

Rabbit Creek White Alice Site
Anchorage
Alaska

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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

RABBIT CREEK WHITE ALICE SITE

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SUMMARY

In this report, the White Alice Communications System (WACS) is discussed in terms of its historic significance. Its origin, function, and demise are described. The first part of the report discusses the history of communications in Alaska and the military's fundamental role in its development. The historic context of World War II, the Cold War, and the United States' need for over-the-pole defense are noted along with the technological developments that made White Alice possible. The various phases of construction of the system are described and typical station descriptions are presented. Brief individual descriptions, glossary, and bibliography are included.

This report basically summarizes the findings of a Section 106 review investigation concerning the eligibility of the White Alice System to the National Register of Historic Places, as per the Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended. Section 106 was activated by the Alaskan Air Command's need to demolish their White Alice stations while taking into account their historic value. Thus, this report fulfills a compliance function as well as an informational one. Any omissions or errors are the responsibility of the author.

WHITE ALICE: HISTORIC PERSPECTIVE

The White Alice Communications system (WACS) in Alaska is significant in the areas of communications and the military. Although less than 50 years old (the original two installations, Boswell Bay and Neklasson Lake, opened in 1956), the WACS is historically significant because it was perceived as vital to national defense. It is an example of a technology that evolved so rapidly that its development, achievement peak, and obsolescence occurred within 10 years. Militarily, the system is a significant example of the extent to which the nation would go to avoid another Pearl Harbor. During the Cold War Era, the United States kept a high state of military preparedness and the civilian population was psychologically keyed to a state of war. The WACS reflects this period in American history.

Prior to the installation of the WACS, communications were so primitive that only one telephone call could travel between Fairbanks and Nome at a time. Telecommunications functioned strictly by line-of-sight and there was no way to make long distance "hops" for rapid transmission of information. Simultaneous, multi-voice channels were only dreamt of. WACS changed all that. A new technology, involving the beaming of radio signals from a parabolic transmitting antenna, up to the sky, and back down to a receiving antenna, enabled remote areas of Alaska to be in contact with each other. The idea of bouncing radio signals into the atmosphere, in this case, the troposphere, and receiving that same signal 200 miles away, was truly revolutionary in its day. In fact, it would have reminded some Alaskans of Jules Verne or Buck Rogers. As revolutionary as the WACS was, it was eclipsed by another technology less than a generation later. In the mid-1960's, after WACS was in place, to telephone the "lower '48", Anchorage resident could only lace the call at one place located downtown. Until the mid-1970's, television broadcasts were flown up daily from Seattle. If Seattle was fogged in, yesterday's six o'clock news was rebroadcast. Satellite technology has changed all that. Satellite telecommunications also rendered White Alice obsolete. The remaining tropo stations which dot the landscape are being demolished. The smaller microwave stations are still in use, although they are no longer state-of-the-art.

The history of communications in Alaska is synonymous with the role of the military. Beginning with WAMCATS (see Below) at the turn of the century, a project which intimately involved then Lieutenant Billy Mitchell, the task of long-distance communications fell to the War Department. During the Gold Rush, when garrisons were built to keep law and order, telegraph lines

spanned the state and relayed important information back to Washington, D.C. The military provided Alaska's only communications links to the lower '48 until the advent of satellite technology. This means, of course, that the U.S. Air Force and the U.S. Army were responsible for the inception, construction, operations and maintenance of the WACS. The Cold War Era and the Nation's concern for national defense were the impetus for the WACS and the related systems discussed below. Projects such as White Alice were always designed for a military mission, although they increasingly served the private sector as well. Finally, with the passage of the "Alaska Communications Disposal Act," in 1967, the military began to divest itself of this responsibility. Today, long-distance telecommunications is accomplished by private corporations.

What is striking about the history of communications in Alaska is that the same challenges have faced each major project from the earliest plans up until the satellite era, beginning in the 1960's: extremes in weather; unexplored, vast and inhospitable stretches of terrain, and extreme isolation. As long ago as the 1850's, telegraph lines were proposed for Russian Alaska to facilitate communications between North American and Eurasia. The Western Union Telegraph Expedition (WUTE) began construction on the Seward Peninsula. The first functioning telegraph was the Washington-Alaska Military Cable and Telegraph System (WAMCATS), completed by 1904.

It was the Gold Rush with its influx of prospectors and the founding garrisons to preserve the peace in early population centers that created the need for WAMCATS. Although the system was military, the act of Congress authorizing its construction specifically stated that commercial service would be provided when possible. WAMCATS overland routes consisted of single poles supporting a wire, where possible, or a tripod in muskeg and swamp. The lines connected Fort Egbert (Eagle) to Fort Liscum (Valdez) and Fort Gibbon (Tanana) to St. Michael. Later, a submarine cable was laid from Skagway to Seattle, a distance of 107 miles. The world's longest wireless section, 107 miles, jumped the distance between Port Safety (near Nome) and St. Michael (Jenne and Mitchell 1992). This is also believed to be the first wireless telegraph system in the world which handled commercial messages and the first point-to-point wireless channel on the American continent for commercial operations.

WAMCATS lines lasted longer than the five years expected, but as sections gave out, wireless communication replaced open wire sections. In 1936, Congress recognized WAMCATS as the Alaska Communications System (ACS). ACS sites became the locations for the increasingly popular radio telephone. By 1934, Marshal, St. Michael, Juneau, Ketchikan, Fairbanks, Nome and Bethel had radio

telephone. The system was maintained by the military (the War Department). Although the location of some radio-phones in the local store facilitated transfer to commercial ownership in some instances. By the late 1930's, WAMCATS lines were failing in many places. Disturbances brought about by the Northern Lights inhibited high frequency (HF) radio communications. Medium frequency (MF) transmission was not affected by these disturbances, thus, medium frequency was modernized and expanded, while older high frequency systems were not.

The early buildup of World War II garrisons in Alaska brought teletype and teletypewriter (TWX) capabilities to the military. The Japanese attacks on Fort Mears at Dutch Harbor, with the inability of Fort Mears to contact Fort Glenn 80 miles to the west for air support, resulted in the loss of human life and equipment. Immediate communications upgrading was an absolute necessity. Subsequently, the ACS was expanded from 200 personnel in 1940 to 2000 in 1944.

Among the more heroic and monumental tasks during World War II was the stringing of an open wire pole line by the military the length of the CANOL (Canadian Oil) pipeline (a part of which later became the Alaska Highway) in 1942. In mid-November, with a Washington, D.C. imposed 1 December deadline, conditions were less than perfect:

"A warm Chinook wind had blown for several days, taking out the ice bridges across the rivers. A snowstorm leaving record amounts of snow followed the Chinook and drifts of three or more meters encounter. . . Three ton trucks were driven over half frozen rivers where the ice would dip and sag. Men floundered through two meter snow drifts and strung wire by oil lamps, flash lights, and automobile headlights in temperatures of 30 degrees below zero" (Jenne and Mitchell 1982: 16).

To close the gap just east of the Alaska/Canada border, 50 miles of swamp had to be crossed in the summer. Twenty men from the 255th Signal Construction Company and two Indian guides on pack horses completed the task by 1 October 1943. The muskeg as belly deep on the horses and the men were wet for four weeks at a time. Their motto became: "Through muck and mire, we string our wire." on 1 December, placement of the last segment of line enabled the deadline to be met.

World War II increased people's awareness of Alaska and its strategic role in any ensuing conflicts. While memories of the War in the Pacific were still fresh, the U.S. Military realized the continued need to protect America's back door. Alaska might still be Seward's Folly to some, but the attacks on Dutch Harbor

and occupation of Kiska and Attu served as grim reminders that the U.S. could be attacked from the North Pacific. Of course, the Japanese government had been defeated, but the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was becoming increasingly expansionist and militaristic in western Europe. Soon after the end of the war, Rumania, Poland and East Germany fell under Communist rule and the domination of Eastern Europe was completed in 1949. In a speech in Fulton, MO, in 1946, former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill coined the phrase "Iron Curtain" to characterize the Soviet stance in Europe. "Iron Curtain" became a catchword symbolizing a threatening, malevolent force. The threat of Communist revolution and takeover in newly emerging former European colonies was sometimes real and sometimes imagined. The watchwords of the day became containment and balance of power. The late 1940's-early 1950's was a time of tremendous tension and happenings of global significance, including the formation of NATO, birth of Palestine and the Korean War. In 1949, the Soviets exploded the atomic bomb and the Communist conquest of China was completed.

