The success of American air power in World War II was based on two main factors: the quality of American aircraft used during the war, and more importantly, the quality of American pilots who flew those planes into combat. The Fairchild PT-19 Cornell was one of a handful of primary trainer designs that were the first stop on a cadet's way to becoming a combat pilot. Inexpensive, simple to maintain and most of all, easy to fly, the PT-19 truly lived up to its nickname - the "Cradle of Heroes."

In the late 1930s, Sherman Fairchild hired the talented designer Armand Thiebolt to design an aircraft to satisfy the Army Air Corps' call for a primary trainer. The new plane had to be forgiving, have aerodynamic refinements for improved safety, feature interchangeable parts and be built from largely "non-strategic" materials (i.e. wood and fabric). Thiebolt rose to this challenge and set to work designing the M-62 (Fairchild's designation for the PT-19). The M-62 was fitted with a Ranger in-line engine giving the design a very narrow frontal area. The plane's low wing allowed for a widely spaced fixed landing gear which guarded against ground accidents. The PT-19's steel tubing frame and plywood sheathed wing and tail structures were light, strong and easy to care for; although the wings were susceptible to rotting in wet climates.

In September l939, the M-62 won a fly-off at Wright Field in Dayton, Ohio against 17 other designs and became the U.S. Army's primary trainer. Little more than a year later, 12 PT-19s a week rolled out of Fairchild's Haggerstown, Maryland factory. After America's entry into World War II, Fairchild could no longer meet the demand for PT-19s, so Howard Aircraft, St. Louis Aircraft, and Aeronca also began constructing PT-19s under license. Soon PT-19 airframes were produced faster than Ranger could build engines for them, and Fairchild began fitting Continental radial engines to PT-19 frames, calling the new aircraft the PT-23. Fairchild developed a nearly identical variant of the PT-19, the PT-26, for the Royal Canadian Air Force that featured fully enclosed cockpits to help combat the cold Canadian

climate. By the end of the war in 1945, a total of 8,130 PT-19s, PT-23s and PT-26s had been produced to serve in such places as the United States, Canada, Great Britain, Norway, Latin America and Rhodesia.

The PT-19 on display was received by the United States Army Air Force on April 23, 1943. In May 1943, it was assigned to the 2559th Base Unit, Pine Bluff Arkansas. In July 1944, the aircraft was transferred to the 4136th Base Unit, Tinker Field, Oklahoma, and was eventually turned over to the Reconstruction Finance Corp. for disposition in August 1944. The paint scheme on the aircraft is the same Army Air Force scheme it wore during World War II. The “ED” on the tail indicates it served at the civilian run training facility located at Grider Field, near Pine Bluff Arkansas.

ENGINE	Ranger L-440, 200 h.p.
WING SPAN	35 feet, 11 inches
LENGTH	24 feet, 8 inches
HEIGHT	7 feet, 9 inches
MAX TAKEOFF WEIGHT	2,450 pounds
CREW	2
MANUFACTURED BY	Fairchild Aircraft
TOTAL BUILT	4,889
TOTAL EXISTING	272
FIRST BUILT	1938
MUSEUM'S AIRCRAFT BUILT	1943
MAXIMUM SPEED	124 mph.
RANGE	480 miles
SERVICE CEILING	16,000 feet