

Controlling Form 9/9/92

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Adak Army Base and Adak Naval Operating Base

and or common Adak Naval Station (Naval Air Station Adak)

2. Location

street & number \_\_\_\_\_ not for publication

city, town \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_

state Alaska code 02 county Aleutian Islands code 010

3. Classification

| Category                                 | Ownership                                  | Status  | Present Use                                  |
|--|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> district        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public | <input type="checkbox"/> occupied                   | <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> building(s)     | <input type="checkbox"/> private           | <input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied                 | <input type="checkbox"/> commercial          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> structure       | <input type="checkbox"/> both              | <input type="checkbox"/> work in progress           | <input type="checkbox"/> educational         |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> site | <b>Public Acquisition</b>                  | <b>Accessible</b>                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> entertainment       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> object          | <input type="checkbox"/> in process        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted | <input type="checkbox"/> government          |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> being considered  | <input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted          | <input type="checkbox"/> industrial          |
|  |  | <input type="checkbox"/> no                         | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> military |
|  |  |   | <input type="checkbox"/> museum              |
|  |  |   | <input type="checkbox"/> park                |
|  |  |   | <input type="checkbox"/> private residence   |
|  |  |   | <input type="checkbox"/> religious           |
|  |  |   | <input type="checkbox"/> scientific          |
|  |  |   | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation      |
|  |  |   | <input type="checkbox"/> other:              |

4. Owner of Property

name United States Navy

street & number Adak Naval Station, U.S. Department of the Navy

city, town FPO Seattle \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ state Washington 98791

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. United States Navy

street & number Adak Naval Station, U.S. Department of the Navy

city, town FPO Seattle \_\_\_\_\_ state Washington 98791

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title None has this property been determined eligible? \_\_\_\_\_ yes  no

date \_\_\_\_\_ federal \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ county \_\_\_\_\_ local \_\_\_\_\_

depository for survey records \_\_\_\_\_

city, town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_

# 7. Description

|  |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|
| <b>Condition</b>                         |   | <b>Check one</b>                            | <b>Check one</b>                                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> excellent       | <input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated     | <input type="checkbox"/> unaltered          | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site |
| <input type="checkbox"/> good            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ruins | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered | <input type="checkbox"/> moved    date _____      |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair | <input type="checkbox"/> unexposed        |   |   |

## Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Adak is one of the Andreanof Islands in the Aleutian Chain and is about 1,400 air-miles southwest of Anchorage. While there is considerable archeological evidence of earlier habitation, the island was unoccupied on the outbreak of World War II. Like the rest of the Aleutians, Adak is noted for its storms, fog, tundra, and muskeg, all of which challenged the military when it arrived in 1942.

Today, Naval Air Station Adak, located on the World War II site, occupies the northern half of the island and borders on Kuluk Bay to the east, one of the few good anchorages in the Aleutians. The southern half is a part of the Aleutian Islands National Wildlife Refuge and is outside the boundaries of the historic area. To the west and north of the main base are Mount Reed, Mount Moffett, and Mount Adagdak. Also north of the main base are Andrew Lake (freshwater) and Clam Lagoon (saltwater). The neck of land that separates the two was the location of the World War II naval air station with two runways for land planes, while seaplanes used the lake and lagoon.

Today, Naval Security Group Activity (NSGA) has classified facilities in this area. Little is left of the air station. The two land runways are barely discernible. A dilapidated wooden hangar still stands (out of eight originally), as do concrete portions of two other structures. A wooden boathouse at Andrew Lake is believed to be from World War II. Barbed wire is found extensively in the general area. Neither the hangar nor boathouse are deemed worthy of preservation.

The main area of today's naval station, called "Downtown," is centered around the two runways (7,880 and 7,600 feet) that were constructed for the Army Air Force in 1942. On the south side of Runway B are four hardstands that probably mark the sites of four Kodiak T-type hangars during the war. Almost all structures in this main area are of recent <sup>post-World War II</sup> construction and permanent in nature: extensive family housing, barracks, bachelor officers' quarters, headquarters, hospital, theater, navy exchange, hangars, roads, and all the support facilities that a town of 3,000 people would have. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service maintains a headquarters and visitor center for the Aleutian Islands National Wildlife Refuge. Adak also has a museum in temporary quarters that houses wartime artifacts gathered on the island.

