

WORLD WAR II IN ALASKA

A RESOURCE GUIDE
FOR
TEACHERS AND STUDENTS



Front Cover: Canadian and American troops make an amphibious landing on the Aleutian island of Kiska, August 15, 1943. (Archives and Manuscripts Department, University of Alaska Anchorage)

Rear Cover: Russian pilots participating in the Lend-Lease Program inspect an American fighter at Ladd Field near Fairbanks, circa 1944. (Alaska Historical Library, Juneau, Alaska)



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U.S. Department of the Interior
Anchorage, Alaska

Introduction

This resource guide is designed to aid students and teachers in researching Alaska's World War II history. Alaska's role as battlefield, lend-lease transfer station, and North Pacific stronghold was often overlooked by historians in the post-war decades, but in recent years awareness has been growing of Alaska's wartime past. This renewed interest generates exciting educational opportunities for students and teachers researching this chapter in the history of our state. Few people know that the only World War II battle fought on U.S. soil took place in Alaska or that Japanese forces occupied two Aleutian Islands for more than a year. Still fewer know of the Russian pilots who trained in Fairbanks, the workers who risked their lives building the Alaska Highway, or the Alaska Scouts who patrolled the Bering Sea coast. The lives of Alaskans were forever changed by the experience of war, and the history of that dramatic era is still being written.

This resource guide begins with a map of important World War II sites and a summary of Alaska's World War II experience. Included also is information about National Historic Landmarks related to World War II in Alaska. The selected bibliography that follows is divided into twelve parts to aid student researchers in selecting topics:

- War Comes to Alaska
- Aleutian Campaign
- Alaska Highway and Canol Pipeline
- Wartime Construction
- Native Defenders
- Warplanes and Seacraft
- Aleut Evacuation
- Canadian Participation
- Japanese-American Internment
- Lend-Lease Program
- Japanese Naval Power
- Branches and Units

This bibliography includes books, journals, and videotapes that can be found in Alaska's libraries or obtained through interlibrary loan. They are, for the most part, recent publications. The articles cited here were selected for their relevance to a specific theme and can be found (with some exceptions) in Alaskan periodicals. The bibliography is not meant to be comprehensive, but is instead intended as a gateway to further research.

Information regarding Alaska's libraries and museums follows, with descriptions of collections relevant to Alaska's World War II history and a list of on-line resources. The individual museums and libraries are organized by city. The resource guide concludes with a list of related Internet sites.

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Map adapted from Debra Dubac, *Alaska at War 1941-1945*

Summary of World War II in Alaska

Look for these themes in the bibliography:

War Comes to Alaska

became increasingly concerned about the possibility of attack from across the Pacific. Brigadier General William Mitchell urged Congress in 1935 to adopt a strong northern air defense, declaring, "I believe in the future he who holds Alaska will hold the world." In 1939 Congress established a Panama-Hawaii-Alaska defense triangle to protect America's vulnerable western coast. Alaska, the largest and least fortified of the three, soon saw the construction of naval bases at Sitka, Dutch Harbor, and Kodiak. When Japanese Zeros struck Pearl Harbor in 1941, military and civilian workers in Alaska were still scrambling to fortify the vast territory.

Japanese Naval Power

Six months after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the Japanese bombed Dutch Harbor on Unalaska Island and occupied the Aleutian islands of Attu and Kiska. Before the attack, U.S. codebreakers had established that the Japanese incursion into the Aleutians was merely a diversion intended to draw U.S. ships from their base on Midway Island. Even so, military strategists felt they could not risk leaving the Aleutians open as stepping stones for Japanese attacks on the United States mainland. In addition, the occupation of even these distant U.S. islands was a significant propaganda victory for the Japanese—the affront could not go unanswered.

Aleutian Campaign

Because planes departing from Kodiak and Dutch Harbor did not have the range to engage the Japanese at Attu and Kiska, U.S. forces built bases on other Aleutian islands which would allow them to strike farther west. Pilots and ground troops soon realized they were facing a second enemy, Mother Nature. The weather along the 1,200-mile island chain was some of the worst in the world, with dense fogs, violent seas, and fierce wind storms called williwaws. Aircraft lacking accurate navigational devices or consistent radio contact crashed into mountains, each other, the sea—simply finding the enemy was a life-and-death struggle. For soldiers in the Aleutians, contact with the enemy was infrequent and fleeting, but the weather was a perpetual adversary.

