

TALE OF A CROOKED ROAD

The Alaska Highway from early promotion to the opening to the public.

Purpose: The purpose of this exhibit is to tell the story of the Alaska Highway. The exhibit covers early plans and promotional efforts, the wartime decision to build the highway, the highway's use as a military highway, and opening the highway to the public after World War II.

Scope: The time scope of this exhibit is the years 1932 to 1949. The physical scope of this exhibit is the Territory of Alaska and Western Canada north and west of Edmonton, Alberta. This exhibit will show the promotion, building, military use, and eventual opening to the public of the highway using labels, covers, postcards, documents and other material.

Historical Perspective: The Alaska or "Alcan" Highway was a pre-war dream that became a wartime necessity. The idea of a highway had been proposed and promoted since the time of the Klondike gold rush in 1896-98. During the 1930's there were efforts to promote the idea of a highway by groups in the Territory of Alaska, Western Canada, and the Pacific Northwest. These included a dog sled trip and a motorcycle trip over the proposed route.

The prospect of war in the Pacific made the highway a priority. The U.S. and Canadian governments had begun discussions even before the attack on Pearl Harbor. After the attack and the declaration of war the project became a priority. Construction was ordered in February 1942.

The initial pioneer road was completed in November 1942, and the permanent road was completed in late 1943. The highway was used to transport supplies to Alaska and to the airfields of the Northwest Staging Route.

And yes, the road was very crooked.

Exhibit Information: Exhibit text is presented as shown below:

Item information is in black.

Significant items in the exhibit are outlined in red.

Historical information is in Italics bordered in green.

Postcard captions are boxed and in Blue.

Exhibit Plan

- I. Before the Highway
 - By Dogsled
 - By Motorcycle
- II. Building the Highway
 - Headquarters
 - Starting Points
 - Construction Regiments
 - Dedication
 - Detour 1
 - Public Road Administration
 - Detour 2
- III. Using the Highway
- IV. Epilogue - Highway Opened to the Public