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First Lady Michelle Obama Designates New Preserve America Communities and Stewards

WASHINGTON, D.C. – First Lady Michelle Obama has notified officials in five municipalities that they are being recognized as Preserve America Communities, bringing the total nationwide to 900 designations. Three additional volunteer programs that help preserve heritage have also been named Preserve America Stewards, increasing the ranks of organizations so designated to 50.

“Preserve America Communities and Preserve America Stewards are committed to preserving their past by using their heritage to build a better future,” said Milford Wayne Donaldson, FAIA, chairman of the federal Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP). “These communities and these voluntarily engaged stewards show the importance of creating more vibrant and desirable places to live, work and visit.”

The newly-designated Preserve America Communities are Sonoma, California; Hartwell, Georgia; Hightstown, New Jersey; Bartlett, Tennessee; and, Rockwall, Texas. See below for more information.

The newest to join the Preserve America Stewards honor roll include the Colebrookdale Railroad Preservation Trust (Pennsylvania); Historic Columbia (South Carolina); and the Monmouth County Historical Association (New Jersey). See below for more information.

The Preserve America program began in 2003 with the first community designations announced in January 2004. The program recognizes a select group of communities that use their heritage resources in sustainable ways and share the myriad benefits of historic preservation with residents and visitors. Preserve America Communities, great places to live, visit and explore, are located in all 50 states and several overseas U.S. territories. A full list of Preserve America Communities, along with profiles and links for further information, can be found at www.preserveamerica.gov/PACommunities.html.

Preserve America Stewards are exemplary volunteer programs that have demonstrated success in saving historic places in the best tradition of the national historic preservation movement. Local historic preservation efforts rely upon motivated, active volunteers who band together to make certain that significant historic places remain to enrich and enlighten present and future generations. A full list of Preserve America Stewards can be found at <http://www.preserveamerica.gov/stewards.html>.

Applications from prospective new Preserve America Communities and Stewards are accepted quarterly; the next deadlines for submission are September 1, 2015, and December 1, 2015. Preserve America is administered by the ACHP with assistance from the U.S. Department of the Interior. For more information, including community designation criteria and application forms, see www.preserveamerica.gov.

Information on new Preserve America Communities:

Sonoma, California, is the heart of Northern California’s wine country. The Native American population was overwhelmed by Spanish, American, and Mexican settlement in the 19th century. Colonial influences culminated in the founding of Mission San Francisco Solano de Sonoma in 1823, the last and northernmost mission in California. La Casa Grande in Sonoma was the site of the initial confrontation

leading to the Mexican-American war: the Bear Flag Revolt, California's declaration of independence from Mexico. Sonoma was briefly the capital of the California Republic until the revolutionaries united with American military forces. The Republic's iconic grizzly bear flag is still used by the state of California, and the revolt is reenacted annually to commemorate the event. The original war barracks, along with the Mission, the remaining portion of La Casa Grande, and other historic sites can be toured within Sonoma State Historic Park.

Hartwell, Georgia, named in honor of Revolutionary War heroine Nancy Hart, is the county seat of Hart County and rests in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains in northeast Georgia. In the mid-1920s, Hartwell became an important overnight stop for travelers on the Bankhead Highway, an early auto-trail. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers constructed Hartwell Dam and Lake Hartwell northeast of Hartwell between 1955 and 1963, increasing recreation and tourism opportunities. Hartwell's downtown business area features beautifully preserved buildings circa 1879 to 1925, and a walking tour showcases the community's dedication to historic preservation. Thanks in part to University of Georgia students, the self-guided tour is available in print, audio, and video forms, while 4-H club volunteers offer guided tours during special events. The Daughters of the American Revolution offer a tour featuring costumed reenactors; and guided cemetery tours, the Hart County quilt trail, and a driving tour of Hart County are also available.

