

Rootprints is a publication  
of the St. Louis County  
Historical Society

VOLUME 57 • ISSUE 1  
SUMMER 2015

FOLLOWING THE PATHS OF OUR PEOPLE AND PLACES

# ROOTPRINTS

## Eli Wirtanen's Farm:

A Rich Cultural Legacy Lives on at the Farmstead and at the Depot

by Thomas Vaughn

**E**li Wirtanen – a Finnish immigrant who arrived in St.

Louis County through Thunder Bay around 1900 – would feel right at home inside the Depot. Thanks to a collaborative project of the St. Louis County Historical Society, a new permanent exhibit called *Explore Eli's Farm* opened on May 31st.



Thomas Vaughn

A grant from the Depot Foundation's Undesignated Fund supported the project. This grant also included funding for another immigration-related and recently completed exhibit on the Mezzanine level: *A County Built on Iron*. Duluth's Nordic Center provided further in-kind support, in the form of art work, exhibit labels, including graphic design, and programming collaboration. They are also involved

in plans for further enrichment of the exhibit installation. The Friends of the Wirtanen Pioneer Farm, headquartered in Markham, Minnesota, also shared their collective knowledge from years of caring for the forty acres of wooded lands and sixteen traditionally-built buildings that make up the original farmstead property north of Duluth where Eli Wirtanen took possession of his land in 1904. Together, these organizations have created an informative,

*continued on page 6*

**Museum/Offices**  
St. Louis County  
Historical Society  
506 West Michigan St.  
Duluth, MN 55802  
218.733.7586  
218.733.7585 fax  
e-mail:  
history@thehistorypeople.org  
www.thehistorypeople.org

**Archives**  
Kathryn A. Martin  
Library Archives and  
Special Collections  
Library Annex 202  
416 Library Drive  
Duluth, MN 55812  
218.726.8526

**Affiliates**  
Ely-Winton  
Historical Society  
1900 E. Camp St.  
Ely, MN 55731  
218.363.3228

**Hibbing Historical Society  
& Museum**  
Memorial Building  
23rd St. & 5th Ave.  
Hibbing, MN 55746  
218.263.8522

**Minnesota Museum of  
Mining**  
701 Lake St. W.  
Chisholm, MN 55719  
218.254.5543

**Sisu Heritage Inc.**  
P. O. Box 127  
Embarrass, MN 55732  
218.984.3048

**Tower-Soudan  
Historical Society**  
404 Pine St.  
P. O. Box 465  
Tower, MN 55790  
218.753.5021

**Virginia Area  
Historical Society**  
800 - 9th Ave. No.  
P. O. Box 736  
Virginia, MN 55792  
218.741.1136



*Eli Wirtanen built his savu sauna with a broad axe. This view shows the entrance next to an exterior window that looks out from the dressing area. The small opening in the wall allowed air to enter into the sauna structure and heat the hearth area. The screen on the lower opening is contemporary.*