

Buyer's Guide To Hangars, Doors And More

BY TIM KERN



TIME TO BRING YOUR PRIDE AND JOY INSIDE

UV damage, bird proliferation, easy warm ups, cleanliness, weatherproof loading, privacy and security—these are on the long list of reasons why you might decide to store your airplane indoors and out of the weather. Perhaps you enjoy leisurely working on your aircraft, or maybe you need a suitable showroom, a place for guests to view your pride and joy. Whatever your reasons, congratulations—your aircraft, mechanic and passengers will be thankful for your decision to protect your valuable investment.

What follows is a list of some of our favorite building suppliers. Some offer a wide range of styles and services, while others have a more specialized focus. Contact several companies before you decide to go with one. You want to ensure that all of your specific needs are met at a price you can afford. Consider your present needs, and also allow for expanding to meet future needs (yours, and even those of the building's next owner).

Most important, virtually every builder and supplier emphasized the importance of early contact with site preparation folks and architects. Items as significant as the type and style of ramp and door—or even the number of elec-

trical outlets you'll want—must all be considered. It's a safe bet that these companies have more experience at constructing hangars than you do, and they're happy to share—so work with them!

HANGARS

It would be an understatement to say, "The buyer has all the choices." Nearly any hangar construction—from something as simple as an open shelter on dirt to a building as complex as the Taj Mahal—is available. Start with your dream list, and work your way back to reality—it's amazing how many of your fantasies can come true, provided that you take your time and consult with experts.

EagleSpan

Jerry Curtis, EagleSpan's president, wanted to showcase his latest and greatest hangar, a recent Louisiana installation: "Because we had the opportunity to value-engineer the building with the architect, instead of just bidding on it after it was fully designed, EagleSpan was able to 'kit' the building with all its complexities, including fire-rated walls, office features, tip-up hangar door and flat-panel finished walls. Our patented EagleBeam, with its rectangular shape and lighter weight, allowed for complex connections to be done

with ease, and saved invaluable build time." The company welds all clips at the factory, and its prepainted primary and galvanized secondary structures reduce both construction time and cost uncertainty. Visit www.eaglespan.com.

Erect-A-Tube

Approaching its 50th anniversary and celebrating more than 20,000 hangar units in operation in all 50 states, Erect-A-Tube has a long history in the aircraft hangar and hangar door business. The original developer of the electric bi-fold door system designs and fabricates GA facilities for both small single-engine aircraft and corporate business jets. Based in Harvard, Ill., Erect-A-Tube offers established expertise and combined hangar and door manufacturing resources to owners, builders and architects. Visit www.erect-a-tube.com.

Future Steel Buildings

This company offers strength and economy; uncomplicated, do-it-yourself construction; and easy future expansion. The familiar "Quonset hut" steel building is a fully modernized DIY construction, sporting made-to-spec size and finish. Future Steel supplies everything you'll need, including double sliding doors (other types are available) complete with hardware. When it's time to expand, additional arch panels bolt to the back of the building, and the trussless roof allows maximum indoor cubic efficiency. Visit www.futuresteel.com.

Metallic Building Company

Metallic constructs anything from small individual hangars and T-hangars to corporate and full FBO buildings. The company serves as a manufacturing partner in the planning stage and as a single-source supplier with on-site construction resources. Hangars come with 25-year color finish and 20-year weather-tightness warranties. Visit www.metallic.com.

Morton Buildings

Morton's hallmark is direct cooperation, whether with a site architect, an airport planning board or the end user. Meeting local snow and wind load requirements, the company's buildings can even incorporate living quarters. Morton works with manufacturers to get the door configurations you desire. It handles all aspects of production, so fit and workmanship are consistent, and costs are established in advance. The company's president, Jeff Neihouser, says, "Storing an airplane gives the owner and pilot confidence and peace of mind. It costs a little more to do it right, but saving a little money and not getting the ideal building can be significantly more expensive." Visit www.mortonbuildings.com.

R&M Steel Company

Quickly built, large, all-steel buildings are R&M Steel's specialty, and the Idaho firm can assemble tapered-beam buildings of virtually any height and width in post-supported sectional construction. R&M Steel produces each building to order, accommodating specific design needs and local codes. From simple shade ports to individual, group, maintenance or corporate hangars with attached office or warehousing duties, R&M Steel provides economical, adaptable designs. Visit www.rmsteel.com.

Sterling Steel Buildings

With its overhead-space-saving gambrel roof and pre-deposit job-site visits, Henderson, Colorado's Sterling Steel Buildings does things differently. Popular options include translucent panels (skylights); colored roof and side panels; no-weld, bolt-up assembly; lightweight, webbed trusses; and enamel-painted primary structures. The company stresses economy and is particularly proud of its comprehensive customer service. Visit www.sterlingsteelbuildings.com.



