

For Immediate Release:
May 9, 2012



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First Lady Designates Five New Preserve America Communities

WASHINGTON, D.C. – First Lady of the United States Michelle Obama has signed and sent designation letters to five new Preserve America Communities, bringing the nationwide total to 877.

“Preserve America Communities are committed to preserving their past by using their heritage to build a better future,” said Wayne Donaldson, chairman of the federal Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP). “It is good news for the nation when 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, listed alphabetically by state, are the following:

- Colusa, California
- Albion, New York
- Mount Pleasant, South Carolina
- Fort Pierre, South Dakota
- Douglas, Wyoming

The Preserve America 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. These latest designations bring California to a total of 37 and New York to a total of 41 communities recognized by the program. South Carolina now has 24 designated communities, South Dakota seven, and Wyoming 10.

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 contact information, can be found at www.preserveamerica.gov/PACommunities.html.

Applications from prospective new Preserve America Communities are accepted quarterly; the next deadline for submission is June 1, 2012. 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/communities.html.

Editor's Note: Because full community profiles may not yet be available on the Web site at the time of designation, the following information regarding the newly designated communities is being provided.

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Background Highlights About the Newest Preserve America Communities

Colusa, California is on the Sacramento River and is surrounded by agricultural lands. Located at what was the river's navigable limit for many years, Colusa provided supplies to the gold fields and shipped gold, grain and granite to San Francisco. It is bordered on the north by the Colusa State Recreational Area and on the west by the Colusa Wildlife Refuge. Both areas feature active ranger and interpretive programs, and the city offers a walking and biking tour program.

Colusa hosts an annual event called Western Days which features cattle roping, branding, cooking and music. An associated parade includes a longhorn cattle drive and equestrian units. The events attract all ages with numerous participatory activities and reflect the community's farming and ranching roots.

After the Civil War, many displaced southerners came to Colusa. The architecture of the city reflects the graceful grandeur found in the pre-Civil War south. Colusa's antebellum charm has attracted many Hollywood directors. The City and the County of Colusa recently completed a joint Economic Development Plan, with a strong emphasis on promoting both heritage and wildlife tourism.

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The Village of **Albion, New York**, nestled along the Erie Canal, contains one of the most intact historic commercial corridors in New York, with buildings dating to 1827. These structures are a legacy from the time when the canal was a bustling transportation corridor. Each year, thousands of tourists bike, boat and walk the Erie Canal or travel nine miles up Route 98 from Albion to Lake Ontario.

The Albion Main Street Alliance recently teamed with the New York Governor's Council and the State University of New York (SUNY) Brockport to generate a tourism marketing plan, with a focus on heritage and agricultural tourism, and established the 98-Corridor Coalition with the Orleans County Tourism Department and the Orleans County Chamber of Commerce. This coalition has produced new promotional materials including regional maps highlighting heritage and agricultural tourism activities and a new Web site.

Activities in partnership with the Albion Central School include a "Walk the Canal" program and a service learning class through which 7th graders researched and cared for a forgotten cemetery connected with the Albion Poorhouse. A monument and interpretive sign now commemorate the site.

The town of Gaines, which includes a portion of the Village of Albion, contains the Cobblestone Museum, an important tourism destination. More than 90 percent of all known remaining cobblestone buildings, a distinctive regional style, are found within a 100-mile radius of Albion, and several are owned and maintained by the museum.

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The area that is now **Mount Pleasant, South Carolina** was first visited by Europeans beginning in the late 1600s, and the town's historic Christ Church dates to 1727. Several of our nation's founding fathers, including Charles Pickney and Edward Rutledge (the youngest signer of the Declaration of Independence), had ties to Mount Pleasant. Snee Farm (Pickney's plantation home) and Boone Hall Plantation (one of America's oldest remaining working plantations) are both National Historic Sites.

