FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

2017 East Tennessee Endangered 8 Announced on May 1

May 1, 2017, 2:00 p.m. at Historic Westwood

Each year the East Tennessee Preservation Alliance (ETPA) presents a list of endangered heritage sites in the program’s sixteen county region around Knoxville. Endangered historic places are selected by the East Tennessee Preservation Alliance Board of Directors from nominations received from members and the general public. The goal is to draw attention to these threatened heritage assets and encourage property owners and communities to develop preservation strategies for saving them.

May is National Preservation Month. Preserving historic properties has been proven to provide certain benefits to property owners, neighborhoods and entire cities. It is an essential tool for creating places with a high quality of life, stable property values, and tourism appeal. The preservation movement no longer relies on nostalgia alone to explain why saving our heritage is beneficial to the greater good. There is conclusive data proving it is a strategy that works on many levels. Community leaders and property owners need to be aware of this before more of our historic places are lost forever.

Raising awareness of both the importance of historic preservation and specifically threatened sites is why the East Tennessee Preservation Alliance produces this list annually. It is also why the organization has developed “PLACES, the Preservation Toolbox for East Tennessee”. The Toolbox exists to assist with the process of developing viable solutions for saving our endangered heritage and is available online at www.knoxheritage.org/etpa/toolbox.

The 2017 Endangered 8

1. **Bowman House, Loudon County** (New for 2017)

   The Bowman House, originally located on the Little Tennessee River and now on Tellico Lake, was built in 1828 by George Bowman, a German immigrant. Mr. Bowman is thought to be the first white man to build among the Indians. The Federal style home is typical of Tennessee country homes of that era and features a limestone base quarried from Morganton, brick made on site, and beautiful curved-brick corbeling under the eaves. The property is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is a featured property in Loudon County history books.
This property is currently for sale and ETPA encourages a preservation-minded buyer purchase the property and follow the Secretary of Interior Standards for restoration and renovation. The organization stands ready to assist with consulting on that process.

2. **Davis Creek Primitive Baptist Church, Claiborne County** (New for 2017)

The Davis Creek Primitive Baptist Church has been holding services since 1797. It is believed to be the oldest Primitive Baptist Church still holding services in Tennessee. Located in the Speedwell community, the current church building dates to 1880 and has only two active members remaining. The structure is facing much needed repairs. In addition to basic maintenance, such as roof repair and bell tower stabilization, the church would like to apply for National Register designation. To do so, other items will need to be addressed such as removing the front foyer addition which covers the original two entry doors, one for men and one for women.

ETPA encourages community support for this project. Organizers have started a Facebook page and are contacting political representatives and private individuals for donations of money, materials and labor.

3. **Richland, Shield’s Station and Poplar Hill, Grainger County** (New for 2017)

The Blaine area is home to three properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places, all located within a 1.2 mile stretch along Highway 11-W. Richland was built by Revolutionary War veteran Captain Thomas Jarnagin on land recognized as the first recorded deed in the newly formed Grainger County. Captain Jarnagin then gave Richland as a wedding gift to Major and Lavinia Jarnagin Lea in 1796. The home would later be the birthplace of Albert Miller Lea who achieved fame as an engineer, soldier, and topographer of national significance. Nearby Poplar Hill, also known as the Cynthia Lea House, is a rare example in East Tennessee of the Gothic Revival style built in 1830. Furthest west is Shield’s Station, established around 1790 and operated by Dr. Samuel Shields as a stagecoach stop, tavern, store, medical dispensary, and post office from 1830 until the 1860s. It is a rare example in East Tennessee of the New England Saltbox post and beam structure.

While the individual properties are currently well-maintained, the Grainger County Historical Society and ETPA are concerned about recent blasting at a quarry operation within this 1.2 mile area of historic
buildings. Standards for vibration limits to protect historic buildings vary and can be influenced by soil and structural conditions. It is this lack of definitive information that can be problematic for historic structures. ETPA is seeking to encourage local conversations about how to carefully monitor the conditions of these historic structures as commercial activities intensify within close proximity. The City of Blaine issued a directive in April for the quarry to cease operations within six months.

