

DAKOTA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY ACCESSIONS LOCKHEED MARTIN COLLECTION

by Sally Anderson

The Dakota County Historical Society has been busy processing a large donation of documents and artifacts from the Lockheed Martin Company's Eagan facility, which closed in 2012.

The project started more than a year ago, while the records were still onsite at the Eagan facility. Employees at the location had been collecting historical items for several years, and volunteers began sorting and cataloging the records and artifacts.



Les Nelson, Clinton Crosby, Tricia Myhre and Jon Simon hard at work cataloging images.

The initial focus was on separating the items that were to go to the Charles Babbage Institute (CBI) at the University of Minnesota (a collection dedicated to information technology history), and those that would be transferred to the Dakota County Historical Society. The records for CBI were documented before the transfer, but the crew ran out of time to inventory all of the records bound for DCHS. So the indexing project continues at DCHS' Lawshe Museum, and it will take many more

months. About 20 pallets of materials were delivered to the museum, and about an equal number to CBI.

The collection includes artifacts, documents, memorabilia, company newsletters, and more than 50,000 photographs and slides. Some date back to the mid-1940s, and the early days of the Lockheed Martin Computer Division, when it was called Engineering Research Associates (ERA). The crew indexes each of these items using a custom database, which will make them more accessible to future researchers.

Asked what has been the most interesting part of the project, volunteer Tricia Myhre says, "It's the opportunity to see the large variety of projects that the company was involved with over the years."

The volunteer effort has been led by a group of retired and former Lockheed Martin and Univac/Unisys employees. More than 50 volunteers have been a part of this project, and DCHS is very grateful for the time, energy and expertise that they bring to this unique project.

For several months, the museum had items in process on the exhibit floor, so visitors could watch the accessioning process and talk with staff as they worked. (For more on the exhibit see page 16.)

The next phase of the project has now started. Volunteers and staff will be culling through thousands of images, selecting and digitizing several hundred, which will be juried down to several dozen representing the history of ERA and its successor firms. The images and descriptive captions will form the basis of a new permanent exhibit, "The Birth of Minnesota's Computer Industry."

Sally Anderson is a DCHS trustee as well as an active Friend of LeDuc. This article is the first in a series highlighting the important contributions of the many volunteers of DCHS.