Native Defenders

The battles raging in the Aleutians and around the world changed the lives of ordinary Alaskans. Many Alaska Natives joined units of the Alaska Scouts and the Territorial Guard to patrol Alaska's coasts and lead reconnaissance missions in combat zones. Aleuts living on the island of Attu were taken prisoner by the Japanese while families from both the Aleutian and Pribilof Islands were evacuated by U.S. forces and spent the remainder of the war in derelict fishing and mining camps in Southeast

Aleut Evacuation

Alaska. And, under an emergency measure in effect in the western

Summary of World War II in Alaska

<p><i>Japanese Internment</i></p>	<p>United States, Alaskans of Japanese descent were shipped to internment camps in the Lower 48. The fear of sudden attack also led to censorship of the media, food rationing, and obligatory blackouts in coastal areas.</p>
<p><i>Lend-Lease Program</i></p>	<p>Wartime construction also transformed life in Alaska, bringing large numbers of workers and military personnel into Alaska's smallest communities as well as new means of transportation and communication. Beginning in 1942 U.S. aircraft were routed through Alaska and Siberia to Russia's battlefield with Germany as part of the Lend-Lease Program. A string of new airfields allowed American pilots to leapfrog through the Canadian and Alaskan wilderness to Fairbanks where Russian pilots were waiting to fly the planes westward. Until 1942 passengers and freight arrived in Alaska two ways—by boat and plane. Close cooperation</p>
<p><i>Canadian Participation</i></p>	<p>between Canada and the United States made possible the construction of the Alaska Canada Military Highway, a 1,420-mile wilderness highway which followed the path of lend-lease aircraft along the Alaska-Siberia air route. This Far North construction boom also included telephone lines, oil pipelines, railways, and roughly 300 military installations throughout Alaska.</p>
<p><i>Wartime Construction</i></p>	<p>On May 11, 1943 U.S. forces landed on Attu and began an uphill battle to retake the island. After nineteen days of fighting, the beleaguered Japanese soldiers launched a final banzai charge in an attempt to break through the American line. When the battle ended, only 29 prisoners remained of a Japanese force of roughly 2,600. Three months later the drama at Attu was matched by an equally dramatic anticlimax. Foul weather had delayed Allied attempts to retake Kiska, and when U.S. and Canadian forces finally landed on August 15, they were stunned to find that the Japanese were gone—they had been evacuated under cover of fog three weeks before. As the guns fell silent in the Aleutians, Army and Navy facilities began to demobilize and many were closed, though fighting in the Pacific and in Europe would continue for another two years.</p>
<p><i>Alaska's War Ends</i></p>	<p>The Secretary of the Interior, through the National Park Service, took steps to acknowledge the importance of Alaska's role in World War II history by designating eight sites as National Historic Landmarks. These sites include former Army and Navy bases, Aleutian battlefields, airfields, and an area on Kiska Island once occupied by the Japanese. Today eight former World War II military sites in Alaska are National Historic</p>
<p><i>National Landmarks</i></p>	<p></p>



Buildings burn following the Japanese attack on the fort at Dutch Harbor, June 3, 1942. A second, more damaging attack came the next day, though the P-40 Aleutian Tigers scrambled to intercept the enemy from a secret base on Umnak Island. (Archives and Manuscripts Department, University of Alaska Anchorage)



Aleut villagers face an uncertain future aboard a ship bound for Southeast Alaska. During the Aleutian Campaign, 881 Aleuts were evacuated from their homes and spent almost three years in makeshift “duration villages” without proper sanitation, heat, or medical attention. (Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association Inc.)

