

Friday, September 23, 2011

Society Presents 2011 State History Awards in Traverse City

TRAVERSE CITY—The Historical Society of Michigan presented its 2011 State History Awards at the 137th Annual Meeting and State History Conference held September 23-25 in Traverse City. The awards were presented at the annual awards reception and banquet Friday evening. The State History Awards are the highest recognition presented by the state's official historical society.

Seventeen awards were presented this year in a variety of categories, including Lifetime Achievement, Distinguished Volunteer Service, Outstanding Educator, Communications, Local Societies, Institutions, Restoration/Preservation, Media, Publications: University and Commercial Press, Publications: Private Printing, Educational Programs, and Special Programs and Events.

This was the fifth year that the Historical Society presented its capstone **Lifetime Achievement Award**, which honors men and women who have dedicated themselves to preserving Michigan's history over a significant amount of time.

The 2011 Lifetime Achievement Award was presented to educator, author, and filmmaker Glenn Ruggles. As a teacher at Walled Lake, Ruggles was named Outstanding Teacher of the Year, received the Ferris E. Lewis Award for Excellence in Teaching Michigan History, was twice the recipient of the Distinguished Service Award, and was named to the Model United Nations Hall of Fame as the founder and advisor of Walled Lake Central High School's Model United Nations club.

Beyond these impressive achievements, Ruggles has authored nine books, including "Beside the Golden Door," a history of Irish settlers in Oakland; "Elk Rapids: The First Hundred Years"; and "Voices on the Street," an oral history of downtown Elk Rapids. He also co-produced three 16mm films, one of which—"The River's The Same"—earned an Award of Merit from the Historical Society of Michigan in 1976.

Ruggles has been deeply involved in oral history projects with many organizations, including the Sterling Heights Public Library, the Walter P. Reuther Labor Library, and the Michigan Supreme Court Historical Society. He led numerous history organizations and was a regular columnist for the *Elk Rapids Town Meeting* newspaper.

In the category of **Distinguished Volunteer Service**, the Society recognized Rod Wilson. As president of the Rochester Hills Historical Society, Wilson has spearheaded restoration and education efforts in his community. Wilson's notable preservation activities include the restoration of Rochester's World War II Honor Roll, a Carrera glass monument that had been disassembled and in storage since the 1960s; the preservation of the 1845 Lysander Woodward House; the repainting of the 1880 Griggs Brothers/Rochester Elevator Company Grain Elevator;

and the restoration and re-hanging of the 1938 Marvin Beerbohm WPA mural in the former Rochester High School building.

Wilson also spent countless hours developing and leading educational programs. He created the Downtown Rochester Historic Walking Tour, worked with a multi-agency task force to develop interpretive signs for historic sites along Paint Creek Trail in downtown Rochester, and established a research committee within the Rochester Avon Historical Society to compile documentation on local buildings and sites. The committee's efforts succeeded in having the Griggs Brothers Elevator placed on the National Register of Historic Places, and work is underway on three other potential National Register nominations. Wilson also works with the Sons of the American Revolution and the Michigan Historic Preservation Network.

The **Educator** award went to Richard Cahow, who began his 40-year career with Kalamazoo Public Schools in 1970. He taught AP history at Kalamazoo Central High School for 32 years before retiring in 2010. Cahow was recognized three times by the Kalamazoo County Excellence in Education Program, whose nominations came from the top graduating seniors. Of his educational philosophy, Cahow has remarked, "[T]he key to effective teaching [is] getting the students involved in the course material. In the study of history, simply knowing the names, dates and events is of limited value. Events and dates are nothing without people and so I focus the attention of my students upon the people who made things happen." Cahow has done this by bringing speakers to the classroom to discuss their role in the Vietnam War and by taking students to the Gilmore Car Museum to experience a Model T firsthand. He continues to volunteer at the Kalamazoo Air Zoo and the Gilmore Car Museum, and shows educators novel ways to engage students.

