
The Historical Society of Michigan

E s t a b l i s h e d i n 1 8 2 8

1305 Abbott Rd. East Lansing, Michigan 48823
Website: www.hsmichigan.org E-mail: hsm@hsmichigan.org
Phone: (517) 324-1828 Fax: (517) 324-4370

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Historical Society Presents State History Awards

The Historical Society of Michigan handed out its annual Awards of Merit at the 129th State History Conference held in Port Huron, Michigan Friday, October 3 through Sunday, October 5. The conference, sponsored annually by the Historical Society of Michigan, featured over twenty-five speakers who focused on Michigan history topics.

The Award of Merit is the highest award presented by the state's official historical society and oldest cultural organization, the Historical Society of Michigan.

Awards were presented in eight categories including contributions of local historical societies, distinguished volunteer service, distinguished professional service, Michigan history publications, media, restoration and preservation, as well as special programs and education.

Local Historical Societies

An Award of Merit in the Local Historical Society category was presented to the *East Detroit Historical Society*. For twenty-five years, the society has worked to preserve and promote Eastpointe history through numerous projects that have earned the community's respect. In addition to their ongoing events, they have tackled larger projects that engage the community of Eastpointe as well. Their dedication to the restoration of the Erin/Warren Fractional District No. 2 Schoolhouse in 2001 resulted in its addition to the National Register of Historic Places. The society is strenuously working to restore a 1922 Ford Model T chemical fire truck, which has been used in the community's parades for years. Members are traveling throughout the metro Detroit area to raise awareness of this piece of Eastpointe's history, as well as to raise funds for its restoration and preservation. Thanks to the commitment of the East Detroit

Historical Society, Eastpointe and surrounding communities have a unique opportunity to appreciate and enjoy their past.

Distinguished Volunteer Service

An Award of Merit for Distinguished Volunteer Service was presented to ***Sharon MacLaren***. Ms. MacLaren has dedicated more than twenty years to promoting and preserving Upper Peninsula history. She has written scripts for community dinner theater productions, developed a three-day community festival including historic reenactments, revamped a historic church's program, organized summer Icon Painting workshops, and even helped open a history-themed Café du Voyageur and historic tour company.

Ms. MacLaren helped secure funding to erect historic outdoor sculptures in Sault Ste. Marie and chaired a project that resulted in new exhibits for the River of History museum. She has been actively researching, fund-raising, and organizing the community to save and renovate the historic Sault Theatre. Ms. MacLaren has also served on a variety of community boards and commissions focused on local history and business, and helped reactivate the Chippewa County Historical Society in the early 1990's. Through her dedicated leadership Sharon MacLaren has helped to enrich the public's awareness and appreciation of Upper Peninsula history.

Distinguished Professional Service

Dr. David Armour was recognized for thirty-five years protecting, preserving, and promoting the Upper Peninsula's natural and cultural heritage. Dr. Armour has participated in the restoration of nearly every historic structure in the National Historic Landmark of Fort Mackinac during his tenure. He has also overseen the restoration of other historic Mackinac Island buildings including the Mission House, Mission Church, and the Benjamin Blacksmith Shop.

Dr. Armour has also been involved with preservation and restoration efforts at Colonial Michilimackinac, one of Michigan's earliest European settlements. The Fort is now a National Historic Landmark and one of Michigan's earliest industrial sites. As well as contributing to the preservation of the region, he has played a key role in the Mackinac State Historic Park's nationally acclaimed publication program. As a general editor, Dr. Armour has been responsible for producing over fifty titles on the area's history, as well as having written dozens of books himself.

Publications

In the publication category awards were given to the following eight books: *A Desirable Station: Soldier Life at Fort Mackinac* by Phil Porter; *Asylum: Pontiac's Grand Monument from the Gilded Age* by Bruce Annett, Jr.; *Before Motown: A history of Jazz in Detroit 1920-1960* by Lars Bjorn; *Fish for All: An Oral History of Multiple Claims and Divided Sentiment on Lake Michigan* by Michael Chiarappa and Kristin Szylvian; *Greetings from Berrien Springs* by Leo Goodsell and Robert Myers; *Lewiston in the Lumbering Era* by Herman Miller; *Michigan's Early Military Forces* by Leroy Barnett and contributions by Roger Rosentreter; and *The Way We Played the Game* by John Armstrong.