On the north side of Sweeper Cove are structures surviving from the wartime Army Reserve Depot, including three immense warehouses, smaller storage buildings, ~~two wharves (one of which has been modernized)~~, and a stone breakwater.\* This depot, with matériel for 50,000 troops, was established in 1943-44 to serve in the event an invasion of Japan from the Aleutians were to

\*The breakwater has recently been rebuilt. The contractor placed a bronze plaque on it that states the original breakwater was constructed by U.S. Navy Seabees. In fact, the original was also built by a contractor under the direction of U.S. Army Engineers.

# 8. Significance

| Period                                    | Areas of Significance—Check and justify below   |   |   |  |
|---|---|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric      | <input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> community planning     | <input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> religion        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499        | <input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic    | <input type="checkbox"/> conservation           | <input type="checkbox"/> law                    | <input type="checkbox"/> science         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599        | <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture            | <input type="checkbox"/> economics              | <input type="checkbox"/> literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> sculpture       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699        | <input type="checkbox"/> architecture           | <input type="checkbox"/> education              | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> military    | <input type="checkbox"/> social/         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799        | <input type="checkbox"/> art                    | <input type="checkbox"/> engineering            | <input type="checkbox"/> music                  | <input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899        | <input type="checkbox"/> commerce               | <input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement | <input type="checkbox"/> philosophy             | <input type="checkbox"/> theater         |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900– | <input type="checkbox"/> communications         | <input type="checkbox"/> industry               | <input type="checkbox"/> politics government    | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation  |
|   |   | <input type="checkbox"/> invention              |   | <input type="checkbox"/> other (specify) |

Specific dates      1942-1945      Builder Architect

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

The World War II installations on Adak Island are significant in the history of the Aleutian Campaign because they allowed American forces to mount a successful offensive against the Japanese-held islands of Kiska and Attu. As the most westerly American airfield from September 1942 to February 1943, Adak allowed for intensified bombing (with fighter plane protection) of the Japanese garrisons. As the most westerly naval operations base from the fall of 1942 to the end of the campaign, it provided support to the ships and submarines of the North Pacific Force in their fight against the enemy in northern waters. Its excellent harbor provided shelter for the assembly of a large task force for the assault on Kiska. And its rugged tundra-covered terrain and fierce weather provided ideal conditions for training the Allied invasion force in amphibious warfare in the Aleutians. Had a northern invasion of Japan's Home Islands occurred, as was once proposed, Adak's Reserve Depot would have provided the essential matériel for such an undertaking.

The Build-Up

When the Japanese bombed Unalaska Island and invaded Attu and Kiska islands in June 1942, American defenses in the Aleutians consisted of an army and naval base at Unalaska and an army airfield on nearby Umnak Island, both 700 miles east of Kiska. Although bombers, flying through some of the world's worst weather, could reach Kiska, they could not be escorted by shorter-range fighters. The need for an Aleutian advance base further west became urgent. The army favored Tanaga Island, west of Adak, but the navy argued strongly for the latter, particularly because of its all-weather harbor. Higher authority supported the navy's position, and Col. (later General) B.B. Talley, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, was directed to establish a base on Adak. Talley, then the senior army engineer in Alaska, had demonstrated his abilities in the rapid construction of a dozen or more new bases in Alaska and had already scouted Adak from the air. Now, he prepared to turn the island into Alaska's largest and most expensive wartime base of operations.

On June 28, 1942, advance American reconnaissance parties landed from submarines on Adak. They found no trace of Japanese occupation, although the enemy had planned a hit-and-run raid on the island earlier. Two months later, August 30, U.S. troops waded ashore at Kuluk Bay amidst a terrific storm. The 4th Infantry Regiment pushed through the mud struggling to set up defenses (the Japanese did not discover the landings until October 1, at which time they made two ineffectual air raids on Adak), while the 807th Aviation Engineer Battalion began constructing an airstrip on a flooded tidal basin. By draining and filling in this flat basin, they succeeded in building a

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 46,700 acres

Quadrangle name Adak

Quadrangle scale 1:250,000

### UTM References

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### Verbal boundary description and justification

See continuation sheet.

