

Contact: Martin Ackley, Director of Communications, (517) 241-4395

## **Library of Michigan's 2010 Michigan Notable Books Reflect Our State's Legacy of Perseverance**

---

December 10, 2009

LANSING - The Library of Michigan today announced the list of the 2010 Michigan Notable Books – 20 books highlighting Michigan people, places, and events.

“This year’s selections prove that persevering through economic and personal hardship is nothing new for Michiganders, and that this enduring and independent spirit has a long, rich history in the Great Lakes State,” said state Superintendent of Public Instruction Mike Flanagan.

Short stories of despairing people moving toward salvation; a biography of the state’s first geologist, who discovered many of Michigan’s natural treasures; and a children’s book that tells the story of a slave family’s flight to freedom are among this year’s most notable Michigan books.

“This year’s Michigan Notable Books bring to life the Michigan experience through vivid storytelling that creates portraits of the people and places that make Michigan great,” said State Librarian Nancy Robertson. “Addressing Michigan’s natural beauty, its innovative leaders or the faith of its people, these books celebrate Michigan as a place and a people that even in the most trying of times find transformation. The Library of Michigan is delighted to honor these 20 books as the 2010 Michigan Notable Books.”

Each year the Michigan Notable Books (MNB) list features 20 books published in the previous calendar year that are about, or set in, Michigan or the Great Lakes region, or are written by a Michigan author. Selections include nonfiction and fiction books that appeal to a variety of audiences and cover a range of topics and issues close to the hearts of Michigan residents.

Michigan Notable Books is a statewide program that began as part of the 1991 Michigan Week celebration, geared to pay tribute and draw attention to the many people, places and things that make Michigan life unique. In that regard, MNB successfully highlights Michigan books and writers focusing on the Great Lakes State. Each title on the 2010 list gives readers insight into what it means to make your home in Michigan and proves some of the greatest stories are indeed found in the Great Lakes region.

This year's Michigan Notable Book selection committee includes representatives from the Library of Michigan; Borders Inc.; Cooley Law School; The Detroit News; Detroit Public Library; Grand Valley State University; Lansing City Pulse; Michigan Center for the Book; Michigan Historical Center; Schuler Books & Music; and the Traverse City Record Eagle.

The Library of Michigan museum store will carry the 2010 Michigan Notable Books and the books will also be available at the Michigan e-store at <http://apps.michigan.gov/MichiganeStore/public/Home.aspx>.

For more information about the MNB program, call 517 373-1300, visit [www.michigan.gov/notablebooks](http://www.michigan.gov/notablebooks) or e-mail [michigannotablebooks@michigan.gov](mailto:michigannotablebooks@michigan.gov).

The 2009 Michigan Notable Books are:

***American Salvage: Stories*** by Bonnie Jo Campbell. Wayne State University Press.

In these stories about cold, lonely, working-class Michigan life, Campbell creates a world where salvation counterbalances loss and despair, and she leaves the reader with a sense of hope and belief things will get better. Campbell's daring stories and exceptional writing create an image of rural Michigan that lingers and cannot be forgotten.

***Annie's Ghosts: A Journey into a Family's Secret*** by Steve Luxenberg. Hyperion.

The fear of mental illness hits deep into the psyche, and that terror brings about this fascinating book of research into family genealogy, personal history and secrets long held. It all started when Detroit native Steve Luxenberg began to discover some discrepancies in his mother's stories about her family as she neared the end of her life. A complex blend of genealogy research, cultural mores and a long-past Detroit are brought alive. Despite the secrets, Luxenberg's love of his family is clear, and while not all is discovered, much is, and his story becomes a story that belongs to all of us.

***The Art Student's War: A Novel*** by Brad Leithauser. Alfred A. Knopf.

The vividly depicted city of Detroit takes a lead role in this historical coming-of-age novel set in World War II. A talented art student, Bianca Paradiso volunteers to draw portraits of wounded soldiers at the local hospital. As turmoil engulfs her Italian family, Bianca struggles in both her relationship with one of her sketch subjects and her budding romance with the son of a local drug store titan.

