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## **2007 State History Awards Presented at State History Conference**

The Historical Society of Michigan presented its 2007 State History Awards at the 133<sup>rd</sup> annual State History Conference held in Macomb County, Michigan September 28-30. The State History Awards are the highest recognition presented by the state's official historical society and oldest cultural organization, established in 1828.

Fifteen awards were presented in a variety categories including Publications: University and Commercial Press, Local Societies, Publications: Private Printing, Publications: Children and Youth, Communications, Media, Educational Programs, Restoration & Preservation, Distinguished Volunteer Service, Institutions, Special Programs and Events.

The Society also added a new capstone award this year, the Lifetime Achievement Award.

With the new Lifetime Achievement Awards the Historical Society of Michigan seeks to honor the full body of work of men and women who have dedicated themselves to the preservation and promotion of Michigan's history in a wide variety of ways. The first **Lifetime Achievement Award** was presented to Michigan historian Larry Massie.

Massie has spent nearly all of his adult life working to further knowledge about and appreciation for our state's rich history. In this capacity, and often with the help of his talented wife, Massie played such roles as archivist, appraiser, author (at least 20 books and numerous articles) board member (at least four historical organizations) book collector, designer for seven exhibits, presenter (in hundreds of schools), publisher, researcher, teacher and volunteer.

Among Massie's accomplishments are designing the Flint Sit-Down Strike exhibit for Flint's Sloan Museum and contributing to the Learning Center at the Michigan Supreme Court Hall of Justice. He helped appraise John Harvey Kellogg material for the University of Michigan and, for a number of years, participated in the "Celebrate the Great Lakes Chautauquas." Since 2003 *Encore Magazine* has carried his "Michigan" series. Many people know of his books with lyrical titles like *From Frontier Folk to Factory Smoke* and *Copper Trails to Iron Rails*. Wearing his publisher hat, he has published several books written by others such as *Upbound Downbound: The Story of the Soo Locks* by Bernard Arbic.

Larry Massie has created an extraordinary record of involvement in sharing Michigan's history and promoting our state's past in a wide variety of ways.

Two books were recognized with State History Awards in the **Publications: University and Commercial Press** category.

Jeff Alexander received a State History Award to for his book *The Muskegon: The Majesty and Tragedy of Michigan's Rarest River* published by Michigan State University Press. Alexander's work represents a concentrated effort to bring to light the importance of conservation in Michigan. The Muskegon River's role in the lumber boom devastated the region and modern urbanization continues to be a threat. Alexander provides an entertaining and informative look into the necessity of preserving nature and our history.

The second book to receive a State History Award in the University and Commercial Press category is *My Brave Mechanics: The First Michigan Engineers and Their Civil War* by Mark Hoffman published by Wayne State University Press. This work traces the history of this little-known unit of volunteer mechanics and reveals the group's substantial engineering accomplishments and combat experience. Hoffman offers readers a detailed account of the Michigan engineers from a wealth of sources, including letters, diaries, regimental papers, period newspapers and postwar accounts. As little has been written about Union volunteer engineers in the western theatre, their unique history will make fascinating reading for Civil War buffs, local historians and those interested in the history of American military engineering

In the category of **Books: Private Printing**, the Historical Society of Michigan presented two State History Awards. The first award was presented to the Roundtable of Royal Oak Historical Organizations for their work *Royal Oak Images- Yesterday's Charm Today's Treasures*. The forward of this fine book mentions that every community has a personality or a spirit of place that identifies it as special or unique. As readers travel through the pages of *Royal Oak Images*, they can stop at each location and meet the people who lived there, learn what they did and what they loved about their home and town. *Royal Oak Images* chronicles the city's classic homes, business buildings, churches and other public buildings using more than 250 images and detailed background text. This book is a wonderful example of what other communities can aspire to achieve with publications of their own.

A second award in the category of private printing was presented to John C. Mitchell's *Wood Boats of Leelanau: A Photographic Journal* published by the Leelanau Historical Society and funded by the Edmund and Virginia Ball Foundation. This wonderful book was inspired by the popular "Wood Boats on the Wall" exhibits hosted annually by the local historical society since 2003. Mitchell collaborated with Leelanau County high school students, who acted as research and writing assistants, to thoroughly investigate the local maritime heritage in historical records and newspapers. John C. Mitchell captures the reader with the compelling history of wood boats – all manner of them from dugout canoes to mackinaw boats, schooners, fishing tugs, sloops, passenger steamers, mail boats, life saving rescue boats, pleasure craft, speed boats, and others. The 178-page book is richly illustrated, beautifully designed, and indexed. It is a valuable reference tool disguised as a coffee table display.

