

LADD FIELD, MAIL WAREHOUSE
(Building No. 1050)
(AHRIS No. FAI-455)
Marks Road, Fort Wainwright
Fairbanks
Fairbanks North Star Borough
Alaska

HABS AK-36-O
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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
ALASKA SUPPORT OFFICE
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
240 West 5th Avenue, Room 114
Anchorage, AK 99501

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

Building Name: Building #1050 (Mail Warehouse)

AHRS No.: FAI-455

HABS No.: AK-36-  

Location: Building #1050, Marks Road, Fort Wainwright, Fairbanks North Star Borough, Alaska.

Mapsheet: Fairbanks D2; SWNW Section 8, T1S, R1E.

Present Owner / Occupant: Department of the Army.

Original Use: Post Office / Mail Warehouse.

Present Use: Vacant.

Significance: Building #1050 is an original contributing element of Ladd Field National Historic Landmark, listed to the National Register of Historic Places in 1984 with a period of significance from 1938 to 1945.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1944-45. Construction of Building #1050 was begun in 1944 and completed in 1945 in the 100 Zone of Ladd Field. The official *Transfer of New Construction* is dated August 23, 1945.
2. Architect: Office of the Engineer, Ladd Field. Major Edward O. Tracy, Corps of Engineers, U. S. Army, was the Resident Engineer at Ladd Field during construction of Building #1050. The Constructing Quartermaster was Major William H. Hammond, Quartermaster Corps, U. S. Army. Brigadier General Benjamin B. Talley was in charge of all Corps of Engineers operations in the Alaska Territory during World War II.
3. Original and subsequent owners: Department of the Army, 1945-1947; Department of the Air Force, 1947-1961; Department of the Army, 1961-present.
4. Original and subsequent occupants: Building #1050 was constructed as a post office and mail warehouse for Ladd Field. With the establishment of Ladd Air Force Base in 1947 the property was transferred to the Department of the Air Force, which used it as the Base Post Office. In 1961 Building #1050 was transferred to the Department of the Army; it continued to serve as a post office until the mid-1970s.

Beginning on May 6, 1974, Building #1050 was leased to the Alyeska Pipeline Service Company for use as administration space. The lease was terminated in May 1980. On October 13, 1977, Army Community Services was granted the building for use as a community center. The building was open to a wide range of community activities on post, including the Boy Scouts and the Flying Club. Per a disposition dated March 24, 1983, the building was used to house the post Property Book

Office and provided administration space and records storage. In 1988 Fort Wainwright's Criminal Investigation Division (CID) took over the building. CID used the property until February 1998. The building is now vacant.

5. Builder, Contractor, Suppliers: Real Property records do not indicate the contractor or the original contract number.
6. Original plans and construction: Building #1050 was built from plans produced by the U.S. Engineer Office, Ladd Field. The original plans, numbered 6808-623 and dated September 16, 1943, are on file at Plans and Services, Directorate of Public Works, Fort Wainwright.
7. Alterations and additions: Prefinished ribbed steel roofing and siding have been installed over original materials. The two original arctic entryways have been removed from the left (north) elevation, leaving a single entry. Concrete steps have been removed from the original dock on the front (west) elevation. The entrance on the front elevation has been converted from a double-door to a single personnel door. Two window openings on the right (south) elevation have been enclosed. The interior has been extensively modified.

Following is a history of modifications appearing in the records of Real Property, Fort Wainwright:

- a. In 1953 a drinking fountain was removed per Contract No. C-128-53.
- b. In 1961 the interior of the building was modified at a cost of \$6,291.00 per Voucher No. 63-61. Modifications included the removal of a number of partitions to create a conference room and additional office space. During the same year a fire alarm system was installed per Voucher No. 106-61.
- c. In 1979 additional interior partitions were constructed for the Community Center at a cost of \$17,726.54.
- d. In 1980 the building was modified per Contract No. DACA85-79-C-0018. Work included: installing blown insulation above the ceiling; replacing existing windows with triple-pane storm windows; replacing exterior doors with insulated steel doors, frames, weatherstripping, hardware, and thresholds; and painting all exterior surfaces. Work was completed at a cost of \$9,175.00. Also in 1980, panic hardware was installed per Work Order No. 00014-9J.
- e. In 1990 isolated ground outlets for computers and copy machines were installed at a cost of \$1,1687.14.
- f. In 1992 new siding and a corrugated aluminum roof were installed.

B. Historical Context: Ladd Field was established in 1940 as a cold weather experimental airfield "to be operated as a proving ground for problems faced by the Air Corps should an emergency require action in the northern latitudes."¹ In April 1940 the Cold Weather Testing Detachment was activated at Ladd Field under the command of Major (later Brigadier General) Dale V. Gaffney. By late 1941 Ladd Field had a strength of 520 personnel. With America's entry into World War II, the mission of Ladd Field and its personnel expanded significantly as the Army prepared to respond to the Japanese threat. In

¹ Memorandum from the Chief of the Air Corps to the Assistant Secretary of War, dated October 13, 1938. RG 77, National Archives, Pacific Alaska Region, Anchorage, Alaska.

