

ST. LOUIS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

ANNUAL REPORT

2007



Board of Governors, December 31, 2007

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Paul Knuti, Vice-President, Sisu Heritage, Inc.
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JoAnne Coombe, Society Executive Director (ex-officio)

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Vernon Zacher

Leonard Hirsch, Hibbing Historical Society

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Ted Barker, Minnesota Museum of Mining

Roger Woods, Virginia Area Historical Society



St. Louis County Historical Society 2007 Annual Report

The St. Louis County Historical Society continued in 2007 to perform its mission as the State of Minnesota designated history service provider for the County of St. Louis County, through collection, preservation, interpretation and presentation of historically significant artifacts and archival materials. It accomplished these mandates through the operation of a museum in the St. Louis County Heritage & Arts Center; commonly known as the Depot, continuing stewardship of Society owned archival collections, located at the Northeast Minnesota Historical Center, located within the University of Minnesota Duluth's library building; traveling exhibits; production of special events incorporating educational aspects; and collaboration with and participation in other related programs. The Society also facilitates funding for a network of six affiliated area historical organizations, located on the Iron Range in Chisholm, Embarrass, Ely, Tower, Virginia and Hibbing. Another expression of the Society's educational programming is its quarterly newspaper, *Rootprints*, produced for the membership and for the general public.

Highlights of 2007 follow, as during this year the Society:

Facilitated a significant change in its contractual relationship with the University of Minnesota and Minnesota State Historical Society, effective January 1, 2007. Responsibility for the employment of archivist of the Northeast Minnesota Historical Center was transferred from St. Louis County Historical Society to the University. The archives of the St. Louis County Historical Society continue to be housed at the Center, and the same services are available to the public, as previously.

Continued to feature substantive, educational articles in *Rootprints*. Highlights of 2007 editions included: *The Art of Francis Lee Jaques* (whose work is represented in the Society's 200 piece art collection);

The Rise of the Timber Baron: An Overview of Robert Whiteside; Iron Range Jewry: A Heritage Revived; and Enjoy Hospitality of Historic Proportions at Olcott House (the feature piece of an issue largely centered on Duluth and county bed and breakfast establishments).



Locomotive Engine, by Francis Lee Jaques

Iron Range Jewry complemented a "Culture and Cuisine" program produced August 18 by the Society in collaboration with the Friends of B'nai Abraham Synagogue, a Twin Cities group devoted to the preservation and restoration of B'nai Abraham Synagogue in Virginia, Minnesota. This event featured excellent food (using a typical Shabbat menu); interesting artifacts from the synagogue displayed for the evening; and a lecture by Marilyn Chiat, Ph.D., art and religious architecture historian.



Marilyn Chiat, speaker, Marjorie Ostrov, President of the "Friends", and Robert S. Mars, Jr., Board of Governors member at the "Culture and Cuisine Program", August 18, 2007



B'nai Abraham synagogue, Virginia, Minnesota

Appointed Penny Clark as a new representative to the Heritage Preservation Commission, when Susan Maki's term expired. This position includes a liaison function with both the Society' Board of Governors and the HPC.

Continued project management publicity planning for the publishing of a book on the Duluth Boat Club, *Invincible*, authored by Michael Cochran, of Minnesota Power, and funded by a generous bequest from the estate of Max Rheinberger, Jr. estate, due for publication in 2008.

Continued "recovery" (from museum damages caused by the construction project at the Depot that dispersed damaging particulate matter) efforts, to gain further intellectual control of its collections, through comprehensive, uniform, and adequately descriptive artifact cataloguing, continuing to utilize digital photography in this process. The services of Senior Interns from the Senior Community Service Employment Programs were utilized in this effort, in addition to the efforts of Collections Manager Milissa Brooks-Ojibway.

Continued in-service education of Collections Manager via a three-session workshop on Disaster Preparedness through the Midwest Art Conservation Center, (MACC) in Minneapolis and an online Collections Management course through Upstate History Alliance, a New York based organization, covering a broad spectrum of national collection management issues.

Continued refinement and implementation of the Traveling Exhibits program, which provides Society produced and/or sponsored exhibits on loan to other county courthouses in St. Louis County, and to others, upon request.