*Kevin Murphy's Summer of the Bear* authored by Leigh Arrathoon is the recipient of the 2007 State History Award for **Publications: Books - Children and Youth**. It is the first effort in an adventure-packed series of historical fiction. In this coming-of-age story, Kevin and his best friend, Brock Tomlinson, set out to spend the summer at the Tomlinson cabin in the Pigeon River Country State Forest. The French Canadian boy next door takes the boys on a canoe trip that they, and the readers, will never forget.

The novel focuses on the aftermath of European-Native American contact, the meaning of the core democratic value of liberty, and the significance of becoming a responsible adult and good citizen. By setting her work in the 21st century, Arrathoon invites youngsters to grapple with the problems they will face in their lifetimes, while learning from the valuable lessons of history. The purpose of the book is to teach young readers about the histories, economies and customs of the Canadian fur traders, the big American trading companies and the Ojibwe Indians. Throughout the volume, Kevin discovers that becoming a man in our society is linked to the fundamental American concept of freedom *with* responsibility.

This year's award in the **Local Societies** category was presented to the Presque Isle County Historical Society. Michigan has many fine local historical museums, but the Presque Isle County Historical Museum stands out for the breadth of its programs and its recent accomplishments. In June 2006, the museum acquired the 42,000 image archive of the Michigan Limestone and Chemical Company and it has a detailed plan to inventory, preserve and display these images. Three exhibits have already been completed. In conjunction with local teachers, the museum began a local history education project where it has produced twenty-five short stories of county history. The museum teamed with the Rogers City Kiwanis Club to develop programs of local history available along with corresponding teachers' guides. The museum's new, more active role has significantly altered the way it is viewed in the community and, most importantly, it has helped awaken the community's interest and pride in its own history!

In the **Communications: Newsletters and Websites** category two were honored. The Great Lakes Shipwreck Museum was honored with a State History Award. Since its inception in 1978, the Shipwreck Society has published a quarterly newsletter – the *Shipwreck Journal*. Each issue has included images and text documenting Great Lakes shipwrecks, lighthouses, maritime history, the U.S. Lifesaving Service and U.S. Coast Guard, and the various activities of the Great Lakes Shipwreck Society and Museum. *Shipwreck Journal* is distributed to the Society's 1,300 members, emailed to 700 members, displayed and archived at the Library of Michigan, and made available free to the public.

In addition to *Shipwreck Journal*, the Shipwreck Society has been actively producing film, video and DVD presentations, booklets and art prints, and it maintains an award-winning website – [www.shipwreckmuseum.com](http://www.shipwreckmuseum.com). This interactive site includes virtual tours of the Museum, an online store, an archive of Shipwreck Stories, and a wealth of practical information regarding the Museum and its services.

The second award for Communications: Newsletters and Websites went to Diana Barrett for her website work on behalf of the Grand Rapids Historical Commission. This online archive has the goal of using local photos of the past to document the ways the people of Grand Rapids lived worked and played. This easy to use website allows one to search the Grand Rapids Historical Commission's archives to find information on a whole host of subjects relating to life in the city. Beyond retrieving images from the past, the website provides other useful information ranging

from notes on proper citation all the way to how to use the primary sources the reader has now accessed. The Commission website is located at [www.historygrandrapids.org](http://www.historygrandrapids.org) .

In the category of **Media**, the Historical Society of Michigan presented a State History Award to Macomb Cultural Center for its program “A Legacy of Service and Courage: the World War II Generation.” Beginning in February 2007, and over the next three months, more than 75 events were held, including presentations by those “who lived it” as well as topical experts, film, musical and dramatic performances, hands-on workshops and exhibits. The video produced for the opening event provided an overview of the impact of the war, overlaid with personal recollections. The video for the closing ceremony focused on the reflections of local men and women who served during World War II, not only recounting their experiences, but their perspectives on why they served and what they hope future generations take away from these experiences. These videos are exceptional in terms of production quality, but more importantly for their ability to bring home to the viewer a range of ideas, emotions, and perspectives that provoke reflection and response.

