

A Treasury of American History

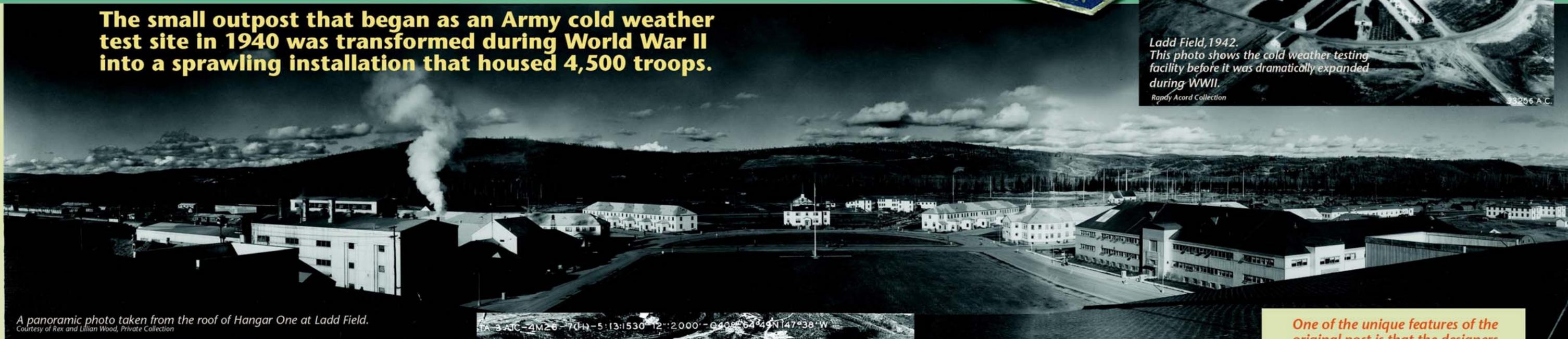


Ladd Field, 1942. This photo shows the cold weather testing facility before it was dramatically expanded during WWII.

Randy Acord Collection

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The small outpost that began as an Army cold weather test site in 1940 was transformed during World War II into a sprawling installation that housed 4,500 troops.

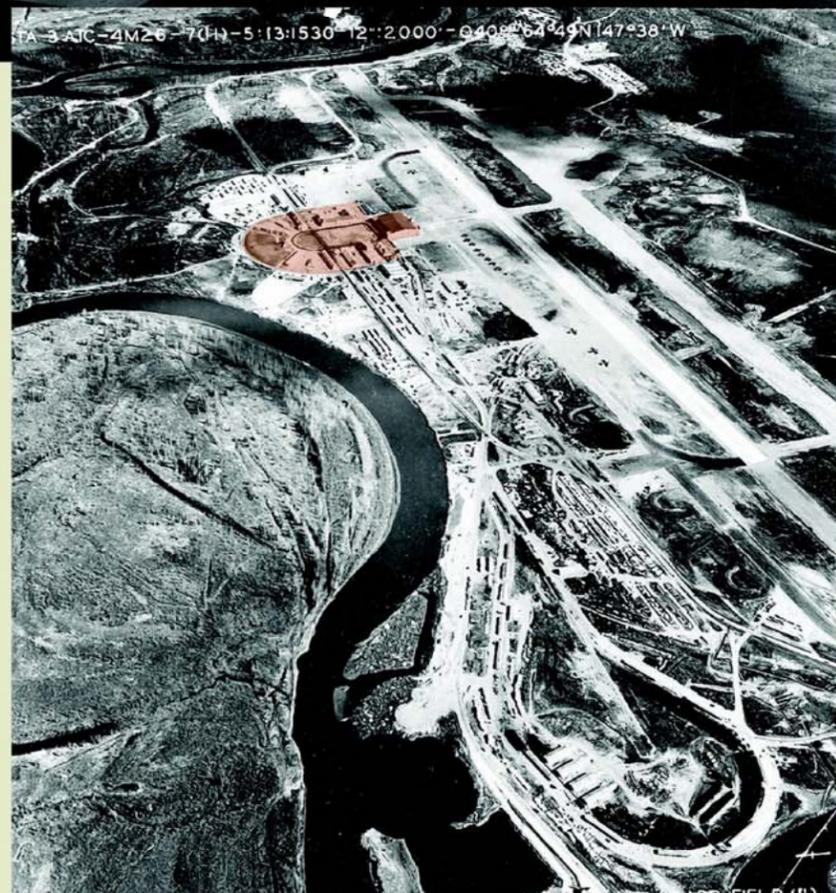


A panoramic photo taken from the roof of Hangar One at Ladd Field.

Courtesy of Rex and Lillian Wood, Private Collection

The buildings on the North Post are at the center of the National Historic Landmark that recognizes Ladd Field as one of the treasures of American history from the World War II era. These buildings were closely related to the two major missions of Ladd Field during World War II--cold weather testing and the Lend-Lease transfer of aircraft to the Soviet Union to help in the war against Germany.

The Air Transport Command, which was in essence a military air service, established the air route from Montana to Alaska. The ATC served as a vital link in the Aleutian war effort, transporting personnel and cargo from the United States to Alaska before shipment to the front.



The orderly design reflects the era in which the post was conceived, before the demands of war created an emergency situation in which appearances were expendable, and utility and speed were all that mattered. Considerable planning is evident in the design of the Post, an architectural framework visible to this day.



East elevation of combined Air Corps barracks, theater, PX and hospital, ca. 1943. AAF photo

Ladd Airbase as it was in 1944 after two years of immense and rapid growth. A second landing strip has been built as well as dozens of new offices, housing units and shop and maintenance facilities. The orange-colored overlay shows the horseshoe configuration of the initial design, now known as North Post. AAF photo

One of the unique features of the original post is that the designers had decided that large tunnels would be built to keep the utility lines from freezing. The tunnels were six feet wide and eight feet high, large enough so that they became underground hallways in the winter. Troops regularly used them during cold weather to get from one building to another along the horseshoe in comfort.



Quartermaster building and the adjacent power plant, ca. 1943. AAF photo

