



## A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE USS HORNET MUSEUM

### Hornet Legacy in the U.S. Navy

The name *Hornet* is legendary in annals of naval history. Sail- and steam-powered *Hornets* have made significant contributions in all major conflicts, beginning with the Revolutionary War. The first two ships in the Continental Navy, ten-gun sloops, were named *Hornet* and *Wasp*. The second *Hornet* fought the Barbary Pirates in 1805 and was instrumental in supporting the Marine Corps victory at Derne, a battle that ended the war. Following these first two *Hornets* were four more vessels named *Hornet* leading up to the seventh *Hornet*, an aircraft carrier: *USS Hornet (CV-8)*. In commission for only one year, she participated in the three most important Pacific Theater events in the first year of World War II. During 1942, she launched the famous Doolittle Raid against the Japanese homeland in April, fought in the decisive Battle of Midway in June and helped win the pivotal Guadalcanal campaign later that year. She was sunk in a ferocious enemy air and surface attack in late October.



The eighth and final ship to bear this gallant name, *USS Hornet (CV-12)*, was commissioned on November 29, 1943, the fourth ship in the Essex-class series of aircraft carriers. Her incredible exploits during World War II earned her the Presidential Unit Citation and nine battle stars. During the 14 months she was in harm's way, she never tied up at a pier. During that time, her pilots and crew destroyed over 1,400 enemy planes and sank 73 enemy ships. She was attacked 59 times but never suffered a major hit. *Hornet* is one of the most decorated ships of WWII, having participated in nearly every major action in the latter-stage Pacific Theater of operations.



In the 1950's, *Hornet* was modernized and re-designated as attack carrier CVA-12. However, she was too small to handle the high performance jet aircraft then entering the fleet, and was reassigned as an anti-submarine warfare carrier, CVS-12, in 1958.

In the mid-1960's, *Hornet* completed three tours of combat duty on "Yankee Station," off the coast of Vietnam.

Her main responsibilities were maritime interdiction as well as aircrew search and rescue. During this era, she was also a key participant in developing naval tactics to protect carrier battle groups from attack by Soviet nuclear submarines.

Her illustrious career culminated with the flawless recoveries of Apollo 11 and Apollo 12 in the Pacific Ocean. On July 24,

1969, the Apollo 11 command module "Columbia", and the first humans to walk on the moon, parachuted into the ocean.

Under the gaze of

President Nixon, the *Hornet* helicopters and crew recovered the astronauts, command module and 46 pounds of moon rocks. Once the astronauts were quarantined in a special trailer on the ship, 500 million TV viewers worldwide watched as the President welcomed Buzz Aldrin, Neil Armstrong and Michael Collins back to earth.



Because of this perfect performance, she was also selected to recover Apollo 12, one of the most successful space missions ever flown. *Hornet* retrieved the all-Navy astronaut crew of Pete Conrad, Alan Bean, and Dick Gordon and the command module "Yankee Clipper" on November 24, 1969.

Like many of her sister WWII aircraft carriers, *Hornet* was retired from service in 1970. For 25 years, she quietly waited for her next assignment while silently tied up in the mothball fleet in Bremerton, Washington.

In 1991, *Hornet* was granted National Historic Landmark (#1029) status when a group of Bremerton citizens discovered the legacy of the "Gray Ghost" and decided to honor her contributions to America.



## USS Hornet as a Public Museum

The Aircraft Carrier Hornet Foundation's goal is to create and maintain a world-class museum with an emphasis on 20th century history, especially naval aviation and lunar space exploration (sea, air, and space). A State and National Historic Landmark, *Hornet* is a significant community asset that supports a wide range of community activities. These include patriotic events, youth outreach, and educational exhibits.

Currently, the museum has restored and opened for public tour all the important "carrier operations" spaces. These include the flight deck, hangar bays, engine room, flight operations control center, bridge, navigational center, infirmary, pilot ready rooms, and the combat information center. Many ship compartments have been turned into permanent exhibits with memorabilia and educational displays covering other important ships, aircraft squadrons, NASA space mission recoveries, and topics of general historical interest. Other restored areas are used as classrooms and berthing for youth overnight programs.

## The Saving of the USS Hornet

The process for creating the museum began in May 1995, when Astoria Metals Inc. relocated the ship to the San Francisco Bay Area to be scrapped. During this time, *Hornet* was towed to the Alameda Naval Air Station to serve as the focal point for festivities surrounding the 50th Anniversary of the end of WWII. A large group of dedicated volunteers cleaned and painted various parts of the ship and it was opened to the public two days a week. Approximately 75,000 people visited *Hornet* from May through October of 1995.

In May 1995, with great foresight, the Aircraft Carrier Hornet Foundation (ACHF) was formed to permanently save *Hornet* from being scrapped. In November, the Navy placed her into the Ship Donation Program and gave ACHF time to raise enough funds to complete the application process for acquiring the ship.

By September 1997, the ACHF had secured \$2.1 million in donations and loans, and *Hornet* was officially transferred by the Secretary of the Navy in May 1998. Approximately 200 volunteers and staff worked tirelessly to recondition the ship to be a safe, publicly accessible museum. The restoration process was a complex and labor intensive effort.