Alaska's World War II National Historic Landmarks

Landmarks (NHLs). NHL status recognizes these places as being among the nation's most treasured resources deemed worthy of preservation. The Secretary of the Interior, through the National Park Service, designated the following NHL sites to commemorate the significant events and human drama of Alaska's role in World War II:

- **Adak Army and Naval Operations Base, Adak Island**
- **Attu Battlefield and Bases, Attu Island**
- **Fort Glenn (Cape Field), Umnak Island**
- **Dutch Harbor Naval Base and Fort Mears, U.S. Army, Unalaska Island**
- **Japanese Occupation Site, Kiska Island**
- **Kodiak Naval Operating Base and Forts Greely and Abercrombie, Kodiak Island**
- **Ladd Field (Fort Wainwright), Fairbanks**
- **Sitka Naval Base and U.S. Army Coastal Defenses, Sitka**

Alaska's Aleutian World War II National Historic Area

Part of the National Park Service's role is to administer the NHL program. Available materials include a booklet entitled "WWII National Historic Landmarks: The Aleutian Campaign" and a lesson plan from the *Teaching with Historic Places* series entitled "Attu: North American Battleground of World War II." For copies of these materials contact National Register Historian Janet Clemens at (907) 257-2458 or by e-mail at janet_clemens@nps.gov. An interesting website about underwater archeological investigations of WWII resources in Kiska Harbor can be found at <http://www.nps.gov/scu/kis~1.htm>.

Though visiting a real historic place is one of the best ways to gain valuable insights, several of Alaska's WWII sites are difficult to access. One resource for learning more about events in the Aleutians during this period is the Aleutian WWII National Historic Area in Unalaska. This unique park, designated in 1996 as an affiliated area to the NPS, is owned by the Ounalashka Corporation, a Native village corporation. The Alaska Support Office of the National Park Service assists with the planning, development, and interpretation of the park as well as with educating the public about the history of the Aleuts and the role of the Aleutian Islands during the war. Information about this park includes an interpretive brochure, a planning document, and a website still under construction. Plans are also in place for a visitor center. For information contact Linda Cook, special assistant for Aleutian programs, at (907) 257-2658 or by e-mail at linda_cook@nps.gov.

War Comes to Alaska



Ulakta Head and Command Center, Aleutian World War II National Historic Area. (National Park Service, Anchorage Support Office Archives)

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U.S. troops carry wounded comrades during the battle to retake Attu, May 11-28, 1943. The battle claimed the lives of 549 Americans and left twice that number wounded. Approximately 2,600 Japanese soldiers died during the fighting or committed suicide before being captured. Only 29 were taken prisoner. (Archives and Manuscripts Department, University of Alaska Anchorage)

Local Resources: Museums and Libraries

ANCHORAGE:

Alaska Aviation Heritage Museum

4721 Aircraft Drive
Anchorage, AK 99502
Phone: (907) 248-5325
E-mail: aahm@alaska.net
Internet: <http://www.alaska.net/~aahm/>

The Alaska Aviation Heritage Museum contains displays of both Japanese and American WWII memorabilia from the Aleutian Campaign, including uniforms, weapons, flags, insignia, and historic photographs. The collection also includes a Catalina Flying Boat and the wreck of a P-40 Warhawk fighter, both used during the Aleutian Campaign.

Anchorage Museum of History and Art

121 West Seventh Avenue
Anchorage, AK 99501
Phone: (907) 343-4326
E-mail: museum@ci.anchorage.ak.us
Internet: <http://www.ci.anchorage.ak.us/Services/Departments/Culture/Museum/index.html>

The Alaska Gallery of the Anchorage Museum of History and Art is home to three displays portraying WWII Alaska. The first display includes the uniform and rifle of an Alaska Scout and details about the Alaskan Territorial Guard; the second is a diorama of aircraft used during the Aleutian Campaign; and the third is a vision of life inside a Quonset hut.

Consortium Library

University of Alaska Anchorage
3211 Providence Drive
Anchorage, AK 99508
Phone: (907) 786-1825
General Collections Internet: <http://www.uaa.alaska.edu/lib/>
Archives and Manuscripts Dept. Internet: <http://www.uaa.alaska.edu/lib/archives.html>

Consortium Library contains an impressive collection of books relating to Alaska's WWII history. Its Archives and Manuscripts Department frequently exhibits material drawn from extensive collections of photographs, personal records, and government documents relating to Alaska's war experiences.