February 1942 the Eleventh Air Force, under the Alaska Defense Command, established an air depot at Ladd Field for aircraft supply and repair. By July 1942 the Sixth Air Depot and its attached units had a strength of nearly 900 personnel. In 1942 Ladd Field was chosen as the Alaska headquarters of the Alaska-Siberia (ALSIB) lend-lease ferrying route operated by the Air Transport Command. Planes bound for the Soviet Union were serviced and transferred from American to Russian aircrews at Ladd Field. For the balance of the war, the Air Transport Command had over 2,000 personnel stationed at Ladd Field. The volume of aircraft delivered to the Soviet Union over the ALSIB route exceeded that delivered over all other routes combined. By the end of the war, 7,926 aircraft bound for the Soviet Union had been processed through Ladd Field. The historical context of Ladd Field is discussed in greater detail in the Overview Report (HABS No. AK-36).

Building #1050 was originally designated Building #126 and served as a post office and mail warehouse toward the end of World War II. The building also housed offices of the Red Cross, the Chaplain, the Safety Engineer, and an ordnance section during the war.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. *General Statement:*

1. Architectural character: Building #1050 is representative of permanent military construction in Alaska during World War II. Design elements reflect constraints imposed by the fierce winters of the Alaska interior.
2. Condition of fabric: The exterior of Building #1050 is in good condition. Minor cracks are visible in the concrete stem wall, but these do not compromise the structural integrity of the property. However, the interior has been completely compromised. The property developed ventilation problems following installation of the new roof in 1992; the build up of condensation in the interior has adversely affected ceilings, walls, and the electrical system. In addition, the interior froze after a window was left open when the property was vacated. Drywall and interior finishes are crumbling, and light fixtures are falling.

B. *Description of Exterior:*

1. Overall dimensions: 50'-9-3/4" x 98'-9-3/4". Building #1050 is a rectangular building measuring 50'-9-3/4" x 98'-9-3/4" with approximately 4,900 square feet of floor space. There are three entries.
2. Foundations: Concrete footings five feet below grade.
3. Walls: The building has a concrete stem wall that rises approximately 3' from grade. The wall is 10-1/4" thick. Above the stem wall the exterior wall consists of prefinished ribbed steel siding over the original wall assembly. Wall sheathing consists of 15-pound building paper and 7/8" plywood sheathing over 2" x 6" studs. The walls contain 2" blanket insulation. The siding has a factory, sand-colored finish.
4. Structural systems, framing: The property is of permanent, wood-frame construction. Structural framing of the walls is 2" x 6" studs spaced at 24" on center with 6" x 16" wood columns at the trusses. Columns are secured to the foundation by anchor bolts. There are six trusses spaced at 16'

(the four center trusses) and 12'-6" (the two end trusses) on center. Trusses are constructed of 6" x 8" boards (top and bottom chords) and 6" x 6" boards with steel gusset plates at the connections. Trusses are spanned by three rows of 8" x 12" purlins spaced at 12'-6" on center. Purlins are flush with the top chords and connected to the chords by steel hangers. Resting atop this assembly are 2" x 8" rafters spaced at 16" on center.

5. Porches, stoops: There is a gable-roofed porch on the front (west) elevation at the main entrance the building. The porch is not an original feature and was constructed over the concrete loading dock. The original concrete steps on the northern and southern ends of the dock have been removed and replaced with a single set of steps on the western end. The porch roof was built as an extension of the original vent dormer. It is supported by two metal pipe posts. Metal handrails extend around the porch and down the steps.

The smaller gable-roofed, concrete-slab porch on the back (east) elevation is also not an original feature. The porch roof is supported by two wood posts.

6. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: There are three exterior personnel doors painted dark brown. The steel doors (and the door framing) are not original.
 - b. Windows and shutters: The building has twenty-three double-hung, sash windows (metal). Security mesh has been installed on the interior with openings to access window locks. Fenestration consists of four windows on the front and back elevations, seven windows on the left elevation, and eight windows on the right elevation. Windows are not original.
7. Roof: Building #1050 has a hipped roof with a 6:12 pitch. Roofing is prefinished ribbed steel with a dark brown, factory finish. The building originally had a copper roof. It is also unclear whether insulation and a vapor barrier were installed as part of the contract. Below the roofing, the assembly consists of 55-pound roofing paper and 7/8" sheathing over 2" x 8" rafters.