Located at Alameda Point (the former Alameda Naval Air Station), the USS Hornet Museum was informally opened to the public on August 27, 1998.

The formal Grand Opening celebration was held in October with Dr. Buzz Aldrin, Apollo 11 astronaut and the second man to walk on the moon, as guest of honor and featured speaker.



This ceremony signaled that *Hornet* was serving America again, in her new career as an educational venue, community asset, and caretaker of Navy tradition in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Among the numerous exhibits are 12 aircraft, both fixed and rotary wing, ranging from WWII vintage to the modern era. Apollo artifacts include the only "moon germ" quarantine trailer (MQF) outside of the Smithsonian Institute and used by the astronauts of the Apollo 14 mission, and an Apollo command module that flew a sub-orbital mission in 1966.



The principal artifact is the ship itself, having been involved in two of the 20th century's most memorable events (WWII and the first Apollo moon landing). *Hornet* is recognized as the most authentically restored aircraft carrier museum in the U.S. and provides an ideal platform for public education in the areas of science, technology, naval history, naval aviation and lunar exploration.

Special new exhibits are created each year to cover relevant subjects such as the Doolittle Raid on Japan, women in the military, space exploration, anti-submarine warfare operations, and others.

The museum is operated and promoted as a destination for family-centered activities and is open six days a week, twelve months a year. There is ample free parking for vehicles at the head of the pier and a food concession on weekends.

The initial demographics of the museum audience are Northern California residents and SF Bay Area visitors with a special emphasis on educational opportunities for youth in the local communities. As a world-famous landmark, the museum attracts many visitors from across the U.S. and around the world.



## MUSEUM PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

The *Hornet's* basic programs and services were established in the first year of operation. The museum's contributions to the Bay Area area can be measured by the breadth and value of our community service activities. The key program areas can be categorized as:

- Museum (general admissions, group tours, store sales, membership, flight simulator, etc.)
- Community Events (big band dances, patriotic holidays, special events, etc.)
- Youth Outreach (youth live-aboard, scout merit badge, etc.)
- Private Events (corporate promotions, school graduation events, film productions, etc.)

### Museum

The museum has acquired and restored a number of permanent exhibits. It continues to seek aircraft and other artifacts to restore the ship to its most accurate representation of her past life. The museum is not subsidized by any government agencies. Its operating revenues come from the basic community service programs listed above, plus memberships, private donations, and corporate sponsorships.

Since the museum opened, over 750,000 people have visited the ship. Most come to experience the authentically restored areas, such as the Bridge and Pilot Ready Rooms. The museum also provides a unique and stimulating environment for school programs that teach science and history concepts in an interesting, interactive, and fun manner. Most guests agree that the highlight of their visit was a docent-led tour, where they heard firsthand experiences from the veterans.

The *Hornet* operates a website with a virtual photographic tour of the ship on it to allow a wide audience to experience her legacy. There is also an online store that sells a variety of *Hornet*-related merchandise.

### Community Events

*Hornet's* Big Band Dances generate significant interest throughout the Bay Area and are often sold out. Approximately 1,000 people attend each of these popular events with headline bands such as Glenn Miller, Tommy Dorsey, Harry James, and Benny Goodman. The 6,000 square foot dance floor is put to full use, with a dedicated group of 400+ returnees to every dance.

The museum dances are widely recognized as the best swing parties in the entire Bay Area and many attendees dress in period attire.

The museum hosts special public events, especially in conjunction with patriotic holidays. In past years, newspaper, radio and TV coverage of *Hornet* has increased due to the planning of creative events. These include new exhibit openings, Veterans' Day ceremonies, Memorial Day ceremonies, 4th of July celebrations, Fleet Week participation, and commemoration of the Apollo 11 recovery. These events attract significant visitor attendance—17,000 alone for the four day "Moon Fest" in 1999, the 30th anniversary of Apollo 11.