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

| state | code | county | code |
|-------|------|--------|------|
|       |      |        |      |
|       |      |        |      |

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Erwin N. Thompson, Historian

organization Denver Service Center, National Park Service date March 16, 1984

street & number 755 Parfet Street telephone (303) 234-4509

city or town Denver state Colorado 80225

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date \_\_\_\_\_

Keeper of the National Register

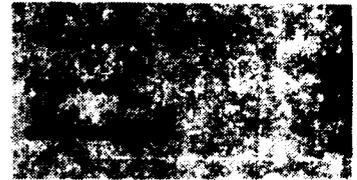
Attest:

date \_\_\_\_\_

Chief of Registration

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materialize. The three large warehouses, each measuring 181 by 800 feet, were painted respectively red, white, and blue in 1976 for the American Revolution Bicentennial.

On the rolling hills west of the main base, the army in World War II constructed a large hospital of quonset huts. Very little remains in this area except scars in the tundra. There is one quonset of unusual appearance--bay windows and ells--still standing. Now abandoned, its original function is unknown. Near the hospital site, to the north, an Advance Command Post was established and, during the Aleutian campaign, army, navy, and army air force commanders established their headquarters here. Little remains at the suspected site of this command post: a roof; a two-story, concrete vault; and wooden (communications?) poles. Because of security reasons, one must have a marine escort to this site. U.S. Marines today maintain an unusual memorial in this general area--two trees.

During the war, both army and navy shipping made use of Sweeper Cove. The navy had two temporary drydocks and three piers there. Two of the army's wharves, at the Reserve Depot, are maintained and used by the navy today, as is the petroleum unloading pier that the army constructed. Other naval facilities were located in Finger Bay, including ship repair drydocks, a motor torpedo boat base, and Rear Adm. T.C. Kinkaid's quarters. Still other naval installations located here or elsewhere on the island included a radio station, marine barracks, and main fleet post office. On the shore of Finger Bay today is an abandoned anti-submarine net. Nearby, are the foundation ruins of a fish cannery that operated until 1979. The wartime wharves at Finger Bay are now greatly deteriorated. Ruins of personnel quarters are found over all the hills, from Finger Bay to Andrew Lake. Some of these are maintained and used by personnel for off-duty retreats.

During the war, the military considered Adak to be an offensive base and not a defensive one. Consequently, few coastal defenses were constructed: 155mm gun batteries at North Spit, Shagak Bay, and at Zeto Point; and two batteries of 90mm guns on the west side of Kuluk Bay near the runways. At different bays and inlets around Adak, infantry outposts with machine gun emplacements were established. Three of these are within the historic area: North Spit, Shagak Bay; Andrew Bay; and Zeto Point. Also at Zeto Point was a joint army and navy harbor entrance control post. A long-range radar aircraft warning station was at Cape Adagdak, near where a U.S. Coast Guard Loran Station is today. Some evidence--concrete, timbers, quonset ruins, etc.--is found at these sites.

In 1976, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers conducted a survey at Adak to determine what remained from the World War II era. Included in the findings were the following:

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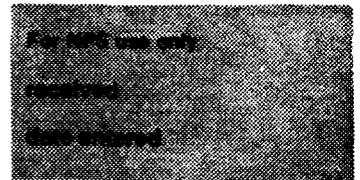
- 300 wood frame buildings
- 1,291 quonset or Pacific huts, standing or collapsed
- 190 revetments
- 2,000 petroleum barrels
- 6 reinforced concrete buildings
- 10 docks, wood, pile
- 8,300 feet barbed wire, with pickets
- 15 acres metal runway matting

No inventory of these features was taken at the time of the field inspection made by the historian who prepared this landmark study of Adak.