C. *Description of Interior:*

1. Floor plans: The floor plan of Building #1050 reflects a maze of partitions for office space. The building currently has twenty rooms. Interior partitions are constructed of drywall on 2" x 4" studs. Ceilings are constructed of 1/2" drywall nailed to 2" x 6" ceiling purlins spaced at 16" on center. Purlins are cross-cut by 2" x 4" boards spaced at 8'-0" on center. Ceilings have 3" blanket insulation.
2. *Flooring:* Flooring typically consists of vinyl tile over particle board. Three rooms have sheet vinyl flooring, and a number have carpet over particleboard. The flooring is not original and covers the original floor consisting of 1" finished hard-wood flooring, 15-pound building paper, 3/4" plywood, and 2" lean concrete mix aggregate over a 4" concrete slab. The original wooden flooring has been removed from the 9'-7" x 6'-8" foyer on the western end of the building; flooring in this area consists of vinyl tile over concrete.

3. *Wall and ceiling finish:* Walls are painted off-white or light brown with a dark brown trim. Ceilings have a plaster finish and are generally painted off-white.
 4. *Openings:*
 - a. Doorways and doors: The wood interior doors are not original.
 - b. Windows: A room formerly used Fort Wainwright's Criminal Investigation Division for interrogation has a two-way, mirror window.
 5. *Mechanical equipment:*
 - a. Heating: Building #1050 is connected to the North Post utilidor system; however, heat and hot water have been shut off. Heating utilities in the building consist of piping and baseboard radiators.
 - b. Ventilation: Large gabled vent dormers (an original feature) are located on the southern, eastern, and northern slopes of the roof. In addition, two vent dormers (installed during the roof remodeling) occur on the roof ridge. The porch on the front elevation has an aluminum vent louvre. Since installation of the aluminum roof, the building has had persistent ventilation problems that have contributed to the deterioration of the interior.
 - c. Lighting: The property has fluorescent light fixtures. Electrical service to the building has been turned off.
 - d. Plumbing: The women's bathroom has two toilets and a sink. The men's bathroom has two toilets, a urinal, and a sink. Water and sewage systems have been shut off.
- D. Site:** Building #1050 is in the North Post area of Fort Wainwright that contains the original Permanent Garrison. The building is located northwest of the horseshoe-shaped parade field off Marks Road between two housing units. A narrow parking area surrounds the property. North of the property is Building #1049 (formerly "NCO-12"), used for family housing. South of the property is another family housing unit, Building #1051 (formerly "NCO-14").

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. Architectural Drawings:** The following drawings were referenced:
1. Drawing No. 6808-623. September 3, 1943. Mail Warehouse. 6 sheets. U.S. Engineer Office, Ladd Field, Alaska. Location: Plans and Services, Directorate of Public Works, Fort Wainwright, Alaska.
 2. Drawing No. 6808-689. December 12, 1943. Organizational Chart, Ladd Field, Alaska. 1 sheet. Resident Engineer Office, Ladd Field, Alaska. Location: RG 77, National Archives, Pacific Alaska Region, Anchorage, Alaska.
 3. unnumbered. September 9, 1985. Floor Plan, 1050. Director of Facilities Engineering, 172th

Infantry Brigade, Fort Wainwright, Alaska. Location: Plans and Services, Directorate of Public Works, Fort Wainwright, Alaska.

B. Bibliography:

1. Primary sources:

Alaska Air Command Series III. Archives, University of Alaska, Anchorage. Anchorage, Alaska.

Alaska State Historic Preservation Office. 1997. Ladd Field, National Register of Historic Places Nomination. Anchorage, Alaska.

Lauer, B.C. 1944. *Official History, Ladd Field - Fairbanks, Alaska; Fall 1938 - 31 January 1944*. Manuscript on file at the Office of History, Alaska Air Command. Elmendorf Air Force Base, Alaska.

National Park Service. 1984. Ladd Field, National Register of Historic Places Nomination. Denver Service Center. Denver, Colorado.

Plans and Services Records. Directorate of Public Works. Fort Wainwright, Alaska.

Real Property Records. Directorate of Public Works. Fort Wainwright, Alaska.

Record Group 77, Office of the Chief of Engineers. National Archives, Pacific Alaska Region. Anchorage, Alaska.

2. Secondary sources:

Fine, Leonore and Jesse A. Remington. 1972. *The Corps of Engineers: Construction in the United States*. Office of the Chief of Military History, United States Army. Washington, D.C.

C. Supplemental Material:

1. Oral History:

Interview with Randall Acord, October 28, 1998. Sound recording on file at the Center for Ecological Management of Military Lands, Colorado State University. Fort Collins, Colorado.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This report was prepared as part of Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) documentation in support of the facilities reduction program of U.S. Army Alaska. The report adheres to the standards of the HABS Collection maintained by the National Park Service. Research was conducted on site during 1998 by Jeffrey Blythe, Gene Stout & Associates and the Center for Environmental Management of Military Lands, Colorado State University.