

Cold War Radar Stations in the North

Radar and Communication Stations in Alaska 1953 – 1995

Purpose: This exhibit tells the story of the Cold War radar defenses of Alaska and the communication system that allowed the radar stations to talk to the wider United States defense system.

Three different radar systems were built in Alaska and a new communication technology was built to connect them.

Scope: The scope of this exhibit are the years 1953 to 1995. the physical scope is the Territory of Alaska until 1959 and the State of Alaska after 1959. The exhibit includes covers from the U.S. Army Post Office system and the civilian post office. The nature of many of the sites mean that military mail was cancelled at civilian post offices and vice versa. All are represented in the exhibit. If a system extends into Canada, only the Alaska section is included in the scope of this exhibit.

Historical Perspective: The Second World War had built Alaska into an important military location. The beginning of American involvement with the attack on Peral Harbor had traumatized Americans. As the Cold War started, the cry became “No More Pearl Harbors.” Alaska became an important part of the defense of the North American continent. In the end, three different systems were built; The Aircraft Control and Warning System, facing mainly west and south; the Distant Early Warning (DEW) Line, facing north; and finally, the Ballistic Missile Early Warning System reaching over the horizon and into space. Part of this system exist to this day.

Mail Routes: Army Post Office (APO) mail was transported to a Postal Concentration Center in Seattle, Washington. The military mail then entered the civilian mail system. Civilian mail to and from Alaska was gathered in the major cities and then transported by ship for surface mail or by air for Airmail. Mail traveled in Alaska by airplane, truck, ship and still dogsled in some places.

Exhibit Plan

Radar Stations

Aircraft Control and Warning System

Distant Early Warning Line

Ballistic Missile Early Warning System

White Alice Communications System

White Alice at Radar Stations

White Alice at Other Stations