4. **Old Jefferson City Hall—Jefferson County**

The Old Jefferson City Hall was built in 1868 by John Roper Branner, one of Jefferson City’s most influential citizens, about the same time as his nearby home known as the Historic Glenmore Mansion. The structure was home to the Masonic girl’s school and local lodge. In 1882, the site became the community’s first public school after the young ladies were moved to the Mossy Creek Baptist College campus - a precursor to today’s Carson-Newman University. In 1904, space was provided to the City for offices and a two-story addition was added to the front of the building. In 1930, the City and Lodge divided the space and added a wing for the City Hall and its fire department (and first fire truck). City government used the site until 1989. From 1868 until recently, local Masonic Lodge #353 continuously held sessions in the building. It holds a prominent position as an anchor on the southeast end of downtown.

Since the City Hall relocated in 1989, only a portion of the building has been used by the Masonic Lodge. Age, lack of maintenance and water damage have contributed to its current condition which is still stable. The roof has not been replaced since the 1950’s and needs repair. The current owners are not able to make repairs and have a desire to sell the property. ETPA is encouraging a preservation-minded buyer purchase the property and follow the Secretary of Interior Standards for restoration and renovation. The local Mossy Creek Foundation has been having a visible impact on historic downtown Jefferson City.

5. **Oliver Springs Southern Railroad Depot – Roane County**

Built c. 1893, the Oliver Springs Depot was one of the busiest of the Coster Division. Its popularity grew along with the nationally known Oliver Springs Resort Hotel and nearby coal production. This building is a small-frame style, one story structure. Original interior wood has writing still visible from 123 years ago. It features gables and large overhangs. The last passenger train pulled through the depot in 1968. In 1983 Southern Railway planned to demolish the structure. The town rallied for saving this historic remnant and eventually struck a deal with Southern Railway, provided it would be removed from the site and relocated.
elsewhere. In 1986, the citizens of Oliver Springs were able to have the building moved across the street with the help of TVA.

The depot is currently home to the Oliver Springs Library and Museum operated by the Oliver Springs Historical Society. The outside paint is lead-based and needs containment and new paint. Roof repairs and water drainage are also issues. The town has little funding to make repairs and it is the only library and source for internet connection for many citizens. Time is of the essence and ETPA encourages local citizens and political leaders to find the funding needed to ensure the structure has a future in the community.

6. **New Salem Baptist Church – Sevierville, Sevier County**

   The New Salem Baptist Church was built in 1886 by Isaac Dockery, noted African American builder, and is Sevierville’s oldest surviving building, Sevier County’s oldest brick church building, and the only historic African American church in the county. The Gothic-revival church served the thriving African American community until the 1950s when the last services were held by the original congregation. Since that time, the church has been used by other congregations and denominations, and the historic integrity has slowly been chipped away. The original bell tower and pulpit furniture have been removed and the overall interior has been altered significantly. Even with these changes, the church was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2003, and a Tennessee Historical marker was placed on the grounds in 2006.

   The New Salem Renovation Task Force is spearheading the preservation and fundraising efforts and have set a goal to raise $500,000. The building suffers from lack of maintenance and ventilation issues, which are compromising the structure. It also sits in a floodplain and the main level needs to be raised. The annual Isaac Dockery Day fundraiser will be held on May 20 in Sevierville. More information can be found online at www.isaacdockery.org. A major gospel music event fundraiser is being planned for September. ETPA invites the community to support the Task Force’s ongoing fundraising for this project.

