



St. Louis County Historical Society

Annual Report 2012



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Mission Statement

The general nature and purpose of the Society shall be the discovery, preservation and dissemination of knowledge about the history and prehistory of St. Louis County and the State of Minnesota. In addition to collecting and preserving objects of material culture and historical research material, the Society shall maintain and operate a museum and materially participate in the collections and operations of a historical research center adequate to serve the region encompassing St. Louis County and northeastern Minnesota.

The mission of the Society directly complements the broader mission of St. Louis County government "to provide its people those services mandated and/or expected by its citizens so as to provide a good quality of life."

Education through Exhibits (Dissemination of knowledge)

Crossroads of a Continent

The 90th anniversary year for the Society began with the creation of a major new exhibit funded with a grant from the Depot Foundation's Undesignated Fund, called *Crossroads of a Continent*, a timeline exhibit covering major events and eras of St. Louis County from 1856 to the present. Content development was provided by Barb Sommer, formerly of Duluth and now an independent historian based in the Twin Cities. Graphic design was done by Chani Becker of Ilot House Design, Duluth, and the exhibit was fabricated by Gordon Manary, Duluth.

Reception by Depot visitors has been very positive. The continuous retention of the exhibit in the Great Hall of the St. Louis County Heritage & Arts Center has been periodically challenged by building rentals and the needs of other Participating Member Organizations. However, these breaks in the exhibit's availability are temporary breaks and *Crossroads of a Continent* will continue to appeal to and educate far into the future.



St. Louis County Heritage & Arts Center visitor viewing Crossroads of a Continent



Return to the River

Traveling Exhibit Program

The Society's traveling exhibit program expanded with the creation of *Return to*

the River: The History of the St. Louis River and the Western Lake Superior Sanitary District by WLSSD for donation to the Society upon completion. This beautiful and engaging, multi-paneled, freestanding exhibit, was designed and fabricated by the same contractors whose professional services the Society later used for *Crossroads of a Continent*. It tells the story of the uses, serious pollution, and cleanup of the lower St. Louis River basin to the point where sturgeon, a very slow reproducing species of fish, are now able to thrive. An opening was held for *Return to the River* in the Great Hall of the Depot in early June 2012. It then remained in the Great Hall for much of the summer, after which it was borrowed by the Great Lakes Aquarium, a natural home for it, for one year. The exhibit appealed to people of all ages and contained several very appealing acrylic boxes highlighting aspects of the exhibit's content. The boxes were three-dimensional replicas of a sturgeon, pipes polluting the river and a portrayal of the WLSSD recycling system.

Another large traveling exhibit, *Ojibwe Faces and Stories*, started the year at the St. Louis County Courthouse in Virginia, spent the summer on exhibit in the Great Hall of the St. Louis County Heritage & Arts Center (the Depot) and moved to Northwoods School in Cook at the beginning of the 2012-2013 school year.

Children of the Finnish Homesteads was borrowed by Petrell Hall, primarily for their centennial celebration; a significant section of the Society's William Roleff Forest History photographs was borrowed by the Cross River Heritage Center in Schroeder for their open season; *Preserving the Old Country* was on exhibit at the Ely Arts & Heritage Center for theirs. In October, two Veterans' Memorial Hall exhibits - *The 18* (intern created exhibited about the 18 volunteers for the Civil War from the area now established as St. Louis County, Minnesota) and *500 Days* (the experiences of the 125th Field Artillery in WWII) moved to the Hibbing Courthouse.

Exhibits Created by Society Interns

The Society's Veterans' Memorial Hall program produced two exhibits in 2012 through its interns. The first, *Desert Medics*, opened May 4 in the Great Hall. The photos upon which it was based were provided by Dennis Hughes, Chair of the Veterans' Memorial Hall Advisory Committee, during his service in Iraq in Operation Desert Storm.

The second exhibit created by a VMH intern, who in this case began her association with the Society as a volunteer, was *Allie's Picks*, which opened in September with a reception in