visitor center building. While present-day building records state the shop was built in 1942, a 1943 army map does not show it.

West of the parade are three wartime structures: A two-story building with a one-story wing at each end (a long ell at the rear no longer exists); the wartime function of this building (1562) was possibly administrative while today it is called Kluge Hall and contains administrative offices and a thrift shop. South of it stands the all-important wartime power and heating plant (1561), not presently in operation. Next to the plant is[1] a wartime community center (1560), constructed in 1941 and enlarged in 1943.

Many of the first buildings at Ladd retain their original, and distinctive, copper roofs. Another unusual feature was a network of underground utilities corridors. Those corridors in the vicinity of the officers' quarters, parade ground, and Hangar No. 1 are of sufficient size (7 by 9 feet) to allow persons to walk underground during cold winter weather.

Airfield

South of the industrial area, the airfield proper begins. Adjacent to the parade is the huge, metal-clad Hangar No. 1, the first to be completed at Ladd, in 1941. On its north and south sides are two-story "lean-tos" containing offices and shops. This imposing hangar is now vacant. East, west, and south of the hangar are extensive concrete or earthen aircraft parking areas where, later, planes destined for the Soviet Union received final preparation. Beyond them is the first of two parallel runways at Ladd Field. In 1941, this reinforced-concrete runway was 5,000 feet in length. By 1943, gravel extensions had been laid at each end, giving a total length of over 9,000 feet. These extensions were later paved. Also in 1943, the second, paved runway, 9,000 by 150 feet, as well as additional parking areas, taxiways, and hardstands were under construction. Two Kodiak, T-type hangars (1542 and 1543) were erected at the end of the parking area east of Hangar No. 1. Said to have been used only by the cold weather test station, these hangars have

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1. Today's army building records state it was originally a community center. The writer feels uneasy about the term which was not in common use at the time and because of the building's location--between the power plant and a hangar.

been permitted to the Bureau of Land Management for fire suppression activities.[2]

In the 1943 expansion program for Ladd, three Birchwood-type hangars were authorized for the south side of the enlarged field. These nearly-identical structures are extant, but their locations are somewhat different than originally planned: Hangar No. 2 (3008), Hangar No. 3 (3005), and Hangar No. 6 (2085). They were completed ca. 1944. All three have been modernized and are in excellent condition. Today, they house army helicopters. Also on the south side of the field are two sets of double hangars, Nos. 4 and 5 (2106) and 7 and 8 (2077) that were erected at the same time. Considering the many changes in missions over the past 45 years, the overall integrity of the original Ladd field structures is remarkable.

The significant historical features at former Ladd Field are:

Officers' quarters on the horseshoe, nos. 1047, 1049, and 1051; also, the commanding officer's quarters, no. 1.

Early administrative center (present guest house), no. 1045.

Automobile garage, no. 10.

Former nurses' quarters, no. 1021.

Radio station, no. 1024.

Former post hospital, no. 1555.

Former aircraft maintenance shop, no. 1541.

Strcuture no. 1562 (Kluge Hall).

Former power and heating plant, no. 1561.

Former "community center," no. 1560.

Hangar no. 1.

Two parallel runways, including parking areas, taxiways, and hardstands.

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2. Both hangars were surveyed in 1980 for possible demolition.

Two Kodiak hangars, nos. 1542 and 1543.

Three Birchwood hangars, nos. 3008, 3005, and 2085.

Two double hangars, nos. 2106 and 2077.

Chapel, no. 1043.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
___ prehistoric	___ archeology-prehistoric	___ community planning	___ landscape architecture	___ religion
___ 1400–1499	___ archeology-historic	___ conservation	___ law	___ science
___ 1500–1599	___ agriculture	___ economics	___ literature	___ sculpture
___ 1600–1699	___ architecture	___ education	X military	___ social/ humanitarian
___ 1700–1799	___ art	___ engineering	___ music	___ theater
___ 1800–1899	___ commerce	___ exploration settlement	___ philosophy	___ transportation
X 1900–	___ communications	___ industry	___ politics government	___ other (specify)
		___ invention		

