



St. Louis County Historical Society 2008 Annual Report

In 2008 the Society continued to perform its mission of collecting, preserving, interpreting, and presenting historically significant artifacts and archival materials, through exhibits, educational programs, book publishing, and the publication of *Rootprints*, its newspaper. It also continued its contractual partnership with the Minnesota Historical Society and the University of Minnesota Duluth at the Northeast Minnesota Historical Center, repository of the Society's archival materials (paper records, photographs, and electronic materials). It also continued its ongoing partnership with six affiliated area (Iron Range) historical organizations: Ely-Winton Historical Society, Hibbing Historical Society, Minnesota Museum of Mining, Sisu Heritage, Inc., Tower-Soudan Historical Society, and Virginia Area Historical Society.

Exhibits

The Veterans' Memorial Hall program of the Society was heavily committed to raising funds during 2008 for its next major exhibit, *Generations of Service*, which will open in the summer of 2009. This exhibit covers all U.S. wars and conflicts in which St. Louis County residents participated, both through military service and through home front support, such as iron mining. The fundraising effort was successful, including the sponsorship by U. S. Steel of an underground mining scene to be included in the exhibit.

This exhibit will be housed in the same room, located just off the Great Hall of the St. Louis County Heritage & Arts Center (the Depot) formerly occupied by the award-winning *Dignity Thru Unity*, which was an exhibit about the Vietnam War and its era on the home front.

The Society partnered with the Woodturners' Museum of St. Paul, and local woodturners to

produce a beautiful exhibit in its Fesler Gallery space, which opened with a reception on May 31, 2008. Historical and current tools of this craft/art were also on display, along with the finished pieces.



Two examples from The Art of the Lathe exhibit

A display case exhibit in the Forest History Room hallway and filled with the Society's Rowing Club artifacts and drawings by local artist Jeff Stark was designed by him and produced in conjunction with the publishing of the book *Invincible: History of the Duluth Boat Club*, by Michael J. Cochran of Duluth, an avid oarsman, with decades of interest in the subject.

As part of the Society's contribution to the international event FinnFest 2008, a new exhibit, *Finns of Western Lake Superior*, was produced. Content developer was Marvin Lamppa, well known regional historian. This exhibit covered socio-political and cultural aspects of Finnish immigrants' lives in this area, particularly during the largest wave, which arrived between 1895 and 1910. It opened in the Great Hall, along with a refurbished *Children of the Finnish Homesteads* and *Mayme Sevander's Odyssey: To Soviet Bondage and Back*. It then moved to the Virginia Courthouse, as part of the Society's traveling exhibit program.

Nowhere to Hide, an exhibit providing an historical understanding of the present worldwide HIV/AIDS pandemic by comparing it to the 1918 flu pandemic, opened at the Depot in the Great Hall on December 1st, World AIDS Day, with a free public reception. Local artist Gary Lundstrom designed the exhibit, which is now part of the Society's traveling exhibit program, after another showing in the Fesler Gallery (2009). AIDS Information Duluth contributed to the content development.

Educational Programs

An additional contribution to FinnFest 2008 by the Society was a bus tour on July 22nd. The tour included Finnish farm sites in Embarrass

and historic Wirtanen Pioneer Farm in Markham, with a stop at historic Kaleva Hall in old Finntown in Virginia.



A view of the Seitaniemi housebarn in Embarrass

"Lunch with the History People", an ongoing monthly educational lecture series presented a wide variety of topics, from Bob Dylan's early life on the Iron Range, to ghosts in Minnesota (extremely well-attended) to "Leatherheads of the North", presented by Chuck Frederick, a topic of special interest due to a celebrity visit to the Depot by George Clooney and Renee Zellweger, promoting their movie on the same topic. Early Twin Ports radio programming, the 2008 Election in Historical Perspective, and the life of Bill Callies, a popular game warden in Waskish, Minnesota, were also included

Veterans' Memorial Hall, a program of the St. Louis County Historical Society, presented a Flag Festival June 16th - 20th in the Great Hall, educating the public about flags and their significance. Enemy flags, such as a Viet Cong and Japanese (WWII) flags (below), historical U. S. flags, including a rare 1818 flag, and military unit flags were included.

