An Exhibition of Women's United States Air Force Uniforms

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AN EXHIBITION OF WOMEN’S UNITED STATES AIR FORCE UNIFORMS

by

Michelle K. Robinson LeBaron

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

in

History

Approved:

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UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY
Logan, Utah
2023
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ABSTRACT

An Exhibition of Women’s United States Air Force Uniforms

by

Michelle K. Robinson LeBaron, Master of Science

Utah State University, 2023

Major Professor: Dr. Susan Grayzel
Department: History

The new Women in the Air Force exhibit under development at the Hill Aerospace Museum, located at Hill Air Force Base, Utah, is long overdue. The exhibit is set to replace the existing display in order to more accurately and comprehensively represent women’s continuing legacy of service to our nation. The uniforms in the Hill Aerospace Museum collection constitute the focal point of the new exhibit. Material culture methodologies form the foundation of this exhibit work; seeking to provide greater understanding of women’s military experience and history through the analysis of their uniforms. This approach therefore utilizes uniforms, the museum’s greatest resource of service women’s primary source material, to learn more about female participation in the United States Air Force (USAF) in the 20th century.

The development of this exhibit will provide a greater representation of Air Force women and their history in the USAF through their uniforms. This completed exhibit acknowledging the ever-present women of the United States Air Force will serve to inspire the next generation of female airmen and all who look upon the stories of these patriotic women.
PUBLIC ABSTRACT

An Exhibition of Women’s United States Air Force Uniforms
Michelle K. Robinson LeBaron

This paper covers the development of the new Women in the Air Force exhibit at the Hill Aerospace Museum, of Hill Air Force Base, Utah. The exhibit places an emphasis on female airmen’s uniforms and what those uniforms can tell us about women’s experiences in the United States Air Force over the course of the 20th century and into the 21st.
DEDICATION

To Major (Ret.) Glen M. Robinson and Mrs. Lisa N. Robinson
For their service and sacrifice to this great nation and instilling in me a love of country
and gratitude for all who serve so faithfully.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My work is in no way a complete representation of American women’s military experiences, it is only one narrow vantage point, even within the study of Air Force women. I give thanks for and acknowledge all the patriotic women of the United States Armed Forces who have served and provided such a rich history worthy of study and admiration. I express gratitude for all the work and dedication of the scholars who have come before me and laid the foundation of scholarship on women’s history; on everything from individual agency, material culture and public history, to women in the U.S. military.

I am deeply appreciative of Director Aaron Clark and Curator Justin Hall of the Hill Aerospace Museum for entrusting such an important project to me. I am humbled by their confidence in me to bring this exhibit to life. I am also grateful to all the staff and volunteers at the museum for their kindness and willingness to help me succeed. I give special thanks to my family for their support and endless encouragement. Dr. Patricia Rushton and Gail Griswold have my gratitude for going out of their way to assist me. I am grateful to the members of my committee -Dr. Rebecca Andersen and Dr. Molly Cannon- for their willingness to advise me on this big project. I will always be thankful to Dr. Susan Grayzel, for her knowledge and wisdom on the subject of women in the military and of course, for exercising so much patience with me as I have worked to produce this exhibit. I am full of gratitude to God for blessing my educational journey with all of these good people.

Michelle K. Robinson LeBaron
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INTRODUCTION

In a 1964 fashion show put on by the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Service showcasing the uniforms of the United States military, Lieutenant Colonel Marybeth Simpson of the US Army made an important point: “Styles and military uniforms change to reflect the changes in taste and attitudes of a particular era. Changes are also made to make the uniform more practical and comfortable and, in the case, of the dress uniform-more handsome.”¹ The uniforms for men and women of all branches of the American services reflect the “changes in tastes and attitudes of [their] particular era.” This is what makes military uniforms such an important aspect of the material culture that informs women’s military history.

This paper analyzes servicewomen’s uniforms though the last century. It focuses on those that are representative and reflective of some of the significant changes in female participation in military aviation, specifically in the United States Air Force (USAF) and with connections to Hill AFB, Utah and the Hill Aerospace Museum. It is through the study of a chosen few women’s uniforms housed in the Hill Aerospace Museum collection, that important cultural and social shifts and legislative changes will be analyzed and addressed. This involves assessing the eras in which women piloted aircraft for the air forces of the United States as well as the bills and measures that, in some cases, empowered and enhanced their opportunities to serve, and those that limited

it. The women’s uniforms from each of these eras in American military history are
telling. The female dress uniforms of air forces from the 40s through the 70s placed a
premium on femininity and elegance of its wearer, while the pant duty uniforms of these
same eras were more representative of women’s war work- hard, physically and
emotionally demanding work. The analyses of these, as well as other uniforms worn by
Air Force women throughout the 20th century, will be an in-depth look at the uniforms
embodied and worn by female airmen displayed in the new Women of the Air Force
exhibit under development at the Hill Aerospace Museum, Hill Air Force Base, Utah.
The uniforms of this new exhibit offer a unique perspective on female participation in the
US Air Force, through a chronological display of material culture.

The United States Air Force has two standard uniforms, that are regularly worn
and utilized by their airmen- the service dress or dress blues and the battle dress or
fatigues- and they will be discussed as they appear in the collection of the Air Force’s
Hill Aerospace Museum. Flight duty uniforms, more commonly known as flight suits,
and similar flight clothing worn by women in U.S. Air Force history will also be
discussed throughout this paper as they are central to the story of aviation. The uniforms
in the exhibit that will be discussed in this paper include: the dress and flight uniforms of
WASP Alberta Hunt Nicolson, the dress and flight uniforms of WAF Sonia Lillard
Shands, a late 1970s-1980s women’s Air Force service dress uniform, and the Gulf War
era BDU, or battle dress uniform. This paper serves as a companion piece to the new

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2 Barton C. Hacker and Margaret Vining, *Cutting a New Pattern: Uniformed Women in
3 The Air Force uses “airmen” to refer to personnel- male and female. There has been
debate over the use of the designation and push to change it, but this exhibit will
demonstrate that women have served faithfully in the Air Force despite it.
exhibit and provides additional information to all who desire to learn more about the importance of women in uniform.4

4 The mess dress, the formal uniform of U.S. airmen, and the physical training, or PT as it is more commonly referred to, uniform will not receive attention in this paper.
HISTORIOGRAPHY

Agency - the action and ability to make choices for one’s self - is critical to understanding and evaluating women’s participation in warfare. Catherine A. Brekus addresses the issues confronted by those studying and interpreting women’s history in her book chapter entitled “Mormon Women and the Problem of Historical Agency,” found in *Women and Mormonism*. Expounding on the definition of agency, she explores what it means when women choose to exercise their agency in a way that perpetuates the system that they exist in, rather than push against it or attempt to dismantle it. Barton C. Hacker and Margret Vining make a supporting argument in their book, *Cutting a New Pattern: Uniformed Women in the Great War*. The women of the United States Air Force in the twentieth century, for the most part, perpetuated the system, by subjecting themselves to the authority of those in command and adhering to the rules and regulations of the service. By today’s standards, the physical requirements and expectations placed on women of the past century were unfair and may seem disempowering and belittling to these women, yet the women who joined the air forces of the United States chose to accept these uniforms and participate as fully as they could as members of this branch of the American military. Brekus’s theories on female agency and the reenforcing of existent social systems have helped to establish a foundation for this paper as we consider why women have participated in the United States Air Force when their uniforms suggest social as well as organizational constraints placed upon them. An awareness and appreciation for the individual agency of women is critical in examining their

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5 Hacker and Vining, *Cutting a New Pattern*, xvi.
participation in an organization that would seem to strip the individual of that great gift. What does their choice to wear the uniform of the U.S. Air Force mean?

Never in the history of the United States Armed Forces have women been conscripted into the military. All women have entered military service by choice. In some ways they had a greater opportunity to exercise their agency in their choice to join, whereas in the era of the draft, most men arguably had less. But once enlisted, they often sacrificed much of their freedom, allowing themselves to be part of the larger military system, a system that had a long history of marginalizing women.

It is fascinating to ponder which act of agency has the greater impact; the choice to exercise it in full, or the choice to give it up in favor of a cause. By putting on the uniform, service women chose to perpetuate what many might see as a rigid and unfair system. The transition in uniform styles and the availability of certain uniforms to service women (i.e. pants and combat boots) suggest that they also pushed back against some of the constraints placed upon them, getting themselves more practical attire as well as helping the dress uniform to continue to evolve.

Military culture is the key to understanding the design and expectation of the early 1960s Women’s Air Force uniforms. Paul Achter discusses military culture as it has influenced civilian culture, fashions specifically. Achter argues in his article entitled “‘Military Chic’ and the Rhetorical Production of the Uniformed Body,” that the designers of military-inspired clothing, downplay and even seek to completely sever the tie between the clothing and violence. I argue that designers of service women’s

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6 Paul Achter, “‘Military Chic’ and the Rhetorical Production of the Uniformed Body,” *Western Journal of Communication* 83, no. 3 (2018): 266.
uniforms have sought this very thing throughout most of the twentieth century. Achter adds that the “use of women as models is central to the rhetoric separating military styles from violence.” The early Vietnam Era uniform is a case in point. It was a uniform produced and worn at a time when mainstream American culture was experiencing so many disruptions with enduring demands for gender and racial equality.

Hacker and Vining examine the issues of gender and culture through the uniforms of First World War women in *Cutting a New Pattern*. They argue, and Brekus would likely agree, that the uniform made the woman as much as the woman made the uniform—each exerting its influence on the other. How a woman chose to wear her uniform, however, altered or unaltered, was an exercise of her agency. It was chapters fourteen, fifteen, and sixteen on American women’s uniforms that offers the most insight for my own work, giving important background and context for the meaning and importance of uniforms for American women. Vining and Hacker’s book is inspired by the unparalleled collection of American women’s uniforms from the First World War housed at the Smithsonian Institution. Hacker discusses the uniformed women phenomena of the First World war in chapter fourteen. The emergence of uniformed women in this era is the starting point for the new exhibit. The legitimization and iconography of American nursing and medical uniforms, the subject of chapter fifteen, are critical aspects of women’s participation in war throughout the 20th century. Chapter sixteen makes a

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7 Achter, “‘Military Chic’,” 275.
8 Hacker and Vining, *Cutting a New Pattern*, xxiii.
similar case for uniformed women outside of traditional healthcare roles—those that joined the newly formed auxiliaries of the armed forces. An emphasis is placed on how the women felt about their uniforms and the sense of pride that came with wearing their military uniforms, this focus is also integral to the development of the new Women in the Air Force exhibit. I will analyze American Air Force women’s uniforms across the twentieth century and into the twenty-first, by addressing the social and cultural changes reflected in them, and the perspectives of the women who wore them.

The articles “‘If I Should Have the Right Stuff”: Utah Women in World War I” by Mariam B. Murphy and “Immigrants, Minorities, and the Great War,” by Helen Z. Popanikolas contextualized local historical experiences of service women and were particularly helpful in writing the plaques for the exhibit at the Museum. Murphy’s article provides extensive information about the various ways in which Utah women supported the war effort, including nursing, ambulance driving, food preparation, and Liberty Loan drives.10 The article contained excellent references to specific Utah women and their unique contributions; its images of photographs (including uniformed women), war records, and documents integrated into the article were particularly valuable. I intend to use them to help create the image of women’s participation in the First World War through their uniforms in the exhibit at Hill. One limitation of these studies is the less than abundant information on ethnic minority women and how they participated in America’s First World War effort. It was my hope that my own research would uncover these contributions, but my research too has yielded limited results on uniformed women

10 Mariam B. Murphy, “‘If I Should Have the Right Stuff”: Utah Women in World War I,” Utah and World War I, Utah Historical Quarterly 58, no.4, 334-350: 335.
of the Great War who belonged to minoritized groups. It could be in part due to the intersectionality that characterized the lives of these women, contributing to the overall silences in the Utah historical record, but it could also be due to the fact that Utah remains a predominantly ‘white’ populace. With all the efforts to bring minoritized groups to the forefront through revisionist history in the last decade, it is likely that the information uncovered about these groups through these specific sources, and others, is what is available to find. The challenge for my work is therefore, to bring the contributions of the women from these groups to the attention of museum patrons.

Fred Erisman’s article, “Machinery Knows No Sex:” Ruth Law, Women’s Abilities, and World War I Aviation,” provides material on women in the First World War and flight. Erisman addresses the question of women in combat during World War I through a women and gender studies framework. His essay contextualizes ideas of gender politics during the Great War era through an analysis of Ruth Law’s ideologies. Law’s words and views on women’s social, political, and military participation, found in newspapers from her heyday, provide the substance for his argument. Law was a strong advocate for women and the use of technology as a way of extending their influence, even in the military. Law was one of the first women to volunteer to fly combat missions for the U.S. Army in World War I, and when the Secretary of Defense refused women a place in the air forces, she persisted in her efforts through aerial bond drives and as a recruiter for the Army. The essay does not fully demonstrate how her advocacy for women in combat lead to the other victories for women in military aviation victories

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achieved by women in the United States Air Force later in the twentieth century. Nevertheless, Erisman’s analysis of Law’s trailblazing legacy offers a critical starting point to the story of women in flight throughout the Air Force’s history. I intend to build on his work, establishing Ruth Law as the forerunner of the women aviators in the US Air Force and all of the United States military by illustrating her influence on legislation and female participation in the USAF throughout the 20th century and into the twenty-first. I will do this in part through an analysis of her Army Air Corps uniform found in photographs preserved by the Smithsonian Institution. The exhibit will introduce the early female aviators, or aviatrixes, of the 20th century in its already existent Early Aviation display with the addition of a new plaque and female mannequin, replacing the male one that has sat on the Burgess-Wright flyer for over three decades.

