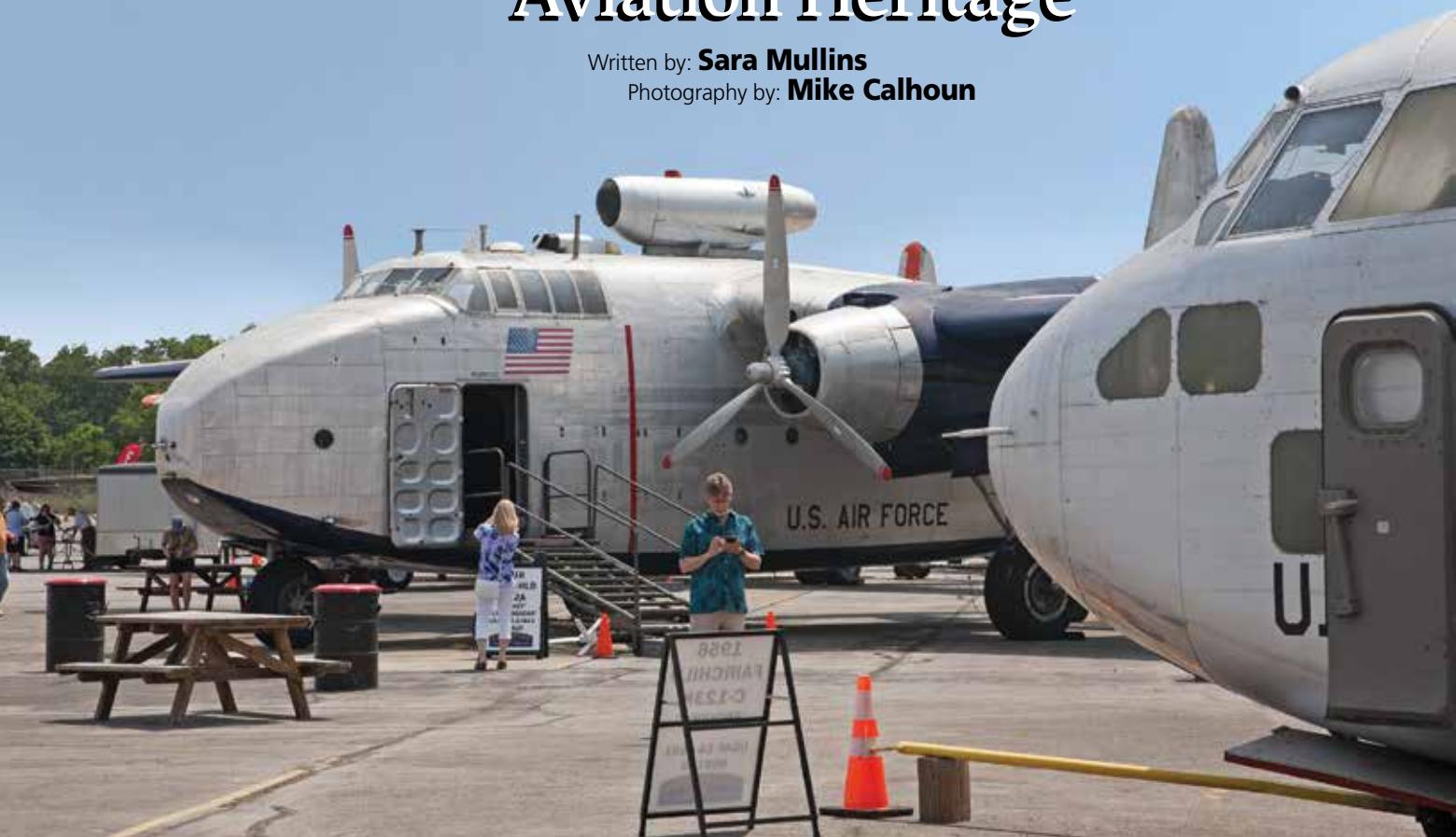


# Celebrating Hagerstown's Aviation Heritage

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## HAGERSTOWN AVIATION MUSEUM

Transportation in many forms has long been a hallmark of the city of Hagerstown, Maryland. First established at the crossroads of the "Warrior Trading Path," the Eastern Native American North / South Trading Route, the town grew quickly and was a prized location for transportation of all kinds, beginning with foot travel and covered wagons and river navigation. When the railroad arrived it spurred the growth of Hagerstown into a transportation center. Its "Hub City" nickname arose from the convergence of railroad lines into the city center in a pattern resembling the spokes on a wagon wheel.

