



St. Louis County Historical Society 2006 Annual Report

The St. Louis County Historical Society has served since 1922 as the State of Minnesota designated history service provider for the County of St. Louis with responsibility to collect, preserve, research and interpret artifacts, documents and published materials related to the county's heritage. The Society evolved from a grass roots organization to one of the state's largest county-based historical societies (per Minnesota Historical Society). To better serve the people of northern Minnesota and Duluth's millions of visitors, the Society moved into the Historic Union Depot in 1976 and began operating one of the most comprehensive public museums north of the Twin Cities metropolitan area.

The general nature and purpose of the Society, per mission, is the discovery, preservation and dissemination of knowledge about the history and prehistory of St. Louis County and the State of Minnesota. Mission is accomplished through operation of a museum (St. Louis County Heritage & Arts Center), continuing stewardship of Society owned archival collections at the Northeast Minnesota Historical Center, located within the University of Minnesota Duluth's library building, traveling exhibits, educational programming, and production of special events that incorporate educational aspects. The Society also provides funding for a network of affiliated area historical organizations (Minnesota Museum of Mining in Chisholm, Sisu Heritage Inc. in Embarrass, and local historical societies in Ely, Tower, Virginia and Hibbing). The Society operates as a membership-based organization, producing a quarterly newsletter for the members and the general public.

For the past ten plus years, the Society has been ranked by the Minnesota Historical Society as being among the top five historical societies in the state, based on scope of operations and quality of collections.

During 2006, the St. Louis County Historical Society:

Continued implementation of its Range Exhibits, a part of its Traveling Exhibits program, which included *Mayme Sevander's Odyssey: To Soviet Bondage and Back*, at Ely-Winton Historical Society and *Father Baraga: Shared Horizons*, at Ely-Winton H.S. and St. James Catholic School, Duluth. The Society also



Some of the Society's Eastman Johnson art collection, exhibited in the Fesler Gallery, June 2006. The entire collection was exhibited at the Tweed Museum, University of Minnesota Duluth, summer through fall 2006.

- hosted the photo exhibit *Portraits of Home*, which focused on substandard housing and homelessness in St. Louis County.
- Began publishing a well-received quarterly newspaper, *Rootprints*, in the summer of 2006, which now includes a substantive center article, and a timeline of captioned photos of historic county buildings and artifacts owned by the Society.
- Opened an exhibit on the 125th Field Artillery (WWII) in the Fesler Gallery on July 1st.
- Held the second annual Pearl Harbor Day commemorative and fundraising (for Veterans' Memorial Hall) dinner on December 7, 2006, in the Great Hall of the St. Louis County Heritage & Arts Center (Depot), with World War II veterans Joe Gomer and Bob Watts as featured speakers.
- Continued efforts to address the heating, ventilation, and air-conditioning system problems, which are crucial to the re-opening of the Ojibwe Gallery. Worked in cooperation with the Historic Union Depot Corporation board of directors and the County of St. Louis, owner of the building, to seek funding for the first remedial stage of this process.
- Held our 84th Annual Meeting of the Membership at the Radisson Hotel's Great Hall, with author Bill Beck as our featured speaker.
- Initiated a Veterans' Memorial Hall internship program, utilizing students from area colleges as marketing and collections interns, providing specialized educational opportunities for the students and benefiting the Society through additional help for the projects and ongoing activities of VMH.

- Secured VMH grant funding, making possible environmentally stable, secure Memorial Hall related collections, which freed up space for general Society collections storage. The program also acquired the services of a Senior Aide worker, who functions as a program assistant.
- Held our Veterans' Memorial Hall 6th Annual Antique Car Show and Sock Hop, this time including military vehicles. ShBoom again provided the music, and both part of the event were well attended.
- Participated in many stages of the St. Louis County Sesquicentennial's "History Train", from the development and installation of the exhibit itself through many stops throughout the county. A "Scholars' Symposium" was held in August 2006, at the St. Louis County Heritage & Arts Center (the Depot). The exhibit now remains there, in the train museum, for long-term public viewing.
- Prepared for the transition of employment of the archivist of the Northeast Minnesota Historical Center at the close of 2006 to University of Minnesota Duluth employment. This transfer of stewardship of SLCHS archival material does not affect ownership; SLCHS continues to uphold its mission of collecting, preserving and making available to the public historical records of many kinds.
- Funded, published, and released to the public early in 2006, directly, and through many retail outlets throughout the county, the book *A County Built on Iron: St. Louis County 1856 – 2006*, by Bill Beck. The timing of the book's publication and distribution was set in conjunction with St. Louis County's Sesquicentennial celebration.