Phil Porter's *A Desirable Station: Soldier Life at Fort Mackinac*, presents an engaging narrative of the lives of soldiers who garrisoned that northern Michigan fort. Mackinac Island's economy had shifted from the fur trade to tourism by the time Company B of the 43rd Infantry took command of the fort in August 1867. Soldiers at the post had little fear of attack, and the island resort community offered plenty of diversion. Many soldiers considered the post "a desirable station."

Porter does a masterful job of weaving together the stories of individual soldiers with the overall history of Fort Mackinac. Dozens of contemporary and modern photographs complement the book's lively and comprehensive text.

Asylum: Pontiac's Grand Monument from the Gilded Age by Bruce Annett, Jr., is a meticulously researched collection of details, photographs and illustrations of one of Michigan's former examples of architectural splendor, which was once on the National Register of Historic Places. The building was demolished in 2002. The book's well-crafted short chapters discuss the hospital's conception and birth in 1878, its distinguished Victorian Gothic structures and campus design, and its operations, particularly during its early years, that at times saw up to 10,000 people living and working in its "town within a town." The author has employed useful captions for illustrations and included biographical essays on important persons connected to the asylum, such as Elijah J. Myers, the master architect, early superintendents and medical staff. This text is carefully researched, well documented, includes useful endnotes, and will hopefully reach a wide audience among students and citizens who will be intrigued by this addition to the local history and architecture, as well as mental health facility literature.

Lars Bjorn's and Jim Gallert's *Before Motown: A History of Jazz in Detroit, 1920-1960* captivates audiences with its rich compilation of archival photographs, interviews and newspaper research involving the history of jazz in the city from 1920-1960. According to the Michigan Historical Review, *Before Motown* "combines a social scientist's penchant for thick socioeconomic context with a collector's love of minutiae. The result is a highly readable, meticulously documented chronicle of jazz musicians, audiences and venues in a city that is far better known for its rhythm and blues and automobiles than for its jazz."

Fish for All is a collaborative effort of Michael J. Chiarappa, Associate Professor of History and Environmental Studies at Western Michigan University, and Kristin M. Szylvian, Associate Professor of History at Western Michigan University. It is a seminal and scholarly study of the environmental history of the Great Lakes freshwater fisheries. *Fish for All* reveals how tradition, cultural heritage, economic livelihood, and scientific understanding have affected the carefully dispensed allocations of these resources in the Great Lakes region.

This book documents the shared experiences of the diverse peoples involved in Michigan's fishing communities including sport and commercial fishing, government, ecological, non-indigenous species, and Native Americans. The book stresses the importance of building coalitions to address common concerns such as water pollution, habitat degradation, and invasion of exotic species. *Fish for All* is an extensive, varied, and intrinsically interesting collection of testimonials that combine for a sweeping, comprehensive, and environmental history of Great Lakes fish and fisheries.

Greetings from Berrien Springs by Leo Goodsell and Robert Myers, is a photographic history of Berrien Springs, Michigan and presents over 260 photographs of the community and surrounding area, many of which are published for the first time in this volume. Goodsell and Myers draw on numerous organizations and private individuals to bring these rare, unpublished photos to the public, creating a lasting legacy for the people of southwest Michigan. The book is divided into eleven chapters, with each addressing a particular aspect of Berrien Springs' history. *Greetings from Berrien Springs* fills a void in the existing body of work about this community, as rural areas of Michigan are often overlooked in published histories.

Lewiston in the Lumbering Era by Herman L. Miller represents nearly thirty-five years of work, starting with Miller's efforts to write down stories that Lewiston residents began sharing with him in 1968. Following several drafts an early edition of this volume appeared in 1991 and a much larger, third edition was published in 2003 nearly tripling the original edition's size and content.

Miller focuses his study on a specific community where Michigan lumber was harvested and give scholars and laypeople a unique window on the impact this industry had on a local community. Illustrated with many historic images of Lewiston this book is an excellent example of a privately published local history.

Michigan's Early Military Forces by Leroy Barnett and Roger Rosentreter fills a void in our knowledge of Michigan's military forces from 1775 to 1860. In addition to the copious detail included in this new book, histories of the Revolutionary War, War of 1812, Toledo War and others help explain the reasons behind the various conflicts. Barnett and Rosentreter's volume stands as a memorial to the military forces that served in Michigan and will be a lasting reference tool to those who are interested in this period of the state's history.