Executive Director JoAnne Coombe continued service on the Historic Union Depot's Board of Directors, as the elected PMO (Participating Member Organization) representative, whose appointment is ratified by the HUDC board.

Continued the "Lunch with the History People" program, a monthly noon hour program, free to the public, of guest lecturers on a variety of topics. 2007 featured: "Cold War Air Defense Systems", "Maritime History", "Reflections on a Working People's History of Duluth", and "History of Original Settlement".

Continued work on the exhibit *Nowhere to Hide: A St. Louis County, Northeastern Minnesota Perspective on the Social, Political and Cultural History of the HIV/AIDS Pandemic with Comparisons to the 1918 Flu Epidemic*, through a fundraising performance by Over the Top Dance Company, *Emote-Shun*, at Mitchell Auditorium at the College of St. Scholastica and through further planning efforts.

Held its Veterans' Memorial Hall 7th Annual Antique Car Show, including for the second time military vehicles, and the Sock Hop immediately following it, in the Great Hall of the St. Louis County Heritage & Arts Center. ShBoom provided the music again, and both events were well attended and appreciated.

Continued our popular ongoing monthly free verbal appraisals of antiques and collectibles, provided by board member and professional appraiser Dan Sershon.

Held its Veterans' Memorial Hall 's 3rd Annual World War II/Pearl Harbor Day Remembrance Dinner in December, with Doug Bekke, curator of the Minnesota

Military Museum, Camp Ripley, as featured speaker. This event was also well attended and appreciated.

Continued the VMH internship program, with most interns specializing in collections or in marketing". The very successful fundraiser "Coney Day at the Depot" was held in August, organized and produced by an intern.

Veterans' Memorial Hall Program Director Dan Hartman continued to lead efforts to prepare artifacts for a move to a more secure and environmentally stable off-site storage facility.

Held its 85th Annual Meeting of the Membership in February, in the Great Hall of the Depot, with guest speaker Nina Archabal, Director of Minnesota Historical Society, presenting "Local History in a Global Age".

Continued sales of and initiated free distribution to educational institutions and senior citizen facilities of Society published book *A County Built on Iron*.

Opened a new exhibit, *Topping it Off*, in the Fesler Gallery in May, featuring historical men's and women's hats from various eras during the 1800s and 1900s, along with information about styles, former millinery shops, and the art of hat making, from throughout St. Louis County. (See photo below for a sample of the hats.)

Enjoyed a staff retreat/outing at Burntside Lake and Burntside Lodge, in Ely, including a guided tour of the lake by Emily Wahlberg, a longtime Society member and Lake resident, in July. (The cover of this Annual Report shows "the most photographed cabin in Minnesota", one of the many natural and historic points of interest covered in this wonderful tour.)

Inaugurated a new display case (photo top right, this page) on the Duluth Naval Reserve, the idea for which was generated by its closing. Many of the service people stationed at the base were present for the opening at the Depot. The Society alone served a total of 93,256 individuals in 2007, through museum visits (44,834); archives use at the Northeast Minnesota Historical Center (2,000); website



accessing (32,212 visitors combined total Society and VMH websites); visitors to Society traveling exhibits (5,761); attendance at and participation in special events (1,856); mail, e-mail, and walk-in service requests (1,560); and Depot rental patrons using areas enhanced by Society exhibits (5,033). Two Iron Range affiliates report service statistics of 3,724 (Minnesota Museum of Mining) and 3,135 (Virginia Area Historical Society). These service statistics for the remaining affiliates (Ely-Winton Historical Society, Hibbing Historical Society, Sisu Heritage Inc., and Tower-Soudan Historical Society) are not currently available.

2007 Staff of St. Louis County Historical Society:

JoAnne Coombe, Executive Director
Julie Bolos, Manager of Administrative Services
Susan Schwanekamp, Executive Assistant
Milissa Brooks-Ojibway, Collections Manager
Daniel Hartman, Veterans' Memorial Hall Program Director
Helen Wright, Exhibit and Special Projects Assistant

A complete copy of the Society's 2007 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 at history@thehistorypeople.org.