The History of the USS Hornet

By Toni Mitchell

The USS Hornet has carved a distinguished place in the annals of United States naval history. Renowned for its valor and resilience, several ships have borne the name USS Hornet.



The name "Hornet" first appeared in the Continental Navy during the American Revolutionary War. The original USS Hornet was a 10 gun sloop-of-war commissioned in 1775; she played an important role in early American naval operations. The Hornet was involved in several engagements, supporting efforts to disrupt British supply lines and contributing to the fledgling nation's fight for independence.

The next USS Hornet was a 20 gun sloop-of-war built in Baltimore in1805. It was a 441-ton brig-sloop operating along the U.S. Atlantic coast and in the Mediterranean until its decommissioning in late 1807.The Hornet was notable for its service during the War of 1812, where it achieved several victories. The ship sank in a storm on September 29, 1829.

World War II Aircraft Carriers:



Perhaps the most famous USS Hornet was the CV-8, a Yorktown-class aircraft carrier commissioned in 1941. The ship gained legendary status for launching the Doolittle Raid against Tokyo in April 1942, a daring attack that boosted American morale and demonstrated Japan's vulnerability. The Hornet also participated in the pivotal Battle of Midway, and later, the Battle of the Santa Cruz Islands, where she sustained heavy damage and was ultimately lost in October 1942. Despite her short service, the Hornet CV-8 played a critical role in shifting the balance of power in the Pacific Theater.



Following the loss of CV-8, the Navy commissioned the USS Hornet (CV-12), an Essex-class carrier, in 1943. This vessel served with distinction throughout the remainder of World War II, participating in major Pacific campaigns and earning sixteen battle stars. After the war, CV-12 supported operations in Korea and Vietnam and was later involved in the recovery of Apollo space missions, including the splashdown of Apollo 11 in 1969. Today, CV-12 is preserved as a museum ship in Alameda, California, honoring the legacy of those who served aboard her.