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For Immediate Release

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### **Friggins, DeTour Reef Light Win Prestigious UP History Awards**

ESCANABA MI: Thomas G. Friggins and the DeTour Reef Light Preservation Society received the Historical Society of Michigan's top awards for the preservation of Upper Peninsula History on June 24 at the 57<sup>th</sup> Annual Upper Peninsula History Conference.

Thomas G. Friggins, Director of the Iron Industry Museum in Negaunee, was awarded the Charles Follo History Award. The DeTour Reef Light Preservation Society received the Superior Award, a new recognition established this year.

Since arriving in the Upper Peninsula in 1974, Friggins has provided encouragement and leadership to countless museums, historians, educators and students. He is perhaps best known for his leadership of the Iron Industry Museum in Negaunee and the remarkable interpretation of the town of Fayette Historic Townsite, as well as Fort Wilkins at Copper Harbor.

The living history program Friggins created for Fort Wilkins has enthralled visitors for many years, and has made everyday life at this wilderness post fascinating. His work with college student interpreters at these sites has helped introduce many new professionals into the field.

The Historical Society of Michigan presents the Follo Award each year to an individual who has made an outstanding contribution to the preservation and promotion of Upper Peninsula history. It was established in 1979 to honor the memory of Charles Follo, an Escanaba schoolteacher who promoted and helped advance historical understanding of Michigan's U.P.

"The Follo Award is the highest recognition given to an individual leader in UP history by the Historical Society of Michigan" according to the Society's executive director Larry Wagenaar. "Mr. Friggins exemplifies how important the efforts of one person can be to advancing Michigan's history. Conveying the award in Escanaba this year was especially meaningful as the conference was once again in the hometown of Charles Follo."

In a similar fashion the Historical Society of Michigan established the new Superior Award in 2006 to recognize organizations that make important contributions to UP history. This year the award was given to the DeTour Reef Light Preservation Society.

The DeTour Reef Light Preservation Society was organized in 1998 to restore and preserve the 1931 DeTour Reef Light. Built in the classical revival architectural style, the light on Lake Huron marks the entrance to the St. Mary's River DeTour passage. The light was manned until 1974; the United States Coast Guard declared it surplus property in 1997.

In the years following its organization, the all-volunteer DeTour Reef Light Preservation Society obtained over \$1 million in grants, matched with nearly \$125,000 in donated labor and \$52,000 in cash, to restore the light. The project has included interior and exterior restoration of the building and reinstallation of one of the original foghorns. Planned work in the future includes refurbishing a barge for use as a landing dock and access to the lighthouse, creating interpretive signs and rebuilding a second deck crane.

Preservation Society leaders Chuck and Jeri Feltner were on hand to receive the Superior Award on behalf of the organization.

“The Preservation Society’s remarkable efforts in only eight years exemplify the dedication and community spirit for which the Upper Peninsula is renowned” commented Awards committee chairman Robert Myers of Berrien Springs.

The Charles Follo and Superior Awards are presented each year at the Historical Society of Michigan’s Upper Peninsula History Conference. Territorial governor Lewis Cass and Henry Schoolcraft, who explored and wrote about the UP, founded the Society in 1828.

During the State History Conference, to be held in Bay City September 22-24, the Society will present its annual State History Awards. For more information on the Society’s awards visit [www.hsmichigan.org](http://www.hsmichigan.org) or call (517) 324-1828.