NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
MULTIPLE PROPERTY DOCUMENTATION FORM

This form is used for documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form (National Register Bulletin 16B). Complete each item by entering the requested information. For additional space, use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

X _____ New Submission _____ Amended Submission

A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

Military Development and Infrastructure, Glacier Bay Vicinity

B. Associated Historic Contexts

(Name each associated historic context, identifying theme, geographical area, and chronological period for each.)

1. Second World War Facilities in the Glacier Bay Region, 1939-1946

C. Form Prepared by

name/title Rick S. Kurtz, Historian

street & number 2525 Gambell Street telephone 907/257-2542

city or town Anchorage state AK zip code 99503

D. Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature and title of certifying official

Date

I hereby certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.
The year 1939 stands out as a time of change in the Glacier Bay region. On April 18, President Roosevelt signed an executive order expanding the boundaries of Glacier Bay National Monument to incorporate Excursion Inlet, Gustavus, and the Fairweather Coast. This made the 2.29 million acre monument the second largest park unit in the nation—after Alaska's Katmai National Monument. The nation was creeping out of the economic depression which had gripped it throughout the 1930s. Returning prosperity, coupled with growing fears over travel abroad, signalled a renewed interest in visiting national parks. Finally, in Europe and Asia nations were either preparing for, or had already become embroiled in the steadily escalating onslaught which would become the Second World War. The repercussions were soon felt at Glacier Bay.

Typically, the construction of a large airfield within the confines of a national park unit would seem radically out of character. However, the circumstances unfolding in 1939 and 1940 were anything but ordinary. In Europe, Adolf Hitler's Germany was gobbling up neighbors and seemed bent upon precipitating a major confrontation with France and England. Across the Pacific, Japan's military-led government was carving out spheres of influence in Asia. With growing unease the American military began to assess the situation. They acknowledged that most of coastal Alaska lay vulnerable to enemy attack and possible occupation. A decision was made to initiate efforts to make Alaska more defensible. Primary among these efforts was the construction of airfields, under the auspices of the Civil Aeronautics Board, which could serve civilian and, if need be, military purposes.

In 1938 Congress passed the Civil Aeronautics Act. The act made possible the establishment of airports and radio range stations in Alaska. Many of the proposed sites targeted military needs. However, Alaska's economic boosters were also aware of the potential civilian benefits derived from more airfields in Alaska. In particular, boosters focused on Alaska's strategically advantageous position along the so called "Great Circle Route" to the Orient. From the U.S. west coast, the shortest route to Japan and Southeast Asia was along an arc which passed directly through Southeast Alaska. Airplanes would be required to stop and refuel in
Alaska on a regularly scheduled basis. This could prove a boon to the tourist industry, augmenting, and providing feeder routes to locations which steamships could not reach.

The ramifications of the construction program were soon felt at Glacier Bay. An army engineering report had identified the flat 25 square mile tract of tidal lands surrounding Gustavus as the "best location for an air base between Juneau and Nome." The implications of this report were not lost on the Gustavus community or the NPS. Several of the homesteaders had given up hope of continuing to live at Gustavus, after the monument's 1939 boundary expansion. The likelihood of an airfield presented new economic opportunities catering to the traveling public. For others the prospect of an airfield provided a chance to profitably dispose of their land.

NPS Director Newton B. Drury went on record saying the park service was opposed to the policy of constructing airfields in national park units. However, the Director said the NPS would not obstruct the construction of an airfield at Gustavus. Drury stressed that the park service was cooperating in the spirit of national defense, and recognized that Gustavus was the only suitable site in the region for a heavy bomber base.

Both Drury and Southeast Alaska boosters anticipated that the Gustavus airfield would become a major hub for commercial aircraft traveling between the Orient and the lower 48 states. It could likewise serve as a transfer hub for local commercial lines. Drury feared the possibility of bad weather grounding flights at Gustavus for days at a time. He stressed the need for the government to construct adequate facilities to house and feed stranded passengers.