***Bath Massacre: America's First School Bombing*** by Arnie Bernstein. University of Michigan Press.

On May 18, 1927, an explosion rocked the small town of Bath, in Clinton County, when dynamite planted by Andrew Kehoe detonated in the basement of the local school. In this dramatic history of the horrific tragedy that claimed more than 40 lives (most of them schoolchildren), including Kehoe and his wife, the author skillfully explores the origins and events leading up to the tragedy, the terrible destruction at the school and Kehoe's farm, and how the stunned community struggled to cope in the immediate aftermath.

***Fordlandia: The Rise and Fall of Henry Ford's Forgotten Jungle City*** by Greg Grandin. Metropolitan Books/Henry Holt.

The remarkable story of Henry Ford's failed attempt to transform the rugged Brazilian Amazon rainforest into both a factory and a model American-style town, complete with golf courses and ice cream shops. Fordlandia represents a fascinating dichotomy matching the Amazon rainforest, with its complex natural environment and rugged conditions, against the automobile industrialist who had perfected the assembly line.

***Have a Little Faith: A True Story of a Last Request*** by Mitch Albom. Hyperion.

Mitch Albom offers a story about his eight-year journey between two worlds, two men and two faiths. After Albom's hometown rabbi asked him to deliver his eulogy, Albom tried to learn more about the man and found himself thrown back to a world of faith he'd left years ago. By examining his faith, Albom also connected with a Detroit pastor, a former convict preaching to the poor and homeless in a decaying church with a hole in its roof. Ten percent of the profits from this book will go to charity, including The Hole in the Roof Foundation, which helps refurbish places of worship that aid the homeless.

***Isadore's Secret: Sin, Murder and Confession in a Northern Michigan Town*** by Mardi Link. University of Michigan Press.

An astonishing story of a nun who was murdered in Isadore nearly 100 years ago. Years after the nun's disappearance, her bones were found, but only when local law enforcement found out about this murder as gossip spread through the town was anything done to find out who killed the nun, Sister Janina. A compelling story and a well-researched and carefully written account of the events that affected Isadore and its Catholic Polish population so greatly.

***January's Sparrow*** by Patricia Polacco. Philomel.

In January 1874 in Marshall, slave takers came to take the Crosswhites back to Kentucky. This is the story of how the Crosswhites came to Marshall, why they stayed there and what happened on that day the whole town rose up to save the Crosswhites from the slave takers. This is Polacco's second time on the Michigan Notable Books list (*An Orange for Frankie*).

***The Lost Tiki Palaces of Detroit: Stories*** by Michael Zadoorian. Wayne State University Press.

Interesting and quirky characters abound in this engaging collection of short stories set in and around Detroit. Divided in sections appropriately named West Side, East Side and Downtown, the collection portrays common themes relevant to the region and the city, including hardship, racial tension and hope.

***Michigan's Columbus: The Life of Douglass Houghton*** by Steve Lehto. Momentum Books.

This well-researched and readable biography details the extraordinary – and tragically short – life of one of the most important figures in Michigan history. Having earlier accompanied Henry Rowe Schoolcraft on his expeditions through the Lake Superior region and the upper Mississippi valley, Houghton was the state's first geologist, from 1837 until his death at age 36 in 1845. His 1841 annual report detailed the rich copper deposits found in the Keweenaw Peninsula, and, by suggesting they could be mined successfully and profitably, helped foster Michigan's subsequent mining boom. This is Lehto's second time on the Michigan Notable Books list (*Death's Door: The Truth Behind Michigan's Largest Mass Murder*).

***Nothing But a Smile: A Novel*** by Steve Amick. Pantheon Books.

Steve Amick gives the reader a remarkable portrait of postwar America. When Wink Dutton is discharged from the army in 1944, he has little to his name besides his Purple Heart. His prospects change unexpectedly, however, when he meets the beautiful Sal Chesterton. The story plays out against wartime struggles, the Chicago underworld of the 1940s and 1950s, HUAC and the Red Scare and the postwar migration of Americans from the cities to the suburbs. This is Amick's second time on the Michigan Notable Books list (*The Lake, The River & the Other Lake*).

***Orlando M. Poe: Civil War General and Great Lakes Engineer*** by Paul Taylor. Kent State University Press.

A comprehensive biography of General Sherman's right-hand man, Orlando M. Poe, who served in the Civil War, commanded the 2nd Michigan Infantry and led brigades at Second Bull Run and Fredericksburg. This influential man was much praised for his bravery and service. He went on to lead an illustrious career as the supervisor for the design and construction of numerous Great Lakes lighthouses and then designed and constructed the largest shipping lock in the world at Sault Ste. Marie.

