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Contact: Matt Spangler
(202) 517-1481
mspangler@achp.gov

First Lady Michelle Obama Designates New Preserve America Community

WASHINGTON, D.C.—The nation’s first subdivision designed specifically for African Americans is the latest community to be designated by First Lady Michelle Obama as a Preserve America Community. With the First Lady’s formal notification last week of Orange Mound, located in Memphis, Tennessee, the total number of such communities nationwide now stands at 905.

“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 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.”

Orange Mound (Memphis), Tennessee, derives its name from the Osage Orange shrubs found on the grounds of the Deadrick Plantation, on which the neighborhood was originally platted. Orange Mound was founded in 1890, when developer Elzey Eugene Meacham purchased the land from the Deadrick family and sold lots in it to African American families, despite opposition. The population of the community remained primarily African American throughout the 20th century, as it gained a reputation as a refuge for blacks moving to Memphis from rural areas in the South. Orange Mound fell into decline in the 1980s and 1990s, but in the new century the neighborhood has experienced a revival, driven in part by older residents using its rich heritage to encourage the next generation to take a more active role in improving and maintaining the community. Orange Mound’s 125th anniversary celebration in 2015, for example, was a tremendous success, thanks in part to the partnership between local government, non-profits, community organizations, educational institutions and businesses.

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 the communities, along with profiles and links for further information, can be found at www.preserveamerica.gov/PACommunities.html. The program is administered by the ACHP with assistance from the U.S. Department of the Interior and U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Applications from prospective new Preserve America Communities are accepted quarterly; the next deadline for submission is December 1, 2016. For more information, including community designation criteria and application forms, see www.preserveamerica.gov.

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.*

ADVISORY COUNCIL ON HISTORIC PRESERVATION

401 F Street NW, Suite 308 • Washington, DC 20001-2637
Phone: 202-517-0200 • Fax: 202-517-6381 • www.PreserveAmerica.gov