Hightstown, New Jersey, is an incorporated borough in central New Jersey, 17 miles northeast of Trenton. European settlement in the area began in the late 1600s, and Hightstown was founded in 1721. The borough is midway between two state parks that memorialize the Revolutionary War battles of Princeton and Monmouth. In the 19th century, the hamlet became a way station for Camden and Amboy Rail Road and Transportation Company, the first railway in New Jersey. The famous John Bull steam locomotive, a featured exhibit at the Smithsonian Institution, ran on the C&A tracks through Hightstown. Seventy-six historic resources are located within the Historic District, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In 2014, the borough and its many community partners completed the Stockton Street Historic District Streetscape Infrastructure Project, restoring historic carriage steps and rehabilitating historic brick and slate sidewalks to ensure safety and accessibility.

Bartlett, Tennessee, originally called Union Depot, is now part of Memphis's metropolitan area. The settlement was established in 1829 as the last major way station for stagecoach traffic between Nashville and the Mississippi River. In 1838, Native Americans traveled along Stage Road through Bartlett during forced relocation from their ancestral homelands on what is now known as the Trail of Tears. Though the city was a stop on the Memphis-Ohio Railroad and was the home of the county court from 1870 until 1885, Bartlett remained a small farming community from its founding through the first half of the 20th century. The Bartlett Historical Society operates the Bartlett Museum out of the historic Gotten House and provides costumed docents for public events. Davies Manor, on a historic plantation, offers tours of its house and grounds, as well as Civil War reenactments and other educational events. Davies Manor, the Gotten House, an official Trail of Tears National Historic Trail marker, and many other historic buildings and markers are featured on the city's interactive digital tour of Bartlett's history.

Rockwall, Texas, northeast of Dallas on the Blackland prairies, is the county seat of the smallest county in the state. Originally inhabited by Native Americans belonging to the Caddoan language family; the area was also settled by displaced Native Americans from the southeastern United States during the 1800s. The construction of the National Road of the Republic of Texas in the 1840s brought settlers from Dallas, and Rockwall was officially founded in 1854. The town remained a small farming and cattle raising village until the railroad arrived in the late 1880s, allowing exportation of cotton and other crops. The subsequent population boom included a sizable African American community. Interstate Highway 30 and the Southwest's first aluminum plant helped transform rural Rockwall into part of the greater Dallas metropolitan area in the 1950s and 1960s. A Texas Main Street Community since 2009, Rockwall runs a

Façade Grants Program, assisting with repairs and restoration of storefronts within the Old Town Historic District.

Information on new Preserve America Stewards

Colebrookdale Railroad Preservation Trust (Pennsylvania) The Colebrookdale Railroad Preservation Trust has spearheaded a multi-county, multi-community public-private partnership to revitalize the Civil War-era Colebrookdale Railroad as an engine of community and economic development. Volunteers have contributed tens of thousands of hours in bringing the rail line from the brink of abandonment back to operation. Volunteers have repaired tracks, refurbished historic rail cars, and operate the excursion trains on the line. It is expected that creation of this new heritage tourism attraction could bring up to \$2 million in economic benefit to the region.

Historic Columbia (South Carolina) Historic Columbia is dedicated to preserving the historical and cultural heritage of Columbia and Richland County. Volunteers play a key role in interpreting the organization's four historic house museums. In addition to house tours, volunteers lead a diverse array of programs throughout Columbia, including tours of local historic neighborhoods, African American heritage sites, and Civil War sites. Historic Columbia's garden volunteer program also offers opportunities for volunteers to maintain and lead tours of diverse historic landscapes.

Monmouth County Historical Association (New Jersey) The Monmouth County Historical Association maintains five historic houses and relies heavily on its volunteers to perform many needed functions. Volunteers are completely responsible for the historic houses where they are stationed, providing interpretation to visitors, and interior and exterior maintenance. Landscaping includes care for two herb gardens for growing historically appropriate herbs and plants. Each house has special public programming, carried out principally by volunteers. For example, at the Covenhoven House (built ca, 1753), volunteers demonstrate open-hearth cooking.

About the ACHP: An independent federal agency, the ACHP promotes the preservation, enhancement, and sustainable use of our nation's diverse historic resources, and advises the President and Congress on national historic preservation policy. It also provides a forum for influencing federal activities, programs, and policies that affect historic properties. In addition, the ACHP has a key role in carrying out Preserve America. For more information, please visit www.achp.gov and www.preserveamerica.gov.