

## ARMY AIRFIELD ON THE FRONTIER

In August 1939, construction began on Ladd Field just days before Hitler launched World War II in Europe. The new airfield was located adjacent to Fairbanks, a gold mining town of a few thousand people.

Despite the new urgency the war created, construction at Ladd Field could not get underway until the spring of 1940 when shipments of material were due to arrive from the lower 48 states. Once they did arrive, General "Hap" Arnold, the Chief of the Army Air Corps, ordered the air station to go into operation as soon as possible. Ladd Field opened in September 1940, a year ahead of schedule and with only the runway complete.

Ladd's first two years were spent as a cold weather test station. After the U.S. entered the war and Lend-Lease aid was extended to the Soviet Union, the post expanded to accommodate new missions and the influx of thousands of personnel.

## LADD FIELD



Major Arthur K. Ladd was an Air Corps pilot and Medal of Honor recipient who was killed in a 1935 South Carolina airplane crash. In 1940, four months after the new Fairbanks Air Base opened, the Army recognized Major Ladd by naming the new air field in his honor.

## CULTURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT AT FORT WAINWRIGHT

The Fort Wainwright Cultural Resources Management section supports the Army's mission by identifying, inventorying, and managing cultural resources in a manner that complies with federal law, minimizes impacts on the mission, supports sustainability of resources, and provides sound stewardship of properties eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

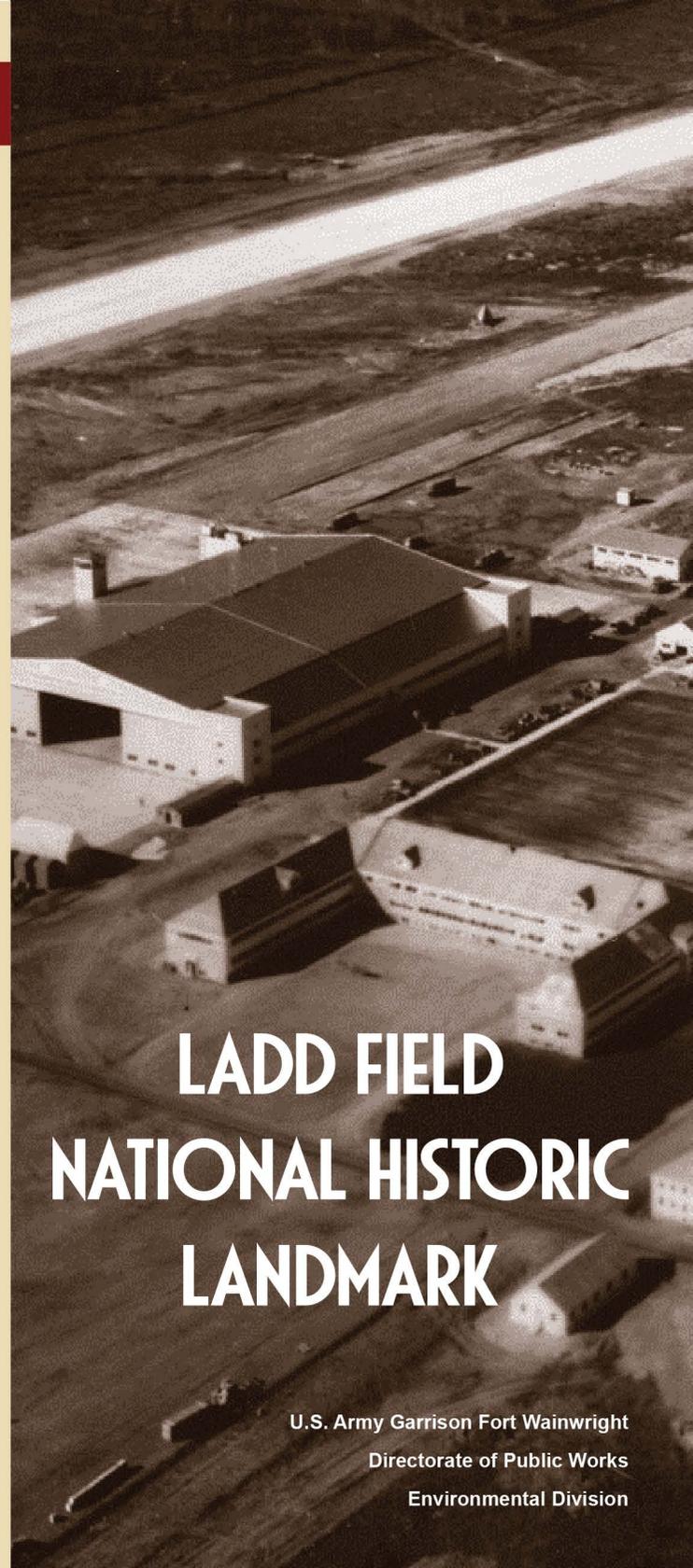
The section is located within the Environmental Division, Building 3023. Copies of our publications and additional information on the history of Fort Wainwright are available during business hours, Monday through Friday 7:30 am to 4:30 pm or on the website at [www.wainwright.army.mil/env/CR.html](http://www.wainwright.army.mil/env/CR.html).



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## LADD FIELD NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK

U.S. Army Garrison Fort Wainwright  
Directorate of Public Works  
Environmental Division





*North Post as it was built for cold weather testing; before it was dramatically expanded to meet the demands of World War II operations, circa 1942.*

Because of its unique role in the World War II era, Ladd Field was recognized as a National Historic Landmark in 1985 with a period of significance from 1938 to 1945. Ladd Field is noted for its role as a Cold Weather Test Station and for the part it played in Lend-Lease operations during World War II.

These historic properties provide a connection to our military heritage. They have witnessed the past and will tell their stories to the future.

*Hangar 1 circa 1944. Hangar 1 was constructed for cold weather testing, but became the hub of operations during World War II, with the Soviets and Americans sharing the space equally, divided by interior hangar bay doors.*

## COLD WEATHER TEST DETACHMENT



To prevail on the war front, the U.S. Army Air Forces needed aircraft that could operate reliably in all climatic conditions. Ladd Field was established to help meet this critical need.

When field testing began at Ladd, no one knew how well military planes and ground equipment would perform in real-world subzero conditions. Through the efforts of the Cold Weather Test Detachment (CWTDD) every aircraft in the Army Air Force inventory was able to fly at temperatures as low as forty degrees below zero by the end of the war.



*1941, testing Arctic clothing. The test detachment consulted prominent mountaineers as well as experienced Alaskans as they developed a variety of cold weather clothing and accessories.*

In addition to testing aircraft design, the CWTDD also tested for numerous other cold weather needs such as uniforms, rations, and survival equipment.

## LEND-LEASE

The U.S. government assisted Allied forces during the war by providing "Lend-Lease" deliveries of aircraft and war materials.



*American, Canadian, and Soviet officers from the Lend-Lease Program.*

From 1942 to 1945, the U.S. supplied the Soviet Union with 7,926 aircraft over the Alaska-Siberia, or ALSIB, route. Pilots from the Air Transport Command flew aircraft from Great Falls, Montana, through Canada and Alaska until they reached Ladd Field. At Ladd, Soviet pilots took over the ferrying operation, flying the aircraft to Nome, then across Siberia and on to the European war front.

By the end of the war, in addition to aircraft, Ladd Field also processed millions of pounds of tools, aircraft parts, explosives, medical supplies, and vehicles to the Soviet Union.

