

# World War II Heritage

Ladd Field began to take shape in 1939, when the surveying and clearing work began on a small cold weather test station, the first modern military installation approved by Congress for Alaska.



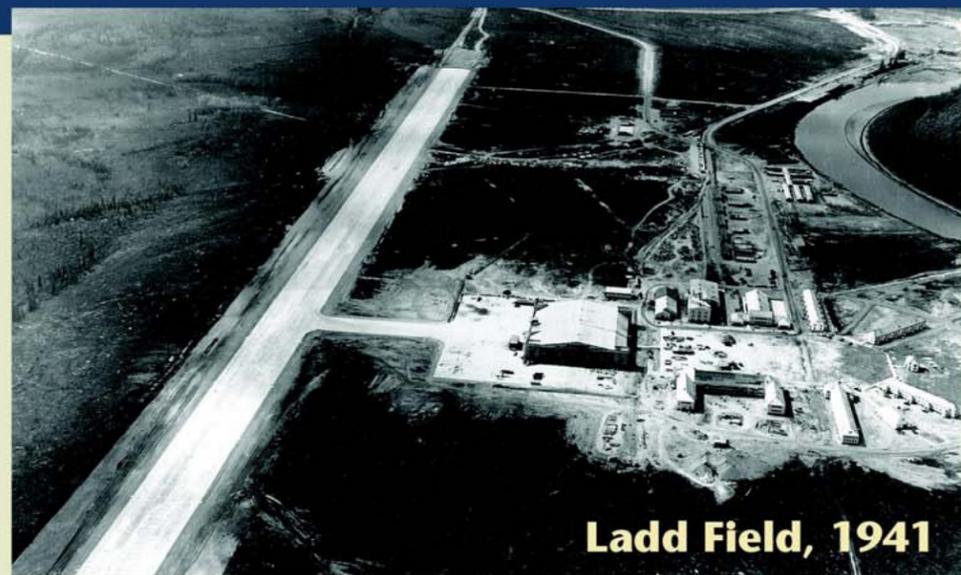
Writing in 1942, author Jean Potter praised the "extraordinary job" done by those who built Ladd Field and the other Alaska military installations of the era.

"In these days of all-out war activity, when bomber factories are taking shape almost overnight on the sites of apple orchards, the Alaskan fortification may seem like a routine achievement. It was much more than that. It was a frontier task, in a strange and little-known region of treacherous, fog-bound coasts, huge unexplored mountains, and permanently frozen inland plains--a no man's land with almost no population, offering almost no developed means of food or fuel supply."



The two central themes of World War II at Ladd Field are relevant for Fort Wainwright today and into the future. First, the demands of cold weather operations and the need to train and test in Arctic conditions remain. Second, the location of Interior Alaska on world air routes is as important today for the accomplishment of Army missions as it was for the Lend-Lease operations of World War II.

Cold weather testing remained an important element of Ladd Field operations from the outset of World War II, but another task soon emerged as the dominant mission. The United States and the Soviet Union agreed that Ladd Field would be the transfer point for aircraft provided to the Soviets to help fight the Germans.



**Ladd Field, 1941**



This plane manufactured in Hopedale, Texas, was painted with its patriotic logo before being flown to Fairbanks. Courtesy Pioneer Air Museum/Randy Acord.



Cold weather testing (CWT) was performed on all models of planes ferried up from the Lower 48 manufacturers. Courtesy Pioneer Air Museum/Randy Acord.



Left: Cold Weather Test Detachment fighter section crew poses with P-47D, Ladd Field, ca. 1944. Courtesy Pioneer Air Museum/Randy Acord.



**Ladd Field, 1945**

American crews flew the bombers, fighters and cargo planes to Fairbanks, where Russian pilots took over. For three years, the Soviet red star was a common sight in the skies over Fairbanks, painted on 7,926 U.S.-built aircraft that roared off into the western skies, winter and summer, bound for the war in Europe. Without question, this supply route benefited the Allied cause.

By the end of the war, Ladd Field had expanded to many times its original size. There were nearly 700 buildings and facilities that could house more than 4,500 personnel. A second runway paralleling the first increased landing and take-off capacity, and seven hangars dotted the field.



An American applies the Soviet red star to the belly of a plane early in the Lend-Lease program. Alaska Air Command, UAF 87-149-33