In late May and June of 1940 a series of events occurred which helped to assure the future of the Gustavus airfield. On May 27, Representative Jennings Randolph (W.Va.) spoke to the opening session of the National Aviation Forum. Randolph stressed the need for developing an air transport network in Alaska to meet civilian transportation and cargo needs. The establishment of airfields would likewise serve as a vital link in the nation's defense network. Following Randolph's speech was a June 5 announcement saying that the Civil Aeronautics Authority (CAA) had approved the establishment of an air route between Juneau and Seattle. It was anticipated that Gustavus would serve as an alternate landing site during those frequent occurrences when Juneau was weathered in. Coinciding with the CAA's announcement was a statement from Governor Ernest Gruening saying that the construction of

---

2DOI, NPS, Glacier Bay Expedition 1939, by Earl A. Trager (Mount McKinley NP: NPS, 1939), 8.
3Ibid., 16.
4Associated Press, "Gustavus Point Field May be on Orient Run," Anchorage Daily Times, 30 April 1941, University of Alaska Anchorage; Newton B. Drury memo for the Director's Office and all Field Offices, 27 May 1946, National Archives, NPS Central Classified File, RG 79, Box 2226, GLBA File 201.
5Ibid.
Alaska airfields was now assured. The military would provide funding to construct the new airfields as well as upgrade several existing sites.⁶

Much of the impetus for making this funding a reality had resulted from the repeated prodding of General Simon B. Buckner, the officer in charge of Alaska's military defense. The result was that by the fall of 1941 a string of CAA airfields, at Gustavus and other locations, were nearing completion. The Gustavus Point Field consisted of two paved and lit runways—one 7,500 feet long, the other one mile long. Maintenance shops, housing facilities, radio control towers, and a service road were constructed to support the operation. The airfield never saw the heavy bomber use as anticipated when first constructed. Flying heavy bombers from Gustavus to the 1942-1943 military confrontation with Japan in the weather-plagued Aleutian Islands was not practical. The field, however, was used for a variety of military support roles.⁷

As the military theater moved across the Pacific, the Gustavus Point Field came under increasing civilian use. By 1944 Pan American was already utilizing the strip and was pursuing the idea of building a hotel to accommodate customers. The park service and local residents were likewise considering the future use of the airfield. Once the war ended, the airfield and its associated structures would come under park service management. There was an anticipation that Gustavus would become Southeast Alaska’s major airport, eclipsing the weather-plagued Juneau facility.⁸ These possibilities placed the park service in a dilemma. More flights meant the possibility of more tourists. This fit well with NPS efforts to increase visitor numbers. Increased use, however, would also mean more congestion, and more infrastructure, all to the detriment of the wilderness experience available at Glacier Bay. The presence of the airfield at Gustavus, it was feared, would serve as a catalyst for the establishment of airfields inside other remote park units. The issue was resolved when the park service relinquished the airfield to the CAA after the war.

THE EXCURSION INLET MARINE TERMINAL

In August 1942 the U.S. Army embarked upon a massive but highly secretive construction project on the east shore of Excursion Inlet. Before it was over the facility, known as the Alaska Barge Terminal, would employ 3,000 workers and cost nearly $18 million.⁹ The impetus for constructing the barge terminal was two-fold. On the morning of June 3, 1942 a Japanese fleet steaming off the coast of Southwest Alaska launched an attack upon the military base at Dutch Harbor. The action was part of a diversionary feint designed to lure the American Pacific fleet away from Midway Island, Japan’s primary objective. Having received and deciphered

---

⁶"Governor Says Alaska Defense is now assured," The Daily Alaska Empire, 5 June 1940, 1, 3, University of Alaska Anchorage; "CAA Grants Authority to PAA for Air Route from Seattle to Juneau," The Daily Alaska Empire, 7 June 1940, University of Alaska Anchorage; Patricia S. Jernburg, "Alaska Air Transport Gets Boost," The Daily Alaska Empire, 11 June 1940, University of Alaska Anchorage.


⁸Tomlinson memo.

Japanese radio traffic concerning the operation, U.S. Pacific Commander Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, chose to concentrate his forces at Midway. The ensuing battle was a Japanese defeat and proved to be a major turning point in the war.\textsuperscript{10} To cover up the defeat the Japanese military embarked upon an elaborate propaganda campaign. They asserted that the Aleutian Islands and not Midway had been their primary objective. In order to fully sell the coverup, the Japanese military felt it imperative to occupy the Aleutians.\textsuperscript{11} The original Japanese plan had called for temporary occupation of the Aleutian chain as an additional diversionary device. It was this change in strategy which ultimately led to the construction of a supply terminal at Excursion Inlet.

