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NEW EDUCATION AND VISITOR CENTER AT JOHN JAY HOMESTEAD

Construction Contractor Selected; Work to Commence in Early 2012

KATONAH, NY, January 27, 2012— One of the oldest standing structures on the John Jay Homestead State Historic Site property, the 1801 Carriage Barn, will be restored and revived to become the site's Education and Visitor Center, thanks to the efforts of Friends of John Jay Homestead in cooperation with the NY State Department of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. The contract for exterior restoration for the \$1.5 million project was awarded last week after years of research, planning and fundraising. Exterior restoration construction is slated to begin in spring 2012.

“The commencement of this project is a major step forward for John Jay Homestead State Historic Site,” said Rose Harvey, NYS Commissioner for Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. “A true public-private partnership, the completed project will transform this historic structure into a space that will welcome visitors, enable expanded educational programs and offer flexible-use space for special exhibits and community gatherings. The Carriage Barn project will celebrate history, encourage tourism at the Homestead and provide the community additional reasons to visit this local and national treasure,” she added.

A Founding Father's Legacy in Bedford

The now 64-acre site was the home of Founding Father John Jay, president of the Continental Congress and chief negotiator of the Treaty of Paris. He served as the first Chief Justice of the United States, the Secretary for Foreign Affairs, and a two-term governor of New York. In 1801, after a lifetime of public service, Jay retired with his family to his “Bedford Farm.” Following Jay's death in 1829, his descendants continued to live in the house until the 1950s. In 1959 the property became a New York State Historic Site, and since then, the historic house's interiors have been restored to look as they did during John Jay's lifetime.

The Carriage Barn was built in 1801 under the direction of John Jay. In Jay's time, the Carriage Barn had box stalls, space to store hay and grain, and large hinged doors to accommodate horse-drawn carriages and sleighs. The structure continued to serve as a riding stable and carriage barn until about 1910, at which point automobiles replaced the carriages. In almost constant use for practically 200 years, the building is now in significant danger of deteriorating beyond repair.

New Life for an Historic Structure

The restored Carriage Barn will become the gateway for visitors to the site. Designs for the new Education and Visitor Center include an information desk; a viewing area for videos about John Jay and the site; computer stations with interactive education components, and a hands-on activity space for young learners. The facility will also include a gift shop, reading room and historic exhibits about farming and the use of horses throughout the farm's history.

"This new facility will encourage more visitors to come experience the Homestead," said Friends of John Jay Homestead President, Melissa Vail. "The Carriage Barn's central location and regular operating hours will provide an accessible point of entry to the site, including for the approximately 60 percent of visitors who visit the gardens and grounds but don't otherwise engage in site programming. We're opening up the site to give people a better opportunity to learn about both the indoor and outdoor stories of John Jay's life and times. We are especially excited about these connections as we expand the farming and agriculture activities available at the site, including our new Farm Market, chicken-and-egg coop, beekeeping school, and community teaching garden," she said.

Expanded educational outreach is another goal of this project. "The completed Carriage Barn Center will help us to support larger numbers of school children," Vail continued, "including those from under-funded school districts who visit the site thanks to the Friends' free bus transportation program. The Center also will provide information on other things to see and do in the area, creating stronger partnership opportunities with other cultural organizations and village businesses, and contributing to Bedford's economic prosperity," she noted.

Community Support Preserves History

Planning for the Carriage Barn project began several years ago, including vigorous fundraising efforts for the \$1.5 million project. “So many people in our area value the history and unique importance of the Homestead,” said Friends Executive Director, Wendy Ross. “We have been continually gratified by the generous support this project is receiving from people throughout the area: those affiliated with the Friends group as well as people who understand that this site and the depth of history it contains represents a true gem in our community.” Ross explained that more than half of the total fundraising goal has already been reached, through a combination of individual donations, private foundation grants and government funding. “We are so thankful to the people who have contributed to this exciting campaign, including 100% of our Friends’ trustees. They believe that the creation of the Carriage Barn Education and Visitor Center will be a huge step forward for the Homestead site. We are also grateful for Commissioner Harvey’s skillful work with the different agencies and levels of government involved in making and administering government grants to this project,” she added.

Fundraising to reach the full construction cost goal is ongoing. “We continue to reach out to individuals who have a love of history and of this site. We look forward to giving people the opportunity to participate in carrying the site’s legacy into the future,” Ross said.

In addition, Friends of John Jay Homestead will host a black tie gala to celebrate the initiation of construction on the long awaited Carriage Barn Education and Visitor Center. The event will also include the presentation of the Founders Award to Friends Trustee and former Board president, Sascha Douglass Greenberg and her husband Evan Greenberg, Chairman and CEO of Ace Group.

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