The Society's newspaper, *Rootprints*, also serves to educate the public. Each issue contains a substantive article in the center,



Imperial Japanese flag from WWII

along with historical information integrated throughout. In 2008 major articles included the Kitchi Gammi Club - history, establishment, and architecture, the influenza epidemic of 1918, an in-depth piece on the 1818 flag donated by the Robert S. Mars, Jr. family to the Society, which was the centerpiece of the Flag Festival and Soiree (highlight event of that week).

The Society also published *Invincible: History of the Duluth Boat Club*, by local author Michael J. Cochran, in 2008. This book, along with its well attended author's reception on July 17th in the Great Hall and companion exhibit, was a substantial educational contribution by the Society. The author also contributed a *Rootprints* piece for the front page of the Spring issue, with further details on the oarsmen, especially their training and coach.



Some members of the Max Rheinberger (one of the "invincible four" rowers) family at the Invincible author's reception July 17, 2008. Publication of Invincible was funded by a bequest from the Max Rheinberger, Jr. estate.

"Antique Appraisal", an ongoing, monthly program offered by Society board member Dan Sershon, professional appraiser, as a public service to anyone wanting to obtain a brief appraisal on their antique items, ranging from art to furniture, continued throughout 2008, and was, as always, a popular event.

The Veterans' Memorial Hall program also continued its internship program, a partnership with local colleges, providing museum and marketing experiences to students, usually for credit. The interns have assisted the VMH program director with event planning and implementation, collections management, and fundraising activities.

Annual Meeting of the Membership

The 86th Annual Meeting of the Members of the Society was held in the Great Hall on February 26th. Savories catering provided an excellent dinner and Ken Buehler, Executive Director of Historic Union Depot Corporation and the North Shore Scenic Railroad gave those in attendance an update on the efforts to restore passenger rail service to Duluth. Vern Zacher of Cloquet, a long time Board of Governors member, became President of the Board that night, replacing Richard Hudelson of Duluth, who had served as President for the previous year.

Veterans' Memorial Hall Program

Another remembrance dinner, this time to honor veterans of the Korean War, after three well attended World War II/Pearl Harbor Day events, was held on December 10th. The Professional Chefs' Association provided the dinner, donating their time.

The B Company Marines, a local unit who served in Korea, were honored at the event. Air Force ROTC members from UMD assisted by acting as servers.

Veterans' Memorial Hall includes in its priority activities/goals the gathering and recording (onto its website) veterans' stories. Reality exceeded the goal of 700 new stories in 2008, as follows, listed in ascending order of length and complexity: 720 basic biographies; 99 expanded biographies, 12 memoirs, and 20 oral histories.

VMH also accessioned 81 new artifacts during the year.

Collections/Artifacts

During 2008 twenty drawings from the Society's 1856 Eastman Johnson collection were assessed, conserved, and reframed through Midwest Art Conservation Center in Minneapolis. 64 non-VMH artifacts were accessioned by the Society in 2008. A part-time collections assistant entered artifact descriptions and provenance (information related to origin) for approximately 4,000 items into the Society's PastPerfect database. At the close of 2008 approximately 30% of the Society's total artifacts had been digitally photographed for reference and identification purposes.

Service Statistics (Individuals Served)

St. Louis County Historical Society alone served a total of 102,691 individuals in 2008, through museum visits (41,763); archives use at the Northeast Minnesota Historical Center (2,000); website accessing - VMH (approximately 26,000) and Society (5,524) websites; visitors to Society traveling exhibits (5,830); attendance at and participation in special events (1,797); mail, email and walk-in service requests (2,200); and Depot rental patrons using areas enhanced by Society exhibits (17,577).

In addition, our Iron Range affiliated historical organizations report that they served through their programs and exhibit visitation totals as follows for 2008:

Ely-Winton H.S. - 1,048; Hibbing H.S. - 258

Minnesota Museum of Mining - 4,499

Sisu Heritage Inc. - 537

Tower-Soudan H.S. - information not yet provided; Virginia Area H.S. - 4,145



Duluth Mayor Don Ness and Jerome Blazevic, local historian and previous presenter at "Lunch with the History People", at the dedication of Duluth's Historical Park in Fond du Lac June 16th, attended by Society staff and board members .

2008 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

Betty Jensen, Collections Assistant

Daniel Hartman, Veterans' Memorial Hall Program Director

Karin Swor, VMH Program Assistant

A complete copy of the of the Society's 2008 audited financial statements is available upon request. Excerpts are provided here as an enclosure. Please call the Society's administrative office at 218-733-7586 or email us at histhistory@thehistorypeople.org with any requests, questions, or concerns.