John Armstrong's *The Way We Played the Game* is a true story of one Michigan team and the dawning of American football. The book provides rich and diverse insight into the early days of football in Michigan and development of a sport that continues to have far reaching impact on the social, economic, and academic culture of our state today. This true tale is told from the perspective of a quarterback and small town team from Benton Harbor who rose to compete in the state championship in 1903. Armstrong employed twelve years of meticulous research in primary records, ranging from first-person interviews, to newspaper accounts, to team photographs, to document this remarkable story.

Michigan Media

The 2003 Award of Merit for Michigan Media went to the *Joint Archives of Holland* for their film entitled, "Tulip Time in Holland."

The film presents an outstanding video documentary of one of America's oldest and largest festivals. In creating the video, Hope College professors David Schock and Geoffrey Reynolds bring together historic and contemporary photographs and film, and interweave them with interviews of Holland community leaders. The resulting video documents the history of the festival itself and its effect on Holland's history and culture. The video also addresses the cultural diversity that is now a part of the community. "*Tulip Time in Holland*" shows how the festival has helped the community retain its original Dutch heritage even as other cultural groups have become part of the city's ethnic and cultural makeup.

Restoration and Preservation

The Award of Merit for restoration and preservation was awarded to the **Rochester Hills Museum** for the **Van Hoosen Dairy Barn Adaptive Reuse Project**. After years of the property being split and sold the remaining land was donated to the city of Rochester Hills to be used as a museum facility. In 1989 the city purchased the Van Hoosen Dairy Barn along with ten acres to preserve the historic and scenic character of the area's rural past, initiating a ten-year project focusing on restoration of the building. In April of 2002 the barn's restoration was completed, transforming the dilapidated barn into a multi-purpose facility.

In addition to the having exhibits revolve around the themes of agriculture, settlement and industry, the Rochester Hills Museum also hosts weddings, youth and adult group programs, lectures, tours and various civic organizations at the facility. The nationally registered Rochester Hills Museum and the 1927 Van Hoosen Dairy Barn not only serve historical and educational purposes, but engages the community in numerous other activities allowing for blending of the city's past and present.

Special and Education Programs

The **Detroit Historical Museums Educational Department** was recognized for educational excellence in their effort to increase school attendance in the Dossin Great Lakes Museum by developing a comprehensive Teacher Guide. The guide provides educators with primary sources, pre and post-tests, lessons, history hunts and more focusing on the exhibits at the Belle Isle museum. The state MEAP standards were integrated into the materials to ensure that the elementary educational objectives were met.

The Detroit Historical Museum serves over 300,000 visitors each year. Some 60,000 of these are school children. This new Teacher Guide serves as an excellent example of how historical organizations can facilitate learning and reach out to young audiences by giving teachers the tools they need to engage and fascinate students studying Michigan's history.

The **Downtown Ann Arbor Historical Street Exhibit Program** was given an Award of Merit for their innovative effort to bring the city's past alive. The Street Exhibit Program features sixteen sites with large freestanding transparent glass frames that allow pedestrians to look through photos of vanished buildings to view the current downtown streets and structures. The

sites also include remarkable porcelain enamel wall images and artifact replicas that celebrate varied historic themes and downtown architecture.

The exhibits highlight government, entertainment, transportation, and the city's diverse communities and businesses. They also explore Ann Arbor's relationship with the University of Michigan campus. This decade-long project involved hundreds of volunteers and over twenty professionals and historians. Educational materials integrate the program into local school curricula. The Street Exhibit Program has not only served as an educational tool in a living history aspect, as well as enhancing the pedestrian environment, but has also heightened the community's sense of belonging and historic identity.

The Historical Society of Michigan presents its Awards of Merit each year at the State History Conference. Next year the Society will meet in St. Joseph. 2004 Award of Merit nominations are due by August 1, 2004.

For more information on the Awards of Merit, a nomination form, or membership in the Historical Society of Michigan visit www.hsmichigan.org or call the Society at (800) 692-1828. The Historical Society of Michigan is the state's oldest cultural organization, founded in 1828 by Lewis Cass and Henry Schoolcraft. It is an independent non-profit dedicated to the education and advancement of Michigan's historical story.