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First Lady Designates Nine New Preserve America Communities

WASHINGTON, D.C. – First Lady of the United States Michelle Obama has signed and sent designation letters to nine new Preserve America Communities, bringing the total nationwide to 867.

The Preserve America Communities 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 visit and explore, are now located in all 50 states and several overseas U.S. territories.

“Preserve America Communities 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). “It is good news for the nation when nine more communities demonstrate that they want to enjoy and share the economic, educational, environmental, and sustainability benefits preservation provides while creating more vibrant and desirable places to live, work, and visit.”

The newly designated communities are, by state: Mammoth Spring, Arkansas; Cartersville, Georgia; Paris, Kentucky; Skowhegan, Maine; Waynesville, North Carolina; Independence, Oregon; Smethport, Pennsylvania; Tiverton, Rhode Island; and Pittman Center, Tennessee.

These diverse communities will be celebrating their designation as part of National Historic Preservation Month, observed around the country each May. Paris, Kentucky is also celebrating the 225th anniversary of the founding of Bourbon County with a week of programs and tours, culminating in a ceremony at the county courthouse in which state and local officials will be participating.

Among the achievements of the new Preserve America Communities is Planet Smethport, an award-winning Web site developed by Smethport High School students and their teacher over 10 years and still growing (www.smethporthistory.org). Historic photos, post cards, biographies, geographies, histories, newspaper clippings, personal histories and interviews, obituaries, artifacts, and memorabilia form a portrait of the area and enable time travel through the streets and back to the present.

Tiverton, Rhode Island, has rehabilitated the Bourne Mill complex, restoring historic features and turning the vacant buildings, dating to the late 1800s, into residences and commercial space. Prior to this adaptive reuse, this site was generating only \$13,000 in tax revenue a year. Property tax revenues are projected to increase to \$574,000 per year, and the project is expected to generate 184 permanent jobs, in addition to the estimated 535 direct and indirect jobs created during the construction period.

Preserve America is administered by the ACHP with assistance from the U.S. Department of the Interior. For more information see www.preserveamerica.gov and www.achp.gov.