



The Preserve America Program

Preserve America is a federal program that encourages and supports community efforts to preserve and enjoy our priceless cultural and natural heritage. The goals of the program include a greater shared knowledge about the nation's past, strengthened regional identities and local pride, increased local participation in preserving the country's cultural and natural heritage assets, and support for the economic vitality of our communities. Since the program's inception in 2003, the First Lady of the United States has been involved in supporting and promoting Preserve America. Detailed information on all aspects of this initiative can be found at www.preserveamerica.gov. Major components of Preserve America include the following:

Preserve America Presidential Awards

Four awards are given annually to organizations, businesses, and government entities for exemplary accomplishments in the sustainable use and preservation of cultural or natural heritage assets; demonstrated commitment to the protection and interpretation of America's cultural or natural heritage assets; and integration of these assets into contemporary community life, combining innovative, creative, and responsible approaches to showcasing historic local resources.

The 2008 Preserve America Presidential Awards were presented by the First Lady at a White House ceremony on May 12, 2008. The awardees were the African Burial Ground Project, New York; the Corinth and Alcorn County Mississippi Heritage Tourism Initiative, Mississippi; the Lower East Side Tenement Museum, New York; and the Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program, Texas.

Preserve America Communities

This program recognizes and designates communities, including neighborhoods in large cities, which protect and celebrate their heritage, use their historic assets for economic development and community revitalization, and encourage people to experience and appreciate local historic resources through education and heritage tourism programs. To date, 795 Preserve America communities have been designated in all 50 states and one U.S. territory, including 19 neighborhoods and four tribal communities.



Jonesborough, Tennessee, became a Preserve America Community in August 2005 and showcases its history as the oldest town in the state.

Benefits of designation include White House recognition; eligibility to apply for Preserve America Grants; a certificate of recognition; a Preserve America Community road sign; authorization to use the Preserve America logo on signs, flags, banners, and promotional materials; listing in a Web-based Preserve America Community directory; inclusion in national and regional press releases; official notification of designation to state tourism offices and visitors bureaus; and enhanced community visibility and pride. Preserve America Communities are also featured in National Register Travel Itineraries and in "Teaching with Historic Places" curricular material created by the National Park Service. There are quarterly deadlines to apply for designation annually on March 1, June 1, September 1, and December 1. Application forms are available at www.preserveamerica.gov/communities.html.

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Preserve America Grants

More than \$17 million in matching grants has been awarded to 228 projects through the country since 2006 to support community efforts to demonstrate sustainable uses of their historic and cultural sites, focusing on economic and educational opportunities related to heritage tourism. Grant amounts range from \$20,000 to \$250,000. Funding availability and the next application round for Preserve America Grants have not yet been set.

This program complements the Save America's Treasures grant program, which funds "bricks-and-mortar" projects, by helping local communities develop sustainable resource management strategies and sound business practices for the continued preservation and use of heritage assets. State Historic Preservation Offices, Tribal Historic Preservation Offices, designated Preserve America Communities, and Certified Local Governments that have applied for Preserve America Community designation are eligible to apply for Preserve America Grants. Further information is available at www.nps.gov/history/hps/hpg/PreserveAmerica.



Volunteers of the Chimney Rock Interpretive Association, a Preserve America Steward, work to help bring the past to life.

Preserve America Stewards

The newest component of the Preserve America initiative—Preserve America Stewards—honors exemplary volunteer efforts at historic resources around the country. Former First Lady Laura Bush unveiled the new program at the 2008 Preserve America Presidential Awards ceremony, and the designation of the first 11 Preserve America Stewards was announced on January 16, 2009. First Lady Michelle Obama recognized two additional Stewards recently. The honorees are recognized for stewardship programs that have demonstrated a successful use of volunteer time and commitment in order to help care for our cultural heritage. Government entities (federal, tribal, state, or local), non-profit organizations, and businesses are eligible to apply to have their programs recognized. The application form and further information is available at www.preserveamerica.gov/stewards.html.

Preserve America History Teacher of the Year Award

Since 2004, the First Lady has presented the annual Preserve America History Teacher of the Year awards. Mrs. Bush presented the 2008 award on October 24, 2008, to David B. Mitchell of Masconomet Regional High School, Topsfield, Massachusetts, at a ceremony at the Union League Club in New York City. Mitchell was selected from a group of finalists from each state, the District of Columbia, and U.S. territories, who each received \$1,000 and a core archive of history materials for his or her school library. The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History facilitates this award program.

Educational Outreach

Preserve America has worked with the History Channel's Save Our History initiative to create a teacher's manual with lesson plans and volunteer ideas that involve students in preserving historic sites in their communities. In addition, the First Lady appeared in three public service announcements on the importance of preserving America's heritage.

Executive Order 13287: "Preserve America"

Signed by the President on March 3, 2003, this Executive Order complements the Preserve America initiative. The order establishes federal policy to provide leadership in preserving America's heritage by actively advancing the protection, enhancement, and contemporary use of the historic properties owned by the federal government. The order also encourages agencies to seek partnerships with state, tribal, and local governments and the private sector to make more efficient and informed use of these resources for economic development and other recognized public benefits. In addition, it directs the Secretary of Commerce, working with other agencies, to use existing authorities and resources to assist in the development of local and regional heritage tourism programs that are a significant feature of many state and local economies. As required by the order, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation delivered the first report on implementation of Section 3 to the President on February 15, 2006, and a second report on agency progress in February 2009. See www.preserveamerica.gov for the full 2009 report.

Preserve America Summit

A Preserve America Summit to recognize the 40th anniversary of the National Historic Preservation Act and consider the future of the national preservation program was convened in 2006 and hosted by the First Lady. A Youth Summit met in conjunction with the larger conference and has provided a model for subsequent youth gatherings and projects (notably in Colorado). A series of 13 important recommendations emerging from the Summit to improve the operation and effectiveness of historic preservation efforts nationwide were adopted by the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and are now being implemented by federal agencies in cooperation with non-federal partners.

Program Management

The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and the Department of the Interior have the primary responsibility for carrying out the elements of the program. The chairman of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and the Secretary of the Interior co-chair the Preserve America Steering Committee to guide implementation of the program. The steering committee includes representatives of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation; the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, Education, Housing and Urban Development, Interior, and Transportation; the General Services Administration; the Institute of Museum and Library Services; the National Endowment for the Humanities; the President's Council on Environmental Quality; and the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities. For more information about Preserve America, visit www.preserveamerica.gov.

October 2009