Lieutenant General John DeWitt, head of the U.S. Army Western Defense Command in San Francisco, immediately set about the task of ousting the Japanese from the occupied Aleutian islands of Kiska and Attu. The Japanese takeover was viewed as blow to American morale and had to be dealt with quickly and effectively. To support the retaking of the islands, DeWitt embarked upon a plan for a major amphibious assault. Such a plan, to be successfully implemented, would require extensive amounts of supplies. The supplies needed to support the operation would have to be transported north on ships. Unfortunately, oceangoing cargo ships were in critically short supply as were military escort vessels. To overcome these impediments, the military devised a plan to ship supplies north on barges. The barges would sail up the Inside Passage from Seattle and Prince Rupert, British Columbia. The numerous offshore islands would help screen the barges from enemy attack and provide protection against seasonal storms. Upon reaching Southeast Alaska, the cargo would be conveyed to ocean going vessels to complete the final leg of the trip across the turbulent Gulf of Alaska.\textsuperscript{12}

The only problem which still remained was the construction of an adequate deep water staging facility in Southeast Alaska. Under ordinary circumstances Juneau would have been the obvious choice. However, military strategists perceived Juneau as being too vulnerable to enemy attack. A March 1942 army engineering report suggested Cape Spencer (lying on the outer Fairweather Coast) as a suitable terminal site. The site was rejected as being open to storms emanating from the Gulf of Alaska. Excursion Inlet, with its well protected deep water harbor, its abundance of timber, and closeness to the Gustavus Point Field seemed a logical alternative. Thus on August 12, military personnel began sawing down trees at Excursion Inlet for what was to be a massive and secretly built barge terminal.\textsuperscript{13}

The park service was largely kept in the dark about the project. Superintendent Frank Been heard of the ongoing construction from U.S. Forest Service personnel during a visit to Juneau. Upon further inquiry, Been was told that the project would be immense requiring some 20,000 to 30,000 log pilings cut from Excursion Inlet, most of which lay within the monument. The park service would need to temporarily transfer some land in the inlet to the War Department. The

\textsuperscript{11}Ibid., 102.
\textsuperscript{12}"German Prisoners," 16, 18.
\textsuperscript{13}Ibid., 18; Donald Guimary, Salmon Canneries in Southeast Alaska: A Documentation of Selected Historic Salmon Canneries and Cannery Sites (Anchorage: 1983), 7; Lyman Woodman, 700 German Prisoners of War in Alaska (GLBA: NPS), 1.
NPS saw little chance of mitigating these potential threats to the monument, and resigned itself to accepting such urgent military necessities.\textsuperscript{14}

Terminal construction was completed in November 1943. The base covered some 638 acres of land on the inlet's east side just south of the monument boundary. Over 800 buildings were erected including warehouses, cold storage buildings, a 200 bed hospital, and quarters for nearly 4,000 officers and enlisted troops. A fresh water stream was diverted to supply a reservoir blasted from the nearby mountain. In total, nearly a million cubic yards of rock were excavated to provide fill material and facility space. Facilities included over 500,000 square feet of open storage area, a 1.5 million gallon tank farm, and three docks of 1,000 feet each. The port could accommodate nine ships, six barges, two ammunition ships, and two tankers.\textsuperscript{15}

A sawmill and equipment shed were constructed at the head of the inlet to provide the project with a ready supply of timber. Tractors hauled the timber down to the water for transport to the construction site. On the west side of the inlet the military constructed a powder magazine. The army also established a salmon fish camp--consisting of a smokehouse and tent platforms--on a small stream west of the inlet on Icy Strait. At one point the military contemplated the construction of a road from Gustavus to Excursion Inlet as well as a road from Excursion Inlet to the newly developed Alaska Highway. Neither road was built. The military, however, did construct about 20 miles of roadway at Excursion Inlet.\textsuperscript{16}

The Alaska Barge Terminal served for only a few months in the capacity intended. By the time the facility was completed in November 1943, Kiska and Attu had been retaken and the main theater of operations had moved farther west. Any potential Japanese shipping threats had largely vanished and there was once again an abundance of cargo ships. During its short lifespan, some 2,000 black troops from the 483rd Port Battalion were shipped in to operate the facility.\textsuperscript{17} This use of black troops at Excursion Inlet--and construction of the Alaska Highway--in "non-traditional roles" was a significant step towards the eventual integration of the military services. Black troops were generally limited to performing labor intensive non-mechanized assignments at stateside locations. These stipulations were based upon misperceptions about the Black soldier's mechanical aptitude as well as his ability to survive northern climatic conditions.