National Archives and Records Administration Pacific Alaska Region

654 West Third Avenue
Anchorage, AK 99501-2145
Phone: (907) 271-2441
E-mail: archives@alaska.nara.gov
Internet: <http://www.nara.gov/regional/anchorag.html>

The National Archives contain vast collections of U.S. government records and material entrusted to the National Archives by various agencies. All aspects of Alaska's WWII experience are represented in military records, municipal records, census information, and historical photographs.

Z.J. Loussac Library

Anchorage Municipal Libraries
3600 Denali Street
Anchorage, AK 99503-6093
Phone: (907) 343-2975
Internet: <http://www.ci.anchorage.ak.us/Services/Departments/Culture/Library/index.html>

Loussac Library has a superb Alaska collection containing the majority of the books and articles cited in this bibliography. The library is also home to a microfiche collection of Alaska's newspapers. The Loussac Library is one of the best places to find material on Alaska during WWII, either in person or by interlibrary loan.

FAIRBANKS:

Pioneer Air Museum

Interior and Arctic Alaska Aeronautical Foundation
Location: Alaskaland Park
P.O. Box 70437
Fairbanks, Alaska 99707
Phone: (907) 451-0037
E-mail: akttt@imagi.net
Internet: <http://www.ptialaska.net/~akttt/aviat.html>

The Pioneer Air Museum has on display photographs, Russian uniforms, and other memorabilia related to the Lend-Lease Program, which ferried aircraft to the Soviet front via Alaska. The museum is also home to a single-engine Norseman plane used during the war for cargo delivery and search-and-rescue missions.

Elmer E. Rasmuson Library

University of Alaska Fairbanks
310 Tanana Drive
Fairbanks, AK 99775-6800
Phone: (907) 474-7224
Internet: <http://zorba.uafadm.alaska.edu/library>

Rasmuson Library includes an extensive Alaska collection which contains the majority of the works cited in this bibliography. In the same building are the archives of the Alaska & Polar Regions Department. This archive is one of the richest sources of historical materials concerning WWII in Alaska.

JUNEAU:

Alaska State Library

Location: 8th floor, State Office Building
P.O. Box 110571
Juneau, AK 99811-0571
Phone: (907) 465-2925
General Collection Internet: <http://www.eed.state.ak.us/lam/library.html>
Historical Collection Internet: <http://www.eed.state.ak.us/lam/library/hist/hist.html>

The Alaska State Library is an excellent place to begin searching for books and articles about WWII Alaska. In addition, the library's historical collection contains one-of-a-kind material and rare books on the same theme.

KODIAK:

Baranov Museum/Kodiak Historical Society

101 Marine Way
Kodiak, AK 99615
Phone: (907) 486-5920
Fax: (907) 486-3166

The Baranov Museum houses both historical photographs and memoirs relating to the Aleutian Campaign and the role of the Kodiak Naval Operating Base in particular.

UNALASKA:

Museum of the Aleutians

P.O. Box 648
Unalaska, AK 99685-0648
Phone: (907) 581-5150
E-mail: museum@arctic.net
Internet: <http://www.aleutians.org/>

The Museum of the Aleutians opened in 1999 and is still in the process of displaying its collections, which include weapons, historical photographs, uniforms, diaries, flightlogs, and Japanese flags from the Aleutian Campaign.

Online Resources: Museums and Libraries

Alaska Library Web Pages

<http://www.alaska.net/~akla/libweb.html>

This site offers a list of links to library web pages throughout the state and to SLED, which provides access to library catalogs and related resources. Alaska Library Web Pages is maintained by the Alaska Library Association.

Alaska Library Directory

<http://www.eed.state.ak.us/lam/library/dev/asl1d99.html>

This site provides a list of basic user information for every library in Alaska. The site is maintained by the Alaska State Library.

Museums and Historical Societies in Alaska

<http://www.eed.state.ak.us/lam/museum/list.html>

Here you will find a complete list of Alaska's museums and historical societies, each with user information and a description of facilities. The site is maintained by Alaska State Museums.

Statewide Library Electronic Doorway (SLED)

<http://sled.alaska.edu/>

SLED offers access to library catalogs and other resources of interest to Alaskans under the slogan "information resources for, about and by Alaskans."



