

**Bell Bomber (B-29) Plant  
1943 - 1946**

**A plan to help lift rural Cobb County out of the Great Depression by building a commercial airport changed course when America entered WWII and Marietta was chosen as the location for a new aircraft assembly plant. Wartime necessity had rival companies collaborating as when Bell Aircraft Corporation of Buffalo, NY was awarded a contract to build B-29 Superfortresses designed by Boeing. Standing 29 feet tall with a wingspan of 141 feet, the four-engine plane had a 4,000-mile range, a ceiling above 30,000 feet and maximum speed exceeding 350 mph. In total 668 B-29s were produced here. Peak employment surpassed 28,000 people with both skilled and unskilled jobs commanding higher wages than were found elsewhere. At the end of the war the B-29 contract was cancelled, employees were laid off and Bell sold its assets. But the plant left an enduring legacy of prosperity in terms of increased wealth and workforce capabilities. Used primarily for storage until the onset of the Korean War, the plant was reopened in 1951 with a contract awarded to Lockheed.**

Cobb County Historic Marker Project - 2009

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July 15, 2009

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Bell Bomber (B-29) Plant  
1943<sup>1</sup> - 1946<sup>2</sup>

A plan to help lift rural<sup>3</sup> Cobb County<sup>4</sup> out of the Great Depression<sup>5</sup> by building a commercial airport<sup>6</sup> changed course when America entered WWII and Marietta was chosen as the location for a new aircraft assembly plant.<sup>7</sup> Wartime necessity had rival companies collaborating<sup>8</sup> as when Bell Aircraft Corporation of Buffalo, NY was awarded a contract<sup>9</sup> to build B-29 Superfortresses<sup>10</sup> designed by Boeing.<sup>11</sup> Standing 29 feet tall<sup>12</sup> with a wingspan of 141 feet,<sup>13</sup> the four-engine<sup>14</sup> plane had a 4,000-mile range,<sup>15</sup> a ceiling above 30,000 feet<sup>16</sup> and maximum speed exceeding 350 mph.<sup>17</sup> In total 668 B-29s were produced here.<sup>18</sup> Peak employment surpassed 28,000 people<sup>19</sup> with both skilled and unskilled<sup>20</sup> jobs commanding higher wages<sup>21</sup> than were found elsewhere.<sup>22</sup> At the end of the war

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<sup>1</sup> Carson, 2-3, 25, Garrett, 1002, 1004, Holland, 4, 9, Ivey, 18, Kirby, 17, 23, 26, Martin, 31, Mintz, 5, 17, Roth, 54, Scott, 143, 150, Vander Meulen, 76, 78, Williams, Yates, 59.

<sup>2</sup> Carson, 2, 26-7, Holland, 4, 24, 27, Kirby, 121, Scott, 205, Vander Meulen, 85, Yates, 61.

<sup>3</sup> Holland, 1, Kirby, 8-9, Miller, 14, 25, Williams, Yates, 58.

<sup>4</sup> Yates, 58.

<sup>5</sup> Scott, 110-1.

<sup>6</sup> Holland, 1-2, Kirby, 7, MDJ, 9/25/1983, Scott, 117, 125, 130, 290, Yates, 58.

<sup>7</sup> Holland, 5, Inglis, 76, Kirby, 7, LeMay 47, Martin, 31, Vander Meulen, 7, 27, 75, Yates, 60.

<sup>8</sup> Holland, 3, Kirby, 9, 125, LeMay, 46-7, Scott, 109-10, Vander Meulen, 29.

<sup>9</sup> Atlanta Journal, 3/14/1943, Holland, Introduction, MDJ, 9,25,1983.

<sup>10</sup> Holland, 3, LeMay, 35, Wikipedia, it was stated that the name B-29 Superfortress was derived from its predecessor the B-17 Flying Fortress, and was carried on in its successor the B-52 Stratofortress.

<sup>11</sup> Croup, 6, Holland, 3, Inglis, 76, Kirby, 54, LeMay, 46, Mintz, 16, Scott, 110, Vander Meulen, 27.

<sup>12</sup> Bowman, 27, Inglis, 72, height stated as 27'9", Kinney referred to the height in terms of a 3-story building, LeMay, 179, Leverington, 12.

<sup>13</sup> Holland, 3, Inglis, 72, Kirby, 66, 74, LeMay, 35, 179, Leverington, 12 specified the span was 142 ft 3 in, Vander Meulen, 7.

<sup>14</sup> Atlanta Journal, 3/14/1943 used the term "multi-engine", LeMay, 35, Leverington, 12.

