

# The Columbian | Serving Clark County, Washington

**UPDATE: Pearson Air Museum to reopen Wednesday**

**It will feature spruce mill, auto exhibits instead of planes**



Photo by [Zachary Kaufman](#)

The National Park Service has terminated an agreement with the city of Vancouver, putting Pearson Air Museum under management of the park service's Fort Vancouver National Historic Site.

By [Tom Vogt](#)

As of Wednesday, February 27, 2013

## **New story**

### [Air Museum reopens under new management](#)

Pearson Air Museum will reopen at 10 a.m. today under new management, as a National Park Service facility.

Pearson has been closed for three weeks following a dispute between the NPS and the Fort Vancouver National Trust, which had operated the air museum on behalf of the city of Vancouver.

Theresa Langford, a park service museum curator at Fort Vancouver National Historic Site, said Pearson will follow the same schedule as before — from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Wednesday through Saturday. Admission to Pearson Air Museum, 1115 E. Fifth St., will be free.

The first couple of exhibits are of an interim nature, to get the museum reopened quickly, Langford said.

One is based on the history of transportation in the area.

“We’ve had community members offering antique vehicles,” Langford said. “One of the best is a 1918 Stanley Steamer” automobile.

There also is a type of vintage vehicle not usually associated with its manufacturer: an old Ferrari tractor. Some replicas also will be on display.

“It’s supposed to be an air museum, but they have no assets to support that,” Elson Strahan said. He is president and CEO of the Fort Vancouver National Trust. “This is really, in our view, a huge loss to the community. We view this action by the National Park Service as an appropriation of community resources.”

The second exhibit will focus on the World War I-era spruce mill in Vancouver — the world’s largest at that time. It will feature two encampment setups, Langford said. One will provide a glimpse of life for spruce mill workers based in Vancouver; the other will replicate logging camp life for soldiers stationed in Northwest forests.

“At the end of March, we will have another exhibit about the birth of Pearson Field, and its military roots,” Langford said. “It will feature artifacts from our museum, and on loan.”

During the time it is open to the public, the museum will be staffed by at least two park service personnel, as well as volunteers.

Museum-based programs will include a 45-minute walking tour exploring the history and archaeology of the spruce mill, as well as educational programs for students.

The museum had been empty since Feb. 6, when exhibits owned by and lent to the Fort Vancouver National Trust were removed.

The trust's Strahan said the trust is putting together a plan to recover items the park service still holds. Artifacts kept in the temperature-controlled munitions building, such as historic newspaper clippings, were rotated in and out of the hangar while under the trust's control.

Strahan has contacted the Clark County Skills Center to continue with educational aerospace programs that were held at the field. The trust, however, will not use the inside of the museum for these classes.

"That's obviously a big disadvantage to the growth of the educational programs," Strahan said.

He supports a bill introduced by U.S. Rep. Jaime Herrera Beutler, R-Camas, that would transfer ownership of Pearson Air Museum and 7 acres of surrounding land from the National Park Service to the city of Vancouver.