Adak continued to serve as an active base throughout the war and beyond. In 1950, the Army Air Force turned the base over to the U.S. Navy, which continues operations there. Today, the navy has an important mission to carry out at Adak and must, necessarily, continue to develop the station in such manner as is necessary to fulfill that mission. Nevertheless, the evidence of Adak's World War II role as advance army airfield, naval air station, expeditionary advance command post, army reserve depot, naval operations base, and task force anchorage is very much present.

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The following sites and structures from the World War II period on Adak are judged to be historically significant in commemorating the Island's role in the North Pacific campaign:

- Kuluk Bay, Sweeper Cove, and Finger Bay sites. (The ruins of former piers in Finger Bay are excluded.)
- Andrew Lake and Clam Lagoon, which were the water runways for naval amphibious patrol aircraft.
- Runways A and B at the former Army air base. These have been constantly upgraded and serve naval patrol planes and commercial aircraft today.
- Steel anti-submarine net on the west shore of Finger Bay.
- The presumed World War II-era superstructures of three large warehouses on the north shore of Sweeper Cove; the pier in front of these warehouses that dates from the World War II era; and a stone breakwater east of the pier. These structures represent the army reserve depot erected on Adak in 1944 for a possible invasion of Japan. The breakwater has been reconstructed, but represents in general the configuration of the breakwater of World War II years. (Even before the war ended, the breakwater built here was damaged and had to be replaced; the most recent total reconstruction of the breakwater occurred in 1980.) The warehouses were re-sided and re-roofed in 1979, but in their massing they retain exterior characteristics of their World War II appearance. Their superstructures dating from World War II are presumed to remain, although this has not been investigated.
- Quonset hut with bay window addition on the lower east slope of Mount Moffett, in the area of the former army hospital which was composed of quonset huts.
- The site of the Army, Army Air Force, and naval advanced command posts, also on the lower east slope of Mount Moffett, including a two-story concrete vault, but excluding the scattered wooden planks, boards, and poles.
- Site of the ruins and excavation of the former harbor entrance control post on the forward edge of Zeto Point.
- Site of an infantry outpost and a 155-mm gun battery at North Spit, Shagak Bay.
- Site of an infantry outpost at the southeast corner of Andrew Bay.

Not contributing to Adak's historical significance are the numerous ruins of former quonset huts and gouges in the tundra where huts once stood. Also exempted are all modern, post-World War II structures and installations of Adak Naval Station.

Inclusion in the above listing is not meant to imply that the Navy must take any specific maintenance or preservation actions, other than those required under existing law and regulations.

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temporary strip in twelve days. On September 14, the first Liberators flew from Adak to bomb Kiska. Maj. John S. Chennault, son of the famous Gen. Claire L. Chennault, led his Flying Tigers of the 11th Fighter Squadron in company with the bombers. This has been described as a historic mission that established the importance of Adak inasmuch as it was the first combined fighter and bomber zero-altitude strike (50 feet above the waves) of World War II.

Construction of a more permanent runway, Runway A, immediately adjacent to and parallel with the temporary strip soon got underway and, later, Runway B was completed. Both were laid with steel matting in the beginning but eventually were paved. Many times repaired and improved, these runways continue to serve patrol planes today.

Navy seabees soon followed army engineers, constructing a naval air station for the Fleet Air Wing Four's two-squadron search and patrol missions. By summer 1943, the navy's facilities on Adak had grown so extensively that a naval operations base was established: naval air station, ship repair facilities, motor torpedo boat division, naval radio station, marine barracks, main fleet post office, and headquarters for both the commander, North Pacific Force, and commander, Alaska Sector (navy). Also under Adak were the naval advance fueling station and net depot at nearby Great Sitkin Island.

The Eleventh Air Force's bombers and fighters on Adak continued their strikes against Kiska and Attu throughout the fall of 1942:

Because of bad weather, aircraft were forced down all along the Chain. Lucky pilots managed to crash land on narrow beaches of isolated islands. . . . The unlucky ones simply disappeared. Many missions went out only to be forced back to the base. Just as many managed to get over Attu and Kiska but failed to drop their bomb loads because of low fog which obscured the targets.\*

Because of these conditions, the decision was made to construct a new airfield on Amchitka Island, only 65 miles from the enemy on Kiska. The landing force assembled on Adak and on January 12, 1943, occupied Amchitka. Adak's planes provided cover until the new airfield was completed. From then on, Adak became a secondary air base, repairing aircraft and forwarding shipments of bombs and air supplies to Amchitka.