In the category of **Educational Programs** the Society presented the State History Award to Western Michigan University and Fort St. Joseph Museum for their joint work on Fort St. Joseph. In 1998, the Anthropology, Geosciences and History Departments at Western Michigan University joined forces with the City of Niles and the Fort St. Joseph Museum to begin an archaeological exploration of the Fort St. Joseph location. Their work succeeded in locating the remains of houses at the post, along with artifacts left behind by its French, English and Native American inhabitants.

WMU and the Fort St. Joseph Museum have created a wide range of programs to teach the public about the post’s history. Newspaper and magazine articles, PowerPoint presentations, and even coloring books for children have described the fort’s history. A Community Days Open House at the field site features historical re-enactors, artifact exhibits and a variety of educational programs. Western Michigan University and the Fort St. Joseph Museum have deepened our understanding of Michigan’s rich colonial French history through their programs at the Fort St. Joseph site.

The State History Award in the category of **Institutions** was given to the Michigan Historic Preservation Network. The Michigan Historic Preservation Network has forged a leadership role in protecting and preserving Michigan’s historic buildings. The Network offers workshops and training sessions on historic preservation districts for people seeking to protect the identities of their towns and neighborhoods. In 2005 and again in 2007, it activated grass roots support to thwart legislative attempts to repeal Michigan’s Rehabilitation Tax Credit for the restoration of historic buildings. A recent partnership with the nationally-known Partners for Sacred Places has helped twenty-two congregations around the state preserve their historic houses of worship.

The 2007 State History Award in the **Restoration/Preservation** Category was presented to the Minervini Group for the Village at Grand Traverse Commons, a site previously known as the Traverse City State Hospital, the Traverse City Regional Psychiatric Hospital and the Northern Michigan Asylum. The asylum opened in 1885 and it served more than 50,000 residents before it closed in 1989. A few years later title was transferred from the state to a nonprofit group created by Traverse City and Garfield Township to manage and develop the property. What continues today is the largest historic preservation and adaptive reuse project in the country.

The most significant accomplishment of the Minervini Group to date is the restoration of Building 50, a quarter-mile long majestic brick structure that is the focal point of the village. Today, Building 50 is home to a world-class restaurant and an impressive array of shops, condominiums and pristine office spaces. The magnificent 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings are located in a “Central Park” type setting, with pastoral landscapes of the expansive lawns, walkways, paths and historic arboretums, surrounded by 4,870 acres of preserved parkland, woodland, wetland conservation areas and hiking and biking trails. This unique site, which served a special role in the state for more than a century, is poised to continue thriving as Michigan embarks on yet another century.

In the category of **Distinguished Volunteer Service** the Society awarded Valerie Van Heest the State History Award. The research, documentation, interpretation and preservation of Michigan’s underwater maritime heritage have occupied much of Valerie Van Heest’s life for the past twelve years. Her work has focused on the discovery, documentation and preservation of shipwrecks, and educational outreach to both sport divers and the general public.

After playing an instrumental role in establishing Southwest Michigan Underwater Preserve, Ms. Van Heest went on to co-found the Michigan Shipwreck Research Associates in 2001. This non-profit organization is dedicated to the research and preservation of maritime history. Valerie Van Heest’s volunteer work is helping Michigan ensure that a shipwreck found is not a shipwreck lost, but instead a shipwreck preserved.

Finally, a **Special Programs and Events** State History Award was presented to the Macomb Cultural Center for its program “A Legacy of Service and Courage: The World War II Generation.” During its three-month run, more than 10,000 visitors participated in 75 events, activities, and experiences. The presentations focused on those “who lived it” as well as topical experts like Pulitzer Prize-winning author Doris Kearns Goodwin. There also were films, musical and dramatic performances, and hands-on-workshops. Organizers displayed a variety of exhibits and artifacts from the era including a jeep, uniforms, shell casings, parachutes and maps and even arranged a flyover of an authentic B-17. The programming discussed battlefield experiences during the war, life on the home front, and how the media operated in America and overseas. The series drew individuals from all age groups. Throughout “Legacy of Service and Courage,” the center served as a dynamic venue that brought the community’s heritage to life and helped the community actively explore and celebrate that heritage.

This year’s State History Awards were presented at the Historical Society of Michigan’s Presidents Reception and State History Awards Banquet at its annual State History Conference. Nomination forms for 2008 Awards can be found on its website at [www.hsmichigan.org](http://www.hsmichigan.org).

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.

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