

# News Release

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## NATIONAL TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION NAMES AMERICA'S STATE PARKS & STATE-OWNED HISTORIC SITES TO ITS 2010 LIST OF AMERICA'S 11 MOST ENDANGERED HISTORIC PLACES

### *National Trust Calls New York State a "Prime Example" of the National Threat*

Washington, D.C. (May 19, 2010) – Today, the National Trust for Historic Preservation named **America's State Parks & State-Owned Historic Sites** to its 2010 list of **America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places**. This annual list highlights important examples of the nation's architectural, cultural and natural heritage that are at risk for destruction or irreparable damage. Although at least 26 states across the country are grappling with this issue, the magnitude of the nationwide problem can be illustrated by six prime examples, including **New York State**.

America's state parks and state-owned historic sites are threatened – perhaps more than at any other time in recent history – with deep funding cuts and uncertain futures. In response to record-breaking deficits, state governments are cutting funding for state-owned and -managed parks and historic sites from coast to coast. State park systems welcome an estimated 725 million visits every year and include places of national significance – from Native American historic sites to Revolutionary War forts to Civil War battlefields to country estates. This year nearly 30 states have experienced cuts to parks' and sites' budgets, and a recent survey estimates as many as 400 state parks could close. While providing some short-term budget relief, this approach will actually cost states far more in the long term. Before they can re-open, state-owned and managed resources will require massive investments to undo the damage suffered from abandonment, neglect and deferred maintenance.

Few states have seen as many cuts to state parks and heritage-related programs as **New York**, one of six states identified by the National Trust as prime examples of the nationwide problem. Serving 55 million visitors a year, the vast New York State Parks and Historic Sites system of 178 parks and over 30 state-owned historic sites is one of the largest, grandest, and most varied in the country. Even though visitation is high and recent studies have demonstrated the economic benefits to the state from the system, the proposed state budget slashes critical support for these places. Closure of 41 state parks and 14 historic sites has been announced and includes landmarks like the farm and gravesite of abolitionist John Brown, in North Elba, and the beautiful Georgian-era Philipse Manor Hall, in Yonkers, a vibrant center of local community gatherings and activities.

The other five states identified as prime examples by the National Trust include:

► In **Arizona**, \$19 million in revenue from the operation of state parks and lottery proceeds was cut in half, and thirteen of the state's 31 parks were forced to close. Ironically, a recent study shows how Arizona state parks—when open—attract 2.3 million visitors annually, generating \$266 million of direct and indirect economic impact.

► In **California**, twice in the last two years, budget challenges have put the state's 278 parks at risk, prompting their placement on the 2008 list of *America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places*. Chronic underfunding has already impacted 150 parks with reduced services and part-time closures. In a politically-charged climate, a ballot measure slated for November will determine if voters approve a long-term, stable funding solution.

► In **Missouri**, over 120 state park jobs were eliminated due to the downturn in the economy, making a bad situation even worse. With an existing backlog of deferred maintenance totaling more than \$200 million, the state park system's 1,845 structures—700 of which are historic—are put at even greater risk.

► In **New Jersey**, state parks and state-owned historic sites have been on life support for years. Now Governor Christie is slashing the budget of the state agency responsible for parks and historic sites—reducing its funding from \$11.6 million to \$3.4 million. Christie's stark budget also eliminates all funding for the Battleship New Jersey, the Old Barracks Museum in Trenton, Morven Museum in Princeton, and the Save Ellis Island organization.

► In **Pennsylvania**, a drastic 37 percent budget cut forced the closure of Old Economy Village—an exceptionally well-preserved religious colony constructed between 1824 and 1830 and the Commonwealth's first historic site—along with 11 other sites that will close to the public. With Pennsylvania's next budget projected to be even more severe, the future of Pennsylvania's historic resources is in jeopardy.