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\*Alaska Department, "History of Adak," Record Group 338, Washington National Records Center, Suitland, MD.

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Activity intensified on Adak throughout the first half of 1943, as the Allies prepared to invade the Japanese-held Aleutians. Brig. Gen. W.O. Butler, Commander, Eleventh Air Force, had already established his advance command post on Adak, in October 1942. He was joined in March 1943 by Rear Adm. T.C. Kinkaid, Commander, North Pacific Force, and Maj. Gen. Simon B. Buckner, Commanding General, Alaska Defense Command, both of whom moved their command posts from Kodiak for the forthcoming operations. From Adak, they oversaw the successful invasion of Attu in May 1943, and immediately laid plans to capture Kiska.

For the invasion of Attu, the Seventh Infantry Division had received some hurried training in amphibious landing on the sunny beaches of Southern California, a climate and terrain that hardly prepared it for the tundra and mud of the Aleutians. The invasion of Kiska would be different; this landing force of 34,000 men would train on Adak's rugged hills and stormy beaches.

Throughout early summer, troops poured into Adak, a mighty fleet assembled in Kuluk Bay, and the island teemed with activity.\* On the eve of the Kiska invasion, August 1943, the population of Adak was estimated at 90,000 men and more than 100 ships were anchored in the harbor.

Once the Aleutians were cleared of the enemy, a debate took place as to the future role of Adak and other Aleutian bases. Field commanders pointed out the strategic importance of the Aleutians and proposed an offensive against Japan through the Kuriles. In October 1943, the Joint Chiefs of Staff settled the issue by deciding to reduce the Aleutian garrisons but to prepare base facilities and airfields for an offensive if further operations in the North Pacific were planned at a later time. Thus, a huge Army Reserve Depot took shape on the north shore of Sweeper Cove. Contractors filled in land, constructed piers and a breakwater, and built row upon row of storehouses and all the necessary facilities for equipping a potential force of 50,000 men. Just before he transferred from Alaska to another theater of war in June 1944, General Buckner visited Adak and reported that the new depot was coming along in fine shape and it was changing the shape of the land.

On August 3, 1944, the cruiser Baltimore slipped into Kuluk Bay. On board was the Commander in Chief, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, paying his last visit to combat troops in the field before his death eight months later. Adak did not serve as a springboard for an invasion of Japan. But it is the only Aleutian military base to remain continuously in active service from World War II to the present.

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\*All American and Canadian units trained on Adak except the First Special Service Force (2,500 men) which preferred Amchitka.

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GEOGRAPHICAL DATA, BOUNDARIES

Starting at a point in the ocean two miles due east of Cape Adagdak, then south in a straight line passing through Scabbard Bay and on inland 0.8 mile to a point, then west in a straight line passing just south of Finger Bay 10 miles to an unimproved road, then in a straight line west northwest to the southwest base of South Spit, then northerly along the ocean side of South Spit, across the mouth of Shagak Bay, then northerly along the ocean side of North Spit and beyond .75 mile to the mouth of an unnamed stream northwest of the northwest base of North Spit, then in a straight line northeast to a point of land on the west side of Mount Adagdak marked "Lora[n]", then projecting that line in the same direction to a point in the ocean due west of Cape Adagdak, then due east in a straight line past the tip of Cape Adagdak to the point of beginning.

These boundaries enclose all the principal features of the Naval Air Station; Army Field; Naval Operating Base; the harbors of Sweeper Cove, Finger Bay, and inner Kuluk Bay; Army Reserve Depot; outposts at North Spit and Andrew Bay; coastal defenses; and the areas employed in mounting ground troops for the recapture of Attu and Kiska.