Not surprisingly, Hill’s largest collection of women’s uniforms from any war era is that of World War II. I have consulted Emerald M. Archer’s book, *Women, Warfare and Representation* extensively to situate the discussion of women’s participation in the Second World War. This book contains an interdisciplinary approach to the topic of women’s representation in the United States military, arguing for the adoption of gender initiatives in militaries. The book discusses the US military broadly and looks at other countries militaries comparatively, because the US Air Force is not its specific focus. The work is very helpful in other ways, although it does not rely on uniform analysis to discuss femininity, gender stereotypes, war and other related topics. The interviews Archer incorporates in her work emphasize service women’s self-representation and photographs in the discussion of these topics. These emphases are also foundational to
uniform analysis for World War II uniforms, allowing these topics discussed by Archer to be addressed and interpreted through what these women wore.

Serving Our Country: Japanese American Women During World War II by Brenda L. Moore, is another valuable source for this conflict. This book discusses the work of Japanese American women who served in the United States military, through the use of newspapers, personal interviews and other primary sources. What has proved particularly valuable in this source is information about the Americans of Japanese ancestry (AJA) from Utah who enlisted in the Army. A Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) (the forerunner to the WAC) uniform will likely be displayed in the new exhibit and will provide a potential place to discuss AJA participation therein. Another source with a focus on women of ethnic minority groups serving in the US military is Katie Hafner’s 2020 article, “Overlooked No More: When Hazel Ying Lee and Maggie Gee Soared the Skies.” This article focuses on the two American women of Chinese ancestry who earned their WASP wings. These two works by Moore and Hafner make it clear that women of minority ethnic groups are now on historians’ radar and are becoming normalized as part of women’s military history. This is one of the main goals of the new exhibit and this essay; to normalize the ever-patriotic participation of women throughout the history of the United States military, but with special emphasis on aviation. I hope this work will add to that of Moore and Hafner in the normalization process of not just women in the military, but women of a diverse range of backgrounds in the military. The plan for the exhibit plaques includes the stories of multiple women from ethnic minority groups and their various contributions to the wars of the 20th century and to Hill Air
Force Base. One such plaque will tell the story of Miyoko Sadahiro, a Layton, Utah resident, and her service in the US military during World War II and its aftermath.\textsuperscript{12}

*Ancestry of a Defense Weapon Known to Be of Value* by Linda Whitt, Judith Belifaire and colleagues has greatly informed my approach to the Korean War and understanding of how women volunteers were able to participate. This book very thoroughly addressed the participation of both ethnic majority and minority women. Flight nursing is covered and though they did not frame it as such, I will be incorporating Whitt and Belifaire’s work into the history of women in aviation. While women did not serve as pilots, from Whitt and Belifaire’s research, it is clear that they were critical to US operations during the Korean War—in and outside the direct theater of operations.

The recent decision of President Joseph “Joe” Biden to withdraw American forces from Afghanistan has further affected my project, giving an end date to operations, where there had been none before. The American military presence in the Middle East dates back decades. It has defined generations of American’s perspective on warfare, especially after the September 11, 2001, attack on the World Trade Centers. *Women, Warfare, and Representation* proved helpful for these eras of war as it discussed in detail the progress and setbacks faced by women who wished to participate and did serve in the US military during these conflicts. It offered important context and insight into what the American military looks like now with regard to women in the service, how gender is perceived and addressed within the military establishment, and how women are navigating a modern military, after the series of legislative victories for military women that have occurred between 1973 and 2015. These come in the form of the dissolving of the W.A.F. as a

\textsuperscript{12} See Appendix 4.
separate, auxiliary force of the US Air Force, women gaining access to flight training,
and the series of legislation that has subsequently led to women’s full access to the Air
Force’s weapon systems, combat aircraft and combat zones.

The Air Force regularly publishes articles on the advancements made by women
in the military. These articles, though short and often focused on a single woman or a
small group of women, offer valuable insight into the victories women have earned in the
Air Force to date.

The majority of the servicewomen’s material culture available in Hill’s collection
will be used to enhance the new exhibit. Servicewomen’s uniforms are central to the
exhibit design, as they are critical to understanding women’s military history. The
groundbreaking 1920s exhibit showcasing American women’s World War I military and
civilian uniforms exhibited at the Smithsonian Institute, showcased a century ago is a
major inspiration for this new exhibit.13 The National Museum of the United States Army
and the Women In Military Service For America Memorial also offer aspirational
examples of integrating women’s history into the often male dominated museum content
as well as celebrating women from all walks of life and ethnic backgrounds. Edith P.
Mayo discusses the successful Dress for More Freedom exhibit of the Oakland Museum
in the 1970s, which was almost solely reliant on women’s clothing for the development
and production of the exhibit.14 These exhibits demonstrate the power of women’s

History, Behring Center, Smithsonian, https://americanhistory.si.edu/collections/object-
14 Edith P. Mayo, “Women’s History and Public History: The Museum Connection,” The
Public Historian 5, no. 2 (Spring 1983): 68.
clothing and uniforms as primary source material and as capable of conveying individual as well as broader women’s history.
METHODOLOGY

This lack of source material is not unique to the U.S. military, nor to American women, it is a worldwide concern for women’s history. Scholar Edith P. Mayo, and others such as Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, advocate for the use and importance of material culture. Mayo asserts that “the artifact” is important as “a primary source for the study of women’s history.” The changes in Air Force women’s uniforms will help to illustrate the societal norms and expectations of any given point in the last century or so, much like the clothing in *Dress for More Freedom* exhibit did so successfully and J.B. Jackson’s methodology in “The Westward Moving House.” Director Arron Clark described artifacts as central to the museum’s ability to effectively present a historical narrative, expressing that the artifacts themselves have the power to tell the story. Laurel Thatcher Ulrich concurs, describing objects and things as portals, with the “potential to convey information.” Beverly Lemire, analyzing Ulrich’s work adds, objects illuminate issues like “gender practice, [and] ethnicity…across different times and places-" all of which are critical to this project. Giorgio Riello has dubbed this interpretation of history

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18 Director Arron Clark in personal conversation with Michelle K. Robinson, August 2020.
20 Beverly Lemire, “Draping the body and dressing the home: The material culture of textiles and clothes in the Atlantic world, c.1500-1800,” in *History and Material Culture:*
through objects as “history from things.”\textsuperscript{21} The women’s uniforms of the U.S. Air Force on display will serve to provide such histories to patrons supported by background information on text plaques and conveyed through images, audio and other media.\textsuperscript{22}

In order to showcase the material culture of this new exhibit fully, I draw on scholarship, starting with that of Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, a premier scholar in material culture, whose works, \textit{Tangible Things: Making History Through Objects} and \textit{A House Full of Females: Plural Marriage and Women’s rights in Early Mormonism, 1835-1870}, discuss and incorporate a multitude of unconventional primary sources to uncover the hidden history women, clothing and other sewing and hand crafting projects included. Her analysis of these sources, particularly clothing, will help to frame an analysis of women’s military uniforms to understand the experiences of women in the United States’ air forces. Barbra Burman’s article “Pocketing the Difference: Gender and Pockets in Nineteenth-Century Britain,” is also a helpful source for utilizing clothing as a source. This article demonstrates how clothing is gendered and how social, economic, and cultural power is expressed through clothing—the presence, absence, or limited number of pockets specifically. Pockets are few on the service dress uniforms of the last century, being replaced by the less-than-ideal handbag. Pockets are more utilitarian and offer greater freedom to the wearer. Handbags and purses occupied a hand, limiting a woman while in her service dress uniform. As the 20\textsuperscript{th} century persisted and women gained

\textsuperscript{22} See Appendix 6.
greater social and military equality with men, they regained a greater access to pockets through the more masculine and well pocketed battle dress uniforms. The analysis of specific USAF women’s uniforms will follow Thatcher Ulrich and Burman’s models—seeking to uncover the implicit and explicit statements of power woven into these female airmen uniforms.

A similar approach to that discussed above, that enjoyed much success was discussed by Maeve Casserly and Ciaran O’Neill in their study of object sourcing for a material culture collection of women’s history in the Republic of Ireland.23 Casserly and O’Neill assert that public history and women’s history are “intrinsically linked,” both historically and conceptually, and this project lies at this intersection.24 Moving beyond debates regarding the integration of women’s history into mainstream history, my thesis and exhibit design insist on integration to produce “a more balanced narrative,” one that allows the women to stand out in the overarching narrative. It is also intended for the women to stand shoulder to shoulder with the men of the Air Force, allowing male contributions to be equally acknowledged and celebrated.25 This choice in content and integration inevitably produces silences in the new exhibit. Anytime a story is told in a museum setting things are also being left out. Though I have made extensive efforts to incorporate as much as possible, it is impossible to include everything. It is therefore important to be mindful of and open about these silences as the project moves forward.

24 Casserly and O’Neill, 12.
25 Casserly and O’Neill, 14, 15.
The deliberate inclusion of female contributions to the history of Hill AFB and the USAF is part of what Michel Fisch calls a shared authority or authorship. Presented as a solution to power imbalances, this shared authority forms a key element of this project. This idea helps shape the exhibit, allowing for a balanced and fair representation of the diverse group of women who have contributed to the mission of the United States Air Force throughout its history. As previously discussed, there is a general lack of source material for what we might deem as ‘ordinary’ women, and in the case of this project, that designation is often synonymous with enlisted women. While it is tempting to use any sources available to obtain a more robust history of these women, Michel-Rolph Trouillot warns that the context of a source’s production and the context of its consumption must be considered. Topics of ethnicity, race, and gender will also appear at the forefront of this new exhibit. In Age of Fracture, Daniel T. Rogers suggests that power is also at the heart of gender issues in the United States. These culturally defining issues will be found in the content of the new exhibit, but it is the hope that the display can contribute to a positive outlook over the progress that has been made in these areas of American life. As representatives of the United States Air Force, with a mission to recruit future servicemembers, the director and curator asked that careful attention be paid to avoid painting the United States military, and the Air Force specifically, in a poor light. Care will thus be taken to ensure that the exhibit and series of plaques avoid the

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27 Michel-Rolph, Trouillot, Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 146.
“heroizing” and “demonizing” of historical subjects that historian Mary Beard warns against.29 Refraining from “heroizing” and over venerating the historical actors highlighted in the new display, although difficult, will ensure the content remains accurate in representing the complexities of historical actors to museum patrons. One of the main goals of the new Women in the Air Force exhibit is to give a voice to those currently silent in the museum. Despite the initial silences, however intentional or unintentional, this will hopefully be liberating and make a valuable contribution to the rising discipline of military women’s history as women seize the power of history for themselves.30


HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF UNIFORMS

Women’s military as well as civilian occupational advancements and expansion that coincided with U.S. entry into World War II are important to the history of Hill AFB, a military installation that has long sponsored a predominantly civilian-female and male-workforce.31

Anita Phillips, the Director of Women’s Relations (under the umbrella of the War Department) had been the “first to propose a women’s service corps as part of the U.S. Army-” with full military status, in the 1920s.32 Women in uniform had proven themselves in the First World War, but two decades passed before they received the opportunity to serve in uniform outside of the Army Nursing Corps again. In May of 1941, Representative Edith Norse Rogers of Massachusetts, a champion of women’s military status, proposed the Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps Act, and by 1943, successfully proposed the bill for the militarization of the WAAC.33 Rep. Rogers’s legislation created hundreds of service opportunities for women of varying backgrounds to “serve their country in a patriotic way,” with around 350,000 women serving in the United States Armed Forces during WWII.34 Militarization of women’s forces would

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allow these women to be recognized as full members of the military; making it possible for them to receive military benefits and honors for their service. The newly militarized, and newly named, Women’s Army Corps (WAC) helped to blaze a trail for the creation of other female military service units such as the Women’s Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) that flew in support of the United States Army Air Forces.\(^{35}\)

In the decades before Hill’s establishment, female aviators were already helping to lay the groundwork for military aviation. The first American woman received her pilot's license in August of 1911; by 1929, the number of licensed American female pilots had reached 285. In 1941, the year after Hill Field was formally activated and the first year of its immense growth, there were approximately 3000 female pilots in the United States.\(^{36}\) Of these female pilots, 1,074 served their country as part of the Women’s Air Force Service Pilots (WASP), established after the U.S. entered World War II in late 1941. Additionally, the majority of the Women’s Army Corps (WAC) served with the Army Air Forces during this conflict, and civilian women both built and repaired aircraft.\(^{37}\) With manpower shortages across the nation and Hill’s fledgling status as an Army Airfield, women were among Hill’s very first employees, making critical contributions to Allied victory in the Second World War through their work on aircraft.


maintenance lines, handling munitions, tracking maintenance orders, sewing and packing parachutes and many other types of work.\textsuperscript{38}

Hill continued to support the Air Force mission through aircraft maintenance through the successive conflicts in Far East Asia- Korea and Vietnam, and then in the Middle East. It was during these late 20\textsuperscript{th}-century conflicts in the Middle East that the first female helicopter and fighter pilots, and all-female maintenance crews participated. Today, American women serve as flight nurses, aircraft maintainers, pilots, and in many other occupations-military as well as civilian- associated with aviation in greater numbers than ever before. Women engaged in these occupations, and more are found on Hill Air Force Base. Many of these occupations feature in the new exhibit content, which documents the diverse contributions of female airmen on Hill Air Force Base, and the greater USAF.