7. **Former Tennessee Military Institute - Sweetwater, Monroe County**

   Sweetwater Military College was established in 1874 and was later named Tennessee Military Institute in 1902. The 144-acre campus includes ten buildings, with the main and most iconic building dating back to 1909. The campus and the educational activities that have occurred there have always been a major part of the Sweetwater Community. During WW II, TMI was where commissioned officers were found and it
became one of the best known schools in the world which students from all states and several foreign countries. In 1988 TMI closed and was sold to Meiji Gakuin University who operated a Japanese high school called Tennessee Meiji Gakuin (TMG). The high school was first of its kind in the U.S. and served Japanese students whose parents and guardians were living in the America. In 2007, the school was permanently closed. After the closing, the property suffered from ownership battles. That dispute has been settled, but there are roof and other stabilization issues that need to be addressed as well as the development of a long-term vision for its redevelopment. Time is of the essence for this important historic site and ETPA is hopeful a solution can be found this year for moving forward with renovation and restoration.

8. **Stonecipher-Kelly House - Morgan County (near Wartburg)**

The Stonecipher-Kelly House was built around 1814 by the first permanent white settlers in that area, as part of a Revolutionary War land-grant. Around 1807-1808, Joseph Marion Stonecipher and his sons, along with the Samuel Hall family, were the first permanent white settlers in the wilderness area that is now called Morgan County. The Stoneciphers settled various tracts of a Revolutionary War land-grant in the beautiful Emory River valley and its tributaries. In 1814, Ezra B. Stonecipher, one of Joseph’s sons, constructed an unusually large, two-story log home with an additional third-level loft on a portion of the land-grant adjacent to an area known today as Frozen Head State Park. The saddlebag style is unusual for the region, and the house retains most of its original, character-defining, architectural features. In December 2012, the estate put the house and 30 acres up for auction. Barbara Stagg, then ETPA board member and longtime Morgan County resident, worked with descendants of the McCartt family and local preservationists to organize a group of buyers for the property with the intention of later transferring it to a public or non-profit entity. In February 2013, the house and property was presented to the State Land Acquisition Commission for review as a potential addition to the Frozen Head State Park and was accepted.

Since that time, a volunteer crew has rebuilt the dry stack stone retention wall between the house and the old road, Frozen Head State Park staff has been working to build a gravel parking lot just east of Kelly Creek, and the interior of the house has been photo-inventoried. However, the house has asbestos siding and interior paneling that will require professional remediation and must be done before any other interior work is completed, the southeastern portion of the house has foundation issues, and there is the ever-present issue of funding for restoration. ETPA is encouraging a National Register designation for the property and a definitive plan developed for how the house will fit into the state park’s future. The annual Stonecipher-Kelly Days Celebration event is scheduled for October 14, 2017.
Update on the 2016 Endangered 8

Historic Downtown Dandridge was removed from the Endangered 8 after being featured in 2016. ETPA is pleased that the threat to relocate the Jefferson County Courthouse and Department of Education from historic downtown buildings has been reduced. Dandridge has a good track record with historic preservation and that will hopefully continue into the future. Also removed from the list is the Tanner School in Newport which received significant funding in 2016 for rehabilitation. The Tanner Preservation Alliance received an East Tennessee Preservation Award in 2016 for this effort.

Sadly, the Magnet Mills site in Clinton was recently demolished and is now considered officially “lost”. It is regrettable that a new use could not be developed for the historic mill. A water tower still survives and ETPA recommends it be repaired and incorporated into a new use for the site. Magnet Mills is the second Endangered 8 property considered lost after the Morristown College campus buildings were also recently demolished. The former college site is now owned by the City of Morristown which is planning a public park. ETPA strongly encourages the community to use the park design as a mechanism for preserving and sharing the history of the college.

To learn more about the East Tennessee Endangered 8, please visit www.knoxheritage.org/ETPA.

About the East Tennessee Preservation Alliance

The East Tennessee Preservation Alliance works to preserve the structures and places with historic or cultural significance in Anderson, Blount, Campbell, Claiborne, Cocke, Grainger, Hamblen, Jefferson, Knox, Loudon, Monroe, Morgan, Roane, Scott, Sevier, and Union counties. ETPA partners with Knox Heritage to serve as the regional arm for preservation activities in these 16 counties, is supported by local leadership from each county, advocates on behalf of historic preservation, collaborates with regional partners, educates on the importance of preservation and seeks solutions for challenging preservation issues.

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