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World Fair City Saves Landmark

SPOKANE -- The old tower clock, like that of many an American city, seemed destined never to run again.

It was a city landmark. For more than 70 years it had kept the time from the top of a 155-foot tower overlooking the railroad yards that had helped build Spokane into the hub of the Pacific Northwest's Inland Empire.

Last year vandals wrecked it -- apparently forever. They stole cogs and other parts that hadn't been manufactured for decades, and poked an iron bar into the mechanism and wrenched it seemingly beyond repair.

But the old clock will tell the correct time from the tower again when the Expo '74 World Fair opens here May 4. Students at Spokane Community College and handymen from the city building maintenance department have it running already.

Cog wheels and other stolen parts were remade in machine shops at the college and the maintenance department. Students and maintenance men also straightened the pendulum arm and fashioned aluminum hands to replace the old wooden ones.

The clock will be reinstalled as soon as an iron grating is placed in the tower to prevent another break-in.

"You see old clocks like this in a lot of cities," said George Gerdo, Spokane's building maintenance superintendant. "I guess people figure once they're broken, they're finished for good.

"We thought so, too, until we decided to have a try at getting it running in time for Expo. Turned out it wasn't too big a job after all."

