

Gathering In The Chapel



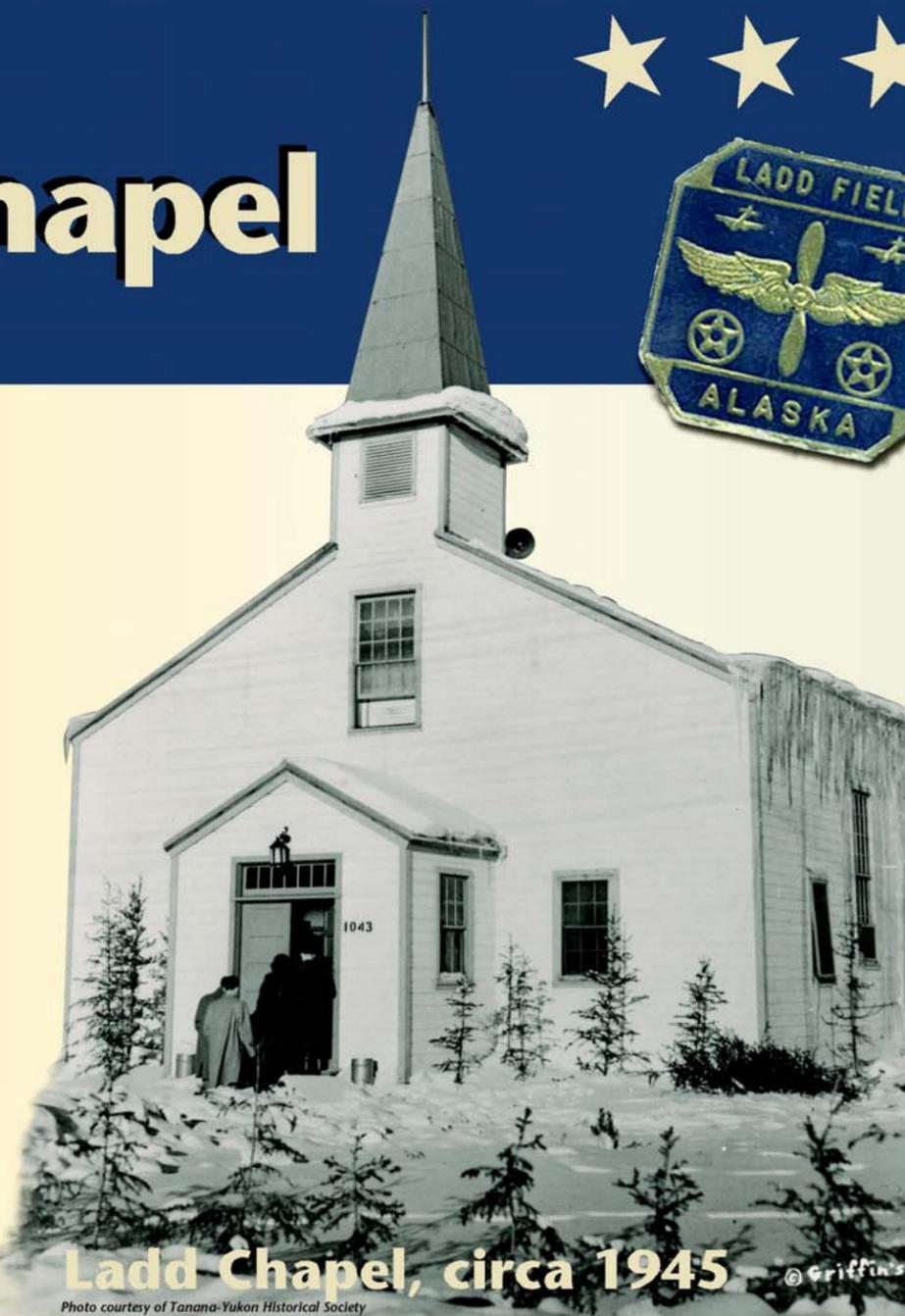
Photo courtesy of Tanana-Yukon Historical Society

In 1944 the US Army provided the community at Ladd Field with its first formal house of worship.

With an architectural style reminiscent of New England churches and seating capacity for 240 people, the chapel soon became a welcome place for the community to come together. From 1940 until the completion of the Ladd Chapel in early 1944, multi-denominational services were held in improvised quarters around the airbase. The population of Ladd Field quickly grew from 520 in 1941 to over 6,000 by the end of 1944. This compared to a Fairbanks population of 3,455 in 1940. By 1944, a new chapel was clearly needed. Though it ceased hosting religious services in 1978, a place of community, a sense of place, of permanence, the aura of days gone by lingers on.



Photo courtesy of Fairbanks Pioneer Memorial Museum collection



Ladd Chapel, circa 1945

Photo courtesy of Tanana-Yukon Historical Society

The 800 Series Buildings

Ladd Chapel is an example of the 800 series of prefabricated wooden buildings used during the war by the U.S. Army. The buildings were based on a modular design that changed only in overall length, in ten foot increments, and the number of stories. The chapel steeple is the most obvious characteristic that distinguishes it from the other buildings on the base.

The 800 series buildings had inside plumbing, electricity and forced air heat, no more and no less than the basic comforts of home in a highly adaptable design.

Wartime Mobilization

During the war years of 1942-1945, hundreds of new buildings went up on Ladd Field. Many were of standard wood frame construction while others were prefabricated Quonset and Pacific huts with distinctive arched sides and roofs.

The Army turned to prefabricated buildings because of the need for speed and economy. Nation-wide, housing and office space had to be created for millions of men and there was no time to waste. The wartime mobilization plan required standard-

dized plans, precut lumber and an assembly-line approach to construction. The buildings were designed to be temporary, and with some exceptions, such as the chapel, that was the case at Ladd Field.



Right: Detail from a panorama of the North Post photographed from the top of Hangar One. Visible are the many temporary quarters and offices erected just northeast of what is today the base headquarters building.

Rex and Lillian Wood, Private Collection



Pacific Huts with connecting woodframe building, Orderly Unit, Zone 100. May 1944. AAF photo, courtesy Russ Sackett.