In the meantime, plans for the defense of North America and Alaska figured prominently. There were already many installations in place from the overnight buildup during World War II, although most had been deactivated. Following a visit to Alaskan military bases in 1947 by General Dwight D. Eisenhower, a major rebuilding of Alaskan Air Command facilities was undertaken. One of AAC's first goals was construction of a permanent Aircraft Control and Warning (AC&W) system. They relied on remnant of the World War II system and there was no overall control of the system, just localized warning that would have to be relayed in other ways. The existing air defense system was improved and a new radar system developed. By 1952, the following AC&W sites were operational: Cape Lisburne, Cape Newenham, Cape Romanzof, Tin City, Northeast Cape, Campion, Tatalina, King Salmon, Indian Mtn., Sparrevohn, Murphy Dome and Fire Island (near Anchorage). Other sites became operational in later years.

The post-war years saw revamping of the submarine cable network and overland routes, always with increased capacity in the number of voice channels. ACS manual switchboards for commercial needs appeared in Glennallen, Tok, Delta Junction, Fairbanks, Anchorage, Juneau and Ketchikan. In the grip of the Cold War, plans were begun as early as 1947 for a system to defend against over-the-pole attack from the Soviet Union. Construction of added AC&W and ACS sites took place during the late 1940's and early 1950's. The foes of severe weather conditions and primitive living conditions were commonplace. A member of the First Communications Squadron, Griffis AFB, wrote in his diary:

"The team has been living in tents with mud up to our knees, working 12 to 14 hours a day, and eating B rations [canned food]. We had to haul the radar equipment seven miles over dangerous mountain roads to the tower. There were times we had to walk up the mountain due to lack of transportation... We have worked in snow, sleet and fog until we were either soaked to the skin or our hands got so cold that we could hardly work. Many times the team returned from their work too late for chow and had to eat peanut butter and jelly sandwiches" (Cloe and Monaghan 1984: 167).

In 1948, experiments had begun to ascertain which type of communications would benefit Alaska and the AC&W system. The Distant Early Warning (DEW-line) system was also on the drawing board, and would be constructed beginning in 1952, with the Barter Island finished first as the "trial balloon." Initial experimentation showed that using VHF, reliable voice communications could be obtained for distances of up to 200 miles. Thus, the decision was made by the Air force to incorporate this new system and pre-existing microwave technology. It soon became apparent that VHF had problems. the AC&W radar jammed VHF signals, and it was the AC&W stations that the new system was supposed to support. This frustration led to the formation of the Alaska Communications Study group in 1954, comprised of government representatives whose task it was to come up with better idea. This group, in turn, asked the Bell System to recommend an economic way to create a communications system for Alaska. The demands placed on such a system would be large. It had to span long distances in inaccessible areas. It had to be dependable despite frequent storms, long winters, intense cold, wind and heat; and the disturbance of the Northern Lights. Because the system was to function for the military and civilian sectors, it had to have the ability to carry many voice and telegraph channels simultaneously. Bell recommended to the Defense Department the construction of a relatively new system, the forward propagation tropospheric scatter system. Because of the tremendous cost involved in construction and managing a remote tropo site, more traditional, smaller and manageable microwave facilities would be used where possible. These would be constructed along the road system every 50 miles or so. This recommendation was accepted by the Air Force and Western Electric Company (WECO) was awarded the contract in 1955. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Alaska District, selected and surveyed all original WACS sites, handled all contracting and constructed 11 of the original 31. The saga of surveying the sites is a story in itself. Consider the one fact that experimental transmission towers had to be set up at each potential WACS site during the winter months and that the tower and accompanying equipment weighed 14 tons. WECO constructed 20 stations and installed the electronics equipment in all White Alice installations.

There are two stories concerning the origin of the name "White Alice". The first is that Alice was an acronym for Alaska Integrated Communications Enterprise (Baker 1987). Because the code name had to consist of two words, White was selected because it seemed appropriate to long Alaskan winters. However, Alice White turned out to be the name of a silent screen actress. Rather than scrap the name, the two words were transposed. "White Alice" seemed more suitable. Another story simply maintains that the Air Force chose White Alice for no particular reason and that it was not an acronym for anything. The association with snow, ice and white had made White Alice a memorable name--one easily associated with remote mountain tops and man-made structures framed in ice and snow.

White Alice successfully linked AC&W sites and DEW-line sites into a cohesive network, and relayed communications back to Elmendorf AFB and Eielson AFB. Additionally, two routes linked the Ballistic Missile Early Warning Site (BMEWS) at Clear AFB to NORAD headquarters in Colorado. The cost of the system was formidable. The estimated cost to build it was 38 million dollars. However, the first phase of construction actually cost 3 and 1/2 times that, or 113 million dollars. The government estimate for construction as Sitkinak, for example, was \$755,711. When the District Engineer opened the bid packages, he was amazed to find the lowest bid was \$943,000. The other bids were over \$1,000,000. A negotiated price of \$3,000,000 for the North River (Unalakleet) station set the precedent for future cost estimates (Alaskan Air Command 1956a, 1956b; WECO 1957). The combination of tightening budgets, spiralling costs, the threat of a steel strike, and the severity of the 1956-57 winter delayed completion of the original network from 1957 to March 1959.

1962 additions to the system--BMEWS, Stretchout--drove the cost up to an unheard of 300 million dollars. This incredible leap in cost was due to many factors. For example, WECO had assumed that remote tropo sites would require six station attendants and one 25 KW generator. In reality, 20 people and a 120 to 180 KW generator were required. When asked about the initial project's enormous cost, the commander of the Alaskan Air Command, Brigadier General K.H. Gibson, was quoted as saying: "Americans are great believers in insurance, and White Alice is a blue chip policy" (Roche N.D.).

As with previous communications projects, building White Alice was a monumental task:

Despite deep snow and sub-zero, the job had to start at once if tight schedules were to be kept. The first task was to select the sites...Some were easy to reach. Most were atop mountains far from civilization. Siting and testing parties

got there by dogsled, by tractor, by helicopter and by shoe leather...Trips to mountain tops through the clutching snow and the howling wind had to be repeated--and repeated...Fourteen tons of equipment were required to erect a 50-foot temporary tower at each site... On numerous occasions, the men were forced to surrender before the onslaught of cold, wind and snow and were immobilized for days, even weeks. This ordeal of waiting was of times made doubly galling by the knowledge that supplies and parts needed for the job were only a few miles distant but inaccessible because the white wall of winter had become impenetrable"(Western Electric Company N.D.).

At its height, in the early 60s, WACS contained 1 1/2 million miles of circuitry--enough wire to encircle the globe 57 times. It was an example of the latest and most sophisticated telecommunications technology in the world, combining, as it did, conventional microwave with new forward propagation tropospheric scatter. Yet, even before the original 33 stations had been completed, a new technology appeared which would soon render WACS obsolete. On 4 October 1957, the Soviet Union launched Sputnik, the first man-made satellite. Ironically, it was not until 26 March 1958 that the original White Alice system was dedicated on Elmendorf AFB. If Sputnik was the first nail in the coffin, Telstar, the first experimental communications satellite, launched in 1962, was the penultimate. The launching of the first viable communications satellite, SATCOM, in 1973, was the last.

In 1967, Congress passed Public Law 90-135. "Alaska Communications Disposal Act," for the purpose of transferring U.S. government-owned long-haul communications facilities in Alaska. Since the early days of WAMCATS, the military had provided long-distance communications for the entire state. This era came to an end. Bids were solicited in 1968 for taking over WACS. The following year, RCA established RCA Alaska Communications, Inc. (now ALASCOM) and became the successful bidder. In 1970, the Public Utilities commission granted authority to Alascom for takeover of the system and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers handled all real estate transfers (see Baker 1987). This extremely complicated process took 13 years, and included several lease arrangements and negotiations, notably sale of the BMEWS A Route prior to final approval of the sale. (see Baker 1987 for a detailed account of the WACS sale). With the advent of communications satellites in 1973, the tropo stations were simply out of date, although the TD-2 stations continue to provide necessary system redundancy. Because the Air force had not intended WACS to fulfill all communications needs in Alaska, and perhaps because Sputnik and Telstar spelled doom for the system, WACS was not upgraded or refurbished to compete

with such a rapidly changing technology. During the 1970's, solid state electronics and satellites became commonplace, while White Alice continued on a slower trajectory using klystron vacuum tubes. White Alice will be remembered as the project that "..served the nation's defense and..let Alaska speak" (Western Electric Company N.D.). WACS' technology revolutionized telecommunications in the 1950's only to be as greatly eclipsed in less than a generation's time by an equally revolutionary technology.