Mount Pleasant has been recognized for exemplary accomplishments in the sustainable use and preservation of cultural and natural heritage assets, and integrating them into contemporary community life. Working with the local Gullah Geechee population, descendants of people who brought the art of sweetgrass basket weaving from West Africa three centuries ago, Mount Pleasant has taken the lead in spearheading ongoing collaboration among local residents, government agencies, developers,

environmentalists and the basket makers to protect and promote this traditional art and save the land where sweetgrass thrives. The town has partnered with the Sweetgrass Cultural Arts Festival Association on many initiatives, including an annual festival and the creation of a Sweetgrass Cultural Arts Pavilion at Memorial Waterfront Park. Residents and visitors can watch basketmakers at work and purchase the artisans' creations. A grant from the South Carolina National Heritage Corridor was used for the construction of the pavilion, and a grant from the South Carolina Arts Commission was used for the creation of an interpretive exhibit.

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Fort Pierre, South Dakota, is the oldest continuously occupied non-indigenous settlement area in South Dakota, dating to 1817. Native Americans had inhabited the area for centuries, and the Arikara and the Sioux were living here when the first white explorers arrived.

The first Europeans known to have visited were the Verendrye brothers, who explored the upper reaches of the Missouri River, seeking the hoped-for Northwest Passage—a water route from the Hudson Bay area of Canada to China that did not exist. In 1743, they placed an engraved lead plate on a hill above what is now Fort Pierre, claiming the land for France—a plate which was found by a group of teenagers in 1913 after lying undisturbed for 170 years.

Lewis and Clark camped here in 1804 and in 1806, and described in their journals a tense confrontation with Native Americans where the Bad River flows into the Missouri on their first passage. Fort Pierre was a key center in the fur trade, and was an important shipping point for cattle and goods during the Black Hills gold rush.

Fort Pierre has been involved in the State Historical Society's Central South Dakota Heritage Tourism Education Program, funded in part by a Preserve America Grant. The goal of the program is to develop and implement an interpretive and educational plan for local heritage tourism resources. To date, 26 interpretive signs have been created for sites in the Fort Pierre area, and a Discover Our Shared Heritage Travel Itinerary has been developed for all local historic buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places in partnership with the National Park Service.

There are hundreds of archaeological sites in the Fort Pierre area. For those sites that are not on federal property (and therefore monitored by the Corps of Engineers) the State Archeological Society relies on a stewardship program where local landowners and volunteers monitor the sites. These volunteers play a vital role in keeping the archaeological sites intact and free of vandalism and looting.

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Douglas, Wyoming, has partnered for 14 years with the International Order of Odd Fellows, Lodge 15, in preserving its lodge building, the former Officers Club of Camp Douglas, which was part of a Prisoner of War (POW) camp during World War II.

Camp Douglas housed more than 3,000 Italian and German POWs at any single time in a 180-building compound spread over more than 600 acres. The Officers Club is the only building remaining intact and contains extraordinary murals of iconic Wild West scenes painted by three Italian POWs. The site is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Douglas has invested significant funding and staff time in the conservation of the murals, repairs and maintenance. City employees have provided docent services to the thousands of visitors requesting a tour of the site.

In 2010, the Odd Fellows, the city and the Douglas Historic Preservation Commission began a campaign to convince the state of Wyoming to acquire the lodge as a State Historic Site. This resulted in a strong recommendation by State Parks personnel to the Wyoming legislature to acquire the site for its unique

historic value, the murals, the contribution the POW workforce made to the survival of the state's agricultural economy during the war years and its viability as part of a proposed heritage tourism trail linking the state's WW II sites. This exceptional collection of sites includes Camp Douglas, F.E. Warren Air Base in Cheyenne, the Veterans Museum in the former Enlisted Men's Club at the former bomber training base in Casper, and the Japanese internment camp at Heart Mountain in Powell. The trail would lead to Yellowstone National Park, and potentially bring more visitors to the Wyoming Pioneer Museum and Fort Fetterman, an 1867 frontier cavalry outpost, as well. The proposal drew much media attention and widespread public support, resulting in a vote to acquire the site in March 2012. The community is encouraged that the Officers Club will be saved for future generations with appropriate preservation and interpretation, while providing an economic boost to the area through increased tourism visitation.