

DAILY LOG

January 4 — Departed Yakutat 2 p.m. aboard US Coast Guard Boat DAPHNE enroute to Seward by way of Cordova. Strong wind offshore; sea very rough.

January 5 — Arrived Cordova 2 p.m. Was met at dock by Dr. Chase, Mayor of Seward, and Mr. Hansen of the Copper River Railroad. Spent the afternoon in their company.

Mayor Chase is very anxious to have the railroad formally abandoned and the steel taken up, giving as his reason that he desires to have a road built over the railroad right-of-way. Later in the afternoon this question was discussed with Mr. Hansen, who stated that the copper mine at the head of the railroad had been closed down and operation of the railroad had been suspended solely due to labor trouble. I understand from him that the date of formal abandonment of the railroad had been postponed to December 31, 1941, it having been previously expected that the railroad would be formally abandoned on December 31, 1940.

Mayor Chase brought up the question of the location of the proposed airfield at Cordova and requested that I fly out to the “proposed location” at Mile 17 on the railroad. I saw little need in doing this as there was about one foot of snow on the ground and I could not see the details of the nature of the field from the air under those conditions. Mayor Chase told me that the CAA officials who had been at Cordova inspecting likely sites had flown over the 17 mile site, had looked at it from the air, and as a result of which had reported unfavorably on it but had reported favorably on a location at Strawberry Point on the Hinshinbrook Island. Mayor Chase also expressed interest in further expanding the present airfield adjacent to Auk Lake point out that the width of the present runway could be extended indefinitely by filling in the lake which has a maximum depth of about 9 feet. Having previously landed on Auk Lake in September 1940, in the company of General Lee and Colonel Dunn and in consideration of the very high hills rising abruptly from the runway strip on one side for its full length and from the lakeshore on the other, it is my opinion that this location is definitely unsuitable for an emergency landing field for military aircraft. On the following morning I discussed this with Mr. Smith who operates the airfield and it is his opinion, with which I concur, that this field is suitable for the operation of small, slow-speed commercial aircraft as are at present being operated out of the field but that it is not suitable for the operation either of the large airplanes or of high-speed military aircraft.

January 6 — Additional snow during the night of January 5-6. Please note reference to conversation with Mr. Smith in log for January 5. Mr. Smith took me out to the airfield and we went over it in detail. WPA project is underway involving an expenditure of about \$5,000 to increase the width of the field in the area immediately adjacent to the ramp.

I requested Dr. Chase to arrange a trip to Mile 17 on the speeder of the Copper River Railroad. He referred me to Mr. Hansen, who told me that due to the snow on the rails (about 3 inches) the speeder would be unable to reach Mile 17.

Departed from Cordova at 7 pm.

January 7 — Arrived Seward at 9 a.m., being met by a motor car of the Alaska Railroad furnished by Colonel Ohlson. Called on Signal Corps Radio Station, Captain Smith, Port Captain, and at the Office of the US Attorney, which was closed. Left Seward at 10:15 am and arrived at Anchorage 1:45 pm. Moved to Anchorage Hotel following which I called on The Commanding General, Alaska Defense Force, Commanding Officer, Elmendorf Field, Commanding Officer, Fort Richardson, and Captain Neil, Assistant CQM in charge of construction at Anchorage. Dinner with Colonel Ohlson that evening.

January 8 — Spent the day with Captain Neil and in the field office with Mr. Coray going over the project. Captain Welling arrived at 11 am from Fairbanks.

January 9 — Substantially as January 8.

January 10 — I had been notified on January 9 that a B17 from Fairbanks would arrive sometime during the morning and would return to Fairbanks shortly thereafter. In view of the uncertainty, little could be accomplished except waiting for the plane as I had been informed that when this plane came down, it would little more than put its wheels on the ground and take off again. I had likewise been assured that I would be notified when the plane left Fairbanks, but having received no notice I called Elmendorf Field about 11 o'clock to see if they had any information. They told me all they knew was that it was on its way down and within 5 minutes I saw the plane out of the window as it was coming in to land. Captain Welling and I immediately went to the field and prepared to leave. We were told that the plane would depart at 2 o'clock. We had dinner at Anderson's Camp and spent the intervening time running errands. All of which was very pleasant but scarcely conducive either to efficient operation or efficiency of air travel. We took off from Elmendorf Field at 2:25 and arrived at Fairbanks in darkness at 4 pm. This condition of travel is not considered unusual when one is required to meet the plans and desires of the person furnishing the transportation. As we approached Ladd Field we saw the headlights of a truck on the runway and the pilot dragged the field three times in an endeavor to convey the impression to the truck driver that he intended to land. Finally the truck lights disappeared and we came in to land and the truck was parked in the end of the runway which we were approaching. The comments of the pilot were to the effect that having been chased off the runway it was up to him to find the truck as its lights had been turned off. I went directly to the Construction Quartermaster Office at Ladd Field and met with Engineer Tuttle and other members of his staff. Was unable to see Captain Rankin who was seriously ill in the hospital. A round table conference was held on the transfer of Ladd Field from the CQM to the Engineer Department and I announced the policy of the Engineer Department would be to take over all personnel and assume all contracts and outstanding obligations subject to audit.

Spent the evening with Captain Lathrop.

January 11 — Went to Ladd Field at 7:30 and spent approximately an hour in the powerhouse. The operation of handling the ashes is at present unsatisfactory. The ashes are carried from the ash pits by vacuum to an elevated ash bin on the outside. The capacity of the bin appeared to be about 25 cubic yards or more although no figure was given as to its exact size. At the time we were at the powerhouse the outside temperature was 15 degrees below zero and the hot ashes being taken from the furnace by vacuum and dumped into the ash bin would immediately freeze and form a solid mass in the bin and are evacuated only with difficulty. Some solution will have to be worked out to improve this condition. The powerhouse exhausted the steam to the outside and a large portion of the buildings were coated with ice several inches thick. That condition, however, is temporary as it is expected that the condenser system would be in operation within 3 or 4 days, whereupon the steam would be returned to the boilers. The temperature of the feed water was about 33 degrees.