The primary mission of Hill Air Force Base has been aircraft maintenance and operations support.\textsuperscript{39} This emphasis is important to maintain for the client and serves as the filter through which most of the museum displays are presently produced and contextualized. The Hill Aerospace Museum often attracts a military-affiliated crowd, but it aims to engage the general public with the rich history of Hill Air Force Base, aviation, and the United States Air Force. A secondary goal is therefore, inspiring the next

\textsuperscript{39} 75\textsuperscript{th} Air Wing History Office, “Hill Air Force Base Heritage,” May 2013, 1.
generation of American airmen. The story of Hill Air Force Base and its contributions to the larger mission of the US Air Force and Air Force aviation, provide the only established parameters for the otherwise lax constraints placed upon the exhibit redesign. How do we bring women forward in this rich history? Women as “active agents,” not “passive observer or victims of history” is a major goal of the exhibit and project.40

WASP Uniforms (Word War II)

The WASP were a highly experienced civilian, all volunteer force of women aviators who answered their nation’s call to action during a critical manpower shortage soon after the US entered World War II. A women’s wartime flying program was established in September of 1942, the concept having been proposed prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawai’i in December of 1941. The Women’s Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron (WAFS) began this work, established through the efforts of Nancy Harkness Love, one of the youngest female pilots of her time.41 Jacqueline “Jackie” Cochran’s women’s pilot program, Women’s Flying Training Detachment (WFTD), would soon follow, and the two programs would merge under the auspices of a new civil service organization, the Women Air Force Service Pilots (WASP), in August of 1943.42 Jackie Cochran became the director of the Women’s Airforce Service Pilots with Love as chief squadron leader of the WAFS.43 The WASP were not yet militarized, that is to say they

41 Ann Johnson, “The WASP of World War II,” Aerospace Historian 17, no. 2/3 (Summer-Fall 1970): 78.
42 Johnson, “The WASP of World War II,” 80.
43 Johnson, 80.
lacked official military status and benefits, but were “under the direct control of Army Air Forces Headquarters.” The lack of military status for these women did not hinder their enthusiasm and patriotism. The trainees paid their own way to training, and their way home if they washed out. They also paid for their own dress uniforms, the first of which was what Ann Johnson describes as “makeshift,” consisting of khakis, acquired from surrounding army posts (the women making all the alterations themselves) and a white shirt. A uniform was an important symbol of belonging in the US military, and despite the fact that they were not officially members of the United States Air Forces, WASPs understood the importance of looking the part, especially for inspections and visits by high ranking military officials. The early WASP uniform therefore was aptly named, the “general’s pants.” Women had once again sought to bring legitimacy to their work by the wearing of self-made uniforms.

Flight suits, which were really mechanics coveralls nicknamed “zoot suits,” for the early classes of WASPs were also hand-me-downs from the Army, coming only in men’s sizes. Many women therefore had to roll up the sleeves and the pant legs to make the suits functional. There is a notable photograph of two WASPs wearing and indicating the oversized nature of the coveralls. One of the women pictured, Mildred “Mikey”

44 Johnson, 80.
45 Johnson, 80.
46 Johnson, 80.
48 “Leonora Horton and Mildred Axton model zoot suits at Avenger Field,” Photograph, c. 1943, Women Air Force Service Pilots Official Archive, Woman’s Collection, Texas Woman’s University.
Axton, became one of the first women to fly the B-29 bomber as a test pilot. This image, among others from the official WASP archive are likely to be included in the new exhibit.

The WASP flew with multiple commands, making do with the uniforms they modified for themselves. Their missions included the towing of targets for live ammunitions antiaircraft trainings, searchlight and tracking missions, smoke-laying and other chemical missions, test piloting aircraft, instructing, and others. One WASP, Ann Baumgartner, was even selected to test pilot the United States’ first jet fighter. Others would show the male pilots of the Army Air Forces how to fly the famed B-29 bomber, the type of plane that would drop the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan at the war’s end. The women of the WASP flew every plane in the military’s arsenal with a retention and safety record comparable to, and in some cases, exceeding, the Army Air Force pilots. The WASP proved themselves more than capable of flying and serving their nation.

By 1944, the WASP also donned a new uniform. This dress uniform was the first of its kind- it was the first blue uniform worn by any American military service. An

50 Johnson, 80.
51 Johnson, 82.
52 Johnson, 80.
53 According to Jill Halcomb Smith, author of Dressed for Duty: American Women in Uniform, 1898-1973, a blue uniform was issued to the members of the Army Nurse Corps prior to the Second World War. This Blue uniform also replaced olive drab. She adds that the blue was chosen to replace the “unattractive” olive drab uniform being worn by the Corps in 1940. By September of 1942 however the color of the nurses Corps uniform was changed back to olive drab by the Surgeon General and the production of the blue uniform stopped. My research suggests that most historians credit the WASP with the first blue service uniform.
example of this service dress is a key part of the new exhibit. This uniform includes a
beret that was also rather unique; the WASP being the only women to wear them. The
Women’s Army Service Corps and other militarized services wore service caps of
varying styles and colors. WASP director Jackie Cochran had insisted that the WASP
have their own uniform, and General Henry ‘Hap’ Arnold of the Army Air Forces
agreed.\textsuperscript{54} One source credits General Arnold with choosing the Santiago blue color of the
uniform.\textsuperscript{55} Cochran then enlisted the help of New York fashion designers to accomplish
her design.\textsuperscript{56} Cochran had refused to accept the Army’s offer of an olive drab uniform for
“her girls” as she called them, insisting instead on something that in her view, was more
feminine and fashionable. In an effort to get the Army Air Forces command on board
with her design, she enlisted the help of two women; a quartermaster corps clerk to model
the olive drab wool uniform, and a French model to sport Cochran’s choice of uniform-
the Santiago blue.\textsuperscript{57} The commanders selected the blue uniform worn by the foreign
model and it became the women pilot’s official service uniform.\textsuperscript{58} The fact that she
consulted and worked closely with fashion designers to produce this uniform shows how
important a uniform, and the look of it, can be when striving to legitimize military
service, while at the same time conforming to gendered ideas of fashion and
attractiveness, for these civil service women operating under the command of the Air

\textsuperscript{54} Deanie Bishop Perish, “History of the Uniforms of the WASP of WWII,” Wings
\textsuperscript{55} Perish, “History of the Uniforms of the WASP of WWII,”
\textsuperscript{56} Perish, “History of the Uniforms of the WASP of WWII,”
\textsuperscript{57} Perish, “History of the Uniforms of the WASP of WWII,”
\textsuperscript{58} Perish, “History of the Uniforms of the WASP of WWII.”
Forces. Fashion designers would also be consulted in the post-World War II years for both men and women’s military uniforms and the same conformity would be adhered to in each instance.

The WASP flight uniform was also updated to this Santiago blue, what we now know as Air Force blue. The uniform is noted for its slacks and Eisenhower or “Ike” jacket. Although not part of the dress uniform, the issuance of pants for regular use represents an important milestone in the history of women’s military uniforms, bringing them one step closer to standing on equal footing with their male counterparts.

Uniforms worn by women in military service during the First World War, and nurses in previous wars, had only skirts and dresses. This meant women had to wear such styles even while performing tasks many would agree are more practically accomplished in pants.59 Pants became an increasingly practical choice as the length of skirts shortened to the mid-calf then just below the knee during the 1940s. Activities that were once possible to do in dresses and long skirts reaching the ankle in the 1910s, with ample coverage and protection from the elements, could no longer be with the extreme changes to the length of socially appropriate skirts and dresses in the span of just 20 years. By the 1940s skirts were commonly hemmed to just below the knee and the layers of structural

59 Some people, like Bernadette Banner, an avid historical dress reconstructionist and seamstress, would argue that skirts are completely practical for almost every activity and most things can reasonably be done in a skirt/dress. The choices of dress of early aviatrices offer a counter argument: things like flying a plane or driving an ambulance are instances where a pair of pants is a more practical choice of dress. In such cases long skirts could even be dangerous. In WWII skirts were shortened and arguably became even more impractical at the knee length, not just as it applied to maintaining personal modesty, but also for health reasons—malaria infested service locations during World War II, as a case in point. See altered uniform boots and story housed at the Women’s Memorial.
underskirts that had shaped women’s dress of the 1910s had been done away with; partly to conserve textile resources during and after the war years, leaving women more exposed to the glance of onlookers as well as to the elements.  

In contrast to other uniformed women, female pilots had donned pants from their earliest days as aviators, as it was much safer and practical in such rudimentary machines. Pioneering aviator Ruth Law, for example, sported pants, in the jodhpur style for the Army Air Corps uniform she was permitted to wear as a fundraiser and recruiter for the Army Air Corps during the First World War. However, she was often seen wearing a full-length skirt with the uniform jacket when not in the air, because that was the social expectation of a woman during that era. The Chicago Herald even reassured their readers of this in their article about her in May of 1917. Law even stated in another newspaper article from the era that her other preference, next to the uniform of the Air Corps, was an apron, sharing her husband’s praise for her cooking skills. The newspaper describes her uniform, pictured therein, as khaki in color with the insignia of the Army Aviation Corps, with a “short” skirt, not so by today’s standards, but telling of the times. This alteration more closely resembled the uniforms worn by other American women then serving in the armed forces in clerical and nursing roles and even those of women who volunteered in

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60 The popular open toe shoe style and the introduction of the bikini later in the decade are also examples of styles influenced by a reduction in resources as well as resource conservation.
civilian organizations like the American Red Cross. Examples of such skirt length can be seen in the women’s World War I uniforms once on display at the Smithsonian. Law’s uniform, as photographed in a scrapbooked newspaper clipping, is slightly ill fitting in the waist of the jacket, and opens a bit wide around the hips, denoting the masculine cut. Her skirt was not Air Corps issue, and it falls to her ankles and she wears lace-up boots, much like the ones she wears for flying. The Chicago Herald quotes her as saying that she felt “quite at home in the army costume…as it is very much like the one she has been accustomed to wear when she drives her plane.” Of note here is the newspapers use of the term ‘costume’ for the Air Corps uniform. The use of the word invokes the image of a child playing dress-up or make believe. The word choice is subtle and perhaps even a subliminal choice, but it implies illegitimacy and immaturity. A woman wearing pants in public during the late 1910s was still not a widely acceptable practice in the United States, despite the efforts of earlier dress reformers of the late 1800s. This lack of acceptance appears to have become almost synonymous with a denial of credibility—onlookers were often quick to discredit a woman.

Both later WASP uniforms— the dress uniform and the flight uniform—in the Santiago blue were worn by WASP member and Utah native Alberta Hunt Nicholson. Both uniforms were donated to the Hill Aerospace Museum and have been on display for roughly two decades. The WASP are often remembered and recognized as the pinnacle in women’s military participation. Their military contributions do represent a climax for the

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64 “Women in World War I: Women’s Uniforms,” Smithsonian Institution.
first half of the 20th century. For these reasons, these two uniforms will be a focal point in
the new display case for the exhibit and will be arranged in combination with supportive
text and other uniforms of the 20th and 21st centuries. It is intended that the uniforms of
WASP Nicholson will be recognized as a peak in women’s participation and contribution
to military aviation in the 20th century and a steppingstone to where women are in the
21st.

Despite all its success, the WASP program was deactivated on December 20th,
1944, when the bill for their militarization failed to pass in congress.67 The war in Europe
was ending and making more male pilots available to serve elsewhere effectively forcing
the women pilots out of their job. The government felt they were easily replaceable, in
spite of the WASPs impeccable flying record. The deactivation of the WASP left them
without any military benefits or compensation. The families of the 38 WASPs who died
in the service of their country were therefore unable to display the gold star; the symbol
recognizing the family of an individual who died in the line of duty and service to
America during war time.68 Women would not be permitted to train as pilots in the
United States military again until 1976. The Women’s Airforce Service Pilots are a
testament to the progress and capability of women aviators. Their uniforms represent
these women’s vanguard status within the American military and aviation.