BERING  
S E A

ALEUTIAN

I S L A N D S

F A

SOUND

SITKIN

ADAK  
NAVAL STATION

BU

LAND

KAGALASKA I

LITTLE  
TANAGA

ADAK

Three Arm Bay  
The Three Sisters

PENINSULA

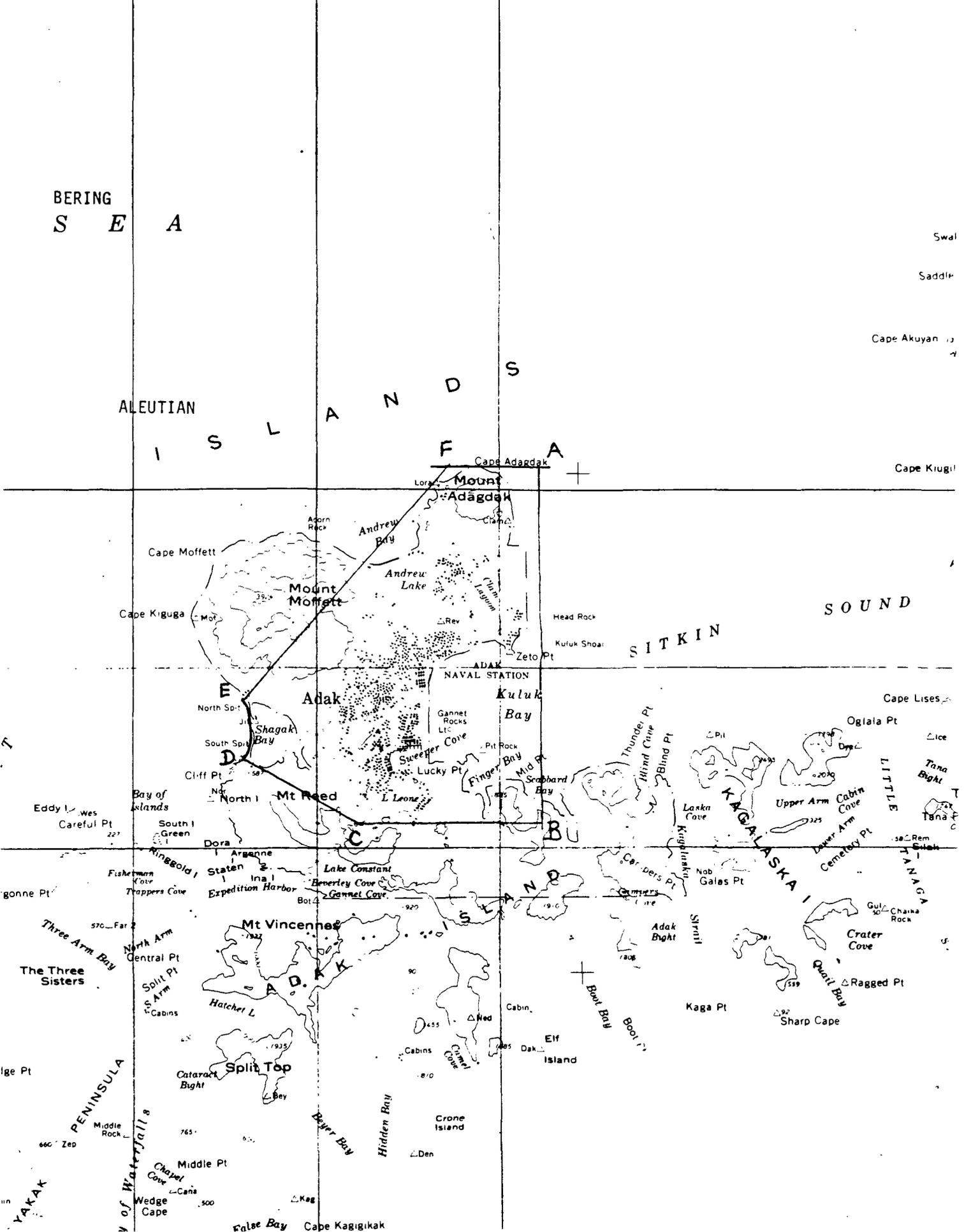
YAKAK

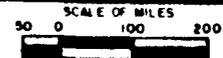
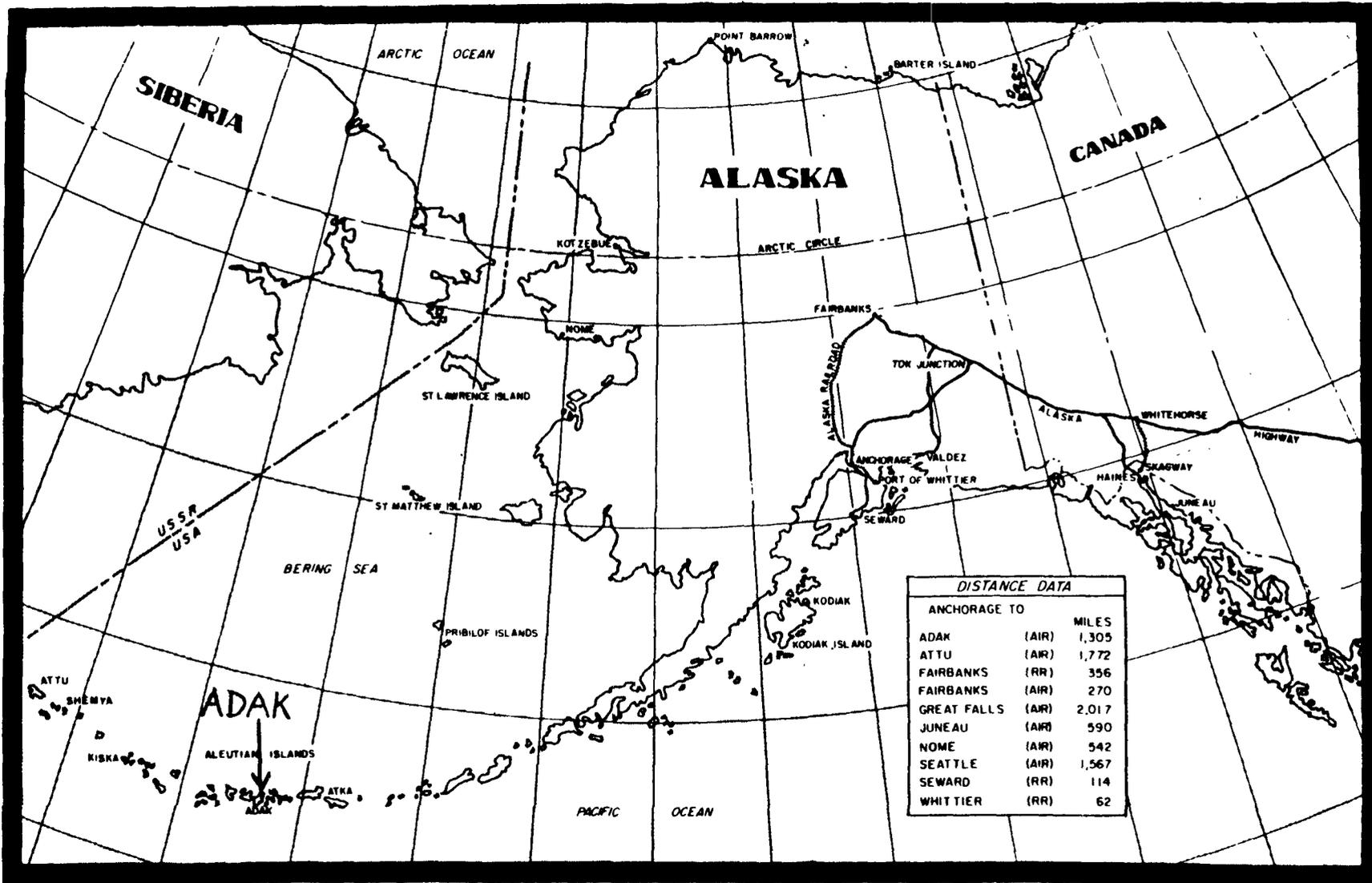
Waterfalls