Today, in the late-1980's, satellite technology is commonplace. New developments will inevitable improve and replace what we currently take for granted. For example, fiber optic cables with almost limitless voice capabilities are being tested and are replacing underwater wire cables. More amazing is Project Meteorburst, already in limited use in some parts of Alaska by the Federal government. Instead of bouncing a signal off the troposphere, a unique idea 35 years ago, the signal is deflected form the trails of passing meteors and beamed with high accuracy to the receiving antenna. Without the original concept that went into the WACS tropospheric scatter system, Meteorburst might still be years in the future.

DESCRIPTION OF THE SYSTEM

The White Alice Communications System (WACS) in Alaska was built in various phases, eventually consisting of 71 separate facilities. Components of the system were far flung, ranging from Cape Lisburne, on the North Slope of Alaska, in the north; to Northeast Cape, on Saint Lawrence Island, Bering Strait, in the west; to Shenya, near the end of the Aleutian Chain, in the southeast; to Beaver Creek, near the Canadian border to the east.

Components of such a vast system were naturally located in a variety of local environments and extremes of all kinds were the rule, not the exception. Local environment was one of the few parameters which allowed for any variation in design or layout because the installations were utilitarian in nature and all served the same function. The other two major variables were 1) whether a military facility already existed at the site, and 2) the type of communications used. In many cases, Aircraft Control and Warning (AC&W) sites or Distant Early Warning (DEW-line) installations were already established at a particular location and White Alice equipment was installed as backup communications for the in-place function. In these cases, existing facilities were used. The two different communications types were "tropo" stations and TD-2 microwave stations. Tropo stations, short for forward propagation tropospheric scatter (FPTS), were found in isolated areas and TD-2's were, and still are, found along major road systems. TD-2, in contrast to tropo, does not stand for anything in particular. It is like a car model; "Porsche 911," for example, there were several larger facilities where the two networks overlapped, containing TD-2 microwave towers and tropo antennas. TD-2's and tropo needed different site configurations. They will be described below.

Of the 31 original WACS facilities, 22 were tropo installations. Tropo were, at the time, a dramatic new form of ultra high frequency (UHF) radio able to leap up to 200 miles by bouncing part of their signal off the troposphere. At the transmitting site, telephone conversations and telegraph messages were combined into a single radio signal. A "feed horn" in front of a "billboard" or "movie screen" antenna sprayed the signal against the parabolic antenna surface, which beamed the signal toward the horizon. The small portion that was not lost was deflected downward by the troposphere, about five miles above the earth. Tropo equipment was so sensitive, it could capture one ten-trillionth of the transmitted signal and still make sense of it. The deflected signal was caught by another billboard antenna and, if necessary, amplified and sent on to the next WACS facility. So revolutionary was this technology in 1955, when it was first put into use in Alaska, and elsewhere, that an article written 11 years later identified three alternative hypotheses to explain the tropospheric propagation mechanism (Gunther 1966).

Six of the 31 installations were the more conventional microwave stations; smaller [consisting of a radio relay building and a microwave tower], more accessible and easier to maintain and operate. Three of the facilities combine tropo and TD-2 microwave antennas together. The original 31 installations are listed in Table 1, below, by type.

The tropo facilities tended to be much larger than the microwave

installations and were often located near AC&W sites. When a WACS site was located at the same site as another military site, it was called a "colocated" facility because dorms, mess, auto maintenance shops, and other buildings were usually shared instead of constructing new ones. Of the 31 original sites, 14 were colocated. These are indicated by an asterisk in Table 1.

It took the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Alaska District, and the Western Electric Company (WECO), three years to build the original WACS system for the Air Force. The original contract had been for 30 million dollars, but, due to several cost overruns, the project cost on the order of 113 million dollars. The next segment of WACS to be constructed was a series of TD-2 microwave installations to support the Ballistic Missile Early

TABLE ONE
THE ORIGINAL WHITE ALICE SYSTEM

<u>Tropo</u>		<u>Micro</u>	<u>Tropo/micro</u>
Aniak	*Kotzebue	Clam Gulch	Neklasson Lake
Anvil Mt.	*Cape Lisburne	Naptowne	*Diamond Ridge
Bear Creek	*Middleton Island	Rabbit Creek	Pedro Dome
*Bethel	*Cape Newenham	R1-N	
Big Mt.	*North River	Soldotna	
Boswell Bay	*Northeast Cape	Starisky Creek	
*Fort Yukon	Pillar Mountain		
Granite Mt.	*Cape Romanzof		
*Indian Mt.	*Sparrevohn		
Kalakaket Cr.	*Tatalina		
*King Salmon	*Tin City		

Warning System (BMEWS) at Clear Air Force Base. This phase of White Alice provided a dual communications route to the "Lower 48", one going down the southeast coast (the A route) to the Ketchikan-Seattle submarine cable, and the other, going east to the Canadian border (B Route) through Canada, down to the lower 48. The ultimate destination of both routes was NORAD in Colorado. Because of this, they were also called the Rearward Communications system. These stations are listed in Table 2, on the next page.

TABLE TWO
THE BMEWS NETWORK

<u>A Route</u>		<u>B Route</u>
Aurora	McCallum	Beaver Creek
Black Rapids	Murphy Dome	Canyon Creek
Boswell Bay	Neklasson Lake	Cathedral
Cape Yakataga	Ocean Cape	Delta Junction
Clear	Paxson	Gerstle River
Donnelly Dome	Pedro Dome	Gold King Creek
Duncan Canal	Sawmill	Knob Ridge
Glennallen	Sheep Mt.	Tok Junction
Harding Lake	Smuggler Cove	
Hoonah	Tahneta Pass	
	Tolsona	

From this list, it is obvious that there is some overlap with the original system. This is because many sites had more than one function, or began with one specific function and added others. Such added functions are called "overbuilds" and denote an addition of certain communications capabilities, rather than a change in site configuration.

Project Stretchout, the next phase, was begun in 1959 and finished in the mid-1960's. This project extended the DEW line system down through the Alaska Peninsula and the Aleutian Chain. WACS capabilities were added on to the installations listed below, in Table 3.

TABLE THREE
PROJECT STRETCHOUT

Cape Sarichef	Nikolski
Cold Bay	Port Heiden
Driftwood Bay	Port Moller

Additionally, King Salmon WACS was overbuilt to include DEW-line capabilities. The Cold Bay facility functioned as the hub for this segment of the WACS. The last major buildup was project Bluegrass which provided an extension to Adak and Shemya. Also added at this time were Alaska Telephone Switching Station (ATSS-4A) capabilities to Big Mountain, Kalakaket Creek, Pedro Dome and Neklasson Lake. These four installations were hubs for the entire network because their circuitry was diversified--if one facility malfunctioned, the other three could communicate. These four facilities varied in layout and function. "Nek" Lake and

Pedro Dome combined tropo and microwave functions. "Kal" Creek, while basically tropo, initially had a microwave link to Campion. Big Mt. was strictly tropo. Operation Bluegrass also added a 50 kw tropo shot from Fort Yukon to Barter Island, thus tying the north coast DEW-line into the main WACS system. Fort Yukon, as well as Adak, Nikolski, and Shemya WACS were the four installations to have 1120 foot billboard antennas. This was because of the difficult terrain and long distances, or "hops," to be travelled along the Aleutian Chain and from the Interior, over the Brooks Range, to the north coast.

WACS microwave capabilities were added at pre-existing locations in the mid 60's. These were on the active Air force bases of Campion, Eielson, Elmendorf and Galena. These consisted of WACS rented office space in existing buildings on Air Force installations. They received signals from other microwave and tropo stations and provided telephone service to the base.