“The Cords” Service Dress Uniform and Flight Uniform (Korean War)

The Army Air Forces became their own branch of the United States military on September 18th, 1947.69 President Harry S. Truman signed the Women’s Armed Services Integration Act into law on June 12, 1948, almost a year after the signing of the National Security Act of 1947 that brought the Air Force into being.70 This act made it possible for the Women in the Air Force, or WAF, to be established just a month later.71 Racial integration of the US Armed Forces began in July of 1948 as well, with the Air Force becoming fully integrated by 1952.72 These were important milestones in the history of the United States military and in the US Air Force. Yet, as the women’s uniforms of this era will demonstrate, for all the seeming progress, there was a decline in women participation in the United States air forces in the post-World War II era.

The multitude of changes that occurred within the Air Force’s “transition” period (1947-1952), can be seen in the Air Force’s uniforms for women. The early years of the Air Force uniform, for both men and women, were represented in multiple colors, style combinations, and fabrics.73 The Korean War took place during this period of transition, 1950-1953, for the United States Air Force, forcing them to find their identity amidst

71 Kane, “Blake Paved the Way for Thousands of Air Force Women.”
turmoil and disruption. The Hill Aerospace Museum has in its collection a 1950, Korean War era Women in the Air Force (WAF) dress uniform. It was one of the uniforms specifically designed for and issued to women in the United States Air Force after the World War II olive drab was phased out. Fashion designers were consulted in the development of this uniform, as they had been with the WASP uniforms. According to Air Force sources, the summer service uniform was referred to as the “Seersucker” or “the Cords” for the blue and white cotton cord fabric it was made of.\textsuperscript{74} The Cords were high maintenance, requiring enough starching to stand up on their own.\textsuperscript{75} Past the midcalf length skirt were the shoes nicknamed “grannies” that had to be spit shined.\textsuperscript{76}

A black over-the-shoulder purse was also part of the uniform, an accessory that appeared during the Second World War and persisted through the end of the century in the women’s service dress uniform. Purses were also part of the dress uniforms worn by Air-WACs and WASP of World War II. Women’s wardrobes of the 1910s, and women’s civilian and military uniforms of the Great War by extension, possessed pockets, negating the need to carry handbags. Scholarship on women’s pockets through the centuries indicates that purses are a less than ideal substitution for women’s pockets, the size and number of which has significantly declined over the centuries in women’s clothing.\textsuperscript{77} Pocket scholar Barbra Burman has termed these ‘disciplinary pockets.’\textsuperscript{78} Purses, in this context, can even be seen as a way of taking away some of women’s independence.

\textsuperscript{74} Waid, “A Look Back: Early Air Force Uniforms,” 3.
\textsuperscript{75} Sonia Lillard Shands Uniform collection notes, Hill Aerospace Museum Collection, Hill Aerospace Museum, Hill Air Force Base, UT.
\textsuperscript{76} Sonia Lillard Shands Uniform collection notes.
\textsuperscript{77} Beverly Lemire, “Draping the body and dressing the home,” 99.
\textsuperscript{78} Barbra Burman, “Pocketing the Difference: Gender and Pockets in Nineteenth-Century Britain,” \textit{Gender & History} 14, no.3 (November 2002): 449.
Burman asserts that pockets are extremely gendered and linked to power in the public sphere, arguing that denying women pockets limits their cultural participation as objects of consumption in society.\textsuperscript{79} She points out the cultural shift away from utilitarian tie-on pockets, that were large and easily concealed beneath the woman’s layers of skirts in earlier centuries, was mostly complete by 1914.\textsuperscript{80} The result was a continuing trend of small sewn-in pockets in women’s clothing and the wider use of handbags.\textsuperscript{81} In contrast, men’s clothing and military uniforms in particular have had no significant shortage in pockets over the course of the century and a half. Most men’s uniforms of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century possessed two to four pockets on the front of the service jacket, with hidden pockets on the inside of the jacket and four, on average, in the pants or trousers. Burman discusses the sexualization of women’s hands in the Victorian age and the correlation between the desire for women’s hands to be out and visible with a decline in the tie-on pocket.\textsuperscript{82} The gloved hands and handbag that took over the Edwardian era make yet another appearance in this particularly conservative era in American history- the 1950s. It was during this postwar era that women were encouraged, by social as well as economic factors, to return to the domestic sphere, to embrace and perpetuate their femininity and maternity. This was the intention of the designers of the new Air Force uniform in this new American era- to reconcile American femininity with military service. How could they compensate for women working in what many deemed an exclusively masculine sphere?

\textsuperscript{79} Burman, “Pocketing the Difference,” 460-461.
\textsuperscript{80} Burman, “Pocketing the Difference,” 448.
\textsuperscript{81} Burman, “Pocketing the Difference,” 448.
\textsuperscript{82} Burman, “Pocketing the Difference,” 461-462.
As the demobilization and reduction of women forces post World War II drew to a close, women returned to their traditional spheres of influence—their homes. As a result, the career paths open to military women were significantly reduced from the expansion seen during the Second World War. Most of the jobs available to them were highly gendered, with clerical work and nursing being among the largest fields, even when the United States entered another war in 1950. Instead of obtaining commissions as pilots, capable women, even those who had served faithfully and effectively in the WASP, were offered positions as air traffic controllers (now referred to as combat controllers or CCT).

Nursing did see expansion in the way of flight nursing and flight medicine as America took casualties in Korea. Medical evacuation fights were still relatively new at the onset of the Korean War in 1950. They had only been utilized by the US military since World War II. This concept was first proposed to the U.S. Army during World War I by pilot Katherine Stinson, volunteer for the U.S. Army Air Corps, and ambulance driver. Only an “elite two percent of World War II nurses” were qualified as flight nurses. The cargo planes used in patient evacuations [C-46s, C-47s, and C-54s] all lacked pressurized cabins. Flight nurses, therefore, assumed greater risk to their own safety and greater complications regarding the treatment of patients. Seventeen of the two hundred nurses that died while serving in the Army Nurse Corps during the Second

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World War were flight nurses.\textsuperscript{86} Despite the risks, flight nurses successfully preserved the lives of 1,176,002 air evacuation patients over the course of the war.\textsuperscript{87}

Initially small in numbers, 200 of the only 1,170 strong Air Force Nurse Corps, flight nurses quickly increased in number to 3,000 at the wars peak- with most Air Force nurses serving as flight nurses by the war’s end in 1953.\textsuperscript{88} Flight nurses of the Korean War proved themselves just as capable in the new era and this new theater of war. Nurses who served in Korea were critical the United Nations’ war effort in Korea, and successfully “evacuated 22,300 war casualties and patients from the Pacific to the United States” over the course of the Korean War.\textsuperscript{89} The flight nurses of the 801\textsuperscript{st} Medical Air Evacuation Squadron (MAES) served on C-124s, C-54s, C-47s, C-48s and other aircraft, escorting and caring for patients as they were medevac’d.\textsuperscript{90} Of the number of servicewomen casualties of the war, three were Air Force flight nurses flying medical evacuation flights in or out of the theater.

The utility or battle uniform used by flight nurses during the Korean War is incredibly close to that of the WASP flight uniform of the Second World War. The replication of the WASP flight uniform of a now bygone era suggests that the uniform had proven its functionality and served the wearer well. A duty uniform, much like those

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{87} Judith Bellafaire, “The Army Nurse Corps,” 15.
\item \textsuperscript{89} Linda Whitt, Judith Belifaire, Britta Granrud, and Mary Jo Binker, \textit{A Defense Weapon Known to Be of Value} (Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England, 2005), 164.
\item \textsuperscript{90} Whitt, Belifaire, Granrud, and Binker, \textit{A Defense Weapon Known to Be of Value}, 194, 209.
\end{itemize}
worn by the flight nurses of the Forgotten War era was donated to the Hill Aerospace Museum by the same service veteran who donated “the Cords” summer service dress-Sonia Lillard Shands. The uniform is comprised of a blue “Ike” jacket, blue slacks, a light blue shirt, and black leather lace-up shoes. This uniform is thus remarkably similar to the WASP flight uniform of the early 1940s. The major difference in the uniforms is not in their appearance, but in their utilization. This difference effectively defines the cultural expectations that shaped these two wars. The Second World War made it possible for women to make unprecedented gains in military occupations and aviation specifically. However, during the Korean war, even with military’s manpower shortages, cultural and social restraints combined to deny women the same access and opportunities to serve. The uniforms used in the Korean conflict were also utilized for flight purposes, like those of World War II, but to a different end. They reinforced nursing as the accepted tradition of female servicemembers, leaving the flying to the men and the healing to the women. Even with medical and technological advancement, the American military remained reluctant to promote the advancement of women within its ranks.

The uniforms of the Korean War represent a dual standard for women in the US Air Force at the time. On the one hand, they were expected to comply with societal expectations of female beauty, poise and traditional female occupations; on the other, they were expected to do hard, hazardous work near combat zones and in dangerous air space. The summer dress uniform symbolizes the premium placed on female beauty and objectification rather than empowerment in post-World War II America. Now serving as integrated and equal members of the United States Air Force, flight nurses of a variety of racial backgrounds wore the utility uniforms so highly reminiscent of the war that so
readily and necessarily empowered American women in its early years, a uniform much like that of the trailblazing and intrepid WASP. These two Korean War era uniforms will be included in the new exhibit, taking their place next to the WASP uniforms. This will help emphasize the visual similarities of the very different eras of war as well as the blatant differences in attitudes towards women and their participation in military aviation. Unfortunately, in the years after the Korean War, the Air Force continued to place beauty standards as their top priority for the women of the Air Force and that would continue until the end of the Vietnam War.

W.A.F. Service Dress Uniform (Late Vietnam Era)

There was little progress made to advance female participation in the Air Force and the other branches of service throughout the Vietnam era, what the department of Veteran Affairs preserves as between 1964 and 1975. The service dress uniforms worn by the women of the Air Force in the early 1960s reflect continuing emphasis placed on the domesticity, and hyper femininity of women in the post-World War II era. There was little variation in the new service dress of the early 1960s from that of the early 1950s. The collar was still very rounded, and the material was still that of blue and white cotton cord. The cuff of the sleeve was simplified, and trim was added, and the cut of the skirt was also slimmed, and the hem shortened to fall just below the knee to reflect trends of the late 1950s. Gloves, handbags, and heels were still government issued accessories. This uniform and the others worn by the women of the Air Force were modeled by

active-duty servicewomen in the 1964 Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services fashion show. The DACWS has been a long-standing advocate and ally of women in the armed forces. Lt. Colonel Simpson of the US Army, who narrated the program, asserted that the Air Force woman who donned the uniform found it “comfortable and easy to care for.”\(^{92}\) I have found no proof to the contrary, but it is worth pointing out that the uniforms predecessor, known simply as “the Cords,” as previously noted, was notoriously time consuming to maintain. These notes on the care of uniforms and specific aspects of them, will be included in the exhibit, appearing on miniature plaques next to each uniform.\(^{93}\)

Certain sociocultural aspects of the now outdated uniform did persist, however. The contradictory nature of the Women’s Air Force uniform and the emphasis on physical beauty survived the transition to the 1960s. Just as in the Korean War era, the demands placed on the wearer of the dress uniform remained those of poise and beauty, but once again, the utility uniforms utilized by flight nurses were evidence of their reality-hard, dangerous, and traumatic work in and near combat zones. Stur argues that nurses were “exposed to combat every day” and witnessed the “most gruesome consequences of battle on a regular basis.”\(^{94}\)

What, therefore, compelled the United States Air Force to redesign their uniforms in a way that simply reinforced old ways of thinking? History had already proven

\(^{92}\) Naval History and Heritage, “Uniforms of Women in the Armed Forces (1964), 2:45 of 14:27.
\(^{93}\) The miniature plaques will be like those found in the 8\(^{th}\) Air Force exhibit and the Leon C. Packer display already in the Hill Aerospace Museum.
women’s war work to be far from clean and feminine. Stur suggests part of the answer in her discussion of WAC officer’s clothing in Vietnam. She concludes that “the Cords” uniforms or service dress was the feminine face behind which they hoped to hide everything unladylike about women’s wartime service.\textsuperscript{95} Ghiliani attributes the early ‘60s WAC uniform design to gender identity anxieties. She explains that “visibility of feminine bodies” and subjective gender notions played major roles in the design of a uniform that walked the line between “practicality, seriousness, and body-conscious sex appeal.”\textsuperscript{96} While Ghilani makes this argument regarding the women’s army dress uniform, the principle holds for the Air Force’s women’s uniforms of the era, because of the simple truth that all branches of the armed services exist within the same military hierarchy and all are subject to a trickle-down effect when it comes to policy, procedure and even culture.

