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First Lady Michelle Obama Designates New Preserve America Communities

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Communities hosting the site of the first uprising against the British in the American Revolution and an early Spanish ranching settlement are among the latest to be designated by First Lady Michelle Obama as Preserve America Communities. With the First Lady’s notification of those municipalities today, the total number of such communities nationwide now stands at 904.

“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.”

The newly designated Preserve America Communities are Redwood City, California; Shelby Township, Michigan; Tyler, Texas; and Warwick, Rhode Island.

Redwood City, California, underwent a number of transformations over the course of the 19th century, from early Spanish ranching settlement to gold rush port and timber industry hotbed to important steam train stop. All of these chapters in Redwood City’s past are traced in the “Path of History,” a 12-site, self-guided walking tour running through the city’s downtown. The Silicon Valley community is also home to five historic districts, several resources listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and an extensive historical archive located in the Redwood City Library. www.preserveamerica.gov/redwoodcity.html

Shelby Township, Michigan, evolved over the century following its founding in 1827 from a small farming community to a hub of automobile manufacturing. This shift culminated in construction of the Packard Proving Grounds in 1927, which was listed on the National Register 80 years later. Today, the proving grounds—also part of the MotorCities National Heritage Area and a Michigan state historic site—hosts a museum and popular events space. In addition, visitors can enjoy the 21-mile Shelby Township Heritage Trail. Prominent stops along the trail include one of the remaining few 19th century one-room schoolhouses and the Beacon Tree Underground Railroad site. www.preserveamerica.gov/shelbytownship.html

Tyler, Texas, once the center of the oil industry in east Texas, now might be better referred to as the heart of the flower trade in the Lone Star state. Every year in March and April, tens of thousands of visitors flock to Tyler for the Azalea and Spring Flower Trails show, which encompasses eight miles of historic homes. Tyler also hosts the annual Main Street Flower Market at the historic Goodman-LeGrand Museum. The “Rose Capital of the Nation,” as the city is also known, boasts six National Register historic districts, two historic overlay districts, and 46 “Half Mile of History” markers. And just outside Tyler are the remains of Camp Ford, the largest Confederate prisoner of war camp west of the Mississippi River. www.preserveamerica.gov/tyler.html

Warwick, Rhode Island, occupies a significant place in both the colonial and industrial histories of the U.S., having born witness to the first armed insurrection against the British—the burning of the HMS *Gaspee* in 1772 following its searches and seizures of American shipping to enforce disputed British

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customs laws—and then hosting booming cotton mills, gristmills, sawmills, railroad, and other sites throughout the 19th century. Today, Warwick has several National Register properties including the Pawtuxet Village Historic District, in addition to having several historical museums and historic homes. In addition, since 1965 the city has put on “Gaspee Days,” an annual commemoration of the burning of the British ship. www.preserveamerica.gov/warwickri.html

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. Departments of the Interior and Agriculture.

Applications from prospective new Preserve America Communities are accepted quarterly; the next deadlines for submission are September 1, 2016, and 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.*