Russian crews in Nome gather under the wing of a U.S. bomber destined for the Russian-German battlefield. The Lend-Lease Program trained Russian pilots in Fairbanks and sent more than 5000 aircraft from the contiguous United States, through Canada and Alaska, and westward through Siberia. (Christianson Collection, No. 79-29-199, Alaska & Polar Regions Department, UAF)



Black engineers build a trestle bridge during the construction of the Alaska Canada Military Highway. Black G.I.'s made up roughly forty percent of the estimated 11,500 Army troops who in just nine months completed a wilderness highway linking Alaska with the contiguous United States. (Anchorage Museum of History and Art)

Internet Sites

The following sites contain information about WWII in Alaska. An Internet search under “World War II” will yield many others which examine the war as a global phenomenon or focus on specific events during the war years.

A Note to Students: Internet sites can be very useful resources, but you should be cautious. You might think of the Internet as a bulletin board where anyone can post a notice – if you use online information, you must decide if your source is reliable. Check with your teacher if you are not sure, and check again for the best way to cite the material you decide to use.

Aleutian Islands: The U.S. Army Campaigns of World War II

<http://metalab.unc.edu/hyperwar/USA/C-Aleutians/USA-C-Aleutians.html>

This site contains a detailed U.S. Army article on the Aleutian Campaign. Included also are maps, illustrations, and a list of suggested reading.

Aleutians Campaign, June 1942-August 1943: United States Navy Combat Narrative

<http://metalab.unc.edu/hyperwar/USN/USN-CN-Aleutians.html>

During WWII the U.S. Naval Historical Center began producing combat narratives of specific naval campaigns. This once-restricted document is offered by the NHC not as an official history but as a view through the eyes of the Navy in 1943.

Fort Glenn Historic Site

<http://alaskanatural.com/military.html>

This site is maintained by the Bering Pacific Ranch, a beef ranch and tourist location on Umnak Island in the Aleutians. Included are WWII photographs and declassified files which provide an almost day-to-day account of military actions in the Aleutians and all of Alaska between 1941 and 1945.

Photos from the Aleutian Campaign

<http://eubank-web.com/Donald/Aleutian/index.html>

This site includes an impressive collection of WWII photographs taken in Adak and other Aleutian sites. The photos belonged to Dr. Will R. Eubank, an aviation medical examiner in the Army Air Corps. Together they help to tell the story of Eubank’s twelve month tour during the Aleutian Campaign.

World War II Combat in the Pacific

<http://www.wpafb.af.mil/museum/history/wwii/combatp.htm>

This site is maintained by the U.S. Air Force Museum on Wright-Patterson AFB, Dayton, Ohio. It offers a series of short narratives concerning all aspects of the War in the Pacific, including the Aleutian Campaign.

Recent Archeological Investigations of World War II Materials in Kiska Harbor, Aleutian Islands

<http://www.nps.gov/scru/kis~1.htm>

This article by Larry E. Murray and Daniel J. Leniban describes efforts to document underwater WWII remains in the Aleutian Islands in a combined effort by the National Park Service, U.S. Navy, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Sonar scans and diving crews were used to locate submerged ships, submarines, and other materials.

Sitka’s WWII Site

<http://mchunter1.tripod.com/sitkaww2.html>

This site, designed by a student named Mathew Hunter, is an excellent source for researching Sitka Naval Operating Base and Sitka’s military history. In addition to an historical narrative the site offers historic photographs, maps, and present-day snapshots of Sitka’s military installations.



This photograph of Japanese pilots was developed from film recovered at Attu Island following the island's recapture by U.S. forces in May 1943. The battle to reclaim Attu was one of the bloodiest of the War in the Pacific. (National Archives)



Canadian troops display a "Rising Sun" flag found on Kiska following the Japanese retreat from the island on July 28, 1943. The evacuation, which took place during stormy weather, went undetected by Allied forces who continue to bomb the island for nearly three weeks. On August 15, an invasion force of Canadian and American troops met only four weather and costly "friendly fire." (National Archives)



“Headquarters, camouflage Umnak” by Ogden Pleissner. (Anchorage Museum of History and Art) (Anchorage