The 1964 military fashion show revealed the crisp new uniforms of all of the women’s service branches; it took place the same year US involvement in Vietnam was increasing substantially with the signing of the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. It is therefore clear that the American military sought to reinforce domesticized image of female service members through a gendered uniform silhouette, complete with high heels, handbags, nylons, and powdered smiling faces. But as Stur demonstrates, in multiple instances, their battle uniforms or fatigues were more functional and practical than the dress uniforms. However, fatigues blurred the boundary so starkly drawn by the women’s dress uniforms and disrupted the orderly image of military femininity. The solution to these threats to

\textsuperscript{95} Stur, \textit{Beyond Combat}, 112, 114.
military masculinity was to reinforce women’s status as “girls” or “ladies” in every aspect of their military career, even their appearance while off-duty. It was clear however that the military women who wore the duty uniforms, especially in country, saw them as practical and suitable to the conditions in which they were expected to work, despite their lack of feminine flair. Government officials, as well as top military leaders made every attempt to limit the participation of servicewomen in the theater of war, allowing only the most qualified of those in the most feminine occupations—secretarial work and healthcare—to serve in Vietnam. It was clear, however, that the “gendered beliefs that informed the war collapsed under the realities of Vietnam.”

The objectification of servicewomen as representing a piece of home is discussed by Stur and by Ghilani. Stur situates the connection between the wearing of the dress uniform in the theater of war with the men’s morale. She explains that the Army was insistent on the women wearing high heels and their impractical dress blues for the express benefit of the men around them. Ghilani supports this analysis through examples of sexualized recruitment posters for the WAC during the Vietnam Era. Through recruitment videos, basic and officer training courses, Air Force flight nurses and other WAF personnel were made aware of what was expected of them in regard to their actions and appearance. Other aspects of it were simply implied by the way they were spoken

98 Stur, Beyond Combat, 114-115.
99 Stur, 128.
100 Stur, 114.
to by male and female commanding officers as well as the way they were treated, thus establishing and reinforcing social constructs, norms and expectations. Stur addresses the adverse effects of highly feminized and sexualized image and expectation of service women in Vietnam in the context of sexual harassment and assault. This understanding begs the question of why women would then choose to participate and to wear the uniform. As with every serviceman, every servicewoman has their own reasons for joining the military. It is important to note that the female airmen of the USAF as well as all other female service branches were all-volunteer forces.

In 1973, under President Richard Nixon, the United States withdrew their forces from Vietnam. It was this same year that American military was converted to an all-volunteer force. It was only after the withdrawal of the United States forces from Vietnam that most of the major legislative gains for women in American military service occurred. In 1976, the WAF was disbanded as women were permitted to enter all of the armed forces on equal basis with men, making the United States military a fully gender-integrated force. Women now had access to weapons training but would not be permitted to participate in combat. They would also have the opportunity to enter the military’s pilot training programs-also non-combat- for the first time since the WASP program of the Second World War. Women would now have the chance to wear the coveted flight suits of the United States Air Force. This access was highly significant as a new generation of women entered Air Force pilot training, recalling to mind the female pilots of the previous war generation. The women who had served with such distinction and no militarization during World War II advocated once again for their military status and

102 Stur, Beyond Combat, 133-134.
benefits for having served their country so well in time of war. The Women Airforce Service Pilots received their retroactive militarization in late 1976.

The women’s Air Force uniform of the 1970s and early 1980s had a beret, much like the one once worn by the WASP in their striking blue uniform of the 1940s. This beret was the first to be worn by women in the Air Force since the time of the WASP. The uniform is highly stylized and reflects the fashion trends of the times. The skirt is short and falls above the knee. All prior Air Force service dress skirt hems had been below the knee. The designers of this trendy new Air Force uniform had taken their inspiration from the icons in fashion of the decade before- Jaqueline Kennedy and the miniskirt. What is interesting is the association of the miniskirt with youthful rebellion. More research is required to uncover the reason behind this rebellious choice for a uniform, which by its very definition demands conformity. Arguably, the choice was made as a recruitment tactic, an effort to attract fashionable young women to the Air Force at a time when the Air Force and its sister branches needed to make for themselves a more positive image in the wake of the Vietnam War. Like the uniforms of the 1950s and 60s, this uniform also had light colored gloves. The museum does not have within its collection the early Vietnam era service dress uniform of the WAF, but it does have this uniform. This late Vietnam era service dress will appear in the new display and with some supplementary materials, to help bridge the visual gap between the Korean War and the end of the war in Vietnam. The 1950s dress uniform displayed alongside this 1970s uniform offers a striking juxtaposition. The two represent periods of transition for women in the Air Force. The styles of the times continued to be major considerations for Air Force uniform designers, as it always had been, but were class, innocence and modesty
had been the embodiment of the WAF uniforms of the 1950s and 60s, the uniform that came out of the 1970s, to some extent, embraced the changing times, the fashion forward look seemed to promise progress within the policies and practices of the Air Force.

Even with all the restrictions that had been place on female military careers earlier in the century, the Air Force now had a female Major General (a two star), Jeanne M. Holm, who had also been the Air Forces’ first female brigadier general in 1971, just two years before.\(^{103}\) A commemorative photograph shows her wearing the 1970s service dress uniform with the short, six-button jacket.\(^{104}\) Further legislation and policy changes that followed the transition to an all-volunteer force afforded servicewomen greater opportunity to engage with the ever-developing aviation technologies in the United States Air Force.\(^{105}\) The women’s service dress of the 1980s reflected these changes, with the skirt once again falling below the knee, the jacket taking on a less overtly feminine appearance and reflecting more so that of the men’s service jacket. The first female cadet entered the Air Force Academy in June of 1976.\(^{106}\) The first all-female KC-135 crew flew a refueling mission - successfully refueling a B-52 aircraft midair- in the summer of 1982.\(^{107}\) In addition, women began training on missile launch crews in the late 1970s and less than a decade later, the first all-woman Minuteman missile crew served on active duty, assigned to one of the Air Forces’ Strategic Missile Wings.\(^{108}\)

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\(^{104}\) Haulman, “One Hundred Years of Flight,” 113.

\(^{105}\) See Appendix 3.

\(^{106}\) Joan Olsen became the first woman to enter the Air Force Academy as a cadet. Haulman, “One Hundred Years of Flight,” 118.

\(^{107}\) Haulman, “One Hundred Years of Flight,” 126.

decade, the first woman, US Air Force Captain Jacquelyn S. Parker, graduated as a test pilot from the Air Forces’ test pilots training school in California.\textsuperscript{109} These milestones for female airmen are critical to understanding the progress made by servicewomen in the armed forces and the evolution of American societal norms concerning women and warfare.

BDUs and Flight Suits (Gulf War Era)

By the 1990s, women had a new service dress uniform, one that differs little from that of the current dress uniform. This new uniform was unique among Air Force women’s service dress because for the first time, dress pants were made available as part of the uniform, no longer restricting women to skirts for service dress. It was also during this era that Marcelite Jordan Harris, the Air Force’s first female aircraft maintenance officer, became the first black woman to earn and hold the grade of Brigadier General in the USAF.\textsuperscript{110} The early 1990s was also marked by further engagement in the Middle East. What would become known as the Persian Gulf War, was also the “largest concentrated wartime deployment of uniformed American servicewomen in American military history.”\textsuperscript{111} Air Force women flew the tankers that refueled American fighter jets over Iraq.\textsuperscript{112} After the passage of the Defense Authorization Acts of 1992 and 1993 that followed this war, women pilots began piloting fighter jets in the Air Force and by 1995,

\textsuperscript{109} Haulman, “One Hundred Years of Flight,” 135.
\textsuperscript{110} Haulman, “One Hundred Years of Flight,” 137.
\textsuperscript{111} Archer, Women, Warfare and Representation, 55.
\textsuperscript{112} Archer, 56.
participating in combat missions. Colonel (Ret.) Martha McSally was the first of these women pilots, patrolling the no-fly zone over Iraq after the Gulf War and later as close combat air support in her A-10 Thunderbolt to boots on the ground in Afghanistan. Brigadier General Jeannie Flynn Leavitt had become the first female Air Force fighter pilot in 1994. Air Force women had broken a great many barriers within the short span of the Persian Gulf War and the two years after, with most women now serving outside of traditional healthcare roles.

Women of this era also wore the BDU or battle dress uniform. The Hill Aerospace Museum will display a donated women’s battle dress uniform from their collection alongside the uniforms of earlier eras. What made this black, brown, green, and tan uniform so unique is its striking similarity to that of the male airman BDU. The only major difference is in the sizing of the uniform. This trend of dressing male and female airmen in the same duty uniform marks an important milestone in Air Force history. This uniform demonstrates the progress made by women to gain equal standing with their male colleagues. Despite the name, this ‘battle’ uniform was no less demanding than an airman’s service dress, requiring regular ironing and starching and boot polishing by the wearer. Flight suits remained much lower maintenance. Flight suits are only worn by select Air Force personnel, namely pilots, flight crews, and flight doctors. In the decades women were barred from participation in the flight schools across

113 Archer, 107, 108.
115 Haulman, “One Hundred Years of Flight,” 145.
the branches of the US military, they were also denied access to these particular uniforms. Once flight training reopened to them in the late 70s, so did the privilege of donning flight suits almost indistinguishable in overall appearance from that of the servicemen.

Also worth noting is the absence of the purse as a standard issue accessory of women’s service dress uniforms in the early twenty-first century signifies a measure of progress for women’s uniforms, for the American military, as they continued to move in the direction of the more functional men’s wear.

Pilots tend to get all the glory, and this seems to be true, even of female pilots. It is important to acknowledge the contributions made by other servicewomen. In World War I, when the Air Corps refused female pilots’ entry into the service, they flew fundraising campaigns and helped recruit men to fly and fight for the United States overseas. During the Second World War, women were given an unprecedented chance to prove themselves as the capable and serviceable pilots they were, and the WASP program proved a major success. The noteworthy Air-WACs of the Women’s Army Corps made quieter contributions through air traffic controlling, clerical and secretarial work. These women will be recognized in the main exhibit and through the contents of a small plaque at the foot of the air traffic control tower in the museum. During the Korean War and the Vietnam War, women in the US Air Force continued to contribute to aviation through air traffic controlling. They also made contributions through flight nursing aboard medical evacuation flights as the nurses of World War II had done. Servicewomen in these conflicts and in the later Middle East conflicts worked in aircraft maintenance and manufacturing of planes. Female airmen of the late twentieth century continued the
traditions of flight nursing, even expanding the practice further, and piloting, also making contributions in the less glorified occupations mentioned in connection with aviation.

As women in the Air Force continue to break barriers and chart new paths it is crucial to see the value and contributions of all female airmen; those who have chosen more traditional career paths in the USAF as well as those Air Force women who chose to defy convention. Each female airmen, over the course of the history of the air forces of the United States military, has voluntarily contributed to the higher mission of the United States Air Force and all contributions, ordinary and extraordinary, should be respectfully acknowledged.
EXHIBIT

Women have been active and enthusiastic participants in aviation since its earliest
days. There is no meaningful explanation of aviation and its history in which women do
not play a part.\textsuperscript{116} In collaboration with the Hill Aerospace Museum, a branch of the
National Air Force Museum, my project enhances public appreciation for, and awareness
of the contributions made by women to U.S. Military Aviation through an exhibit at the
Hill Aerospace Museum. This new exhibit will serve to bridge a major gap in public
memory, sharing the histories of Air Force women through material culture and
integrating their stories into the existing narrative for a more inclusive historical account
of the United States Air Force within the Hill Aerospace Museum.

The under-representation of women’s contributions to military aviation and Hill
Air Force Base (AFB) at the Hill Aerospace Museum provides an excellent opportunity
to integrate information about these elements in a new exhibit.\textsuperscript{117} The new exhibit will
acknowledge the critical contributions women have made, and continue to make, to
American Military Aviation and national defense through their service in the United
States Air Force.

Edith Mayo predicted in the early 1980s that the meeting of women’s history and
public history in museums has the potential to “reveal women’s hidden history” to

\textsuperscript{116} Dr. Susan Grayzel, personal correspondence w/ author, September 28\textsuperscript{th}, 2021.
\textsuperscript{117} Recognizing my enthusiasm for military women’s history and desire to share this
history with the general public, the staff at the Hill Aerospace Museum offered me an
uncommon opportunity to do just that, simultaneously resolving their need for
rejuvenating an outdated and incomplete exhibit. See Mayo, “Women’s History and
Public History,” 71.
Because the target audience of the Hill Aerospace Museum is the general population, it is imperative that this historical intersection created through the new exhibit reaches the patrons of the museum, bringing awareness to the active presence of women in the historical narrative of the United States of America. An acknowledgment of contributions made by women of ethnically and racially minoritized groups is also an important consideration of this exhibit. The goal is to bring minoritized women on to equal footing with other ethnic and gender groups that were afforded more recognition at the time and in the history, therefore providing the opportunity to recognize fairly, the contributions of ethnic and gender groups in all eras of war. The inclusion of such women’s perspectives will help expand our understanding of the experiences of all women in the United States Air Force and the women affiliated with Hill Air Force Base, Utah. The base newspaper and historical records have been important sources in meeting this goal.