Today the city sits at the crossroads of two major interstate highways, I-70 and I-81, where it serves as a gateway to the Baltimore and Washington, D.C., areas. Hagerstown now serves as a "hub" of government, commerce and recreation for the Tri-State Area of Maryland, West Virginia and Pennsylvania.

Building aircraft in Hagerstown began in 1916 and grew steadily. Production was boosted in 1929 when Sherman

Fairchild, a New York inventor, businessman, and aviation pioneer bought controlling interest in the Kreider-Reisner aircraft manufacturing company changing the name to the Fairchild Aircraft company and subsequently producing thousands of aircraft for military and civilian customers until 1984. In 1995, several local aviation enthusiasts provided aerial entertainment at the Fairchild Homecoming and Air Show. Discussion followed about establishing an aviation museum to collect and preserve as many Fairchild aircraft as possible. In 1999, the group held its first board meeting to lay the groundwork for the museum and acquired its first aircraft, a 1928 Kreider-Reisner KR-31. Momentum for the museum foundered after Dick Henson, chief test pilot at Fairchild and founder of Henson Aviation, passed in 2002. Two years later, three aviation enthusiasts – Kurtis Meyers, John Seburn and Steve Christiano – produced the documentary "Hagerstown, Remembering Our Aviation Heritage" that was a hit with local viewers.



“What sets the Hagerstown Aviation Museum apart from similar museums,” Seburn says, “is the connection this collection of airplanes and artifacts has to the Hagerstown area.” Seburn serves as the president of the museum’s board of directors. The museum already has a following around the country, thanks to social media and a segment on the Travel Channel’s “Mysteries at the Museum.”

By 2005 the Hagerstown Aviation Museum was officially established and dedicated to preserving and promoting the region’s 90 plus years of aviation history, and showing appreciation for the men and women who contributed. Thanks to the support of loyal donors throughout the past 25 years, the museum has grown from a concept to the world’s largest Fairchild Aircraft and memorabilia collection. Twenty-three historic aircraft and more than 10,000 photos and artifacts, spanning over a century of aviation in Hagerstown, are housed in the 35,000 sq. ft. area Dome Hangar, Fairchild’s first flight test hangar.

Seburn views the Dome Hangar as the perfect spot for this museum to tell the story of Hagerstown’s aviation history, especially regarding the Fairchild Aircraft plant near the airport. During World War II, military aircraft were produced there by more than 10,000 employees. Seburn’s grandfather worked at Fairchild from 1941 to 1966.

The 1943 era wooden “Dome Hangar” served as Fairchild’s flight test hangar prior to a larger flight test hangar being built in 1945. The “Dome Hangar” will be home to the museum’s collection of smaller aircraft. The two hangars are connected by a building that will be used as an exhibition area for the museum’s many



**Some of the collection of airplanes inside the Dome Hangar:**  
1993 Fairchild RC-26B “Condor” USAF 92-9373 and 1942 Fairchild PT-26 WWII trainer (top photo); 1933 Fairchild 22 C7D (middle); and 1928 Kreider-Reisner KR-31 biplane (bottom) — the first aircraft acquired by the museum.



**Visitors can climb inside the cargo area aboard the museum's historic U.S. Airforce 1956 Fairchild C-123K "Provider."**

displays. In addition, a workshop building was included in the purchase and a restoration shop will be established in this area.

The Dome Hangar had been leased since September 2020 until the museum purchased the facility in April 2023. The purchase included the Dome Hangar, plus a restoration shop area, exhibition area and eight acres of ramp space. This purchase was made possible by a \$5 million grant from the State of Maryland, following former Governor Hogan's 2022 visit when he viewed a 3-D presentation showcasing the museum's vision of the future. The visit, occurring near the end of Hogan's tenure in office, was timely.

In 1954, Fairchild agreed to build the Fokker F-27, the first turboprop jet airliner in the United States. One of the first jet-powered commercial airliners to go into production, it was a revolutionary design in many ways. The plane was manufactured from 1952-58 in Hagerstown. The museum's 1958 Fairchild F-27 had been stored at an airport in Greybull, Wyoming, since the early 1990s, and then donated to the Hagerstown Aviation Museum in 2016. Despite years of sitting in the sagebrush, the aircraft was still in good condition. After an inspection of the airframe and engines, it was determined the F-27 was not airworthy. The F-27 was dismantled by B&G Industries and the fuselage was loaded on a trailer. On July 17, the aircraft arrived at the museum and was promptly unloaded by the Digging & Rigging crew. The museum is very grateful for the donated services of DL George & Sons who made the arrangements and covered the cost of transportation for the F-27.

