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RAMSEY COUNTY
History
A PUBLICATION OF THE RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

We Should All Be Public Historians
KYLIE LINH HOANG, PAGE 17

Before Her Ascent to Fame
Amelia Earhart's Sojourn in St. Paul

LISA HEINRICH, PAGE 11



Amelia Earhart in airplane, 1936. Photo by Harris & Ewing, courtesy of the Library of Congress.



An Insatiable Colonial Appetite
**The Rise and Fall of the Passenger Pigeon
in Ramsey County and Environs**

JENNINGS MERGENTHAL, PAGE 1

IN OUR COLLECTION

In Our Collection shares the pieces acquired by Ramsey County Historical Society.

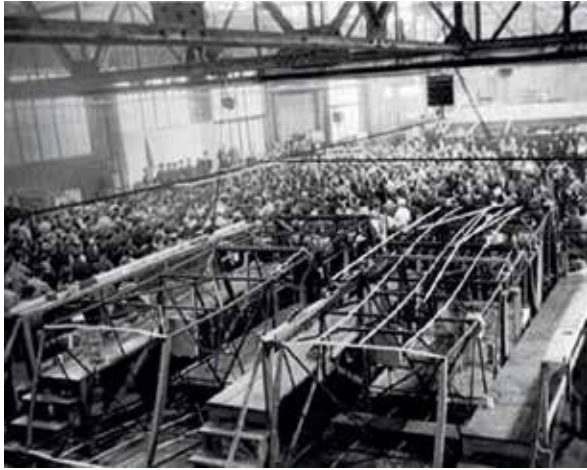
The collection contains tens of thousands of pieces, including archives, books, objects, and photographs, which are maintained by Director of Collections and Exhibitions, Mollie Spillman, in downtown St. Paul.



This identification badge from the Northwestern Aeronautical Corporation (NAC) is stamped with employee number 3493 and features a photo of an unidentified woman standing before a height chart. The reverse is marked “PAT. APLD. FOR.” which is a reminder of the wartime security measures surrounding one of Minnesota’s most significant defense manufacturers.

NORTHWESTERN AERONAUTICAL CORPORATION
DONATED BY: MARYLOU AND JAMES MCADOO OF PORTLAND, OREGON
ACQUIRED: 2012
ITEM DATED: 1943
RCHS COLLECTION: 2012.3.2

IN OUR COLLECTION



Glider frames in the NAC plant, early '40s.



ERA plant in the 50s, top right had had glider frames.

Photos courtesy of NAC became ERA article by John M. Lindley, adapted for the VIP Club's Legacy Anthology by Lowell Benson

The badge represents far more than an employee credential—it is a tangible link to the thousands of men and women whose work helped support the Allied war effort during World War II. Founded in 1942 under the leadership of John E. Parker, NAC was created to build military gliders, overcoming material shortages, production challenges, and tight deadlines to meet urgent government contracts. Workers from across the Twin Cities contributed to this remarkable industrial effort, embodying the determination and patriotism of the Greatest Generation.

In 2005, the Unisys/LMCO Retirees Club Legacy Committee preserved the largely untold story of NAC through recollections and historical research. Their work documents not only the company's wartime achievements but also the people behind them—the factory workers, engineers, and managers whose contributions had long remained overlooked.

When World War II ended in 1945, NAC faced an uncertain future. Rather than close its doors, Parker transformed the company into Engineering Research Associates (ERA) in 1946. While a handful of NAC employees remained, ERA attracted a new generation of engineers and technical specialists who pioneered early electronic computing. Between 1946 and 1952, ERA became Minnesota's first computer company, helping establish the Twin Cities as an important center of technological innovation.

This simple identification badge captures a remarkable story of transformation—from wartime aircraft production to the dawn of the computer age—making it a rare artifact that represents both Minnesota's industrial heritage and the origins of one of America's earliest computing enterprises.