The exhibit showcasing women’s contributions to the history of the American air forces at the museum is currently out of date. The exhibit is limited in scope, only covering the Second World War Era and is located in the far back corner of the first aircraft hangar (the Hadley Gallery), mostly hidden from view. The current exhibit has stood, with little to no updating, for roughly two decades. In a walkthrough with director Aaron Clark, he acknowledged the need for a more up-to-date display, giving me permission to completely redesign the exhibit to reflect the goals of the Air Force and the National Air Force Museum Program. While Hill Air Force Base’s story for the most part began with World War II, its history has continued, and the exhibit thus needs to

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reflect the continued participation and engagement of women in this continuing service. To its credit, the present exhibit on aviation-oriented women offers an excellent jumping off point for my redesign. Within the current display is a static recreation of a photographic image taken of two women maintainers during the Second World War, at what was then Hill Field, achieved with two female mannequins posed at the wing of a B-24 Liberator. This static display is the most visible of the displays featuring women’s participation and evokes a sense of excitement, action, and realism, not achieved anywhere else in the museum. The display is a recreation of a photograph taken at Hill, during the Second World War, capturing the movement of two Rosies, dutifully contributing to the war effort. The captivating realism of this display is inspiring and will remain part of the new exhibit, with only minor updates to mannequins and reconstructed 1940s-era clothing.

The list of killed in action or missing in action (KIA/MIA) WASP was also a point of inspiration as I considered options for ways to appropriately honor those who lost their lives in each major military conflict over the last century.

Initial Project Design

The initial design included a series of small displays with an additional series of small plaques, all integrated harmoniously into the existing museum content. The goal with this seamless integration was to reinforce the normalcy of women’s participation in aviation and reality that women, including those of minoritized groups, have always been present and active in the American military experience. The new exhibit intended to cover female contributions to aviation from World War I to President Joe Biden’s recent decision to withdraw US forces from Afghanistan, where US servicemembers had been
fighting The War on Terror for twenty years. This was to be done through display cases utilizing a combination of text, artifacts and uniforms, oral histories in a variety of forms, images, video and audio. The exhibit plans for six cases, each housing a uniform from a specific era of major conflict; these cases would then be placed among the artifacts, aircraft and uniforms already on display for the era. The new display cases for the exhibit would each showcase a uniform as the central piece. Additional planning included the collection of uniform and artifact donations made through a social media campaign sponsored by the museum to find uniforms for the eras not represented in the collection.

The initial project design also included the development of way-finders- small signs or indicators placed throughout the museum on corresponding artifacts to establish historical themes and make historical connections- to women’s contributions in areas such as aircraft manufacturing, maintenance, and piloting.\textsuperscript{119} For example, way-finders featuring \textit{Fifinella}, the WASP mascot, would indicate all the aircraft flown by the WASP of World War II. Another way-finder would use an image such as Rosie the Riveter, to denote the aircraft women built and maintained, from the Second World War to the present. Way-finders received a great deal of support from Director Clark and Curator Hall and have subsequently made it into the current project design.\textsuperscript{120}

Oral histories conducted with the oversight of the museum director, formed part of the preliminary project plan but did not occur during the development process. Instead, I utilized oral histories found in already complied works such as Dr. Patricia Rushton’s book, \textit{Latter-day Saint Nurses at War: A Story of Caring and Sacrifice}, to tell the stories

\textsuperscript{119} See Appendix 1.
\textsuperscript{120} See Appendix 1.
of specific service women represented in the new exhibit plaques and display, mostly through quotes from these primary sources. I have compiled quotes made by a great variety of servicewomen and men to supplement the artifacts and other information in the display and on plaques, to produce a more robust exhibit, as Casserly and O’Neill advocated for. In spite of the lack of interviews conducted for this project specifically, this approach will hopefully establish the shared authority and authorship Frisch encourages. The selected quotes center around female participation in the United States Air Force and their work on Hill Air Force Base. Some highlight service women speaking about their jobs during wartime and their desires to make meaningful contributions to the nation. Other quotes emphasize the positive influence and impact female airmen had on those around them, these often coming from commanding officers. This variety will offer some understanding of why these women served and what they thought about their own military service.

Upon subsequent meetings with Director Clark and Curator Hall, they explained the further constraints of the project. It would not be possible to execute the preliminary plan for the new exhibit that included the six individual display cases. They explained that it would instead be more cost effective for the museum to produce a single, large display case for the exhibit. There was however consensus that a more integrated approach, as initially planned, would be even more ideal, reinforcing the significant history that women have been continually present in U.S. military aviation, contributing in critical roles to every military engagement over the course of the 20th century and 21st.

121 Director Aaron Clark and Curator Justin Hall, discussion with author, September 10, 2021.
They too saw the downside to a single centralized women’s exhibit and the potential appearance of tokenism in such a design layout. In spite of this understanding, a lack of funding for the extensive integrated exhibit design forced the redesign of the project. Multiple individual display cases would be too expensive for the museum, but one large exhibit case would be more affordable.\(^{122}\) The new exhibit display case would also be located in the same back corner that presently hides much of the women’s history. Director Clark and Curator Hall advocated for an alternative design that was in keeping with the initial goals of the project design - the normalization and seamless integration of female contributions to the history presented in the Hill Aerospace Museum.

**Current Project Design**

It was decided cooperatively by Director Clark and Curator Hall that one large display case will be constructed. It will hold donated uniforms from the Second World War, Korean War era, the late Vietnam era, Gulf War, Afghanistan War/ War on Terror era, and uniforms currently in use by female servicemembers. Director Clark and Curator Hall were supportive of the uniforms being arranged in a linear way, creating a material culture timeline for patrons to note the changes to the USAF uniforms for women over the course of the 1900s and into the 2020s. The uniforms were selected for their place in history - particularly impactful times in Air Force women’s history that help to illustrate their journey and struggle for full and merited involvement in the United States Air Force. Like the 8\(^{\text{th}}\) Air Force exhibit already on display in the museum, smaller, more

\(^{122}\) The new exhibit will be roughly the same size as the 8\(^{\text{th}}\) Air Force exhibit located a few feet away from where the new women’s exhibit will be in the Hadley Gallery. The 8\(^{\text{th}}\) Air Force exhibit opened in 2021 and is the aesthetic model for future museum displays and exhibits.
miniature plaques will be incorporated, as mentioned briefly already, to help patrons recognize the changes in uniforms style as well as the more unique aspects and details of each uniform on display. A text-based timeline aided by photographs will accompany the uniforms and will resemble those found in two other exhibits within the museum—the Early Aviation in Utah exhibit and the Leon C. Packer exhibit.\textsuperscript{123} The timeline will run the length of the exhibit and will highlight major milestones in Air Force women’s history. Artifact driven displays are the goal for the leadership at the Hill Aerospace Museum. The massive display case will incorporate supportive text for the uniforms and their accessories. The exhibit’s display case will utilize photographs, “posters, advertising… and propaganda,” among other text-based artifacts to represent the history of women in the United States Air Force more fully.\textsuperscript{124} The museum is fortunate to have a number of artifacts from women, that will allow me to document their military service in the 20\textsuperscript{th} century. Supplementing the uniforms with text and image-based materials will contextualize the uniforms. This will make it easier to navigate the general shortage of artifact materials available on service women. The Museum has a shortage of women’s Vietnam era artifacts and uniforms, and none at all to speak of from the First World War.

The aforementioned way-finders will accompany a series of small plaques. The plaques will resemble other simple plaques already on display throughout the museum that share information on servicemen and weapon systems. These smaller simple plaques, made up of text and images, allow for some semblance of the initially planned on artifact-supported display cases strategically placed throughout the museum among the already

\textsuperscript{123} See Appendix 6.
\textsuperscript{124} Mayo, “Women’s History and Public History,” 70.
present showcases of male servicemembers. The small plaques will still serve to bring awareness to the continuous presence and contributions of female servicemembers throughout all the major wars of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. These small plaques will share the histories of specific women, and in some cases, groups of female airmen who have made valuable contributions to Hill Air Force Base and the United States Air Force. Examples will include the 1910s trailblazers Ruth Law and Katherine Stinson, and all-female or predominantly female air or maintenance crews of the late 1900s and early 2000s.\textsuperscript{125} Quotes will be utilized extensively for these plaques as they provide a rare opportunity to see the individual perspectives of these Air Force women along with their image and their military contributions. Casserly and O’Neill discuss efforts to bring into focus the stories of not just the extraordinary or iconic, but ordinary women of history into the public history setting.\textsuperscript{126} Such is the goal with this series of small plaques.

The construction of the new women of the Air Force exhibit is still two years out. The Hill Aerospace Museum has several other projects already in production at this time. They have, however, requested that a supply list be made as part of the planning, incorporating all of the materials and artifacts needed to produce this massive display and extensive exhibit project. The list will give them the number of mannequins needed, body styles, arm and leg positioning. Every piece of every uniform being added to the display case will be listed with their accession number as well as any additional artifacts. A sketch will accompany the written exhibit text. The sketch of the display will give information

\textsuperscript{125} See Appendix 4.
\textsuperscript{126} Casserly and O’Neill, 14, 21.
on the layout and insure accurate interpretation of the agreed-upon design. This will allow the staff to produce the exhibit without its creator and designer, as it is set for production these two years out. It will be a testament to careful planning and attention to detail, if with all these things: the small plaques and way-finders mapped out and its display case’s interior designed, the exhibit comes to fruition in the estimated time and in the way it was intended.

It is the hope of the creator that this exhibition will honor these often forgotten and unknown women veterans and volunteers who have served as and among the air forces of the United States of America. The exhibit is intended to pay tribute to women of the United States Air Force and stand among other exhibits of museums like the National Air Force Museum and the Women’s Memorial, that so eloquently and effectively represent American service women. The text is written in a way that will reach a greater, more general audience and therefore offer more patrons the opportunity to learn the histories of individual women. This new exhibit will help museum patrons to understand that women have always been an integral part of the history of aviation and women’s military history is inseparable from that of military aviation.
CONCLUSION

Throughout the twentieth century, women have made significant contributions to the United States Air Force and to aviation. As they worked, they donned uniforms that legitimized their participation in their field and signified belonging. These uniforms altered with the times, reflecting the changes in cultural taste and social attitudes of each era, just as Army Lt. Colonel Marybeth Simpson asserted more than half a century ago. Analyzing and discussing these few servicewomen’s uniforms has offered insight into the importance of women’s military uniforms in the United States Air Force. These uniforms have offered a fascinating study, not just of fashion, but of American society at major shifts in our history. The Air Force service and battle dress for women in the past century are windows of insight as to what was important to Americans at the time, what was expected of women and specifically women who sought to participate in the field of military aviation. As these uniforms go on display in the new exhibit highlighting the contributions of women to the United States Air Force, this paper will serve as an extension, an in-depth analysis and review of these uniforms; their place in history and what they might mean for future generations of American Airmen.
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Appendices
Appendix 1. Way-Finders

Aircraft Mechanics and Maintainers: This way-finder is inspired by the iconic image of Rosie the Riveter and is presented to the client (the Hill Aerospace Museum) as one option for the way-finder that will document and note the contributions of female aircraft maintainers throughout Air Force history on Hill Air Force Base.

Pilots (Female): this way-finder will likely take the form of the WASP pilot wings earned by all those 1,074 graduates of the WASP program. This symbol will be presented
to Hill AFB for the representation of all female aviators that have flown USAF aircraft located within the museum.
Appendix 2. Main Exhibit Text

Objective: to show all patrons that women have always contributed, and continue to contribute in vital roles in national defense, through the United States Air Force, and inspire the next generation of female airmen.

Universal Message/Theme: Duty and sacrifice of women in the United States Air Forces.

Main Exhibit Text- mostly background and general information for each era, specific women’s stories will be reserved for small plaques.

WWI

Background:

Women have been promoters, engineers, builders, and pilots from aviation’s earliest days. Harriet Quimby was the first American woman to earn her pilot’s license in 1911. In 1914, as the First World War began in Europe, American women volunteered and participated in multiple civilian war relief efforts. Women of Utah, including women of the state’s racial and ethnic minority groups, volunteered in a multitude of civilian capacities with over 80 registered nurses (RNs) from Utah (roughly a fourth of all RNs in UT) joining the war effort and over 23,000 women serving with the military in auxiliary capacities nationwide. While some women served as canteen and clerical workers, as ambulance drivers and nurses close to the front lines, some of the foremost female pilots of the era; Ruth Law and Kathrine Stinson, volunteered to fly combat missions over France for the U.S. Army Air Corps. When the Hulbert Measure that would have allowed female pilots to fly for the U.S. Army Air Corps narrowly failed to pass in Congress, these women remained undeterred. Their expeditionary flights to raise money for the
Red Cross and Liberty Loan Drives, their recruiting efforts for the Army and their training of US and Canadian military pilots to fly combat missions in the war were revolutionary in American women’s war time participation, paving the way for greater female participation in the United States Air Force during the Second World War and increasingly after the Vietnam War.

Maintainers:

Many early female pilots maintained their own aircraft. Ruth Law, the third American woman to earn her pilot's license, was among these women pilots with a diverse skill set.

