FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

2018 East Tennessee Endangered 8 Announced on May 17

May 17, 2017, 1:00 p.m. at Henderson Chapel African American Methodist Episcopal Zion Church in Rutledge, TN.

Each year the East Tennessee Preservation Alliance (ETPA) presents a list of eight endangered heritage sites in the program’s fifteen county region. The announcement occurs in correlation to the annual Knox Heritage Fragile & Fading list of places in peril within Knox County.

ETPA serves 15 counties in East Tennessee: Anderson, Blount, Campbell, Claiborne, Cocke, Grainger, Jefferson, Hamblen, Loudon, Monroe, Morgan, Roane, Scott, Sevier and Union. It serves as the regional arm for Knox Heritage, a nonprofit preservation organization started in 1974. The goal of the list 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 2018 Endangered 8

1. **Henderson Chapel African American Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, Grainger County** (new for 2018)

The Henderson Chapel African AME Zion Church in Rutledge was first constructed in 1890 from the logs of Grainger County’s first courthouse. It is the oldest African American congregation and church building in the county. The Chapel was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2000. Regular services ended in 2001 and maintenance issues are beginning to mount. There is concern that the site might be a candidate for redevelopment and the building would be lost.
ETPA encourages the community to work with the Grainger County Historic Society to raise awareness of this important historic site, find funding for repairs, and develop a plan for how the Chapel can become an active part of Rutledge’s heritage assets.

2. Bowman House, Loudon County

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.

In 2017, this property was listed for sale and ETPA encouraged a preservation-minded buyer to purchase the property and follow the Secretary of Interior Standards for restoration and renovation. There has been no change in its ownership status to date.

3. Davis Creek Primitive Baptist Church, Claiborne County

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. The structure has been facing much needed repairs and would like to apply for National Register designation. To qualify, certain 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.

In 2017, ETPA strongly encouraged community support for this project. Since that time, the congregation has made some repairs such as installing a new roof, guttering, and connecting to city water. Regular services are occurring in the church, but the congregation has dwindled to less than ten regularly attending members.

4. Richland, Shield’s Station, Poplar Hill, and Noah Jarnagin Cabin, Grainger County (Amended for 2018)

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 New England Saltbox post and beam structure.

While the individual properties are currently well-maintained, the Grainger County Historic 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. In 2018, the c. 1974 Noah Jarnagin Cabin was nominated to be included with the Blaine properties. Located about six miles further east, the cabin, also known as the Joppa Inn, is located across the street from another proposed limestone quarry. 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.

5. **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 has been spearheading the preservation and fundraising efforts over the past few years and are achieving some success. The new goal is to raise $250,000 to finish repairs. The building still suffers from 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 19 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.

6. **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 with students from all states and several foreign countries. In 1988 TMI closed and was sold to Meiji Gakuin University which 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 very soon for moving forward with renovation and restoration.
7. **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. All of the asbestos siding has been removed. The Frozen Head State Park Business and Management Plan has set renovation as a priority. Friends of Frozen Head State Park and Natural Area has been working to restore the house and grounds as one of its six objectives. Donations to the 501(c) 3 Friends organization may be directed to the Stonecipher-Kelly House. The second annual Stonecipher Kelly Day will be held Saturday, Oct. 13 2018 at the property.

8. **Abandoned Rural Schoolhouses**

In most rural areas, small one-room or two-room schoolhouses were built to serve the immediate community. As communities and education evolved, larger school buildings were erected to accommodate more students and more grade levels. No longer in use, many small rural schools were neglected and left to deteriorate. While property owners and local historians know the locations of these schools, many in the public are unaware. In July of 2017 local news coverage brought attention to Pleasant Grove School in Jefferson County. It was "found" again after being concealed by vegetation. Not all of these former school are concealed. Some, like the Island View School in Sevier County, remain standing in an open field on private property, serving as a reminder of the past for former students, their descendants, and all who travel by on Boyds Creek Highway. Like many schools from this era, the children walked to the schoolhouse and had fond memories of the education and experience they had.

ETPA recognizes that each of these rural schools presents unique challenges in terms of preservation. While little background information is available for some of these rural schools, ETPA hopes to change that by developing an inventory of rural one- and two-room schools in our 16-county region. By knowing which schools remain and the threats they face, we can better promote their reuse and rehabilitation.

**Update on the 2017 Endangered 8**

Two properties were removed from the Endangered 8 list during 2017. One is the Old Jefferson City Hall which 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. Much of the building had sat empty for a number of years,
but a new owner has developed a plan to save the building and its future is much brighter. The second property is the c. 1893 Oliver Springs Southern Railroad Depot. In 2017, Senator Ken Yager received and East Tennessee Preservation Award for advocating for financial appropriations for restoration of the Oliver Springs Depot. Since then, lead paint has been removed, the original dormers reconstructed, and a new roof installed. ETPA encourages local preservationists to work with their legislators on funding for preservation projects.

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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