In the **Communications: Newsletters and Websites** category, the award was presented to the Kalamazoo Public Library for its website *All About Kalamazoo History*. The library's Local History Department took the lead in web-based historical information several years ago by launching an online index of the *Kalamazoo Gazette*. It was the first in the area to feature hundreds of local photographs online from three cultural institutions. *All About Kalamazoo* goes beyond this. It now includes nearly 600 interconnected web pages and covers more than 20 categories. The pages include information about people and places from Kalamazoo's past, researched and written by members of the Kalamazoo Public Library staff. Categories include biographies, cemeteries, rural schools, houses/buildings, businesses, educational, and cultural institutions. The pages provide basic and sometimes very detailed information about these topics. They also include citations, allowing researchers to delve further into the topics or verify the information. Many of the pages include illustrations or historical photos. This website is an invaluable resource for researchers ranging from middle school students competing in History Day to genealogists.

The Rochester/Avon Historical Society received the **Local Society** award. This active society has gained enthusiastic municipal support for such endeavors as their award-winning restoration of a 1930s mural, historic building preservation, oral history program, walking tours, and regular public meetings. They maintain both a website and a Facebook page, and collect artifacts and historical material pertaining to the local area.

The **Institutions** award went to the Marquette Regional History Center, which organized outstanding public support for the creation of its new facility. Hundreds of people donated money, time, and talents to produce a remarkable center, which includes a wonderful museum, extensive archives, and numerous programs and special exhibits. As one of the most active historical groups in Michigan, they are a model for other organizations to emulate.

The 2011 State History Award in the **Restoration/Preservation** category was presented to the Detroit Public Library for their preservation of the Burton Historical Collection. The Burton ranks as one of America's premier cultural resources. Founded in 1915, the collection includes thousands of original archival collections that document the history of New France, the Great Lakes region, the Old Northwest, and Michigan. Beginning in 2008, the Detroit Public Library began a project to develop an online public access catalog to help researchers around the world access the Burton Collection. Staff members of the Burton and students from Wayne State University have cataloged 4,000 archival collections. These have been added to WorldCat (the national bibliographic database) and MeLCat (the Library of Michigan's Electronic Library), thus allowing searchable access to the catalog citations. The project has resulted in a 56 percent increase in the number of researchers using the Burton Collection between 2007 and 2010.

In the **Media** category, David Schock was honored with a State History Award for his documentary titled *STARbySTAR: Naomi Long Madgett, Poet and Publisher*. The poet laureate of Detroit, Madgett is one of America's most influential black poets. Schock tells Madgett's story through carefully intertwined historic photographs, interviews with acquaintances, and conversations with Madgett herself. The film reveals a talented, determined woman who found her own voice through poetry. The documentary chronicles her journey, struggles, and achievements.

Four books were recognized with State History Awards in the **Publications: University and Commercial Press** category. The first honor was posthumously awarded to Godfrey Anderson's "A Michigan Polar Bear Confronts the Bolsheviks: A War Memoir," expertly edited by Gordon L. Olson and published by William B. Eerdmans Publishing Group. A farm boy from Sparta, Michigan, Anderson served with the American Polar Bears 337th Hospital Unit in a frozen, hellish and ill-fated campaign. Years after the campaign ended, Anderson wrote a captivating and wrenching memoir of his experiences as one of the Polar Bears. Gordon Olson, the city historian of Grand Rapids, edited Anderson's memoir to create a vivid account of this almost forgotten chapter of American history.

The second book to receive a State History Award in this category was Craig Fox's "Everyday Klansfolk: White Protestant Life and the KKK in 1920s Michigan," published by Michigan State University Press. "Everyday Klansfolk" sheds new light on this aspect of Klan history. Fox's book examines Klan activities in Newago County from 1923 to 1925, when nearly 20 percent of the county's native-born white men and 10 percent of its women joined the Klan, statistics typical for other communities at the time. The archival research is extraordinary and the book relies heavily on the rich collection at Central Michigan University's Clarke Historical Library. Fox's work provides a valuable tool that allows readers to better understand this painful chapter in our nation's history.