Specific dates 1938-1945 **Builder Architect**

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Ladd Field was established in 1940 originally as a Cold Weather Test Station at the insistance of Maj. Gen. H.H. Arnold, Chief of the Army Air Corps. Here, at Alaska's first army airfield, vital lessons were learned in wing-icing, navigation, aircraft maintenance and operation, instruments and controls, radio communication, cold-weather clothing, armament, and a wide variety of other investigations for operating aircraft in arctic-like conditions. As the Japanese prepared to invade the Aleutians in 1942, the Eleventh Air Force established an Air Depot at Ladd Field for the repair, testing, and supply of aircraft in the Alaska Theater. And, beginning in 1942, Ladd Field became the center of the "Alsib [Alaska/Siberia] Movement," wherein nearly 8,000 military aircraft from the United States were transferred to Russian aircrews for use on the Russian Front. Despite Alaska's cruel winters this air ferry route came to be preferred over the longer Miami-Iraq-Moscow route. Soviet diplomats and missions also traveled through Ladd Field during the war en route to and from the Soviet Union and the United States.

Cold Weather Test Station

Well before he became chief of the Army Air Corps, Maj. Gen. H.H. ("Hap") Arnold recognized the importance of establishing a cold weather test station in Alaska to experiment in adapting planes, personnel, equipment, and base facilities to operate successfully in deep cold temperatures such as are experienced in Interior Alaska. As chief, he persuaded the War Department to complete a site survey in the summer of 1938. A site was chosen 3½ miles east of Fairbanks (postwar growth has brought city development up to the base's boundary) and by autumn the Quartermaster Corps had begun construction with a civilian crew that eventually grew to 1,200 men.

An early experiment concerned how best to construct a 5,000-foot runway that would not heave in freezing and thawing conditions. A promising solution was to remove two feet of topsoil then put in one foot of unwashed gravel. Concrete, reinforced with steel, was poured over this base. (Local citizens persuaded the Army to use thawing techniques rather than attempting to blast the frozen tundra.) This method proved quite successful, although the runways have been upgraded and reconstructed in the subsequent 45 years.

The first Air Corps troops arrived at Ladd Field in September 1940, and soon the first B-17 Flying Fortress arrived for experimental work. The power and heating plant was completed during the winter of 1940-44, bringing heat and cheerful light to the still unfinished barracks and quarters. In January 1941, the Corps of Engineers took over construction and the forceful Col. B.B. Talley, CE, drove the work to completion. At the same time, Coast Artillery antiaircraft units arrived to winter test their weapons. Cold weather testing

continued at Ladd Field until the spring of 1942 when concern over a Japanese invasion caused the Alaska Department to request the testing be halted. The Eleventh Air Force took over the field and established an air depot for aircraft repair, service, and supply for the Alaskan Theater.

Within a few months, however, the commanding general of the Army Air Forces directed the reestablishment of cold weather testing, this time keeping the activity directly under himself. (Even earlier, Ladd Field had been fairly independent of the Alaska Department. One result of this was the envy of other units in Alaska over the high degree of refinement that went into Ladd's facilities. Most other installations were making do with tents and quonset huts.) Testing operations resumed, to be continued until well after the conclusion of World War II. A typical report summarized activity for the winter of 1942-43: "In addition to aircraft accessory equipment, tests and experiments were carried out in connection with clothing, food, motor transportation, medical research, photography and the many and varied factors in connection with Arctic operations."[1]

Air Depot

The establishment of the Air Depot at Ladd in 1942 resulted in the addition of nearly 1,000 officers and men to the garrison. Depot activities, combined with those of the Air Transport Command, resulted in the extension of the existing runway, construction of a second, and the building of additional hangars and housing. Then, with the freeing of the western Aleutians from the enemy a year later, the size of the Eleventh Air Force decreased considerably, resulting in less work for the depot. At the same time, the Air Transport Command was increasing its work load and, having taken command of Ladd Field, had the Sixth Air Depot Group disbanded and absorbed the personnel into its own activities.

The Russians Are Coming

The United States and the Soviet Union had discussed the concept of ferrying American-manufactured aircraft to Russia under a lend-lease program even before Pearl Harbor. In August 1941, the two nations reached an agreement in principle on the plan. Two routes were feasible: from Florida to North Africa, to Iraq and Iran, and on to Moscow, for a distance of 13,000 miles; and from Great Falls, Montana, to Fairbanks, to Siberia, and on to Moscow, for a

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1. Alaska Defense Command, History of Ladd Field, 1938-44, "AAF Cold Weather Testing Detachment," p. 54. Record Group 338, Alaska Defense Command, Washington National Records Center, Suitland, MD.

distance of 7,900 miles. The Russians[2] were not enthusiastic about the Siberian route but, in July 1942, Premier Joseph Stalin accepted this plan.