Defense Workers/ Civilians:

While Hill Air Force Base was not yet operational during the First World War, there were other locations throughout the United States that supported military aviation. One such was the Stinson family’s flight School in San Antonio, Texas. The Stinson siblings were prominent in early aviation. Pioneer aviators Katherine and Marjorie Stinson, with the help of their mother and brothers, established a well utilized civilian flight school. The capable and record-setting Stinson sisters, who had been prohibited from directly joining the fight, helped to train American and Canadian Air Corps pilots who would go on to fly combat missions over the trenches of France during the First World War.

Pilots: [Small Plaques]
Ruth Law

Katherine Stinson

Flight Nursing:

Katherine Stinson proposed the revolutionary idea of using aeromedical evacuations for wounded from combat zones during her service as an ambulance driver during World War I. She presented the idea to both the U.S. Army and the American Red Cross, neither of which gave the proposal much attention.

Interwar Era

Pilots:

Many of the female pilots who had blazed the trail for women aviators in the 1910s were no longer flying in the 1920s, but women continued to pursue aviation. By the middle of the interwar period, the number of licensed female pilots rose to 285 in the United States. Louise Thaden and Amelia Earhart were among the record setters in aviation during this era. There were roughly 3000 female pilots in the United States by 1941 when the US was attacked and then declared war on the Empire of Japan.

Bessie Coleman [Small Plaque]

WWII

Pilots:

Nancy Harkness Love became the United States’ first air force woman when she helped to establish and command the Women’s Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron (WAFS) in
September of 1942. The Women’s Flying Training Detachment (WFDT) soon followed, directed by Jacqueline “Jackie” Cochran, and, in 1943, the two programs merged as the Women’s Airforce Service Pilots (WASP). Love led by example, flying almost every aircraft in the Army Air Forces’ arsenal, and becoming the first woman to fly the B-25. Under the leadership of Nancy Harkness Love and WASP director Jacqueline “Jackie” Cochran, the WASP proved most effective ferrying airframes across the continental U.S., test piloting, target towing for live ammunition training, instructing, and performing training missions for smoke laying and tracking, among other duties. These women had a retention and safety record comparable to that of the male Army Air Force pilots. Their exceptional performance ended in December of 1944, when the program was officially disbanded without providing the WASP military benefits and its service classified. The thirty-eight WASP that died in the line of duty received no military honors. When the U.S. military opened pilot training to women again in the late 1970s, the surviving WASPs fought for and won their militarization.

Utah WASP:

   Alberta Hunt Nicholson

   Marjorie Redding Christiansen

   Frances “Frankie” Roulstone Reeves

Flight Nursing:

World War II saw the first use of pilot Katherine Stinson’s concept of aeromedical evacuations. The practice of air lifting combat wounded from war zones to hospitals was standard practice in all theaters of war by 1943. The practice has remained
critical to the reduction of combat casualties. Only an elite 2% of nurses were qualified as flight nurses during World War II, the most experienced of which was Lt. Aleda E. Lutz - the first female service member casualty of World War II. Aircraft used during the Second World War for aeromedical evacuations were non-pressurized cargo planes [C-46s, C-47s, and C-54s]. The lack of pressurization and exclusive medical status of these aircraft put flight nurses at greater risk. Of the 201 nurses who were killed in action in the Army Nurse Corps, 17 were flight nurses. The flight nurses of World War II were extremely effective, successfully evacuating and preserving the lives of 1,176,002 air evacuation patients over the course of the war.

Air traffic controllers/Combat Controllers (CCT):

Air Traffic controlling was a new occupation opened to women during the Second World War. Some women of the Women’s Army Corps (WAC) stationed on Hill during the war served in this capacity. [See small plaque positioned under air traffic control tower for additional information] WAC women who served with the Army Air Forces were called Air-WACs, and while some of their occupations were new for military women, like air traffic controlling, others were as important, including clerical and secretarial work.

Maintainers:

As Hill Field operated as one of the major repair and supply depots for the Army Air Forces, civilian women went to work as aircraft maintainers, assembling, maintaining and repairing aircraft. They served on the aircraft maintenance lines, in aircraft panel
construction, and in the engine repair shop. These women made vital contributions to the war effort, making up almost half of the civilian workforce on Hill.

Defense Workers/civilians:

World War II saw an unprecedented mobilization of women, a sharp increase from the numbers seen during World War I. Utah women answered their nation’s call on and off military installations. While women worked to assemble and repair aircraft on Hill, others worked diligently as code breakers, female civilian defense workers at multiple military sites loading munitions and other materials, and still others worked at the Ogden Air Service Command Supply Division tracking maintenance orders. Women also worked on Hill in parachute and clothing manufacturing- sewing bomber jackets and overalls for flight crews.

Postwar Era

Pilots:

In the post-World War II years as women were expected to return to their domestic duties in the home, many continued to fly. Jackie Cochran continued her work with the Air Forces, now as a Lt. Colonel in the Air Force Reserves and continued to set aviation records. She became the first woman to break the sound barrier in 1953 after the Korean War. While women were no longer allowed to serve in the military as pilots, they were afforded military status as Women in the Air Force (WAF), the newly established women’s branch of the also newly formed United States Air Force (September 18, 1947).
Korean War

Pilots:

Women of the WAF found other ways to serve in the newest branch of the United States military- the Air Force, in spite of the prohibitions placed on their piloting military aircraft. Many women who had served with the WASP chose to join the Air Force in the post-World War II years and did other aviation related jobs.

Flight Nursing:

Flight nursing got women into military airframes during a time when they were excluded from flying them. Flight nursing was increasingly utilized throughout the Korean War and there was always a demand for these highly trained nurses. At the war’s peak their numbers reached almost 3000, a high contrast from just under 200 at the war’s beginning. Nursing was the emphasized occupation for Air Force, as well as other military women in this era where many in American society and the military sought a return to pre-war norms of women residing in the home. Flight nurses were responsible for the successful evacuation of 22,300 wounded from the theater of war to the United States. Three Air Force nurses died while flying medical evacuation flights in or out of theater during the Korean War.

Air traffic controllers/Combat Controllers (CCT):

Women in the Air Force (WAF) were stationed on Hill during the Korean War with the 3005 WAF Squadron. They served mostly in traditional occupations. Air traffic
controlling was one occupation that remained open to Air Force women in the years following World War II.

Maintainers:

Women, in fewer numbers than before, and only when there proved to be a manpower shortage, continued to work in aircraft maintenance capacities while the American military was engaged in Korea.

Defense Workers/civilians:

American women’s participation in the civilian job sector and the United States military were significantly reduced at the end of World War II. Hill Air Force Base remained active in the post-World War II years and important to military operations during the Korean War. Civilian women retained employment in traditional occupations, sewing parachute packs and harnesses at Hill during the war.

Vietnam War

Pilots:

There was little change in military policy regarding female military pilots from the Post World War II era (1943) through the Vietnam Era (1976). A few years after the withdrawal of American forces from Vietnam, women would again have the opportunity to enter pilot training with the United States Air Force.

Flight Nursing:
The helicopter is one of the most iconic machines of the Vietnam War. Helicopters were critical to medivacs or aeromedical evacuations. While helicopters transported the wounded from the battlefield, it was the cargo planes and the new C-9 “nightingale”, specifically designed for aeromedical evacuations, that transported these wounded out of the theater and back to the United States for further treatment and recovery. Of the only 160 Air Force nurses stationed in-theater in 1968, just 30 were flight nurses. This was due to military leadership’s resistance to allow military and civilian women into Vietnam. Despite their reluctance, servicewomen volunteered to go and served valiantly during this controversial conflict.

Air traffic controllers/Combat Controllers (CCT):

A career in Air Force air traffic control remained open to women in the Vietnam Era as well.

Maintainers:

Local women like Sharon Becker worked on the F-4 aircraft production line on Hill during the war.

Defense Workers/civilians:

Women continued to work on Hill and its neighboring military installations in the Post-World War II years, just in fewer numbers than had been seen during the Second World War. Women still found work in traditional clerical occupations and secretarial jobs, and some successfully found work in aircraft production and maintenance.
Post-Vietnam Era

Background:

Between 1973 and 1980, the Air Force and the United States military made major changes. Female service members would now be part of the main fighting force, no longer a separate entity within each branch of service. With the Air Force now fully integrated, service women would now receive all military and family benefits, weapons training, and access to non-traditional occupations like piloting aircraft. In 1978 service on Titan Missile launch crews was open to them.

Pilots & Crews:

The 1980s were a busy time for the Air Force. While they were engaged in a series of small-scale conflicts overseas, they were also diversifying the occupations available to female airmen. In the conflicts between the end of the Vietnam War and the start of the Gulf War, women officers served as pilots, navigators, bomb operators and enlisted female airmen served as crew members aboard tankers and air support aircraft. In 1988 the Department of Defense (DoD) opened more Air Force jobs to servicewomen. 97% of all Air Force Jobs were now theoretically open to women.

Gulf War

Pilots & Crews:

There were an ever-increasing number of female pilots in the post-Vietnam era, as women entered pilot training again in 1976 (for the first time since World War II).
Women were still excluded from flying combat missions, so they served as pilots and crew of non-combat aircraft like cargo planes and helicopters. Flying tankers that refueled the fighter jets was critical to the air war over Iraq.

Flight Nursing/medicine:

Female service members were no longer confined to only flight nursing, all careers in flight medicine were beginning to open to them as they continued to prove themselves. These professional service women performed life-saving work, utilizing ever-developing medical technologies and practices. However, most female airmen served outside traditional healthcare roles.

Air traffic controllers/Combat Controllers (CCT):

Redesignated as combat controllers, air traffic controllers remain an ever-important part of the Air Force mission and the mission of Hill Air Force Base.

Maintainers:

Major General Marcelite J. Harris, who was the first African American woman to hold the grade of general in the USAF, was also the first female aircraft maintenance officer in the United States Air Force.

Post-Gulf War Years

Background:

**War on Terror (Post 9-11)**

**Background:**

The War on Terror is marked by the terrorist attack on US soil September 11th, 2001. This event set the stage for the United States’ next 20 years of warfare.

**Pilots:**

This war was the first in which women would be allowed to participate completely in the air war, with no combat restrictions in place. Female airmen served as pilots, crew, and load crew of all the Air Forces’ aircraft, from cargo planes to helicopters to fighter jets. Female airmen also pilot drones for the US Air Force.

**Flight Nursing/medicine:**
Flight nursing and military medicine is still critical to the United States ability to fight, as it has been in the past. The difference in this war, and the progress that has been made, is service women's access to any medical profession within the United States Air Force. They can now serve in any occupation; from medical technician to surgeon general and anything in between.

Air traffic controllers/Combat Controllers (CCT):

Combat controllers remain an important aspect of Hill Air Force Base’s mission. Female airmen now serve in leadership positions and continue to work diligently in standard air traffic controlling on Hill and other bases around the globe. They continue to serve on and command missile crews.

Maintainers:

The Ogden Air Logistics Complex, in charge of the maintenance, repair, overhaul, and modifications of Minuteman III ICBMs and multiple aircraft, and critical to the mission of Hill Air Force Base, was under the command of Maj. Gen. C. McCauley von Hoffman between July 2019 and July 2021, a command made possible in part by the exemplary women before her like Maj. Gen. Harris.
Appendix 3. Main Exhibit Timeline

- to be located within the main display case that will showcase the service uniforms of Air Force women throughout the major war eras of the last 120+ years.

Timeline:

1911
- Harriet Quimby is the first woman to earn a pilot’s license in the United States.

1912
- Ruth Law & Katherine Stinson earn their pilot’s licenses as the 3rd and 4th women in the U.S. to do so

1917
- Ruth Law & Katherine Stinson volunteer to fly missions for the Army Air Corps
- Hulbert Measure put forth in Congress- would allow women pilots to fly in combat- narrowly defeated
- Ruth Law is the first woman to wear the uniform of the Army Air Corps as a fundraiser and recruiter for the U.S. Army

Katherine & Margorie Stinson train American and Canadian air force pilots for combat duty at their family’s flight school in San Antonio, Texas.

1920

- Anita Phillips, Director of Women’s Relations (under the War Department) first proposed an Army women’s service corps will full military status

1921

- Bessie Coleman is the first African American to obtain an international pilot’s license

1932

- Katherine Cheung becomes the first woman of Chinese descent in the United States to earn her pilot’s license. She is considered the first Asian American aviatrix.

- Amelia Earhart soloed the Atlantic and the continental United States.

1936

- Louise Thaden and Blanche Noyes won the prestigious Bendix Trophy Race, setting a new record, securing for women a permanent place in the nearly exclusively male dominated aviation racing circuit.

1938

- Willa Brown is the first African American/ Native American woman to earn a pilot’s license in the United States and would become the first female African American officer of the Civil Air Patrol.

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The National Airmen Association of America (NAAA) was founded with the help of aviator, businesswoman, and desegregation activist, Willa Brown, in an effort to integrate African American aviation cadets into the U.S. Army Air Forces—what would eventually come to fruition in the program that trained the famous Tuskegee Airmen.

