

By the start of 1941, the construction work was about 80 percent done, with the power plant already providing steam to heat several of the permanent buildings. The buildings were laid out in a horseshoe pattern on the north side of the runway, with the massive Hangar One dominating the scene next to the airfield. Along the horseshoe there were quarters for enlisted men and officers, a hospital, theater, power plant, and the commander's house.

The design and construction of this portion of the field occurred 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 original post, complying with an early pledge that the field would not be built in a haphazard manner.

The field was laid out in a symmetrical pattern with Hangar One anchoring the design, just to the north of the airfield. The commander's house was at the apex of the horseshoe, which became a parade ground. Buildings along the sides of the horseshoe include a power plant, office/warehouse, quarters for married officers, NCOs and bachelor officers. A U-shaped building on the east side served as a barracks, hospital, PX



North Post and runway, ca. 1942. Clockwise around parade ground from Hangar One on the left: Service club/bus station, power plant, quartermaster, 2 NCO quarters, commander's house, officers' quarters, garage, BOQ barracks/BX/hospital. Rail facilities, access road and warehousing are visible in upper right.

and theater. This building became headquarters for Ladd Air Force Base in about 1954 and retained that function after the base became Fort Wainwright in 1961.

The buildings featured modern utilities, no easy task at a time when frozen water and sewer lines were a fact of life in the Fairbanks area. The solution the Army came up with at Ladd Field was to enclose the electric, water, steam, sewer and phone lines in underground tunnels about six feet wide and eight feet high. The tunnels had connecting branches to all of the buildings along the quadrangle.

One of the most talked about features of Ladd Field was that these utility tunnels did double duty as hallways, making it possible to travel among the major buildings of the

original field without going outside. "In 40 below we walked in comfort," said enlisted man Bob Redding. The utilidor system still exists, providing a convenient way to maintain utility lines.



Interior of a barracks hut. Zenas Richards collection, University of Alaska Anchorage Archives.

The heat escaping from the utilidor had the added benefit of keeping the sidewalks above ground warm. That meant there was no snow to shovel and the sidewalks were clear for those who preferred walking outside.

During the war Ladd was regarded as the most comfortable and best-equipped base in Alaska, historian and retired military intelligence officer Otis Hays, Jr. has written, "with heated pedestrian tunnels linking the buildings and with Hangar One as its most visible landmark. The Soviets who later flew to and from the Fairbanks base called it a 'rest camp.'"

Hangar One was the most prominent architectural feature of the Ladd Field garrison. It dwarfed any other building ever attempted up to that time in Interior Alaska. The open floor of the hangar was 268 feet by 263 feet, nearly enough to hold a football field in either direction. The hangar had large two-story wings on the north and south sides. It had a concrete foundation with a wood truss roof topped by copper sheathing. The wings to the north and south side contained the headquarters staff, the post commander's staff and many other administrative and operational functions.

In addition to uniformed personnel, Ladd relied on a large civilian workforce. By mid-1944 there were at least 1,700 civilians on the base payroll and others working for contractors. Key civilians were recognized for their efforts in 1944 when more than 200 Ladd employees received the Asiatic-Pacific ribbon for civilian service.



Left to right; Commander's Quarters, WAC Barracks, Officers Family Quarters, BOQ (Bachelor Office Quarters). University of Alaska, Fairbanks, Cecil H. Kornegay Photograph Collection, 1946-1948 UAF-1999-204-112



East elevation of combined Air Corps Barracks, Theater, PX, Hospital. ca. 1943. AAF photo.



Quartermaster building and the adjacent power plant. AAF photo.



Ladd Field Fire House (and Rescue Unit), north side of Quartermaster building. University of Alaska, Fairbanks, Cecil H. Kornegay Photograph Collection, 1946-1948 UAF-1999-204-112



Hangar One at Ladd Field Cecil H. Kornegay Photograph Collection, 1946-1948. University of Alaska Fairbanks Archives, UAF-1999-0204-00045.

1929
U.S. stock market crashes, starting the Great Depression.

Carl "Ben" Eielson crashes off the Siberian coast in November, prompting international search. Army Air Corps had neither planes nor pilots to participate.

1931
Alaska governor suggests federal government build more Alaska airfields.

1934
Territorial delegate Anthony Dimond introduces first bill to build an air base and defend Alaska.

Then Lt. Col. Henry "Hap" Arnold leads a flight of 10 B-10s from Washington, D.C. to Alaska and back. Arnold recommends building of Fairbanks air base.

1935
Congress approves idea of Alaska base, but provides no money.

First Juneau to Fairbanks flight.

Will Rogers and Wiley Post die in crash on Alaska's Arctic Slope.

1936
Army party selects site for Fairbanks base just east of town along Chena River.

1937
President Franklin D. Roosevelt withdraws six square miles for Fairbanks base.

1938
Civil Aviation Administration begins five-year campaign to build civilian airfields. At the time there were established airports at Fairbanks, Juneau, Anchorage and Nome.

1939
\$4 million approved for cold weather test station.

August 1939
Surveyors and engineers start Ladd Field work.

September 1939
World War II begins when Germany invades Poland.