<sup>15</sup> The official requirement for the range was 5,333 miles. Maximum ranges were given as follows: Atlanta Journal, 3/14/1943 used the term "long-range", Bockman, 14 stated the B-29 was made to fly long distances, Inglis, 73, 3500-4000 miles, LeMay, xiii, it had the range to strike Japan, 35, 5333 miles, 179, top range of 5725 miles, Leverington, 12, 4100 miles.

<sup>16</sup> Ceilings were stated as follows: Bowman, 27, 30,000 feet, Inglis, 72, 35,000 feet, Kirby, 46, 40,000 feet, 53, up to 33,000 feet, 79, 30,000 feet, LeMay, 179, 32,000 feet, Leverington, 12, 31,800 feet.

<sup>17</sup> The official requirement for top speed was 400 mph. Maximum speeds were given as follows: Bockman, 15 stated the speed redlined at 380 mph, but with some of the equipment removed they could exceed 400 mph, Bowman, 27, 357 mph at 30,000 feet, Inglis, 72, 375 mph, Kirby, 46, 350 mph at 40,000 feet, LeMay, 179, 364 mph, Leverington, 12, 358 mph at 25,000 feet.

<sup>18</sup> Bowman, 32, a total of 3970 aircraft were built of which 668 were built at Marietta, end of war resulted in the cancellation of orders for additional aircraft, Gordon, 12/7/1995, 12/8/1995 stated the number as 663 however in the article from the 8<sup>th</sup> she talked about a commemorative marker that quoted the number as 665, Holland, Introduction, 24 stated that 668 B-29s built at Marietta were put into service in the Pacific theater, Inglis, 73, 76, Kinney stated the number was 665, Kirby, 7-8, 47, 58, 77, LeMay, 181, production totals for Marietta added up to 667, Mintz, 17, number stated as 663 and this was explained in Scott's (following) footnote, Scott, 159 stated the number was 663, and on 817, endnote 13 further clarified that the variation in number could be attributed to several planes being built that were not delivered, Vander Meulen, 7, a total of 3895 were built, 54, stated 668 B-29s from Marietta were accepted by the Army Air Forces with a breakdown of numbers delivered per month, Yates, 60-1 stated the number was 669.

<sup>19</sup> Croup, 18, Gordon, 12/7/1995, 12/8/1995, Holland, Introduction, 24, 54, Inglis, 80, Kirby, Kinney, Kirby, 7, Roth, 54, Scott, 137, 159, Vander Meulen, 84 stated the peak was 27,000.

<sup>20</sup> Holland, 13, Kirby, 8, 29, 50, Scott, 171.

<sup>21</sup> LeMay, 1, Kirby, 29, Odom, 7.

the B-29 contract was cancelled,<sup>23</sup> employees were laid off<sup>24</sup> and Bell sold its assets.<sup>25</sup> But the plant left an enduring legacy of prosperity<sup>26</sup> in terms of increased wealth<sup>27</sup> and workforce capabilities.<sup>28</sup> Used primarily for storage until the onset of the Korean War,<sup>29</sup> the plant was reopened in 1951 with a contract awarded to Lockheed.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Carson, 21, Croup, 13, Davis, 13, Inglis, 77, Ivey, 9, Kirby, 120, Miller, 28-9, Scott, 136, Slade, 13.

<sup>23</sup> Holland, Introduction, Kirby, 121, Mintz, 18, Scott, 176.

<sup>24</sup> Bockman, 16, Carson, 28, Croup, 18, Davis, 37, Gordon, 12/7/1995, Holland, Introduction, Inglis, 85, Kirby, 126, Mintz, 17-8, Roth, 54, Scott, 176, Vander Meulen, 85, 99, Yates, 61.

<sup>25</sup> Carson, 28.

<sup>26</sup> Adams, 34, Bockman, 14 stated the range in altitude was 30,000-35,000 feet, Gabriel, 31, Gordon, 12/8/1995, Holland, Introduction, Irby, Miller, 29, Roth, 54, Vander Meulen, 7, 75, Yates, 61.

<sup>27</sup> Bockman, 16, Croup, 18, Gisel, 16, Holland, Introduction, 27, Scott, 148, Slade, 30.

<sup>28</sup> Adams, 34, Bockman, 15-6, Carson, 25-6, 30, 42, Croup, 19, Gabriel, 12, Holland, Introduction, 25, 27, Inglis, 85, Kirby, 121, Scott, 176-8, Vander Meulen, 7.

<sup>29</sup> Carson, 10, Holland, 24-5, Kirby, 121, Scott, 179-80, 221, Vander Meulen, 85.

<sup>30</sup> Gisel, 18, Holland, Introduction, 19, 23, 28, Inglis, 85, Kirby, 121, 130, Roth, 54, Scott, 215, Vander Meulen, 75, 85.

