



Press Release



Independence National Historical Park and City of Philadelphia

Dennis Reidenbach, Superintendent, Independence National Historical Park
John F. Street, Mayor, City of Philadelphia

Contact: Jane Cowley, 215-597-0060 (INHP)
Joe Grace, 215-686-6210
Roz McPherson, 856-261-4023

For immediate release: Friday, July 27, 2007

PRESIDENT'S HOUSE SITE TO BE COVERED TEMPORARILY FOR PRESERVATION; PUBLIC INVITED TO CLOSING EVENT JULY 31, 2007

Philadelphia, PA – Independence National Historical Park and the City of Philadelphia announced today that the President's House site will be temporarily covered on July 31, 2007 in order to protect the 18th and 19th century architectural findings from deterioration. The public is invited to a closing event to be held at **11 a.m.** at the site (6th & Market Streets). The event will be hosted by the team of archeologists that has brought to light these authentic reminders of the nation's complicated beginnings.

The archeologists made a series of unexpected findings at the site of the President's House, where Presidents George Washington and John Adams lived from 1790-1800, and where at least nine enslaved Africans, kept by Washington, also lived and toiled. They found a basement below the kitchen where Hercules – an enslaved African who later escaped to freedom – presided as George Washington's acclaimed chef. They uncovered the foundation from a bow window that is believed to be the prototype for the Oval Office in the Washington D.C. White House. And they found an underground passage from the kitchen to the main house, thought to be one of the many service areas used by the enslaved and servants working between the main part of the house and the kitchen.

More than 250,000 visitors have now stood at the public viewing platform to witness this extraordinary place, to learn from the archeologists, and to interact with each other on important topics such as race relations in the United States. The reaction to the site has served as a signal that the President's House site has the potential to become a major national icon in the heart of the City.

Archeologists at the site have warned, however, that continued exposure to air and water threatens the fragile remnants from the house – now more than 200 years old – and it is critical that these remains be protected before any further deterioration occurs. The dirt that was removed this past March will be returned to the site, thereby protecting the archeological findings and insulating modern-day utility pipes in advance of winter. The site will remain covered while a decision is reached as to how best to incorporate the findings into a permanent installation commemorating the President's House.

In light of the archeological discoveries and at the request of Mayor Street, a task force was assembled in June 2007 to evaluate options for incorporating the archeological findings into the preliminary design plan that was prepared by the Kelly/Maiello team before the dig began. After further research, a final report with recommendations will be prepared for Mayor Street and INHP Superintendent Reidenbach.

A joint project of INHP and the City of Philadelphia, the President's House dig has been funded entirely by the City at Mayor Street's behest, and it has been conducted under the direction of National Park Service Archeologist Jed Levin. The world-class archeology team assembled by the URS Group to conduct the dig includes Project Manager Stephen Tull, Vice President of URS' Archeological and Historic Architecture Group; Field Director Douglas Mooney, who directed the recent archeological digs at the National Constitution Center and James Oronoco Dexter Sites; and Dr. Cheryl LaRoche, a conservator who worked on both the African Burial Ground and National Constitution Center projects.