HANGARS

Wick Buildings

Working with the architect, builder or municipality from day one is one of Wick's many specialties. Wick designs range from simple single units to complex multi-unit structures. The company also adds a good helping of aesthetics to the mix, accommodating the owner's preferences for floor space, overhead requirements, door configurations, color and facade treatment. With more than 66,000 structures completed, Wick can engineer a top-quality post-frame storage building, workshop or hangar for individuals as well as entire airport complexes. Visit www.wickbuildings.com.

Worldwide Steel Buildings

Catering to the do-it-yourselfer, Worldwide Steel Buildings is a factory-direct source for individual or T-hangars. The company offers 50-year structural and 40-year sheet-metal warranties. Its open-web truss design has been proven to withstand seven-foot ice loads, hurricanes and, recently, an F5 tornado. Worldwide favors bifold doors, and can place them in ends or sides; the company also offers self-supporting overhangs (as large as 14 feet) that enlarge covered space for rain, snow or sun protection. For the "DIY person," features include screw-and-bolt assembly with predrilled, jig-aligned holes. Visit www.wsbnow.com.

Wright Building Systems

Don't be scared by the scale of the Wright buildings you see used by such clients as Loretta Lynn, FedEx or Alamo, or at the Tampa, Denver and Kansas City airports. Small or large, utility or high-tech, Wright can help with full-service or on-site consulting—and everything in

between. As consultants, the company will help you or your architect spec the whole project, down to the doors, insulation and hardware—and Wright can supply or coordinate all the materials. With more than 30 years of experience, Wright puts every customer at the top of its list, endeavoring to produce a product that will last for the long haul. Visit www.wrightbuilding.com.

DOORS

With the exception of the most basic shelters, all hangars have doors, and types range from simple to complex. Factors such as tracking, building structure, overhead requirements, operating systems (manual, electric or hydraulic), weather protection, security, aesthetics, stowage (overhead or side) and real-estate requirements will all figure into your choice. As with hangar buildings, getting the door manufacturer involved early on will save money and eliminate surprises later.

Hi-Fold Door Corporation

A long-standing irritation regarding bifold doors is the additional ceiling height required for the traditional design. This company offers a patented high-clearance solution. With all-welded construction in sizes up to 80x20 feet, the Hi-Fold Door is powered by a 1 hp to 2 hp electric motor or optional high-speed hydraulic operator for push-button convenience. The door can be locked and unlocked with a manually powered hand-crank lock or with optional automatic locking/unlocking. If overhead clearance isn't a problem (common in door replacement situations), a traditional bi-fold Hi-Fold also is available. Visit www.hi-fold.com.



Aero-Lift

Say you've built your hangar, but then your family expands: How do you choose which airplane stays outside? Or perhaps you need to pull the car in, out of the elements. With the Aero-Lift, you don't need to make tough choices—just add some altitude under the wings, and usable floor space doubles. The Aero-Lift Harrington

hoist sports a failsafe pull rotor brake that's automatically activated when the power button is released; it also has a traditional safety-chain backup. Since Aero-Lift's debut in 2001, there hasn't been a structural failure, and 400+ lifts have been installed. The load rating is 2,500 pounds, just 20% of the ultimate load, and the electric hoist is rated for 4,000 pounds. The one-person-operated hoist works in minutes. Utilize all of your hangar's space and make room for your other aircraft, your project or your car. Visit www.armaerospace.com.



Hydroswing



Schweiss Bi-Fold Doors

Hydroswing

Marshal Parker purchased a Hydroswing door several years ago; soon after, he bought the company. His MD 500 is housed behind a Hydroswing door in England, and his Lear 55 is protected by one in the States. He counts the swing-up door's reduced overhead space and strong structure as its best features. "Why have a hole in the building, when with my door, you can have a wall?" he asks. Though the hydraulics-operated Hydroswing is a premium door, its incremental cost is low, since the building can be built shorter than with a bi-fold door, saving material, presenting less structure to the wind and reducing heat/AC requirements. These "green" aspects are particularly important to preserving general aviation, Parker says: "We need to be and look responsible to politicians and nonaviators. We can't allow naysayers to continue attacking GA as irrelevant." New products are in the works, including 40x150-foot metal doors, all-glass walls and doors for smaller applications. Visit www.hydroswing.com.

Schweiss Bi-Fold Doors

In addition to its famed bi-fold doors, which utilize an innovative multi-strap lifting mechanism, Schweiss offers one-piece hydraulic swing-out doors. The quiet bi-fold lift straps can be mounted from the top or bottom, and they open the door at a faster rate as the door gets closer to "full open." Straps, the company says, have more endurance than typical cables; they come with a seven-year warranty. The bi-fold door is available in aluminum and steel. The hydraulic swing-out door's one-piece surface offers excellent sealing, strength and insulation. Schweiss works with architects and designers to ensure that buildings are properly equipped for its doors. Visit www.bifold.com.

P&P