

Press Release



For Immediate Release

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White House Historical Association and National Trust for Historic Preservation to Create National Center for White House History

First of its kind learning center to be located at historic Decatur House

Washington, D.C. (January 7, 2009) – The National Trust for Historic Preservation and the White House Historical Association (WHHA) established the National Center for White House History at Decatur House, effective January 1, 2010. The first of its kind, the center will house historical documentation, support research efforts and provide education programs related to the study and history of the White House.

The center's activities will focus on research related to White House history, will offer expanded programming to children in grades K-12, and host events, such as lecture programs, that explore both White House history and the surrounding area of historic Lafayette Square. The WHHA has recently piloted an elementary education program in partnership with Decatur House. Entitled "Paths to Freedom," it examined slavery and Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation and has served more than 3,500 children.

"The history of Decatur House has been intertwined with the White House for nearly 200 years," said Neil Horstman, president of the WHHA. "There is no more perfect setting than this to provide a home for the association's educational and scholarly programs. And we are committed to continuing and completing the conservation and preservation efforts of Decatur House for this purpose."

The partnership, in which the National Trust for Historic Preservation will continue to own Decatur House while the WHHA will operate the center, unites two organizations with a shared commitment to America's heritage and Decatur House. In 1961, First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy

helped establish the White House Historical Association and spearheaded the preservation of Lafayette Square, which includes Decatur House. During this same period, Marie Beale bequeathed Decatur House, a National Historic Landmark, to the National Trust for Historic Preservation to serve as its early headquarters. The offices of the WHHA are adjacent to Decatur House on Jackson Place, facing Lafayette Park.

"This partnership will allow Decatur House to reinvent itself as a robust 21st century learning center for all Americans," said Richard Moe, president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. "During a time when many historic sites are seeking creative ways to appeal to visitors and the community, the WHHA and the National Trust for Historic Preservation partnership is an innovative model."

The first and last privately owned property on historic Lafayette Square, Decatur House was chosen as the new center's home because of its storied relationships to past presidents, American dignitaries and 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue itself. Built in 1818 and named after its first inhabitant, Commodore Stephen Decatur, Decatur House's notable residents included diplomats, secretaries of state and a vice president of the United States.

In addition to prominent political figures in American history, enslaved men, women and children also lived and worked at Decatur House. The slave quarters, the only surviving evidence that humans were held in bondage in sight of the Executive Mansion, will benefit from new preservation efforts that WHHA will undertake, including research that will be shared with the public. It is anticipated that this new knowledge will also be incorporated into future educational programming.

Designed by Benjamin Henry Latrobe, the "father of American architecture" and prominently located on Lafayette Square across from the White House, Decatur House is one of the capital's most desirable event locations. The WHHA will continue Decatur House's tradition of fine Washington entertaining by offering rental opportunities for receptions, weddings, meetings and parties. Visitors are also welcome to participate in Decatur House tours and visit the popular Museum Shop. For information on tour hours, events and shopping, visit www.decaurhouse.org.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation (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, DC, eight 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. *Decatur House* (1818), one of the first historic sites of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, is one of three residences remaining in the country designed by Benjamin Henry Latrobe, *the Father of American Architecture*.

The White House Historical Association is a charitable non-profit institution whose purpose is to enhance the understanding, appreciation, and enjoyment of the Executive Mansion. It is a cooperating association of the National Park Service. All proceeds from its trusts and the sale of Association products are used to fund the acquisition of historic furnishings and art work for the permanent White House collection, to assist in the preservation of public rooms and to further its educational mission. The Association also sponsors lecture, exhibition, research and classroom programs. Thousands of schools, universities, and libraries have received free educational materials about the White House; and traveling exhibitions are circulated to presidential libraries and museums nationwide. For more information on WHHA and the National Center for White House History at Decatur House, visit www.whitehousehistory.org.

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