There were two other facilities, at Cape Chiniak and Sitkinak, both in the Kodiak archipelago. These installations were intended for use as WACS facilities, although Cape Chiniak was previously designed as an AC&W site. Technology was developing so rapidly during the 1950's that these two installations were rendered obsolete by project Stretchout even before they opened. Thus, Sitkinak was never finished and Cape Chiniak later became a Pacific Range Tracking Site.

Documentation on the White Alice system is voluminous. Below are descriptions of two representative WACS sites. Similar documentation is available for most, but not all, of the 71 facilities. Included throughout this report are representative as-built drawings and photographs of both the tropo and the TD-2 type stations. An example of a large WACS facility with both tropo and microwave antennas is Pedro Dome:

"The station consists of a 15,024 sf communication center, auto maintenance shop, a water fire pump station, a small warehouse, and diesel and mo-gas storage tanks. The communication center was built in 1957, and most of the other improvements were also built in 1957.

"The Communications Center and Attached Power Plant Room together with the dormitory wing contains a total floor area of 15,024 sf. The building is "T" shaped, with the top of the "T" containing the power and equipment room that measures 40' x 256', m/l (measured length), and the base of the "T" being the dormitory, kitchen area and dining room measuring 35' x 134", m/l. In addition there is a 20' x 35' warehouse addition and a 6' x 20' addition off the kitchen. The building has a concrete foundation with a concrete slab

floor, frame insulated walls with asbestos shingle siding, and a flat, built-up, hot tar roof with aluminum flashing and galvanized sheet metal scuppers. The building is heated with American Standard, oil-fired, hot water boilers, 346 MBH, that provides forced air heat to the building.

"The dormitory wing has a dining room, kitchen, walk-in cooler and freezer, storage room, laundry room, community bathroom boiler room and ten dormitory rooms.

"The dining room has asbestos tile floor, sheetrock walls with hardboard wainscot, acoustical tile ceiling, incandescent lights, and double hung metal windows with storm sash.

"The kitchen has asbestos floor, painted hardboard walls and ceiling, and stainless steel cabinets, counters and dishwasher. The station uses the walk-in cooler, but the walk-in freezer is not in operation. The bathroom has asbestos tile floor, sheetrock walls and ceiling and contains 10 white fixtures, including 3 sinks, 2 urinals, 3 toilets and 2 showers.

"The dormitory rooms have asbestos tile floors, hardboard walls and ceiling and double hung metal windows with storm sash. The boiler room has painted concrete floor, hardboard walls and ceiling and contains the oil-fired hot water boilers that heat the entire building.

"The main equipment wing of the building has an asbestos tile floor, and hardboard walls and ceiling. It has double hung metal windows with storm sash. Off the equipment wing is a warehouse annex, the exterior walls and roof being corrugated fiberglass. Its interior finish is similar to the equipment wing.

"The power plant room has painted concrete floors, hardboard walls and ceiling, and double hung metal windows with storm sash. This room houses four Chicago Pneumatic 6-cylinder diesel engines with 150 KW GE generators.

"The Auto Maintenance Shop measures 41' x 51', m/l, for a total floor area of 2,050 sf. This building has a concrete foundation with a concrete slab floor. It is a steel, I-beam constructed building with insulated corrugated aluminum walls and roof. The interior has painted plywood walls and ceiling. Embedded in the floor are six steel strips for track vehicles. The building is heated with a National-US Radiator boiler, oil-fired, 486,000 BTU, with an enclosed antifreeze system, to six suspended heaters. The boiler

room is lined with sheet asbestos on the walls and ceiling. This building has an overhead crane and two truck doors measuring 14' x 16' and 12' x 14', both chain operated. This building is 14 years old, in good condition and shows little deferred maintenance {in 1978}.

"The Water Fire Pump Station Building measures 13' x 17', m/l, for a total floor area of 228 sf. It has a concrete foundation and concrete floor, woodframe construction with asbestos shake siding and flat built-up hot tar roof. It has insulated walls lined with hardboard wainscot and ceiling. This building houses a 6-cylinder Continental gas engine to operate the fire pump, It is heated with a 10 KW electric heater. It has double solid core wood exterior doors.

"Adjacent to this building is an insulated water storage tank with a capacity of 216,000 gallons. These facilities are in good condition and show little deferred maintenance.

"The Quonset-type Warehouse Building measures 15' x 22', m/l, for a total area of 330 sf (the computer printout shows 594 sf). This building has steel frame with hardboard exterior and interior with a wood floor and a sliding wood access door. It is wired for light. The building is in poor condition.

"The Water Pumphouse Building is located near the base of Pedro Dome and houses the water well and diesel engine that pumps the water up the hill to the station. This building measures 12' x 12', m/l, for a total area of 144 sf. It has a concrete foundation and floor, corrugated steel siding and a flat built-up roof with double metal doors and insulated walls and ceiling lined with hardboard. This building has suffered some vandalism, and at the time of inspection {1978} was in fair condition.

"The station has two above ground diesel storage tanks with a capacity of 470 barrels. There is also a 1,000 gallon mo-gas tank with dispenser. The vehicle parking lot is 220 sq. yds. The station is not fenced" (Follett and Associates 1978: 205-207).

Beyond these improvements, tropo stations are practically defined by their huge billboard antennas. There were three sizes of antennas. The smallest was the 30' circular dish. The mammoth 60' and 120' antennas were "billboard" or "movie screen" shaped. Photographs of all types are found at the back of this report. While they may have appeared flat at first glance, they were actually parabolic. The 30' antennas operated at 1 KW, and the

60' and 120' antennas operated at 10 KW and 50 KW, respectively. In front of each antenna was a "feedhorn" which directed the signal onto the antenna where it was then projected out and up. Tropo antennas were always found in pairs and sited slightly one behind the other. This was because the altitude of the troposphere varies, and depending on the position of the bottommost layer, either one transmitter or the other, depending in turn on its distance relative to the receiving antenna, would carry the signal more effectively than the other at a given time. A single 60' antenna weighed 15 tons.

The TD-2 microwave facilities were much smaller and are simpler to describe. Most generally consisted of one power and equipment building and one microwave tower topped by 'cornucopia' shaped antennas. The towers beamed telephone and telegraph signals by line of sight. Each tower was constructed only as high as necessary to see the station antennas adjacent to it in the network. To ensure the two antennas were of compatible height, they were suspended from helicopters until the signal beamed from one to the other. Only then were the cornucopia antennas placed on the towers. The following extract describes the improvements at the Rabbit Creek Radio Relay Station:

"The station consists of a one-story, steel frame, concrete block building that measures 24' x 51', m/l {measured length}, for a total area of 1,246 sf. It was built in 1957. Other facilities include one diesel storage tank with a pipeline to the diesel powered standby generator, a sanitary latrine, chain line fence and vehicle parking.

"The Radio Relay Building is steel frame, concrete block, with concrete foundation and concrete slab floor. Steel truss girders support the corrugated steel roofing over 2" x 6" T & G fir. The walls are 14' to the eaves. The building has solid core wood exterior and interior doors with hood quality hardware. It is heated with a McPherson Oil-fired furnace, 110,000 BTU, that provided forced air heat to the building. The building has no plumbing and no windows.

"The radio equipment room has painted concrete floor, painted concrete walls and is open to the under side of the steel truss girders and roof.

"The standby emergency power room has a painted concrete floor, paint concrete block walls, and is open to the roof. This room houses a 2-cylinder General Motors diesel engine, with 20 KW Delco generator.

"The site has one diesel storage tank with 100 barrel capacity, a 213 sq. yd. vehicle parking lot, and is fenced

with 543 lineal feet of 8' chain link fence with 3 barb wires.

"Sanitary facilities are provided by a 16 sf plywood outhouse.

This station was built in 1957, is in good condition inside and out, has been well maintained and shows little deferred maintenance" (Follett and Associates 1978: 230).

The Rabbit Creek facility is an active repeater station as shown in photo 1 of the Historic American Engineering Record photographs following this description. After the photographs is a set representative as-built drawings of radio relay stations. The ones included in this report are from the Sawmill and Cathedral facilities because the Rabbit Creek as-built drawings are followed by a site plan and floor plan of the Rabbit Creek installation.