Chapel Cove

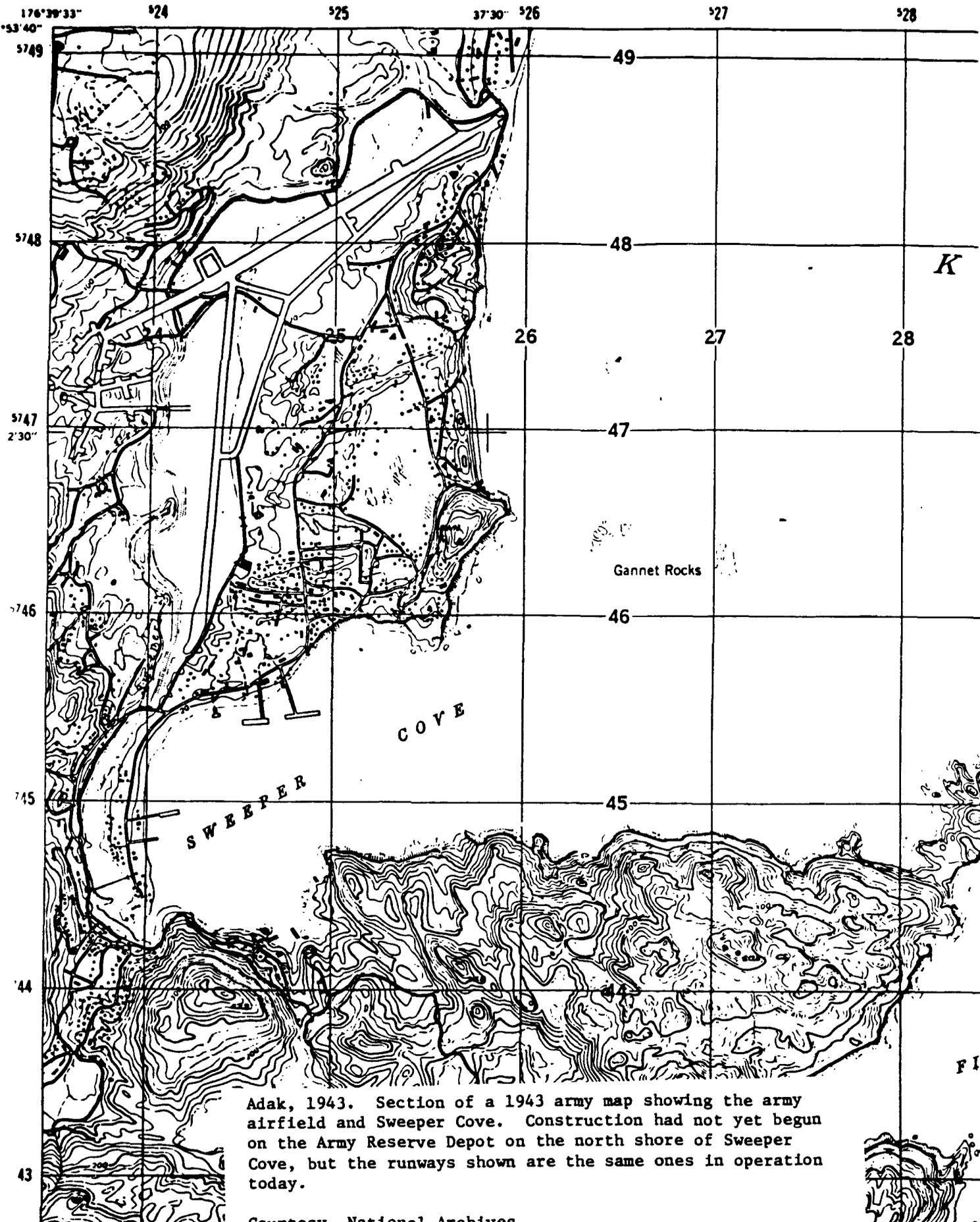
Wedge Cape

False Bay Cape Kagigikak





**ALASKA**



Adak, 1943. Section of a 1943 army map showing the army airfield and Sweeper Cove. Construction had not yet begun on the Army Reserve Depot on the north shore of Sweeper Cove, but the runways shown are the same ones in operation today.

Courtesy. National Archives