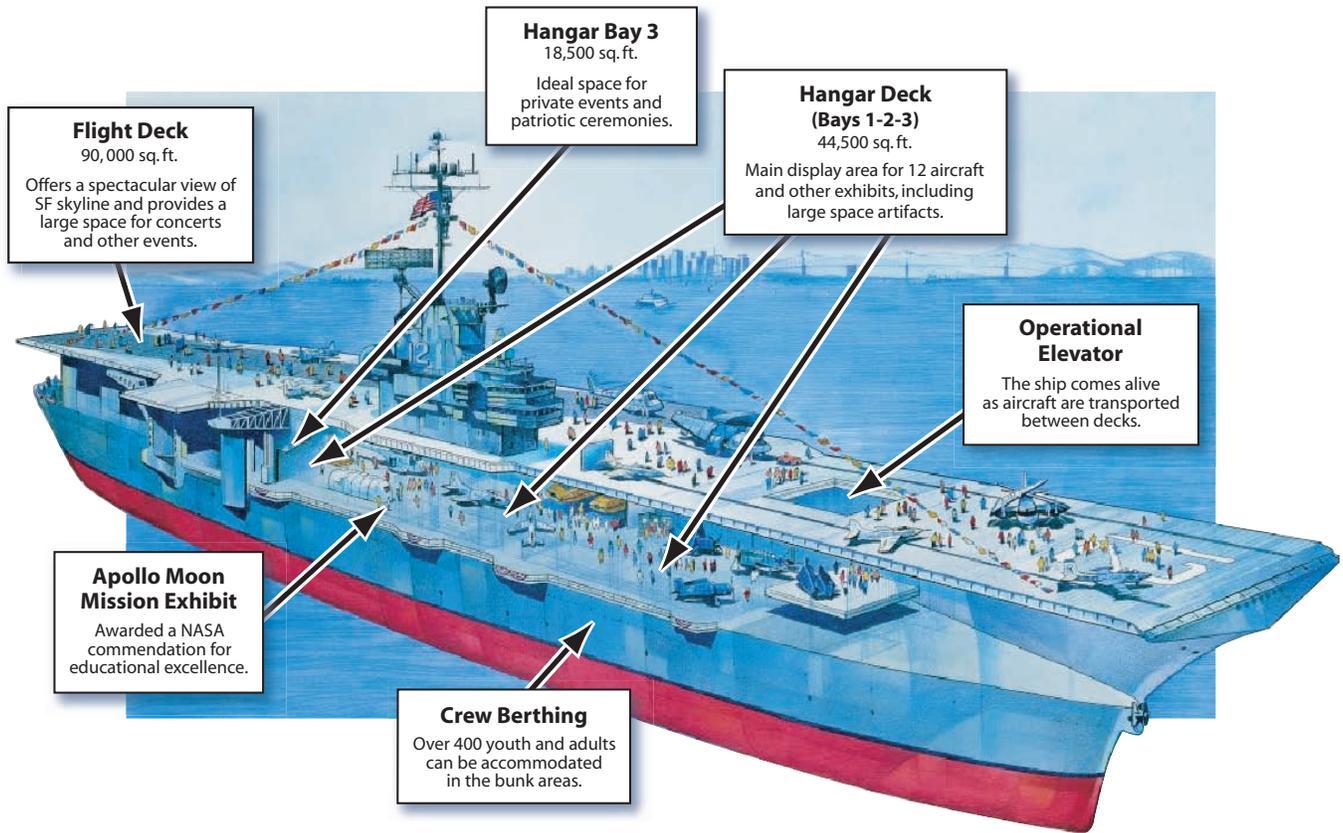


### Youth Outreach

*Hornet* has several excellent programs for the young. The overnight Live-Aboard Program was initiated in 1999 with only a few berthing spaces available, yet 500 young visitors spent a night aboard that year. The program continues to be extremely popular and is still building momentum since many people want the chance to experience a sailor's life aboard an aircraft carrier. The normal program includes a bunk for one night, two meals in the mess deck, interactive games, docent guided tours to key ship compartments, and live presentations on various subjects. The museum can now accommodate over 400 guests each night. The popularity has grown significantly, with more than 12,000 guests for 2005, an astonishing increase during tough economic times!



Adding a new dimension to the Live-Aboard experience, the museum launched a Merit Badge program for Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts. By spending a full day in the classroom with *Hornet* instructors, attendees can qualify for an Aviation or Radio merit badge. This program has been very successful. In 2005, roughly 500 scouts earned merit badges in Aviation and 200 in Radio.



## Private Events

A large number of commercial parties and events have been held using 1, 2 or all 3 hangar bays. Since the museum opened, over 100,000 guests attended some form of group function. The museum is recognized as having the third largest event facility in the SF Bay Area. The entire hangar deck has the capability of seating 2,000 people for a formal dinner including a food preparation area and a large stage.

*Hornet's* film production credits include the 2006 "All Military" episode of the popular TV reality show "Fear Factor," the major 2005 motion picture "XXX: State of the Union," many historical documentaries such as the BBC's "Battle of Midway" and the History Channel's "Destination Tokyo — The Doolittle Raid." The *USS Hornet*, nicknamed the Gray Ghost in WWII, was also the film location for the "Ghost Ship" episode of the TV program "JAG!"

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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## Summary

*Hornet* is an educational venue, community asset, and caretaker of Navy tradition in the SF Bay Area. Having participated in two of the 20th century's most memorable events, *Hornet* provides the ideal platform for public education in the areas of naval aviation, naval history, lunar space exploration, science, technology, and topics of general historical interest.

Since opening in October 1998, the USS Hornet Museum has established itself as a marquee name in the SF Bay Area. Several programs are leaders in their field. For instance, the Live-Aboard overnight program is still gaining momentum with a wide variety of northern California youth organizations, while over 50,000 children have already spent a memorable night on this fascinating ship.

On any given weekend, the hangar deck echoes with the sounds of laughing children and the footsteps of curious families, exploring the wonders of naval aviation and space exploration.

When first-time visitors walk up the entrance brow onto the ship, they are awed by the sheer size of *Hornet*. When they leave, they have a renewed understanding of the courage, honor and sacrifice made by its crew while it served this nation.



*The USS Hornet Museum is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization with the goal of inspiring people of all ages to experience naval history, science, and space technology firsthand.*