"Across the nation, state parks and state-owned historic sites are on the chopping block," said Richard Moe, president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. "Our state parks preserve priceless landscapes and cultural heritage and provide critical opportunities for outdoor recreation, not to mention their important role in generating revenue and creating jobs for local and regional economies through heritage tourism. We recognize that states are experiencing significant fiscal challenges, but park systems and sites are a legacy created and maintained by states even through the leanest times, for the enjoyment, wellness, and enlightenment of the public. In the current troubled economy, Americans are foregoing more lavish vacations and using their state parks and sites more than ever. We cannot afford to abandon these treasures now."

Parks and historic sites are seen as easy targets for cost savings but state budget makers are not looking at the long-term implications of funding decisions. While the immediate threat to parks and historic sites is closure, the secondary—and perhaps greater—threat emanating from the budget cuts will likely be felt in a year or two as these places fall into disrepair and neglect.

Solutions to the current crisis and long-term fiscal dilemmas faced by states are not easy. Fortunately, a handful of states are avoiding immediate cuts, working instead to develop creative strategies that can address both funding and stewardship needs. Ohio, for example, is working systematically to craft appropriate public-private partnerships for specific parks and sites.

For more information about the states and historic sites facing budget cuts across the country, visit [www.PreservationNation.org/11](http://www.PreservationNation.org/11). Most where the public is also invited to learn more about what they can do to support these and hundreds of other endangered sites, experience first-hand accounts of these places, and share stories and photos of their own.

The 2010 list of America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places was made possible, in part, by a grant from History™.

**To download high resolution images of this year's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places in advance of May 19<sup>th</sup>, please contact [pr@nthp.org](mailto:pr@nthp.org). On or after May 19<sup>th</sup>, visit <http://www.preservationnation.org/about-us/press-center/> to register and download high resolution images and video.**

### **The 2010 list of America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places (in alphabetical order):**

**America's State Parks and State-Owned Historic Sites**—This year, nearly 30 states have experienced cuts to parks' and sites' budgets, and a recent survey estimates as many as 400 state parks could close. These state park systems include places of national significance—from Native American historic sites to Revolutionary War forts to Civil War battlefields to country estates—and welcome an estimated 725 million visits every year.

**Black Mountain, Harlan County, Ky.** —Nestled at the base of Eastern Kentucky's rugged Black Mountain, the historic mining towns of Benham and Lynch are working hard to define a future beyond coal. The towns, which have created well-respected heritage tourism sites and are working to revitalize their main streets, now face the

threat of multiple surface and deep mining permits on and around Black Mountain—a move that would be tremendously harmful to Black Mountain’s natural beauty, fragile ecology and growing tourism industry.

**Hinchliffe Stadium, Paterson, N.J.**—Once the pride of Paterson, N.J., Hinchliffe Stadium is one of the last surviving ball parks of baseball’s Negro League. Today, the 10,000-seat, poured-concrete Art Deco stadium that was home to the New York Black Yankees and legendary player Larry Doby, is closed and dangerously deteriorated.

**Industrial Arts Building, Lincoln, Neb.**—For nearly a century, this dramatic trapezoidal exposition space with natural skylights, intricate roof trusses and a four-story fountained interior, has showcased the best of Lincoln, Neb. Despite its long, proud history, the Industrial Arts Building will soon meet the wrecking ball unless a developer steps forward to rescue and reuse the building.

**Juana Briones House, Palo Alto, Calif.**—In the heart of Silicon Valley stands the oldest structure in Palo Alto, built by one of the original Hispanic residents of San Francisco, a pioneering woman who was a rancher, traditional healer and entrepreneur. The 1844 adobe home is a rare reminder of California’s rich Spanish and Mexican history. Today this California State Historic Landmark sits abandoned, deteriorated, exposed to the elements and threatened by demolition.