An active repeater of the Rabbit Creek, Cathedral, and Sawmill type amplifies a microwave signal and sends it on to the next station. A passive repeater, on the other hand, has no active parts and is merely a billboard which functions as an optically aligned reflector, much as a mirror reflects a beam of light. It deflects its signal off of a series of such billboards to its final destination. In southcentral Alaska, a passive repeater system functions between Anchorage and Seward. A passive billboard is prominent as one drives south along the Seward Highway, leaving Anchorage. One can be seen across Turnagain arm on Penguin Peak. The Rabbit Creek station, is more complex than this system.

Microwave signals are received at the Rabbit Creek facility from the Anchorage toll center near Elmendorf Air Force Base and from Naptowne, another repeater station, on the Kenai Peninsula. When Rabbit Creek was first opened, signals were received from R1-N. All of these installations were part of the WACS and the Anchorage toll center was the Anchorage ACS. The microwave signal enters on of two cornucopia antennas which sit on top of the 53 foot TD-2 microwave tower. One cornucopia faces Naptowne and the other faces the anchorage toll center. The signals travel down waveguides, entering the radio relay building. Straight sections of waveguides are constructed of copper while curved sections are coated with dense rubber, with copper inside. Note in these photos that there are four waveguides which converge about 10 feet above the ground as they leave the tower and enter the building. This is because two go to each cornucopia and one receives the signal, while the other transmits it.

What follows are brief descriptions for all 71 WACS facilities. The BMEWS facilities are presented in tabular form because they are so similar. In some instances, particularly tower height or distance to the next station, data are not available. This may be because the data were never recorded for that particular facility, the data have been lost, or the data have not yet been retrieved from the tremendous amount of archival material available. Archival material, mostly as-built drawings, measures in the 1000's of cubic feet.

Installations are listed by phase of construction (original, BMEWS, Stretchout, Bluegrass, and later additions) and within this category, they are listed alphabetically. Included are as-built drawings and photographs of various installations which are referenced in text and immediately follow it. In referring to communications antennas, the following standardization are assumed and not always stated. Tropo antennas occur in pairs; 60 and 120 foot antennas are of the billboard shape, while 30 foot antennas are circular; all parabolic; TD-2 microwave towers occur singly, but have paths to two or more destinations as indicated.

INVENTORY

Original White Alice Network

ANIAK

Aniak was a tropo facility which functioned as the link between Bethel and Sparrevohn. It was constructed between 1955 and 1958 and officially activated on 14 January 1958. It was closed in 1979 and is currently owned by the State which may use part or all of the facilities for educational purposes. Original improvements include a large (6080 sf) equipment and power building and a 12-person dormitory (4750 sf). Three POL tanks had a combined capacity of 7000 barrels of fuel. Aniak has two sets of billboard antennas: one pair of 60' antennas transmits to Bethel, 96 miles away, while the other 60' pair faces Sparrevohn, 135 miles distant. All antennas are deiced. They are painted in a checkerboard pattern because the facility is in the flightpath for the Aniak airport.

ANVIL MOUNTAIN (NOME)

Anvil Mountain was a tropo facility linking Granite Mountain and Northeast Cape on Saint Lawrence Island. It was constructed in 1957 and opened on 9 January 1958. It was deactivated in 1978. The main improvement was a 6720 sf equipment/power building. No dormitory was needed because lodging was obtained in Nome. There was one 1600 barrel POL tank on site. In the mid-70's, a pair of transportable 30' dish antennas was added to bypass the link to Northeast Cape. Originally, two 60' antennas faced Northeast Cape 126 away and a second set faced Granite Mountain, 136 miles away.

BEAR CREEK (TANANA)

Bear Creek was a tropo station linking Indian Mountain, Kalakaket Creek and Pedro dome. It was constructed during 1956 and 1957 and officially activated on 6 January 1979. It originally had a 7200 sf equipment and power building and a 16-person dormitory (5200 sf). One pair of 60' antennas faced Kalakaket Creek, 155 miles away and a second pair linked Pedro Dome, a distance of 130 miles. A pair of 30' dishes linked Indian Mountain, 75 miles away. There was also a microwave link to the Tanana FAA.

BETHEL

Bethel was a three-way tropo link between Aniak, Cape Newenham and Cape Romanzof. It was constructed during 1957 and activated on 18 January 1958. It was deactivated in 1979. Some

RABBIT CREEK WHITE ALICE SITE

HAER NO. AK-23

(Page 20)

improvements may be taken over by KYUK, the regional educational TV channel. The original equipment and power building was 6720 sf. No dormitory was needed. The one POL tank had a 6500 barrel capacity. This impressive site boasted three pairs of 60' antennas. They faced Aniak (96 miles), Cape Romanzof (152 miles) and Cape Newenham (147 miles). All were deiced. Personnel stationed at Bethel WACS used many facilities at the nearby AC&W site.

BIG MOUNTAIN (ILIAMNA)

This tropo station linked Diamond Ridge, King Salmon and Sparrevohn. ATSS switching capability was added in 1969. It was constructed between 1956 and 1957 and opened 7 September 1957. It was closed on 27 April 1979. The equipment and power building measured 40 by 180 feet (7200 sf) and a 16-person dormitory (5200 sf) was also located there. One pair of 60' antennas faced Diamond Ridge, 128 miles away. A second faced Sparrevohn, 120 miles distant. A pair of 30' dishes linked King Salmon, 70 miles south. Big Mountain, Neklasson Lak, Pedro Dome and Kalakaket Creek were linked by ATSS switch. These facilities form a large rectangle and are linked so that if one facility failed, they could still communicate with the other three stations. For example, if Neklasson Lake needed to beam information to Pedro Dome, but Big Mountain was 'down,' the information could be beamed to Kalakaket Creek and then to Pedro Dome, bypassing Big Mountain.

BOSWELL BAY (HINCHENBROOK)

Boswell Bay was one of the first stations activated, constructed in 1955 and 1956, and activated on 29 November 1956. It was a tropo station linking Middleton Island and Neklasson Lake. A pair of 30' antennas faced Middleton Island, 69 miles away and a pair of 60' billboards faced Neklasson Lake, 133 miles distant. Its equipment building was 4600 sf and its separate power building was 2500 sf. There was also a 16-person, 5200 sf dormitory. There were several POL tanks and smaller out-buildings. The facility could be reached only by air. It was demolished in 1987 after extensive historic documentation. Under the guidance of the National Park Service, the State Historic Preservation Office and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, Boswell Bay WACS was determined Eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Archival quality photographs have been deposited at the Library of Congress in Washington, DC and several thousand as-built drawings are on file at the University of Alaska, Anchorage archives.

CAPE CHINIAK

Cape Chiniak was intended as a combination tropo/microwave station, but was never opened as a WACS facility. It was planned as an AC&W site and had a microwave link to Pillar Mountain. Because the construction of the Aleutian DEW line in 1959 mitigated the need for an AC&W site, there was no need for a WACS facility either. The site was virtually completed, however. It did become operational, however, as a Pacific Range Tracking Site in 1958-59.

CLAM GULCH (KENAI R1-S)

This is a TD-2 microwave radio relay station with paths 26 miles north to Soldotna and 26 miles south to Diamond Ridge. It was constructed during 1955 and 1956 and opened on 30 March 1957. Improvements include an equipment/power building (1250 sf), the 275' TD-2 tower and a chain link fence. It is owned by Alascom and still in use.

DIAMOND RIDGE (HOMER)

Diamond Ridge is a combination tropo/TD-2 facility. The 63' TD-2 tower is a link to Starisky Creek, 14 miles north. Two 60' billboard antennas link Pillar Mountain, 135 miles south, and a second pair link Big Mountain, 128 miles away. It was constructed in 1956-57 and opened on 30 March 1957. The equipment and power building (6100 sf) houses the communications center, power generator, radio equipment and operators rooms. There is also a 720 sf auto maintenance shop and a 45 sf water supply building. POL storage is contained in four tanks totalling 1000 barrels. Diamond Range was acquired by Alascom in 1983 and is still in use. The billboard antennas have been removed.

FORT YUKON

Fort Yukon was originally linked to Pedro Dome, 124 miles south by a pair of 60' billboard antennas. 120' antennas were added in 1961-62 to connect to the DEW-line station at Barter Island as part of project Stretchout. It was constructed in 1956-57, and prior to that time, had been an AC&W site. Improvements include the 4960 sf equipment/power building, three smaller 'out buildings,' a septic tank and four POL tanks totalling 10,200 gallons.

