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For Immediate Release

### **Historical Society of Michigan Announces Virtual Annual Conference**

LANSING, Mich.—The 146th annual Michigan History Conference will not only include fascinating information about our state’s past and the stories of its peoples but also make history itself. The Friday & Saturday, October 2 & 3, 2020, annual meeting will be the first-ever 100 percent virtual history conference to be organized and hosted by the Historical Society of Michigan (HSM), a 192-year-old nonprofit, nongovernmental organization that focuses on history education.

“We believe, that by taking full advantage of HSM’s state-of-the-art communications technology that was built into our newly renovated Meijer Center for Michigan History, we can create a powerful and meaningful conference experience even if we cannot safely gather together in the normal way this year,” said Larry J. Wagenaar, HSM’s executive director and CEO. “Our team did not like having to cancel two of our conferences this year and has been working to develop a virtual format that would match the rich experiences our conferences have become known for so we could avoid any future cancelations. During this health crisis, we have seen remote attendance for our online-only history lectures and workshops grow significantly as more people become comfortable using the technology.”

Last year’s Michigan History Conference, which normally moves to a different physical location each year, attracted a record 350 attendees in Ludington. As the pandemic swept across the nation this spring, HSM canceled two of its 2020 history conferences due to stay-at-home orders: the Michigan in Perspective: The Local History Conference in metro Detroit in March (720 attendees in 2019) and the



Upper Peninsula History Conference (250 attendees in 2019), which had been scheduled for June.

While some details remain to be worked out for the 2020 Virtual Michigan History Conference, many of the elements of what had originally been planned as an in-person Lansing-based event will be at the heart of the new online conference. In addition, virtual history-based tours and workshops will be offered, along with virtual breakout rooms where exhibitors can let attendees know about their history-focused organizations and activities. The annual State History Awards will also be presented as part of the 2020 Virtual Michigan History Conference.

“While endeavoring to keep familiar elements for our many repeat conference-goers, we are excited to debut some new features based on the capabilities of digital technology,” Wagenaar said. “For example, post-session virtual chat rooms will allow for some of the social interaction of past conferences as people talk with each other about what they have learned.”

Information about session content, how to register and pricing for the conference will be available soon on the HSM website: [hsmichigan.org](http://hsmichigan.org). The full slate of programming will be shared with potential registrants in the form of a virtual booklet e-mailed to a wide distribution list.

The Historical Society of Michigan, publisher of Michigan History and Chronicle magazines, is the state’s oldest cultural organization, founded in 1828 by territorial governor Lewis Cass and explorer Henry Schoolcraft. A nongovernmental nonprofit, the Society focuses on publications, conferences, education, awards and recognition programming, and support for local history organizations.

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