

We would like to thank those that helped us get here to talk to you today. Thank you to the speaker today, the members of our legislature, Mr. Troy Jackson who submitted this bill on behalf of the Loring Air Museum and those that support us today.

Loring AFB was built as a super base to protect our nation from our enemies and to stand at the ready to fight and strike if needed. The base was the brainchild of General Curtis LeMay. General LeMay was the one that came forward with the idea that it was possible to have a base at the ready on alert 24/7. His idea was to have all those squadrons near each other to make the base more efficient and faster when it came to ready, willing, and able.

Loring opened in 1953 as a base with nuclear weapons. It was once the largest nuclear weapons depots in the world. When it opened one of the more strategic buildings and more formidable was the Arch Hangar. The Arch is one of only 2 built in the world, we have ours and Ellsworth AFB South Dakota is known as the Freedom Arch. The Arch construction started in 1947 and continued to 1949.

The Arch Hangar towers above the runway and is the most prominent structures on the base. It can be seen for miles around and is one of the most photographed icons in Aroostook. The huge structure was built with reinforced concrete and was designed by Roberts and Schaefer Company of Chicago, as a maintenance facility for the B-36 Bomber, and then later the B-52 and the KC-135 Aircraft. A monolithic arch built with some of the newest and most sophisticated engineering of its time, it is a marvel of engineering feat. The form was built on an intricate maze of heavy timber trusses capable of moving on 12 railroad tracks and its height could be adjusted with 272 jacks. It took 2 months to build the trusses and 280,000 board feet of lumber to do it. A steel shortage nearly unhinged its progress, so steel was brought in that was to be used for railroad ties. This is what is reinforcing the concrete of this great structure.

Using an elaborate array of booms, portable concrete hoppers, and wide timber buggy railways, this was used to accomplish the continuous concrete pouring necessary to prevent seams in the Arch. 80 Workers worked nonstop on the first pour for 27 hours, and 36 minutes. Each of the six pours covered 50 feet, two spans, required 230 cubic yards of concrete. The contractors made the center 100 feet of the slab 24 inches thick and then tapered it to 18 inches toward the sides, with 12 ribs along the top. This would allow the structure to survive the weight of the heavy bombers that would occupy the hangar and accommodate the snowfall of Maine winters.

The requirements for such a structure were simple. It had to be 340 feet wide by 300 feet deep, and 90 feet to the inside of the roof of the Arch. It was built using a design that would be able to be pushed on rollers once completed to be used to build more of these structures. However, the military ran out of funding due to WWII and Korea being so close to each other, and other bases being built at the same time. Loring was slated to house 13 Arch Hangars.

The building had radiant heat, and the roof was covered with one inch of fiberglass and four plies of perforated asbestos felt and asphalt. The hangar was finished in June 1949. With

everything that was put into this structure it became a true engineering marvel and stands as a testament of the build, and the engineering used at that time. It was also the first building at Loring to be eligible to be listed on the National Historic Registry of landmarks, structures, and buildings.

When Loring closed the Loring Development Authority took over the day-to-day operations of the base. In all the time that they have been in possession of this structure, there has yet to be a long-standing entity that has taken over occupying this facility. One of the few that occupied it was Telford Aviation and only occupied it for about 6 years. It has been used for other things but nothing with staying power.

In 2005 the Loring Air Museum opened its doors under the name the Loring Military Heritage Center. With an array of members from civilian contractors, friends of Loring, retired military members and members who served we open our doors. Our objective and mission at the museum is to house artifacts and articles that were once used at the base, worn at the base, or were part of the base. We were given the building by the Loring Development Authority to do this project and then later outgrew the original building that was once the base bank. We broke through the wall, created a breezeway, and built a large garage to house the additional equipment and displays that we have received over the years.

We have everything from lighters and mugs, to uniforms and equipment that was once used on the flightline. In 2008 the Bangor Air Museum gifted us a KC-135 Jet engine and it is featured as one of our main displays of the museum and we have taken it and brought it to parades and used it to teach people about the history of Loring.

Former members of the base and civilians started to hear about our endeavors and became life members, brought in more displays and donations, and have helped us come what we are today. We started with a small reunion that brought in the former Security Police and thanks in part to them and using google groups they spread the word about the museum and the members trying to save the incredible history of this once great base. As Facebook came into the picture we have taken off. Loring has over 18 groups and 16,557 members strong as of January 4, 2024.

