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'Army Boots and Army Wings' bookends history at Pearson

Park Service debuts first comprehensive exhibit at museum



Photo by [Zachary Kaufman](#)

Meagan Huff, Fort Vancouver National Historic Site museum technician, puts the finishing touches on a display that includes welding gear used by Betty Jane Budd at Vancouver's Kaiser Shipyard.

By [Tom Vogt](#)

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By Zachary Kaufman

Museum technician Meagan Huff, left, and National Park Service curator Theresa Langford enclose a case that displays the welding helmet and gloves used by Betty Jane Budd at Vancouver's Kaiser Shipyard during World War II.



By Zachary Kaufman

A bugle belonging to Irish immigrant and U.S. Army 7th Infantry Cpl. Eugene Moriarty is displayed in the Fort Vancouver National Historic Site's new exhibit at Pearson Air Museum.

If you go

- What: “Army Boots and Army Wings” exhibit.
- Where: Pearson Air Museum, 1115 E. Fifth St.
- When: Wednesday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- Cost: Free.

Did you know?

The U.S. Army's Vancouver post was known by a variety of names, including Camp Vancouver (1849-1850), Columbia Barracks (1850-1853), Fort Vancouver (1853-1879), and finally Vancouver Barracks (1879 to present).

Cpl. Hugh Beirne arrived in 1849 after his Army artillery regiment was shipped around the tip of South America.

Almost a century later, Betty Jane Budd came here by bus from Kelso — day after day after day.

Beirne and Budd represent two transitional periods in Northwest history, and they bookend the first comprehensive National Park Service exhibit at Pearson Air Museum.

"Army Boots and Army Wings" takes a 96-year look at the history of Vancouver Barracks and Pearson Field, from the arrival of the first U.S. troops at Fort Vancouver through the end of World War II.

The exhibit includes artifacts excavated from Fort Vancouver by Park Service archaeologists, like a World War I visored helmet modeled after medieval

armor. There also are items donated by area families, including another helmet — the welder's helmet worn by Budd when she worked at the Kaiser Shipyard in Vancouver during WWII.

The exhibit opened Friday at Pearson Air Museum, 1115 E. Fifth St. It will continue for about a year.

The Fort Vancouver National Historic Site took over management of the air museum in February after a disagreement with the Fort Vancouver National Trust, a local nonprofit that had operated the museum on behalf of the city of Vancouver.

The transition gave the Fort Vancouver National Historic Site an opportunity to branch out, said local Park Service officials. The replica stockade and the buildings within its log walls were created to represent the Hudson's Bay Company fur-trading era of the 1840s.

"A traditional Hudson's Bay post is not the best venue for an exhibit on the U.S. Army," said Meagan Huff, a Fort Vancouver museum technician who put the exhibit together over the last four weeks.

"A lot of these artifacts have never been displayed before," she said.

Cpl. Beirne was among the first soldiers to arrive, but he didn't serve here long. He was honorably discharged on Nov. 7, 1849. The paperwork is in the Fort Vancouver museum collection; it's too fragile for display, Huff said, so a reproduction of Beirne's discharge leads off the exhibit.

Displays represent local soldiers who served in many conflicts. Gen. O.O. Howard was awarded a Medal of Honor for his Civil War service and commanded Fort Vancouver-based troops in the Indian Wars.

Cpl. Eugene Moriarty, a bugler in the Army's 7th Infantry, fought in the Battle of San Juan Hill during the Spanish-American War.

The visored WWI helmet was made in 1918, as Army ordnance officers looked for solutions to the butchery of trench warfare.

Military aviation is represented by links to the spruce mill that produced aircraft-quality wood for warplanes, and photographic gear used in the 1920s and '30s for aerial surveys of Northwest forests.

Betty Jane Budd represents the "Rosie the Riveter" era of WWII. Budd was 19 when she went to work at Vancouver's Kaiser Shipyard in 1943. Betty Jane and her sister Helen commuted from Kelso on a bus.

Huff said that one of her favorite artifacts is a small booklet that was given to the men of the 1st Aero Squadron, who worked for the Spruce Production Division at Vancouver Barracks in 1919.

It has a two-page list of "awards" that designate the best and worst of the squadron. Corporal Gower was honored as hardest-working. The top sergeant was the meanest man. And poorest? All the buck privates.

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