Blaine Pardoe's "Lost Eagles: One Man's Mission to Find Missing Airmen in Two World Wars," published by University of Michigan Press, was the third recipient in this category. Frederick Zinn, an American aviator from Galesburg, Michigan, pioneered the methods used for recovering and identifying the bodies of missing airmen. He continued his work through World War II, creating the Missing Air Crew Report (MACR) that Gen. George C. Marshall ordered all branches of the armed forces to adopt. Pardoe's book is a thoroughly-researched, engaging account of Frederick Zinn's life work. It is an essential study for anyone interested in American aviation history.

The fourth book to receive an award in the University and Commercial Press category was "The Color of Law: Ernie Goodman, Detroit, and the Struggle for Labor and Civil Rights," written by Steven Babson, Dave Riddle, and David Elsil and published by Wayne State University Press. The authors focus on Goodman's landmark cases and examine the complex relationships he formed with Michigan Supreme Court justices, governors, mayors, and union leaders. The research draws from a rich collection of letters, oral histories, court records and press accounts to tell the story of Goodman's life.

The Historical Society of Michigan presented two awards in the category of **Publications: Private Printing**. The first award went to John C. Mitchell's "Grand Traverse: The Civil War Era," an engaging and delightful read. Mitchell provides a detailed accounting of the Grand Traverse Region during this period. Two extensive firsthand accounts guide the narrative: the diary of Reverend George Smith, who came to Michigan in the 1830s and worked on behalf of Native Americans along the east coast of Michigan, and the *Grand Traverse Herald*, the newspaper founded in 1858 by nationally recognized publisher Morgan Bates. The paper rolled off the presses just in time to capture the drama of the Civil War in Grand Traverse from an abolitionist perspective.

"Bay View: An American Idea," by Mary Jane Doerr, received the second private printing award. This is the first comprehensive history of the Bay View Chautauqua, the local embodiment of an adult education program founded in New York. Doerr filled the void with an exhaustively researched and well-written study. She used the Bay View Archives, other local, state, and national archival and library institutions, as well as oral history interviews. This outstanding volume is a valuable addition to the literature on the Chautauqua movement in the United States. It serves as a model and inspiration for other local communities to follow when describing their Chautauqua associations.

In the category of **Educational Programs**, the Society recognized Heritage Battle Creek for its innovative local history education program, "History Around Us." The project rewrote history objectives from the third grade to fit second grade needs and incorporated local Battle Creek history. With the aid of grants and much planning, they created a wonderful learning experience for second grade students. The children particularly enjoy "BC" the black squirrel, a cleverly drawn cartoon mascot for the project.

The first of two **Special Programs and Events** awards was presented to the Henry Ford Estate for its "Cultural Landscape Symposium 2010: Prairie Style Design Legacy in SE Michigan and Relevance Today." The estate teamed with several local partners for this two-day traveling

symposium and received funds from a Michigan Humanities Council grant. The symposium focused on the historical significance, legacy, and relevance of "Prairie Style" landscape design in Southeast Michigan as illustrated in the works of O.C. Simonds and Jens Jensen, a leader in the Midwestern conservation movement. The symposium brought together historians, curators, architects, landscape designers, gardeners and members of the public to learn from this legacy and to apply its lessons to modern challenges.

The second award went to the North Berrien Historical Society for its exceptional program, "Women in Baseball." The project celebrated Maud Nelson, a renowned baseball player in the early 1900s. Nelson was the first female baseball player in the United States to be commemorated by her community, Watervliet. As a player, coach, and team owner, Maud remained active into the 1930s. Building on this background, the society planned a series of summer events, including a tournament for girls' teams, a civic festival, and a museum exhibit. The tournament drew teams from out-of-state, and fans came from as far away as the eastern United States.

The Historical Society of Michigan, which administers the State History Awards, 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 preservation and presentation of Michigan's historical story.

Nomination forms for the 2012 State History Awards can be found on the Society's website at www.hsmichigan.org.