GRANITE MOUNTAIN (HAYCOCK, CANDLE)

This facility was a tropo link to three other stations. One pair of 60' antennas faced North River 108 miles northwest. A second set faced Anvil Mountain, near Nome, 136 miles away. A pair of

30' dishes also linked Kotzebue, 105 miles west. It was constricted in 1956 and 1957 and activated on 25 May 1957. It was leased to Alascom in 1976. The equipment/power building is 7520 sf and the dormitory is 5200 sf. POL storage is provided by three tanks with a total capacity of 7000 barrels.

INDIAN MOUNTAIN

This tropo station was linked by two 30' dish antennas to Bear Creek, 75 miles away. It was constructed in 1956 and 1957 and opened on 7 February 1958. The 4480 sf equipment building was originally comprised of four separate buildings. They were replaced by one composite building in 1961 at a cost of \$2,280,000. POL storage was provided by three tanks totaling 2550 barrels. Indian Mountain was collocated with an AC&W site. The AC&W site was constructed in 1951 by the 807th Engineer Aviation Battalion who had constructed the World War II airstrips on Umnak and Adak Islands.

KALAKAKET CREEK (KAL CREEK)

Kal Creek was a combined tropo/TD-2, microwave station. It provided a link to North River, 118 miles away, with 60' antennas; a link to Bear Creek 155 miles away, with 60' antennas, and a link to Tatalina, 107 miles distant, with a pair of 30' dish antennas. A microwave link to Campion and Galena was added. It was constructed in 1956 and 1957 and opened on 25 May 1957. ATSS switching capabilities were added during project Stretchout. The equipment/power building was 7520 sf and 16-person dormitory was 5200 sf. POL storage consisted of three tanks totalling 7000 barrels.

KING SALMON (NAKNEK)

This tropo station was linked to Big Mountain, 70 miles away, by two 30' dish antennas. It was constructed in 1956 and 1957 and opened 25 May 1957. During project Stretchout, King Salmon became the link for the Aleutian DEW-line system with the main WACS network. Its equipment and power building is 4160 sf and POL storage is comprised of three tanks totalling 3000 barrels. It is located on an active Air Force Base which provides some facilities. Other facilities are provided by the nearby AC&W site.

KOTZEBUE

This tropo station linked Granite Mountain, 105 miles east, by a pair of 30' antennas and Lisburne, 168 miles to the north, by a pair of 60' billboard antennas. Construction began in 1956 and the station opened on 25 May 1957. The equipment and power

building is 5280 sf. POL storage is provided by three tanks totalling 7950 barrels. The building are abandoned but reportedly in good condition. The state of Alaska may convert the facility into a minimum security prison. The 30' and 60' antennas have been demolished. Kotzebue WACS is colocated with an old AC&W site.

CAPE LISBURNE

This facility was linked by 60' tropo antennas to Kotzebue, 168 miles south, and to Point Lay DEW-line station by a second pair of billboard antennas. It was constructed in 1956-57 and opened on 29 August 1957. Lisburne was the only "seasonal" WACS, not in use during the winter. The equipment and power building was 2960 sf. This was replaced by a "showplace" composite building in 1968-70, which boasted a two-story foyer, "Simulating an airy summer atmosphere." It had a colorful interior and lavish lighting. The building cost 6.5 million dollars. POL storage was accomplished by two 400 barrel tanks. Lisburne was the northernmost WACS facility.

MIDDLETON ISLAND

This was one of the first facilities to open. It was constructed in 1956 and opened on 29 November 1956. The first telephone call to use the WACS went through Middleton Island via Neklason Lake. It has been turned over the Federal Aviation Administration and most of the island is owned by a private group of lawyers, MIDICO. A pair of 60' billboard antennas linked Boswell Bay, 69 miles to the north, and a second set linked Neklason Lake, 130 miles north. The equipment and power building was 4300 sf and constructed in six sections. POL storage was provided by three small tanks. Site condition is apparently good. The tropo equipment has been removed although the antennas are still standing. Middleton Island was an AC&W reserve site along with Ohlson Mountain, Cape Chiniak, Sitkinak, Fire Island, and Murphy Dome. Several FAA personnel are stationed at the facility. Middleton Island was a remote station and considered a difficult post. A Mr. Flanley of Federal Electric was quoted in the Wall Street Journal as saying: "One of our best men couldn't take Middleton Island; it's windswept, small, and bare as a baby's bottom. He got claustrophobia there; we moved him to another station and he's all right" (WECO 1957).

NAPTOWNE (KENAI R1-N)

Naptowne is a radio relay station with a 250' TS-2 microwave tower with paths 48 miles north to Rabbit Creek and 17 miles south to Soldotna. It was constructed in 1955-56 and opened 18 January 1957. It was acquired by Alascom in 1983 and is still

functioning. It consists of a 1200 sf equipment and power building, a 16 sf sanitary latrine, two POL tanks totalling a 200 barrel capacity and a 595' long chain link fence.

NEKLASSON LAKE (NEK LAKE, WASILLA)

Nek Lake functioned as a tropo link to Boswell Bay, 130 miles to the south, and also had a TD-2 microwave link to Elmendorf AFB. Nek Lake and Boswell Bay were the first two WACS stations to become operational (29 November 1956). During Project Stretchout, this facility became a switching station and was incorporated into BMEWS, A Route. The equipment and power building (5610 sf) was built in seven sections and included the communications center, power plant room, switchboard room, pump station, radio facility room, microwave equipment room and office control equipment room. There was also a paint shed and a 250 gallon POL storage tank. None of the original equipment, with the exception of a backup generator, remains. The 60' tropo antennas, while not in use, are still standing. Nek Lake is easily accessible from Anchorage, near Palmer.

CAPE NEWENHAM

Cape Newenham's 60' antennas faced Bethel, 147 miles away (photo 4, as-built 1). This facility was constructed in 1957 and opened on 18 January 1958. Its main function today is as a Minimally Attended Radar (MAR) site with its characteristic golfball configuration. The WACS site consisted of a 5280 sf equipment and power building, a 4750 sf 12-person dormitory and two 475 gallon POL storage tanks. Newenham also had one of the few tramways in the WACS system. It collapsed early during its operation but no one was hurt. The composite building (equipment and power building) was revamped in 1974 at a cost of over six million dollars. The site has been demolished.

NORTH RIVER (UNALAKLEET)

This was a combination tropo/microwave site with 60' antennas connecting Granite Mountain, 108 miles to the east and Kalakaket Creek, 118 miles southeast. A microwave link to the nearby Unalakleet AC&W site was also in place. It was constructed in 1957 and opened on 13 September of that year. Its equipment and power building was 6720 sf and its 12-person dormitory was 4750 sf. POL storage was a combined capacity of 11,200 barrels. Many AC&W facilities were used and the facility was accessible by road from Unalakleet. However, the military-constructed bridge across the Unalakleet River was prone to wash out because of spring flooding, so at times, the WACS personnel were isolated. The

site is now abandoned and heavily vandalized.

NORTHEAST CAPE

Northeast Cape is located on St. Lawrence, certainly one of the more isolated WACS installations. It functioned as a relay station between Anvil Mountain, 126 miles east, near Nome and Tin Cit, near Point Hope, 161 miles away. In both cases, pairs of 60' antennas were used. It was constructed in 1957 and became operational of 17 February 1958. The composite, or equipment and power, building was 5280 sf. POL storage was accomplished by one 500 barrel tank. Because it was colocated with an AC&W site, dorm and recreation facilities were located there.

PEDRO DOME (GILMORE)

Pedro Dome was a combined tropo/micro station. 60' antennas faced Fort Yukon, 124 miles away and a second pair linked Bear Creek, 130 miles to the south. A 75' TD-2 tower interconnected with Fairbanks Alaska Communications Site (ACS), 15 miles away, Harding Lake, Murphy Dome and Eielson AFB. The station was constructed in 1957 and opened on 6 January 1958. It was incorporated into the BMEWS, A Route, in the mid-60's. The equipment and power building was 9120 sf and the attached 16-person dormitory was 5200 sf. Also on site were a warehouse, water pumphouse, auto maintenance building, fire pump station and POL storage with 470 barrel capacity.