The military decided to mothball the terminal in 1944, leaving only a small caretaker crew of a few hundred troops to maintain the facility. Word of the terminal's construction and apparent abandonment finally reached the press in 1945. On March 7 the San Francisco News carried a story entitled "Army Unveils White Elephant." The story described how the military, under a veil of secrecy, had constructed a $17.3 million terminal only to abandon it shortly after

\textsuperscript{14}Frank T. Been memo to O.A. Tomlinson of 8 September 1942, NAPSR, RG 79, Central Classified Files, RG 79, Box 90, GLBA File; O.A. Tomlinson memo to Newton B. Drury of 9 September 1942, NAPSR, RG 79, Central Classified Files, General Records, Box 90, GLBA File.

\textsuperscript{15}"German Prisoners," 18; 700 Prisoners, 2; Guimary, 7.


\textsuperscript{17}700 Prisoners, 2, 8.
completion. Constructed on a "cost plus fixed fee basis," the article called the terminal an extravagant white elephant foisted upon the American taxpayer. With no apparent post-war value, the military decided to tear the facility down rather than bring further embarrassment upon itself. The military estimated that nearly 12 million board feet of lumber could be salvaged plus another $3 million worth of other critical supplies. 

To save money, the army decided to enlist prisoners of war (POWs) for the task of dismantling the terminal. In 1945 nearly 400,000 German POWs were being held in facilities throughout the country. Many of them were put to work—in accordance with the Geneva Convention—performing general labor tasks to augment the civilian labor shortage. In June 1945, 700 German POWs were shipped north to Excursion Inlet to dismantle the barge terminal. These were the only POWs to be interned in Alaska. Many of these Germans had served under General Rommel in North Africa and been POWs since 1943. Some minimal modifications were made to the terminal to accommodate the POWs' arrival. A huge repair shop was converted to barracks. Facilities were also made available for use as a barber shop, clothing shop, and post exchange. A large fence topped with barbed wire encircled the compound. The primary barrier against escape, however, was the terminal's remote location. Prisoners were shown on a map where they were and warned about the ferocious bears and unfriendly Natives living in the area. These deterrents proved quite satisfactory. Attempted escapes were only made on two occasions and in both cases the prisoners returned within a few days, glad to be free from the dense mountainous forests and unrelenting mosquitos.

The demolition was completed in November. By January 1946 the POWs had been shipped stateside for repatriation following the war's end. The POWs had salvaged thirteen million board feet of lumber plus some 10,000 tons of building materials and equipment. Some of this material went to rebuilding the nearby village of Hoonah. In June of 1944 a fire had destroyed nearly the entire village. Local residents were furnished with temporary living quarters at the marine terminal. At one point the military offered to give the Hoonah Tlingit the entire terminal as a new village site. The villagers declined the offer but did accept an offer from the War Housing Authority to help rebuild the village. In total, some 80 houses were constructed at Hoonah for a cost of $3,500 each.

Not all of the Excursion Inlet terminal facilities were destroyed. On November 29, 1946, the government announced a sale of the remaining structures which included 15 buildings, the reservoir, dock, and a large cold storage warehouse. The cold storage warehouse and associated outbuildings were eventually purchased for use as a salmon processing plant to replace a nearby cannery which had burned down. This facility still remains in operation today. The officers' quarters was purchased and remodeled for use as a hunting and fishing lodge. Other infrastructure remnants left behind included the sawmill, powder magazine, and fish camp.

F. Associated Property Types (Provide description, significance, and registration requirements.)

Second World War Facilities in the Glacier Bay Region, 1939-1946

Name of Property Type: Second World War Properties

Description: Second World War properties located in the Glacier Bay vicinity are associated with the larger Alaska mobilization. The properties incorporate a combination of structures

---

18"German Prisoners," 20.

19"German Prisoners," 20; 700 Germans, 5-6.

20Alaska History Class, Hoonah History (Hoonah, Alaska: Hoonah Public School, 1973), 52; 700 Germans, 9; Ackerman, 2-3.
and alterations to the physical landscape. Among the structures are CAA maintenance shops, housing facilities, and radio control tower remnants at Gustavus Point Airfield. Structures in the Excursion Inlet area include the marine barge facility, a sawmill and equipment shed, a powder magazine, and a fish camp. Both locally available materials and a large assortment of materials shipped in from Outside were utilized in the construction of these facilities. Local materials were primarily limited to wood, stone, and fill. Imported materials included concrete, steel, lumber, and a variety of other building products not available locally. Physical landscape alterations include the airfield runway and service road; a reservoir, road network, storage yards, and timber cutover areas at Excursion Inlet.

**Significance:** Second World War properties in the Glacier Bay vicinity are significant under Criterion A in the areas of military and transportation. The nominated properties are significant at the local and state levels.