For our first large Open House we had approximately 3,000 people sign into one of the many books we put out on display to get somewhat of a head count. However due to the size of the building and the amount of people that came not everyone knew to sign in, or simply didn't want to wait in line to sign in. We host dinner dances, we have had fly overs, we even in 2002 had a B-52 land at Loring from Barksdale AFB. At the 2022 Open house we had over 10,000 people who were in and around the B-52, museum, and the other events at the base. This does not count the people who were stationed in and around the former flight path, up at the lakes watching and around Aroostook as this amazing aircraft once stationed at Loring flew over and gave the County the show they had been waiting for since 1994. A static display at Loring!

Now the questions brewing in your minds is why the Arch. As the museum has grown, we have been lucky enough to have the backing of many people. We are looking to grow even more. Our intention is to bring in large military aircraft and put them on display inside this structure. Loring has the distinct disadvantage as other places of the amount of snow fall, we get. If we were to get a large aircraft, it could not be just put on display in the elements without someone to remove the amount of snow we get here in the County. The sheer weight of that would destroy the wings and the aircraft itself over time. When Loring was opened, men were assigned to shovel the snow off the aircraft.

People have shown that the Museum can attract and has attracted many of the public who are interested in this area. We have done tours for the elderly, private groups, reunions of classes from around the County, former members of the base, families of the former members, schools come to learn about the Cold War, other events use us as a tour stop, and we have people who just wander in with no connection other than to learn about the base.

We have the backing of over 16,000+ on Facebook from all the different Loring groups as well as the Charles J. Loring Jr. family who have been very involved at the Loring Air Museum. We have many people from the surrounding community who want to see this grow even more and for us to be able to get grants to bring in those large aircraft. We also have many businesses such as the Bunker Inn who get the foot traffic of our Open Houses and the other people who come to stay.

When we host our Open Houses, we have generated a lot of tourism for Aroostook. Many of those that come don't just stay for the 2-3 days we host this. They come and stay in hotels, and motels, they eat in the area, they buy local, they book Airnobs and other venues to stay longer, They travel in and around the state to the parks and beach areas, and cities of Maine. They rent cars, hotels, motels and fly into PQI for our event.

Those numbers are just for the open houses; but it does not include the number of guests we see who drive in with family and friends from around the country to drive around the base and want to see what is at Loring and what has become of it. They come into the museum and shed tears, and cry because they view the face of a loved one, or just the sheer emotion takes them back to a time that was the highlight of their life, when they were young and vibrant, and the world was at their feet.

One of the farthest that we have seen is from Yugoslavia and Lithuania. Imagine what they spent in the local area and what they are doing for our economy. This summer a van of 13 pulled into the museum parking lot on a closed day picked up the phone and made a call. Within 20 minutes I was there to spend 4 hours with them, till we found something with their dad's photo in it, and his name listed in logs and books. They extended their stay to come back for an additional day for me to drive them around in their van and to see the County.

Many former military have come back to the County and bought land in Loring, Connor, Woodland, Caribou, Presque Isle, Mars Hill, and Van Buren. Many come back yearly to man the

museum and stay in hotels for a week at a time to see the area, and cross over into Canada as well. They man the museum and they enjoy the area of Aroostook that once brought them so much joy to be stationed here and where they made lifelong friends.

The Loring Air Museum is doing great things for the County and for the State and in the future, we hope to bring in so much more with the acquisition of this structure. We know its importance, its history, and the meaning it. To us it is important to keep it in the hands of those who will use it to teach, and to learn about what Loring AFB base truly was, and why it was so important to this nation. As they say to keep it locally owned.

As the last commander at Loring, Colonel Pavelko said in his closing speech at Loring AFB on September 30, 1994, "We closed, we didn't quit". That is why the Loring Air Museum is pushing so hard to obtain this structure. Because we didn't close, and we intend to keep our doors open for all those that want to see living history! But we can't grow without this structure. We can't obtain aircraft without this structure.

Our intent is to obtain grants from the federal government and grants from within Maine to help us achieve our goal of growing and making it feasible for us to be residents of The Arch Hangar at Loring. To get grants and funding to bring in the large birds that were once a symbol and testament to the fight and sacrifice of so many military members that were stationed at Loring A.F.B. Maine. Loring is here and we want to remain here, and we want to put it back on the map. We cannot do that without the Arch Hangar and we hope that you will see that we are a strong museum and capable of doing this, and achieving our goals to maintain and preserve Loring for what it was.

Thank you for listening and we hope that you will help us achieve this goal of saving the Loring Arch Hangar for History.

Matt Cole VP Loring Air Musuem

Written by  
Cuppy Johndro  
Loring AFB Veteran  
Secretary Loring Air Museum 19 years.