PILLAR MOUNTAIN (KODIAK)

Pillar Mountain was a tropo station linking Diamond Ridge 135 miles north by 60' antennas. An original intention of Western Electric was to have Pillar Mt. also link Sitkinak, 107 miles away. However, when project Stretchout was completed, Sitkinak was unnecessary, so this link was never made. Pillar Mt. also served other government and private entities--U.S. Navy, F.A.A., and R.C.A., for example. The Navy was linked via Cape Chiniak, another station intended as a WACS but, like Sitkinak, never opened as such. Pillar Mountain was constructed in 1957 and opened on 26 April of that year. All components were not completed until 1965. The composite building was 4960 sf, and there were also an auto maintenance building, water and fire pump building, water storage tank and POL storage. The facility is now abandoned and is pending conveyance and possible use by the City of Kodiak.

RABBIT CREEK (POTTER, R1-S)

Rabbit Creek was an unattended TD-2 microwave radio relay station between Naptowne, 48 miles south, and R1-N, on Elmendorf AFB, 12

miles north. It was built in 1955-56 and opened on 18 January 1957. It was acquired by Alascom in 1983 and still functions as it did originally. The site consists of a 1200 sf equipment building, a latrine, and a 100 barrel POL tank. Because it contains most of its original equipment and is so well maintained, it was chosen for archival recordation to National Park Service standards during the course of this project. The photographs, copies of which are in this report, will be sent to the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. and representative as-built drawings will be deposited at the University of Alaska, Anchorage archives. The reason why Rabbit Creek as-builts do not appear in this report is because there are only three in existence, and these are not original. Because the TD-2 stations are all virtually identical, Sawmill and Cathedral as-builts are used instead for report purposes.

R1-N (ANCHORAGE R1-N)

This is an unattended TD-2 microwave relay station which connects Neklasson Lake, 32 miles east, Rabbit Creek, 12 miles south, and Anchorage ACS (Alascom Toll Center), 3 miles south. It was constructed in 1956 and opened on 29 November of that year. While it is located on Elmendorf AFB, Alascom owns the microwave equipment. It consists of a small equipment and power building and the TD-2 tower.

CAPE ROMANZOF

This was a tropo station linking Bethel, 152 miles away, by 60' billboard antennas. It was constructed in 1956 and opened on 15 February 1958. Minimally Attended Radar (MAR) facilities were added in the mid-1960's, and this continues to be the station's main function. The original site consists of a 5280 sf composite building, a 4750 sf 12-person dormitory and 2000 barrel capacity POL storage tanks. It was collocated with an AC&W site where other facilities were available. It is now abandoned except for the MAR facility.

SITKINAK

Sitkinak had been intended as a link to Pillar Mountain, 107 miles to the north, but was rendered obsolete by Project Stretchout. The facility was 79% completed when it was abandoned.

SOLDOTNA (KENAI)

Soldotna is an active TD-2 microwave radio relay station, with paths 17 miles north to Naptowne and 26 miles south to Clam Gulch. It was opened in 1957 and acquired by Alascom in 1983.

The original site included a 4550 sf equipment building, a 12-person 4580 sf dormitory, a garage and maintenance shop (1560 sf), a fire pump house and water control building (206 sf) and a 240 barrel POL tank. It serves its original purpose, contains much of the original equipment, but has been somewhat remodelled.

SPARREVOHN

Sparrevohn, which has been demolished, was a three-way tropo relay station. It linked Big Mountain, 120 miles away, with 60' antennas; Aniak, 135 miles away, with a second pair of 60' antennas, and Tatalina, a distance of 127 miles, with a set of 30' antennas. It was constructed in 1956 and 1957, and became operational on 26 October of 1957. It was deactivated in 1979. Its composite building was 5760 sf, and its 16-person dormitory was 5200 sf. POL storage consisted of three tanks totalling 6200 barrels capacity. Sparrevohn was the hardest facility to build and one of the most costly. The site was not accessible by land or water. Survey gear was initially parachuted in 1951. Initial construction was accomplished by the 813th Engineer Aviation Battalion, who built the runway on Anchitka Island in World War II. Because the area was so poorly known at the time, survey equipment was dropped on the wrong summit at least once. On another occasion, a D-9 Caterpillar was being lowered from a helicopter by cable. The cable snapped and the Cat hurled into the top of the mountain, instead of coming to rest on top of it. When an airstrip was finally cleared, it was found to have a slope of 12 degrees. A sheer cliff is situated at one end of the airstrip. 1960 modifications to the composite building cost in excess of 1.6 million dollars.

STARISKY CREEK (HOMER R1-N)

Starisky Creek is an unattended main route microwave relay station linking Diamond Ridge, 14 Miles south, and Clam Gulch, 26 miles north. It was constructed in 1955 and 1956 and opened on 30 March 1957. It was declared excess in 1979 and acquired by Alascom. It consists of a 1200 sf equipment building, an outhouse, and a 100 barrel POL tank. It performs the same function as it did in 1957 and much of the original equipment is left.

TATALINA (McGRATH, TAKOTNA)

Tatalina, which has been demolished, was a tropo link between Sparrevohn, 127 miles away, and Kalakaket Creek, 107 miles away. Both links used two 30' dish antennas. It was constructed in 1956 and 1957 and opened on 27 October, 1957. It was deactivated on 1979 but a Minimally Attended Radar (MAR) facility still functions. There is also a microwave link to Galena FAA. The

equipment building was 4160 sf and POL storage was accomplished by three tanks with a total of 1325 barrels capacity. Many facilities were available at the neighboring AC&W site.

TIN CITY (WALES)

Tin City communicated with Northeast Cape, on St. Lawrence, 161 miles southwest, with 60' antennas. Later temporary 30' circular antennas were added to link Anvil Mountain and Tin City, bypassing Northeast Cape. The facility was constructed in 1957 and opened on 18 February 1958. The composite building was 4960 sf and there were two POL storage tanks totalling 950 barrels capacity. Other facilities were available at the AC&W site, 1.5 miles away. A passenger tramway was added in 1963 to transport workers from base camp to top camp (WACS). The cost to construct this and the Cape Lisburne tramway was almost 1.4 million dollars. Repairs in 1967 and 1968 to the composite building were 4.6 million dollars.

THE BMEWS (BALLISTIC MISSILE EARLY WARNING SYSTEM)/REARWARD
 COMMUNICATIONS

Because most of these stations are so similar, the majority of them will not be described separately. Most consisted of a radio relay building, a POL tank, and a TD-2 tower. They were constructed exactly the same as the earlier TD-2's, such as Naptowne, Soldotna or Rabbit Creek. They were all constructed in 1960 and opened in 1960 or 1961. Some had latrines and auto maintenance shops. In the following list, the station name is listed, whether it belonged to the A or B Route, the stations to which it was linked, and the mileages to the links appear in parentheses.

<u>Station</u>	<u>TD-2 Links</u>
AURORA(A)	Gennallen (25); Paxson (40)
BEAVER CREEK(B)	Tok(41); Mt. Dave, Canada(43)
BLACK RAPIDS(A)	Donnelly Dome(19); McCallum(20)
CANYON CREEK(A)	Gold King Creek; Delta Junction(35)
CATHEDRAL(B)	Knob Ridge(20); Tok(25)
CLEAR (A; BMEWS hub)	Murphy Dome; Gold King Creek
DELTA JUNCTION(B)	Gerstle River(28); Canyon Creek(35)
DONNELLY DOME(B)	Black Rapids(20); Harding Lake(54); Delta Junction (18)
GERSTLE RIVER	Delta Junction(27); Knob Ridge(31)
GLENNALLEN(A)	Aurora (25); Tolsona (20)
GOLD KING CREEK(B)	Clear(60); Canyon Creek
HARDING LAKE(A)	Donnelly Dome(54); Pedro Dome(46)
KNOB RIDGE (B)	Cathedral(20); Gerstle River(31)
MCCALLUM(A)	Black Rapids (19); Paxson (20)
MURPHY DOME(A)	Pedro Dome; Clear
PAXSON(A)	Aurora(40); McCallum (20)
SAWMILL(A)	Neklasson Lake(33); Sheep Mountain(22)
SHEEP MOUNTAIN(A)	Tahneta Pass(12); Sawmill (22)
TAHNETA PASS(A)	Sheep Mountain(12); Tolsona(42)
TOK JUNCTION(B)	Beaver Creek(41); Cathedral(25)
TOLSONA(A)	Tahneta Pass(42); Glennallen(20)

The following five BMEWS stations are of the tropo type and were part of the A Route. All links, unless specified otherwise, are 60' antennas. Site configuration is based on the older stations described for the original WACS tropo installations.