**Merritt Parkway, Fairfield County, Conn.**—Spanning 37.5 distinctive miles and celebrated for its diverse collection of decorative bridges and lush, natural landscaping, Merritt Parkway remains, 70 years after it was constructed, one of America’s most scenic roads. To accommodate increased traffic on the parkway, the cash-strapped Connecticut Department of Transportation is not performing necessary maintenance and has moved to realign roads, replace bridges and redesign interchanges, all at the cost of the parkway’s unique character.

**Metropolitan A.M.E. Church, Washington, D.C.**—A major landmark of African American heritage and one of the most important religious institutions in the United States, Metropolitan A.M.E. Church’s red brick Victorian Gothic-style building, completed in 1886, hosted the funeral of congregant Frederick Douglass in 1895 and Rosa Parks a century later. Years of water infiltration and damage caused in part by adjacent construction projects have compromised the structure, prompting the dedicated congregation to launch a national capital campaign to rescue and restore this irreplaceable house of worship.

**Pågat, Yigo, Guam**—The island of Guam, the westernmost United States territory in the Pacific, is home to the Chamorro people who maintain a thriving culture dating back thousands of years. With the United States military’s announced plans for a massive buildup on the island, many residents are concerned about the potentially devastating impact on the island’s cultural resources, including one of Guam’s most treasured sites, the ancient Chamorro settlement of Pågat.

**Saugatuck Dunes, Saugatuck, Mich.**—Along the shores of Lake Michigan, the 2,500 acres that comprise the Saugatuck Dunes Coastal Area boast a spectacular, sparsely-developed landscape of sand dunes, water, woods and wetlands. Home to several endangered species and a large number of significant historic and archeological sites, Saugatuck Dunes and its surrounding community are threatened by a proposed 400-acre, residential development, to include a marina, hotel, restaurant and retail complex.

**Threefoot Building, Meridian, Miss.**—For 80 years, this 16-story Art Deco, lavishly decorated, granite-clad skyscraper has been a mainstay of downtown Meridian, Miss. Although a developer expressed interest in rehabilitating the deteriorated building, the City of Meridian has been unable to provide gap financing or other incentives and locals fear that Threefoot’s bright future may end in demolition.

**Wilderness Battlefield, Orange and Spotsylvania Counties, Va.**—One of the most significant and bloodiest engagements of the Civil War, the Battle of the Wilderness marked the first time that legendary generals Robert E. Lee and Ulysses S. Grant faced off against one another. It is here—in an area known for its rolling landscapes and distant Blue Ridge Mountain views—that Walmart intends to trample on American heritage by constructing

240,000 square feet of “big box” commercial sprawl within the historic boundaries of Wilderness Battlefield and immediately adjacent to the Fredericksburg & Spotsylvania National Military Park.

***America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places*** has identified more than 200 threatened one-of-a-kind historic treasures since 1988. Whether these sites are urban districts or rural landscapes, Native American landmarks or 20th-century sports arenas, entire communities or single buildings, the list spotlights historic places across America that are threatened by neglect, insufficient funds, inappropriate development or insensitive public policy. The designation has been a powerful tool for raising awareness and rallying resources to save endangered sites from every region of the country. At times, that attention has garnered public support to quickly rescue a treasured landmark; while in other instances, it has been the impetus of a long battle to save an important piece of our history. The list has been so successful in galvanizing preservation efforts across the country and rallying resources to save endangered places that, in just two decades, only seven sites have been lost.

The **National Trust for Historic Preservation** ([www.PreservationNation.org](http://www.PreservationNation.org)) is a non-profit membership organization bringing people together to protect, enhance and enjoy the places that matter to them. By saving the places where great moments from history – and the important moments of everyday life – took place, the National Trust for Historic Preservation helps revitalize neighborhoods and communities, spark economic development and promote environmental sustainability. With headquarters in Washington, D.C., nine regional and field offices, 29 historic sites, and partner organizations in 50 states, territories, and the District of Columbia, the National Trust for Historic Preservation provides leadership, education, advocacy and resources to a national network of people, organizations and local communities committed to saving places, connecting us to our history and collectively shaping the future of America's stories.

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