Considerable adverse comments were made by the powerhouse personnel regarding the quality of the coal being burned in the powerhouse. They stated that the coal formed clinkers, that it contained an excessive amount of dirt, and they made other pertinent comments regarding the coal which is considered unsatisfactory. In the discussion of the powerhouse with Captain Lathrop on the night before, he mentioned that in the operation of the powerhouse at his mine the same type of coal was used and that anyone observing the powerhouse from a distance could see neither steam nor smoke about the building and from all indications its appearance was no different when in operation or when shut down. There is no doubt, however, as to when the Ladd Field Powerhouse is in operation as it forms a dense pillar of smoke which may be seen for many miles. It is fully realized that this powerhouse has just commenced operation and these conditions are not unusual for initial operations. Likewise there are certain features of the powerhouse which have not yet been completed. However if this condition persists some steps will have to be taken to increase the thermal efficiency of it. This condition will be borne in mind over a period of several weeks or months and if upon final completion of the powerhouse this condition persists, definite steps will be taken to ascertain the trouble and to effect a remedy.

With Captain Welling I inspected the warehouse which had been proposed as a temporary barracks for about 100 enlisted men scheduled to arrive at Ladd Field in February from Fort Richardson to conduct cold weather tests. Departed Fairbanks 9:25 am by commercial plane. Arrived Anchorage at 11:25 am. Was met by Mr. Hart and Mr. Doyle. On the plane was Mr. Bartlett, Secretary to Governor Gruening. Took Secretary Bartlett and his daughter to the Persons Hotel and went to the Anchorage Hotel where I met the following persons: Shirley Gunderson, Floyd Nebel, John Edgar, Byron Clark, Everett Palmer, Morris Rice, Iris Van Horn and Margaret Gjælde who had arrived from Seattle the previous afternoon and Hazel Washam who had arrived from Fairbanks on January 8. We went over the situation in general and had lunch together at the Anchorage Grill. I am very pleased with the personnel who arrived from Seattle and no difficulty will be had in taking over the project and changing the methods of procedure to those of the Engineer Department. Spent the afternoon at Fort Richardson.

January 12 — Spent the afternoon at Fort Richardson going over project with Engineer Coray. Among other points, my attention was called to the proposal to establish a pumping station on Ship Creek immediately adjacent to the Post and that water be pumped to a water tower located

as shown on the Anchorage air base lay-out. Investigation disclosed that this water tank stands 141 feet high and on top of which must be erected a beacon from 10 to 12 feet high making the total height of the structure slightly in excess of 150 feet. It is located 1,350 feet from one runway and about 1,450 feet from the other. It was also pointed out that no indication had been received in Anchorage of the type of gasoline system to be used in the servicing of aircraft and that present plans called for installing gasoline tanks having a capacity of 600,000 gallons at the apex of the hangar building triangle.

Preliminary lay-out for the air base therefore calls for the erection of a structure 150 feet high in a dangerous position and the congestion of the water system, fire station, powerhouse and heating plant, gasoline storage, and other utilities in one small area, thereby forming a concentrated target in the event of air attack.

January 13 — In response to an inquiry of the District Engineer as to whether or not it was desired that the Seattle office design the pumping station, a radio was sent to the effect that in the event the pumping station was to be used the design should be accomplished in Seattle. This is considered advisable due to the availability of information in Seattle regarding suitable types for the equipment. However it was pointed out that a water tower formed a definite hazard and that if erected it is my opinion that it would eventually be torn down as had been the case with other tall structures on airfields. This matter was discussed informally with Major Davis, Air Corps Commanding Officer Elmendorf Field, and with General Buckner. Mention was also made of the storage of gasoline.

Radio was sent requesting a designation of the type of gasoline system to be installed and that should an aqua system be considered the effect upon it of extreme continued low temperatures should be taken into account.

January 14 — Question of the water tank was further discussed with General Buckner.

January 15 — Talked with District Office over the radiotelephone from the Office of The Commanding General where it is installed the only privacy set which maintains secrecy of conversation. Large number of points were discussed in general which are not required to be listed here.

January 16 — General Buckner informed me that he had talked to Colonel Dunn, who had in response to a request of General DeWitt asked that General Buckner go over the entire circumstances surrounding the design of the water system with me on the ground and that he, General Buckner, submit definite recommendation to General DeWitt regarding the installation and result of which a conference was held between General Buckner, Major Davis, Engineer Coray, and myself in the General's office, after which General Buckner, Mr. Coray and I went over the ground, following which General Buckner notified General DeWitt by radio that he concurred in my recommendations.

Assumed responsibility for the Ladd Field and Fort Richardson projects as of midnight January 15-16.

January 17 — Further discussed the question of the water system with General Buckner who concurred with my recommendation that the tower not be erected and that there be substituted a gravity system including a hillside reservoir. Notice of this recommendation was submitted to the District Engineer by radio. In response to an inquiry from the District Engineer it was suggested by radio that the water tank be held at the factory awaiting disposition.

January 18 — Received word from the District Engineer to erect water tower in accordance with original plans. Preparations being made to complete the forms and to pour the foundations. Pouring will commence in day or two. Mr. Palmer departed for Ladd Field by air to supervise the transfer of property at Ladd Field from the CQM to the Engineer Department.