***Our People, Our Journey: The Little River Band of Ottawa Indians*** by James M. McClurken. Michigan State University Press.

Utilizing compelling photographs of the families that constitute it, this important and well-researched history of the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians traces the tribe's migration into Michigan's Grand River Valley, its later settlement on reservations in Mason, Muskegon and Oceana counties, the difficult relationship between the tribe and the U.S. government and successful efforts to maintain the tribe's unique cultural identity through the present day.

***Pandora's Locks: The Opening of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Seaway*** by Jeff Alexander. Michigan State University Press.

A powerfully and thoughtfully written story of the impact the opening of the Great Lakes has had on the environment, water conditions and quality of life in the Great Lakes states. The high cost of tolerating dumping deep-sea ballast and exotic species into the lakes is carefully detailed and the personal cost is well displayed. This is a well-researched book that indeed gives one hope among the ruins. This is Alexander's second time on the Michigan Notable Books list (*The Muskegon: The Majesty and Tragedy of Michigan's Rarest River*).

***Roses and Revolutions: The Selected Writings of Dudley Randall*** edited by Melba Joyce Boyd. Wayne State University Press.

This beautifully edited anthology pulls together Dudley Randall's major works in one volume. Long-time Detroit resident Randall was the founder of Broadside Press, which published many well-known Black poets. He was one of the foremost voices in African-American literature during the 20<sup>th</sup> century and was very influential in his mentoring activities. The poems and the short stories show the changes in civil rights and historical events during his 80 years of life, and depict a man who had a deep love for people.

***Season of Water and Ice*** by Donald Lystra, Switch Grass Books/Northern Illinois University.

Donald Lystra creates a touching coming-of-age story set in rural northern Michigan in 1957. Bookish loner Danny DeWitt befriends Amber Dwyer, a pregnant teenager who has been abandoned by her boyfriend and rejected by her family and community. *Seasons of Water and Ice* explores the themes of independence and obligation, courage and surrender, and love and sexuality. The book will appeal to both adult and young adult readers.

***Stitches: A Memoir*** by David Small. W. W. Norton.

Socrates says that an unexamined life is a life not worth living. David Small's heartbreaking story reveals a well-examined life, bringing to light a troubled family and its impact on him as a child, from living in an extremely quiet and depressing environment with angry undertones, to undergoing extremely traumatic throat surgery and waking up unable to speak. A remarkably illustrated story of a child who found refuge in books and in drawing, and, in the end, became his own man.

***Travelin' Man: On the Road and Behind the Scenes with Bob Seger*** by Tom Weschler. Wayne State University Press.

Following Bob Seger's career from the late 1960s, through such highlights as *Beautiful Loser*, *Live Bullet* and *Night Moves*, and culminating in his 2004 induction in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, readers will eagerly turn the page in this behind-the-scenes photographic look at one of Michigan's music icons.

***Up the Rouge!: Paddling Detroit's Hidden River*** by Joel Thurtell. Photographs by Patricia Beck. Wayne State University Press.

This is a beautifully photographed story of a journey up Detroit's Rouge River to investigate whether cleanup efforts are paying off. Two Detroit Free Press journalists undertake a very difficult five-day trip up the river, which involved not just peacefully canoeing but also avoiding getting dunked in a very contaminated river and dragging their canoe over debris and rubbish tossed in the river. Photos show an astonishing number of boats simply abandoned in the river, along with random cars, washing machines and other detritus of civilization.

***When March Went Mad: The Game That Transformed Basketball*** by Seth Davis. Times Books.

Thirty years ago, college basketball was not the sport we know today. Not many games were televised nationally, and the NCAA tournament was not the cultural phenomenon it is today. Two exceptional players, Earvin "Magic" Johnson and Larry Bird, almost single-handedly changed everything. Although they played each other only once, in the 1979 NCAA finals, that meeting launched an epic rivalry, transformed the NCAA tournament into the multibillion-dollar event it is today and laid the groundwork for the resurgence of the NBA. Seth Davis' well-written book explores Bird and Johnson, the 1979 NCAA tournament, and the impact these great players had on the game.

###

The Library of Michigan is part of the Michigan Department of Education. For more information, visit [www.michigan.gov/libraryofmichigan](http://www.michigan.gov/libraryofmichigan).