Local Attorney and Philanthropist Wildey Hubbell Mitchell served as a pilot with the First Aero Squadron in France in World War I after duty with the French army. He was a volunteer in the Yale Ambulance Corps of the American Field Service in Europe. He served as a major in the Army between 1942 and 1946. He was also in the U. S. Air Force Reserve, serving as Lt. Colonel. This trunk was given to the Society in 2006 by the estate of Donald C. Wright.

*This 20-star flag was made in 1818 and was donated in 2006 by Robert S. Mars, Jr. The flag was originally given to his great-grandfather, Robert W. Mars, who served in the Civil War aboard the steam frigate **Mississippi** and was for a time taken prisoner at Camp Ford Stockade in Texas. He eventually escaped and made his way back to the Union Army at the Red River. The governor of Massachusetts presented this flag, along with the framed certificate (next page), to Robert W. Mars in 1870. Robert S. Mars, Jr. has also offered to fund the complete restoration of the flag.*



- Continued our ongoing "Lunch with the History People" noon hour free lecture series, including such guest speakers/topics as "Minnesota Hauntings" by Chad Lewis, "The History of Canal Park" by Bill Meierhoff, and "The Fall of 1918: Death Stalks the Range" by Harry Lamppa.
- Continued our ongoing, monthly free appraisals of antiques and collectibles, provided by board member Dan Sershon, a professional appraiser.
- Held a fundraising reception for our planned 1918 Flu Epidemic/Current HIV Epidemic exhibit in May 2006.
- Held our Veterans' Memorial Hall 5th Annual Antique Car Show and Sock Hop, with music provided by local band ShBoom, which was well attended and enthusiastically received.
- Announced the unanimous reelection of Executive Director Coombe by the Participating Member Organizations of the St. Louis County Heritage & Arts Center to represent their interests on the Historic Union Depot's board of directors.
- Opened an exhibit of part of our Eastman Johnson collection of paintings in the Fesler Gallery in June 2006. This was followed by a longer running (three months) exhibit of the entire collection at the Tweed Museum at the University of Minnesota Duluth, the length of which was made possible by the better

environmental (heating-ventilation-air conditioning) available there.

- Continued the process of computerization of artifact records to PastPerfect; continued the process of the transfer of all Society accession records, utilizing the process of digital photography to expand the description of artifacts in collections cataloging.
- Initiated the production and publication of a book on the Duluth Rowing Club's history, which was made possible by a generous bequest of the Max Rheinberger estate.



*Certificate presented To Robert W. Mars in 1870 by the governor of Massachusetts.
(See preceding page.)*



Camp Claiborne, Louisiana, 1941. This was the training camp for the 125th Field Artillery Unit. The photo was a part of the Society exhibit that opened in June of 2006.

The Society served a total of 103,315 individuals in 2006, through museum visits (64,863), archives use at the Northeast Minnesota Historical Center (2,066), website accessing (22,000), visitors to Society traveling exhibits (12,680*), attendance at and participation in special events (1,200), mail or e-mail reference or service requests (1,050), Depot rental patrons using areas enhanced by Society exhibits (8,493), and six Iron Range affiliates' visitors/patrons (11,290 total).

*St. James School's attendance figures not yet available.

2006 Staff of St. Louis County Historical Society:

JoAnne Coombe, Executive Director

Patricia Maus, Archives Manager/
Curator of Manuscripts

Julie Bolos, Manager of
Administrative Services

Susan Schwanekamp,
Administrative Assistant

Milissa Brooks-Ojibway, Registrar

Daniel Hartman, Veterans'
Memorial Hall Program
Coordinator

Helen Wright, Collections
Assistant

We would also like to express our thanks to Cleveland Cliffs, Inc., St. Mary's Duluth Clinic Health System, and St. Luke's Hospital for their generous sponsorship of *A County Built on Iron*.

The Society would like to extend special thanks to the County of St. Louis and to the Depot Foundation, for ongoing operational support.

A complete copy of the Society's 2006 audited financial statements is available upon request. Excerpts are provided here as an enclosure. Please call the Society office at 218-733-7586 or email us (history@thehistorypeople.org).