With its location between the west coast and Japan, along the Great Circle Route, Alaska was well positioned to serve as a transportation hub for civilian, and should the need arise, military needs. In light of growing threats from Japan and Germany, the U.S. military in cooperation with the CAA exploited this geographic advantage through the construction of a series of airfields in the early 1940s. With the onset of America’s entry into the war, following the attack on Pearl Harbor, the government accelerated its efforts in Alaska. One obvious manifestation of these efforts in Southeast Alaska was the construction of a CAA airfield at Gustavus.

The strategic value of the Glacier Bay area was heightened following Japan’s 1942 Aleutian Islands occupation. The isolated natural harbor at Excursion Inlet suited military needs for a marine barge terminal. It was anticipated that the facility would serve in the retaking of the Aleutians and possibly as a staging point for a northern invasion route of the Japanese homeland should it become necessary. Augmenting this is the noteworthy point that the marine terminal represented a diversification of roles for Black troops. The placement of Black troops at the marine facility helped break stereotypes regarding the black soldier's ability to withstand cold climates. Likewise, their assumption of jobs requiring the use of mechanized equipment helped to break down commonly held beliefs about mechanical aptitude. Finally, there is the recognition that the placement of German POWs at Excursion Inlet in 1945 represented the only incident of POW incarceration in the territory.

**Registration Requirements:** Second World War properties are historically significant. Most of the properties have suffered the effects of weathering and, in some cases, partial dismantling. These properties may sustain some alteration and still be eligible for the National Register if it can be shown that the properties contributed to military and transportation development in Alaska during the Second World War era.

To be considered eligible, a property must maintain integrity of location and setting. All manifestations associated with the Second World War are considered significant so long as they remain in their original locations. The immediate physical setting must maintain the character of place which was evident when these properties were developed. This applies to naturally occurring as well as human made alterations to the landscape. Properties must remain sufficiently intact to convey the feeling and association with the historic context. This should hold true so long as the aspects of location and setting remain.

**Historic Properties:** These sites should be considered in the future for nomination under Context One.

- a. Excursion Inlet
  - Military Sawmill
  - Sawmill Equipment Shed
  - Powder Magazine
  - Military Road Network

- b. Icy Strait
  - Salmon Fish Camp
G. Geographical Data

This multiple property nomination encompasses the area which lies within the current boundaries of Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve.

H. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods (Discuss the methods used in developing the multiple property listing.)

The multiple property listing for military development and infrastructure in the Glacier Bay vicinity is based upon a 1994 National Park Service field investigation of Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve consisting of the following team members: Rick S. Kurtz, Historian; Timothy Cochrane and Dottie Theodoratus, Cultural Anthropologists; Mary Beth Moss, Resources Manager; Hank Lenfter, Biological Technician; and Jennifer Sepez, Intern. The investigation required the team to utilize both air and water transport to gain access to various survey sites. Historic properties were marked on USGS topographical maps for future reference. Properties were recorded through the use of field notes, drawings, and extensive photographs. Research in support of the field investigation included the investigation of park service records; oral histories; and local, regional, and national archives and libraries.

A subsequent result of these investigations is the development of a historic resources study. This study addresses significant historic themes and developments within the park unit from the time of European contact through the Second World War. The historic context for this multiple properties nomination is based upon one of the various themes resulting from the historic resources study. The 1994 field investigation has likewise contributed to the development of an ethnographic history of the region, which will result in multiple property nominations for Native American sites. The significant property types identified in this nomination were derived from the historic context related to Second World War facilities in the Glacier Bay region 1939 to 1946. The requirements for integrity of properties under this nomination were based upon predictions derived from historic trends in the region, the accounts of persons associated with Glacier Bay, analysis of previous field examinations, and development of the historic resources study.

I. Major Bibliographical References (List major written works and primary location of additional documentation: State Historic Preservation Office, other State agency, Federal agency, local government, university, or other, specifying repository.)


DOI, NPS. Glacier Bay Expedition 1939, by Earl A. Trager. Mount McKinley NP: NPS, 1939.


**Primary locations where additional documentation is stored:**

- University of Alaska Anchorage Consortium Library
- University of Alaska Fairbanks Elmer Rasmusson Library
- Alaska Resources Library, Anchorage Federal Building
- Z.J. Loussac Municipal Library, Anchorage
- National Park Service, Alaska Regional Office, Division of Cultural Resources Records
- Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve Library
- National Archives of the United States, Washington, D.C.

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 120 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.