Canadians were already building airfields in the wilderness between Edmonton, Alberta, and Whitehorse, Yukon Territory. These together with six fields in Central Alaska--Northway, Tanacross, Big Delta, Ladd, Galena, and Nome--became the Northwest Staging Route for the delivery of the aircraft. At first, the United States wanted to turn over the planes to Russian aircrews in Siberia. Stalin, however, wishing to avoid an appearance of collaboration in the Far East, suggested that Soviet flyers accept the planes in Alaska, perhaps at Nome. Agreement was soon reached that Ladd Field would be the delivery point and that the Russians would land at Nome for refueling and repairs before crossing Bering Strait.[3]

The U.S. Army Air Corps Ferrying Command had its origins in delivery of American aircraft to Great Britain. Early in 1942 it expanded operations by flying bombers to the South Pacific. Renamed the Air Transport Command (ATC) in June 1942, it directed its Seventh Ferrying Group to deliver the first planes to Alaska. Five A-20 Havoc attack bombers landed at Ladd Field on September 3, 1942. Next day, officers of the permanent Russian mission flew in from Siberia. On September 11, 22 P-40 fighters arrived from Montana. Finally, a contingent of Russian pilots landed at Ladd on September 24 to begin five days of transitional training before flying the new planes home.

Americans found the Russians difficult students at first. The language barrier was only part of the problem. Some planes were too small for two men and the Americans gave instructions on the ground then watched nervously as the Russians took to the air. Also, the Russians appeared to have orders not to fraternize too much with American officers and not at all with American women (photographs of Russians at American dances suggest that any such orders were later relaxed). For the most part, the Russians were polite, well-behaved, and under strict discipline. In the beginning, they complained some about the quality of American planes, perhaps suspicious of products from a capitalist country. (Some Russians may have had a capitalistic heart; it is reported that few planes reached Siberia without a cargo of silk stockings, cosmetics, fishing tackle, cigarettes, or toys.) With the passage of time,

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2. During World War II, Americans preferred the terms "Russia" and "Russians" over "Soviet Union" and Soviets."

3. Galena Field, between Fairbanks and Nome, was an alternate jumping-off point for Siberia or for emergency landings.

however, differences smoothed out and, by 1944, Russia was favorably impressed with the quality and quantity of American aircraft. Soviet flyers and mechanics had free run of Ladd Field and, after the severely cold winter of 1942-43 that was made worse by inadequate facilities, took over many of the new hangars and shops erected in 1943.

The Alsib route witnessed the comings and goings of more than air crews. As early as September 1941, Corps of Engineers Col. B.B. Talley, flying to Nome on an inspection trip, spotted two large (American-made) Russian seaplanes in a lagoon twenty miles east of Nome. That night he met the Russians--a general and 42 staff members--who were en route to the United States on a military mission.[4] Throughout the war, Ladd Field played host to many dignitaries from both nations, including Ambassador Andrei Gromyko and Foreign Minister V.M. Molotov from the Soviet Union, and Wendell L. Wilkie and Vice President Henry A. Wallace of the United States.

The Air Transport Command took over Ladd Field in October 1943, having already assumed command of Galena, Big Delta, Tanacross, and Northway. In March 1944 alone the amount of air freight handled at Ladd amounted to 586 tons, and 288 planes were delivered to Russia. By September 1945, when the Russian mission left Alaska, 7,930 aircraft had been delivered to the Soviets by way of the Alsib Movement.

On November 1, 1945, the Air Transport Command transfered Ladd Field back to the Eleventh Air force. Fifteen years later, on January 1, 1961, the Department of the Air Force transferred Ladd Air Force Base to the Department of the Army. The Department renamed the now historic field Fort Jonathan M. Wainwright, for the hero of Corregidor.

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4. B.B. Talley, Daily Log, 1941-1943, entry for September 1, 1941.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See separate sheet.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 1,010 acres

Quadrangle name Fairbanks (D-2)

Quadrangle scale 1:250,000

UTM References

	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	03	472400	7191300
B	03	472400	7189500
C	03	469400	7189500
D	03	469400	7191300
E			
F			
G			
H			

Verbal boundary description and justification

See separate sheet.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Erwin N. Thompson, Historian

organization Denver Service Center, NPS date April 18, 1984

street & number 755 Parfet Street telephone (303) 234-4509

city or town Lakewood state Colorado 80225

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

___ national ___ state ___ local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title date

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest: date

Chief of Registration

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE : 1983 O - 419-311

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