Currently the museum is open only for special events and group tours with an opening planned in October. Once the museum is complete, visitors will be able to see real planes constructed in Hagerstown up close and personal, along with the museum's extensive archive of thousands of photographs, artifacts, models, personal items, artwork and paintings. Future plans include an exhibit of a mock aircraft assembly line, an archive of the museum's collection of photos and documents, and the acquisition of a 1945-era flight test hangar.

Adventurous visitors can experience the thrill of open-cockpit flying in the museum's 1943 Fairchild PT-19 Primary Trainer by making a \$200 donation. Sign-ups are first come, first served, at the museum gift shop in the Dome Hangar. Flights are limited to one passenger – and the pilot.

Seburn hopes the museum will play an educational role by hosting field trips and inspiring young people to pursue careers in aviation, engineering and manufacturing. He believes that Hagerstown's position between the Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C., and the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force in Dayton, Ohio, — two of the region's largest aviation museums

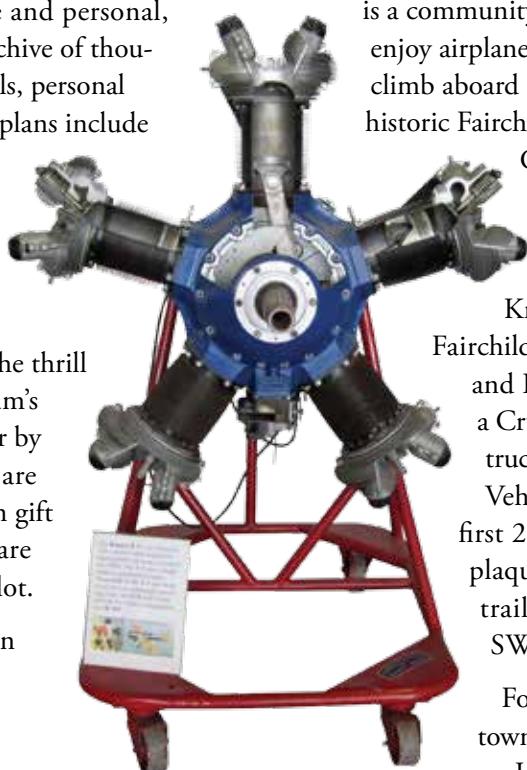
— could bolster visits by groups from around the world.

On the second Saturday of September, the museum presents its annual **Wings and Wheels Expo** featuring a large display of warbirds, modern aircraft, classic cars, trucks, and RC

model aircraft. The Expo is planned as a fun day for the family to visit the airport and learn more about Hagerstown's aviation past, present, and future. Wings and Wheels is a community event providing the opportunity to enjoy airplane rides, music and food. Visitors can climb aboard the Hagerstown Aviation Museum's historic Fairchild C-82 and C-119 Flying Boxcars, C-123K Provider, and PT-26 WWII trainer aircraft. Exhibits feature other museum aircraft built in Hagerstown, including the 1928 Kreider-Reisner KR-31 biplane, 1943 Fairchild PT-19 WWII Trainer, Fairchild 22 and Fairchild 24. The Expo also includes a Cruise-In with antique and classic cars, trucks, antique tractors, and motorcycles. Vehicle registration is \$10 each and the first 200 vehicles receive a custom dash plaque. Other attractions include tractor-trailers, cranes, law enforcement and SWAT vehicles, and much more.

For more information on the Hagerstown Aviation Museum and its Dome Hangar renovation, visit its Facebook page or website at [hagerstownaviationmuseum.org](http://hagerstownaviationmuseum.org), call 301-733-8717 or send a message to [info@hagerstownaviationmuseum.org](mailto:info@hagerstownaviationmuseum.org). Volunteers are always welcome.

Donations can be made online at [hagerstownaviationmuseum.org](http://hagerstownaviationmuseum.org) or by a check made out and sent to the Hagerstown Aviation Museum, 18450 Showalter Road, Building 8, Hagerstown, MD 21742.



**The Kinner R-5 American five cylinder radial engine was used for light general and sport aircraft of the 1930s. Thousands of the reliable R-5 and its derivatives were produced, powering many WWII trainer aircraft (military designation R-540).**



**1970 Bell UH-V1 "Huey" Helicopter on display.**



**Have a flight experience in the museum's 1943 Fairchild PT-19.**