- Hill Field becomes operational
- Director of Coffey School of Aeronautics (Chicago) Willa Brown (funded in part by fellow aviator Janet Bragg) earns her ground instructor license and goes on to train over 200 students at the Coffey School, many of which would become the renowned Tuskegee Airmen of World War II.
- Approx. 3,000 licensed female pilots in the USA
- Empire of Japan attacks Naval Station Pearl Harbor—US joins WWII
- 25 American women go to England to serve with the British Air Transport Auxiliary—the first American women to serve in the air in WWII
- Nancy Harkness Love est. the Women’s Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron (WAFS)—civilian female pilots to ferry aircraft across the continental US for the military to make more men available for combat duty

• Jaqueline “Jackie” Cochran est. Women’s Flying Training Detachment (WFTD) in 1943
• WAFS and WFTD merge under new organization - Women’s Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) with Jackie Cochran as director and Love as chief squadron leader of the WAFS

• Flight nursing becomes standard military practice
• The Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) was militarized under a new name - the Women’s Army Corps (WAC) with the help of Representative (MA) Edith Norse Rogers affording all members military protection and benefits

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WASP Hazel Ying Lee died of injuries sustained in midair collision with a male transport pilot - the WASP’s 38th and last casualty, America’s first Chinese American woman to die in military service

WASP program deactivated without militarization - the women received no military benefits

Women’s Armed Services Integration Act - est. a women’s service as a permanent part of the US military

Women in the Air Force (WAF) est.

Start of Korean War


1952
• USAF declares itself a fully integrated force

1953
• Korean Armistice Agreement signed and fighting ended

1964
• Official beginning of the Vietnam War

1967
• Female flight nurses permitted in aeromedical evacuations

1968
• 160 Air Force nurses in Vietnam

1971
• Jeanne M. Holm (director of Women in the Air Force) becomes the first woman general in the USAF

1973
- Last USAF aircraft leave Vietnam
- U.S. military transitions to all-volunteer force
- Brig. Gen. Holm becomes the first Air Force woman to hold the rank of major general

1976
- Women in the Air Force (WAF) integrated into main force, making the USAF a fully integrated fighting force
- First servicewomen enter pilot training since the WASP program of WWII
- WASP veterans received their retroactive militarization
- Air Force Academy opens to women

1982
- First all-female KC-135 crew completes training mission

1986
- First all-female Minuteman missile crew serves on “alert duty”

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1990
- Colonel Marcelite Jordan Harris, the Air Force’s first female aircraft maintenance officer, is the first black servicewoman to achieve the rank of brigadier general in the USAF

1991
- Start of the Gulf War

1993
- Lt. Col. Patricia Fornes is the first female to command a combat missile squadron

1994
- Brig. Gen. Jeanie Flynn Leavitt becomes the USAF’s first female fighter pilot in the F-15

1995
- Col. Marth McSally becomes the first female combat pilot

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• 2nd Lt. Kelly Flinn is the first bomber pilot in the Air Force

1996
• Col. Betty L. Mullis is the first female airman to command a flying wing

2000
• Maj. Shawna Rochelle Kimbrell becomes the Air Force’s first black female fighter pilot

2001
• Lt. Col. Stayce D. Harris is the first black woman to command a flight squadron

2016
• All military careers, including combat roles, open to women across all branches of the U.S. military

2020
• Capt. Emily “Banzai” Thompson is the first female pilot to fly an F-35 Lightning II in combat

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Appendix 4. Small Plaques Text

Early Pilots

Ruth Law

- Location: Burgess-Wright Flyer as mannequin & plaque
- Title: America’s first female pilot in uniform

Ruth Bancroft Law Oliver 1887-1970

- Text: **First female pilot in uniform**- Ruth Law, earned her pilot’s license in 1912, becoming the third American woman to do so. She was the first woman to own a Wright brothers’ plane and by 1917, Law had set multiple aviation records among male and female aviators. Law volunteered to fly combat missions over France when the United States entered the First World War. During the war, Law lobbied for the congressional measure that would allow women to serve in aerial combat roles. Despite the congressional measure’s failure to pass, Ruth Law and other female pilots persisted in their patriotic efforts by undertaking aerial expiditions, raising thousands of dollars for US war bond drives and the American Red Cross. Law’s skill and dedication earned her the right to wear the noncommissioned officers’ uniform of the United States Army Air Corps- the first woman to do so. For her service in fundraising and recruitment campaigns, she was awarded an Army Air Corps medallion.

**Hill AFB connection**- Ruth Law’s legacy as a pioneering aviator and advocate for women, in military combat-related roles has come to fruition. In today’s United States Air Force, and on Hill Air Force Base, women occupy many roles
and leadership positions, from the Base Commander to F-35 Demo Team Leader and everywhere in between.

Quote: “If the President told me to ‘Go get the Kaiser!’” “I would Fly through the foe’s guarding planes to his headquarters and try to bomb him…and prove that the usefulness of women is not a myth.”

Katherine Stinson & Bessie Coleman

• Location: Curtis “Jenny” JN-4 as mannequin & plaque

• Title: The “Jenny”- A woman’s plane

Katherine Stinson 1891-1977 Bessie Coleman 1892-1926

• Text: Katherine Stinson became the fourth licensed female pilot in the United States in 1912. Stinson set multiple aviation records before the United States’ entrance into World War I. The experienced pilot volunteered to fly for the US Army Air Corps at the outset of war. After being turned down, Stinson flew expeditionary flights to raise money for the American Red Cross and Liberty Loan Drives in her Curtiss “Jenny” JN-4, raising $50,000 in a single 1917 Red Cross fundraising flight. She also made expeditionary flights while serving overseas in England and France. Stinson also served as an ambulance driver for the Allies, after her pioneering idea of aeromedical evacuations was dismissed by the American Red Cross. Her revolutionary idea would come to fruition during the Second World War. Medical evacuation, or medivac, is commonly utilized today by militaries and civilians around the world.
Hill AFB Connection- Utah women also served as ambulance drivers in France during the First World War. One such woman was Maud Fitch of Eureka, Utah who served near the French front in the last year of the war.

The Interwar Years/ Golden Age of Aviation

- Location: wall by briefing hut
- Add: facts and info on female aviators (reprint?)
- Title: [Existing titles]
- Text: June 15, 1921- Bessie Coleman earns her international pilots license in France from the prestigious Federation Aeronautique Internationale (FAI), the first woman of African American and Native American heritage to do so.

1932- Katherine Cheung becomes the first woman of Chinese descent in the United States to earn her pilot’s license. She is considered the first Asian American aviatrix.

- Amelia Earhart makes the second ever non-stop solo flight across the Atlantic Ocean, the same year becoming the first woman to fly solo across the continental United States.

September 1936- Louise Thaden with fellow pilot Blanche Noyes, won the Bendix Trophy Race- the first women to do so. She completed the New York to Los Angeles race in under 15 hours, a new record. She secured for women a permanent place in the nearly exclusively male dominated aviation racing circuit.
April 1938- Willa Brown is the first African American/Native American woman to earn a pilot’s license in the United States and would become the first female African American officer of the Civil Air Patrol.

1939- the National Airmen Association of America (NAAA) is founded with the help of aviator, businesswoman, and desegregation activist, Willa Brown, in an effort to integrate African American aviation cadets into the U.S. Army Air Forces. This would eventually come to fruition in the program that trained the famous Tuskegee Airmen.

June 1940- Director of Coffey School of Aeronautics (Chicago) (funded in part by fellow aviator Janet Bragg), Willa Brown earns her ground instructor license and goes on to train over 200 students at the Coffey School, many of which would become the renowned Tuskegee Airmen of World War II.

8th Air Force

- Location: 8th Air Force Exhibit
- Add: small plaques on WAC assigned to the 8th AF and the WASP who were assigned to Operation Aphrodite
- Title: The “Air” WACS of the 8th Air Force
- Text: WACs were stationed around the globe, supporting U.S. Army and Allied operations during World War II. Some WACs were stationed in England and assigned to the 8th Air Force, operating teletype machines and performing other clerical duties that kept the Mighty Eighth operating.
- Title: The WASP of Operation Aphrodite
• Text: Two pilots of the Women’s Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) were selected to contribute their skill and aviation expertise to the top-secret drone project of the U.S. Army Air Forces.

Air Traffic Controllers

• Location: Base of control tower
• Add: female mannequin to tower set up & new plaque
• Title: A Necessary and Exciting Work

Pvt. Katie M. Spear 1944

• Text: Air Traffic controlling is one occupation women entered into during World War II and maintained their presence in, in the post-World War II era. As the Second World War pressed on, military and civilian women were given greater opportunities and access to non-traditional jobs. Service women such as Katie M. Spear, a member of the Women’s Army Corps (WAC), helped to operate the control tower on Hill Field during the Second World War. She is noted for having said,

“It is a necessary, yet exciting and exhilarating work. High up there in the control tower with the roar of planes overhead, dependent upon us to bring them in, we get that very satisfying feeling that we are a most vital part of the war effort.”

Ola Mildred Rexroat (1917-2017), a veteran of the World War II WASP program and only known woman of Native American decent to have participated in the program, continued her service as member of the newly formed WAF-Women in the Air Force,
serving roughly 10 years as an air traffic controller in the United States Air Force Reserves.

**Hill AFB Connection** - The current commander of Hill Air Force Base’s Operational Support Squadron-75th OSS, the squadron tasked with air traffic control operations on Hill, is Lt. Col. Cynthia Littlejohn.

Atomic Bombs

- Location: Near B-25 and atomic bomb content
- Add: new plaque
- Title: A Unique Perspective
- Text: During World War II, some Nisei (second generation), or American citizens of Japanese descent, living in Utah and those interned in Utah’s internment camps, enlisted in the U.S. army. One such enlistee was Miyoko Sadahiro of Layton, Utah who joined the Women’s Army Corps in March of 1944. Sadahiro served in the WAC medical detachment as a medical technician during her military service. In 1948, just three years after the atomic bombs were dropped on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Sadahiro returned to the city of Hiroshima, where she had attended school years before, with the Atomic Research Committee, aiding in the study of the atomic bomb’s effect on Hiroshima inhabitants and future generations.

  [The Hill AFB Connection- she lived in Utah at the time]

Cargo Planes (Airlift/tanker)
It was one of the premier pilots of the First World War Era, Katherine Stinson, that proposed the idea of Aeromedical evacuations to the American Red Cross during the First World War to more efficiently transport wounded soldiers from the front lines to hospitals. Women in the United States’ Air Force have served aboard cargo airframes consistently since the Second World War. Throughout this time, most have served as nurses and other medical professionals, and in recent decades they have proven themselves as maintenance and logistics airmen, as loadmasters and pilots.

**C-47s & C-54s** - Over the course of the Second World War and the Korean War, flight nurses aboard C-47s and C-54s helped to evacuate over 1,000,000 casualties of war.

**C-124s** - Air Force flight nurses of the Korean and Vietnam Wars served aboard these aircraft when they were utilized in the aeromedical evacuations of wounded and casualties of war during both conflicts.

**B-29 Superfortress**

- Location: B-29/ nose art display
- Add: New Plaque w/ women’s contributions
- Title: The Women Who Taught the Men to Fly
- Text: The female pilots of the B-29 - The first woman to fly a B-29 was former WASP pilot Mildred “Mickey” Axton who worked as a member of Boeing
Airplane Company’s flight test crew after serving briefly with the WASP. Her successful test flight of the B-29 in May of 1944 was followed by two other WASP pilots: Dora Dougherty and Dorothea Moorman in June of that year. These WASP pilots were hand-picked by Lt. Col. Paul W. Tibbets of the Army Air Forces (the pilot that would soon fly the Enola Gay over the Japanese city of Hiroshima) to demonstrate the flying capabilities of the B-29 Superfortress for the wary male pilots of the Army Air Forces. Despite the aircraft’s history of repeated engine failures and Dougherty never having flown a four-engine airframe before, Dougherty and Moorman successfully piloted the aircraft multiple times. One grateful pilot recalled that Dougherty and Moorman, “showed [them] that the B-29 plane was not one to be feared.” Continuing, the WASP pilots “convinced [them] the B-29 was the plane that any pilot could be proud to fly.”

A-10 Thunderbolt II

- Location: A-10
- Add: New plaque abt. First AF female combat pilot
- Title: The Air Force’s First Female Combat Pilot
- Text: America’s first combat pilot- Col. Martha McSally is the Air Force’s first female pilot to fly in combat. She served in the Middle East during operations enforcing the no-fly zone over Iraq, established after the Gulf War. She became the first woman in American history to fly a combat aircraft into enemy territory in 1995. Her first experience firing weapons in combat was done with what is
known as a hard sight, nicknamed ‘standby pipper,’ forcing her to fire the GAU-8 Avenger 30mm gatling gun manually, but none the less, successfully. She is also the first woman to command a combat aviation squadron, further evidence of her ability as a combat fighter pilot, ending her 26-year military career with over 2600 flight hours and 325 combat flight hours.

“I hope I’m a role model to both men and women because we are a fighting force and should not be concerned with differences between us.”
Appendix 5. Small Plaque Sample

Ruth Bancroft Law Oliver
America’s First Female Pilot in Uniform

1887-1970
Appendix 7. Museum Map