DUNCAN CANAL	Smuggler Cove; Hoonah
HOONAH	Duncan Canal; Ocean Cape; TD-2 link to Lena Point
OCEAN CAPE	Cape Yakataga; Hoonah

SMUGGLER COVE Duncan Canal; remote link to DEWline
CAPE YAKATAGA Ocean Cape; Boswell Bay

PROJECT STRETCHOUT

Construction on Project stretchout began in the late 1950's. Because the six stations were configured somewhat differently and had various functions, they will be described separately. All of the stations were tropos and they functioned, overall, as the Aleutian DEW-line system. It was during this phase of WACS construction that 120' billboard antennas were first used. While the 60' antennas had been successful elsewhere, 120' antennas were still in the planning stage when they were constructed on the Aleutians. The facilities were built in the 1950's, and DEW-line capabilities functioned until the late 1960's.

COLD BAY

Cold Bay became the hub of the Aleutian DEW-line system and connected back to the main WACS network at King Salmon. It was also the headquarters for the 714 AC&W squadron. The facility was constructed in 1958, opened in 1959, and deactivated in 1979. MAR capability was added in the 1970's. 60' antennas beamed signals 105 miles to Port Moller and 92 miles to Cape Sarichef. The original site consisted of a composite building which housed the dormitory and the communications equipment as well. additional facilities were available at the nearby ACS site. the original cost for Cold Bay and Cape Sarichef together was almost eight million dollars. Improvements and repair to the composite building in 1971 cost 2.5 million dollars. The installation has been demolished.

DRIFTWOOD BAY (UNALASKA)

Driftwood Bay reached west 106 miles to Nikolse and east 93 miles to Cape Sarichef. 60' antennas were employed. The station was opened in 1959 and deactivated in 1977. It has been vandalized extensively, which is rather surprising because it is such a remote site.

NIKOLSKI

Nikolski not only functioned as a component of the western DEW-line, it served the Navy, FAA, and other agencies as well. It communicated with Driftwood Bay, 106 miles to the east, via 30' antennas; Atka, 233 miles to the west, with 60' antennas, and Adak, 341 miles west, with 120' antennas. It cost five million dollars to build.

PORT HEIDEN

Port Heiden communicated directly with King Salmon, 141 miles up the Alaska Peninsula and with Port Moller, 100 miles down the Alaska Peninsula utilizing 60' antennas in both cases. It was opened in 1959 and deactivated in 198. The original site included a 15,000 sf composite building, a 400 sf water storage tanks, a 90 sf water pump house, a 140 sf ammunition storage structure and fuel storage tanks totalling 540,000 gallons in capacity. This abandoned site had been heavily vandalized and is in a state of "decomposition". It cost 3.5 million dollars to build.

PORT MOLLER

Port Heiden and Port Moller were virtually identical in site composition and configuration. 60' antennas communicated with Cold Bay, 105 miles to the west, and with Port Heiden, 100 miles away. It has been ransacked and free standing water is present in all buildings. The original cost to build Port Moller was 4.4 million dollars. It may have cost to build them Port Heiden because it is a less accessible spot.

CAPE SARICHEF

Cape Sarichef, now in private hands, was built on top of a levelled cinder cone. A problem during construction and all during occupation of the site was volcanic ash and dust which got into all the machinery and bothered the personnel as well. One pair of 60' antennas communicated with Driftwood Bay, 93 miles to the west, while the other pair faced Cold Bay, 92 miles to the east. The initial cost of Cape Sarichef and Cold Bay together was almost eight million dollars.

PROJECT BLUEGRASS

Project Bluegrass extended the WACS to the end of the Aleutian Chain. Adak and Shemya became operational in the late 1960's and were deactivated in the late 1970's. They have been demolished, although the composite building on Shemya has been stripped, remodelled and has been reused for other purposes. Due to the remoteness of these facilities, only 120' billboard antennas could be used. As mentioned above, use of this size antenna was still in the planning stage. When erected during Stretchout and Bluegrass, they had never been used before. Adak communicated with Nikolski to the east, 341 miles distant and with Shemya, an incredible 393 miles to the west. Shemya was the end link to Akak and the WACS system on the mainland and also had communications capabilities with the Coast Guard installation on Attu.

LIGHT ROUTE MICROWAVE FACILITIES (LRM)

LRM's date to the 1960's and provided telephone service to the Air Force Bases on which they were located. They also connected into the WACS system. Pre-existing facilities were used and the WACS rented office space in them. The Campion AFB WACS connected to Kalakaket Creek and Galena. Eielson AFB had a microwave path to Pedro Dome. The Elmendorf AFB facility connected to R1-N and, finally, Galena was linked to Campion and Kalakaket Creek.

CONCLUSION

In the 1950's, White Alice symbolized the Cold War Era and was conceived and constructed by men and women who had lived through World War II, remembering it vividly. While the WACS was not the first FPTS system to become to create. The physical remains of the system reflects a time when such an effort was considered necessary to protect our country from the threat of another global conflict. The WACS was the most sophisticated technology of its day, but it was outmoded soon after it was constructed with the advent of satellite technology. It will be remembered as a necessary stage in the development of telecommunications and as a product of a time in the not so distant past when the Cold War was at its height.

GLOSSARY

Acronyms

AACS: Airways and Air Communications Service
ACS: Alaska Communication System (or Site)
AC&W: Aircraft Control and Warning
ATSS: Alaska Telephone Switching Station
BMEWS: Ballistic Missile Early Warning System
DEW: Distant Early Warning
FPTS: Forward Propagation Tropospheric Scatter
NORAD: North American Air Defense
RRS: Radio Relay Station (or Site)
TWX: Teletypewriter
WACS: White Alice Communications System (or Site)
WAMCATS: Washington-Alaska Military Cable and Telegraph System
WECO: Western Electric Company
WUTE: Western Union Telegraph Expedition

Technical Terms

Amplifier: Device that controls energy from a power source in an electronic system. It has the effect of increasing the strength of an electrical quantity such as voltage, current, or power.

Antenna: Antennas are transducers that convert current or voltage into electromagnetic fields, and vice versa. They are used to send and receive radio-frequency waves such as those from AM and FM radios.

Carrier wave: Commonly a radio-frequency electromagnetic wave used to carry information. Some characteristic of the wave, such as amplitude or frequency, is modified for this purpose.

Circuit: A circuit is the complete path of electric current, including the energy source. Current will flow in a closed circuit but it will not flow in an open circuit.

Converter: Changes electrical current form one kind to another; electronic device that changes the frequency of a radio signal.

Current: Flow of electrons.

Generator: Machine that converts mechanical energy into electrical energy.

Inverter: An electronic circuit that "turns the signal upside down." They are used in almost all electronic devices. They change a positive pulse to a negative one.

Klystron: An electron tube used to amplify or generate radio waves of microwave range frequencies by means of velocity modulation.

Microwave: Form of electromagnetic radiation with frequencies between 1 GHz (1000 MHz) and 300 GHz (30 cm.-1 mm.).

Modulate: Changing some characteristic of a radio-frequency carrier wave so as to transmit intelligence from one point to another.

Propagation: Transmission.

Receiver: Electronic device that recovers information from a carrier wave - and amplifies it for further use.

Rectifier: Device which changes AC current to DC current.

Repeater: A machine or device which amplifies a signal.

Solid-state: Refers to transistors and integrated circuits. Differentiates between vacuum tubes and devices that are "solid" in nature.

Switch: An electrical/electronic device that may be set to allow current to flow (closed) or block current flow (open). When the switch is off, an open circuit exists and current cannot flow. When the switch is on, a closed circuit exists and current flows.

Translator: Device which determines and explains a signal.

Transmitter: A device that transmits information.

Troposphere: Lowest region of Earth's atmosphere.

Vacuum tube: An amplifying device that has its elements inside an evacuated enclosure, such as glass or metal.

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