



NHL Executive Summary



Name of Property: Ladd Field NHL (update)

City, State: Fairbanks, Alaska

Period of Significance: 1939-1945

NHL Criteria: 1

NHL Criteria Exceptions: 2

NHL Theme:

- VI. Expanding Science and Technology
 - 1. Experimentation and Invention
 - 2. Technological Applications
- VII. Changing Role of the United States in the World Community
 - 1. International Relations

Previous Recognition: 1985 National Historic Landmark designation

National Historic Contexts:

World War II in the Pacific NHL Theme Study, 1984

C. Alaska and the Aleutians

American Aviation Heritage: Identifying and Evaluating Nationally Significant Properties in U.S. Aviation History, 2011

12. Military Aviation & World War II, 1939-1945: Research and Development



NHL Significance:

- Ladd Field is nationally significant as the Alaskan headquarters for the Alaska-Siberia (ALSIB) Lend-Lease route and for its role in the development of cold weather aviation technology. The military post played a supporting role in the Aleutian Campaign of World War II in the Pacific. This update to the NHL nomination provides additional information and context on Ladd Field's significance in cold weather aviation testing and the Soviet Lend-Lease program.
- Construction of Ladd Field began in August 1939 and the base went into operation in September 1940, while construction continued. Located near Fairbanks in central Alaska, Ladd Field was the first U.S. Army airfield in Alaska and part of the defense build-up for World War II in the territory.
- The period of significance begins in 1939 when construction of the Cold Weather Test Station began and ends in 1945 with the end of World War II. During the war, operations and facilities were expanded at Ladd Field to support the Soviet Lend-Lease program, playing a crucial role as the transfer point of nearly 8,000 aircraft from the United States to the Soviet Union for use in the eastern front of the war in Europe. The Lend-Lease program to the Soviet Union played a significant role in maintaining the alliance with the Soviet Union and contributed to the Allied victory in Europe.
- After World War II most of the airfields along the ALSIB route were abandoned or turned over to local governments. Of the primary airfields, three were in the United States. These were Great Falls Army Airbase, Gore Army Airfield (also in Great Falls), and Ladd Field. Two additional bases in Alaska, Galena Airport in Galena and Marks Army Airfield in Nome, were located west of Ladd Field as refueling and servicing stops before Soviet pilots left Alaska, and airfields at Northway, Tanacross, and Big Delta provided support between the Canadian border and Ladd Field. Ladd Field NHL is the only airfield along the route that retains the integrity of a World War II airfield associated with the Soviet Lend-Lease program.

Integrity:

- As a historic district, Ladd Field retains a high degree of integrity. The runways and the permanent garrison, constructed as the Cold Weather Test Station and arranged in a Beaux Arts plan, remain intact. Continued use has meant that the buildings have been well maintained with replacement in-kind of historic materials when required. The open spaces of the airfield and Beaux Arts horseshoe layout of the original housing and administrative area remain with an exceptional degree of integrity.
- A few changes have occurred within the district since the historic period. Infill construction has been kept to a minimum with only six new buildings constructed within the updated NHL boundary. All these buildings are low-profile buildings and do not detract from nearby contributing buildings.
- Seven World War II buildings, identified as contributing in the original nomination, have been lost. These include two Kodiak T-hangars, three Birchwood hangars, the power plant, and a community center. Three buildings, originally misidentified as contributing, have been removed from the nomination. These include two Cold War-era double hangars and an aircraft maintenance shop.
- Loss of contributing buildings and construction of noncontributing buildings along the southern boundary of the NHL has resulted in the southern boundary being shifted northward in this update to the NHL nomination. The northern boundary is adjusted as well to remove areas where contributing buildings have been demolished or identified as constructed after World War II, and to include contributing resources that were excluded from the 1985 NHL boundary.



Owner of Property: U.S. Army

Acreage of Property: 528 Acres

Origins of Nomination:

The U.S. Army initiated a re-evaluation and update of the Ladd Field NHL nomination.

Potential for Positive Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program:

High. Revision of NHL nomination is supported by owners and interested parties.

Potential for Negative Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program:

None is known.

Public Comments Favoring Designation (received as of December 21, 2023):

- Elizabeth A. Cook, Cultural Resource Manager/Native Liaison, U.S. Army Garrison Alaska

Landmarks Committee Comments: None.

Landmarks Committee Recommendation:

The Committee recommends that the National Park System Advisory Board recommend to the Secretary of the Interior the acceptance of the NHL updated documentation for Ladd Field National Historic Landmark in Fairbanks, Alaska.

Advisory Board Recommendation: