

WORLD MONUMENTS FUND

Media Inquiries

Holly Evarts, Director of Public Relations
646-424-9594, hevarts@wmf.org

WORLD MONUMENTS FUND LAUNCHES ITS FIRST PROJECT IN HOLY CROSS NEIGHBORHOOD OF NEW ORLEANS AS PART OF ITS U.S. GULF COAST AND NEW ORLEANS INITIATIVE, *RESTORING COMMUNITIES AND THEIR SENSE OF PLACE*

FIRST IN A SERIES OF DEMONSTRATION RESTORATION PROJECTS FOCUSES ON HOLY CROSS' HISTORIC GREATER LITTLE ZION BAPTIST CHURCH

For Immediate Release—New York, NY, June 23, 2006 . . . The World Monuments Fund (WMF), in partnership with the Preservation Trades Network (PTN), has launched a new demonstration restoration project and workshop in the historic Holy Cross community in New Orleans' Ninth Ward, one of the oldest and most intact of the historic communities inundated by the flooding in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Part of WMF's larger initiative to help with the restoration of the Gulf Coast's architectural heritage—*The U.S. Gulf Coast and New Orleans Initiative: Restoring Communities and their Sense of Place*, this pilot project and workshop is the first in a series of five planned by WMF and PTN for New Orleans over the next several months and is focused on the installation of a new, historically appropriate wood floor at the Greater Little Zion Baptist Church, built in 1916.

This past winter, the Holy Cross Neighborhood Association (HCNA) asked WMF and its partners to work with area residents and leaders to assess the current state and the physical condition of the community, to help identify and prioritize needs, and to develop a phased plan beginning with immediate measures necessary for reoccupation. WMF and PTN have developed a number of measures to help with the recovery and restoration of houses in Holy Cross, including workshops that will provide hands-on training while at the same time repairing damaged homes and community buildings. The Greater Little Zion project deals with the repair or replacement of flood-damaged wood floors, a need shared by many residents of Holy Cross; community volunteers, including homeowners, high school students, and local tradespeople, will be working alongside preservation professionals at the Greater Little Zion Baptist Church as they learn how to make the appropriate repairs. A *Mobile Preservation Unit*, a 32-foot recreational vehicle recently launched by WMF, PTN, and HCNA and staffed by a team of experts in building trades and preservation, will be on hand as an additional resource for information and help.

“In New Orleans, the shotgun houses and cottages that make up neighborhoods like Bywater, Tremé, Holy Cross, and the Lower Ninth Ward are as integral to the culture of the city as are its celebrations, music, and food,” said **Morris Hylton III, WMF's Initiatives Manager**. “These modest neighborhoods, home for

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generations to families that are now displaced, really serve as an anchor for local community life. We view the recovery of Holy Cross—its housing, its infrastructure, and its services—as a real resource for the rebuilding of the Lower Ninth Ward, adjacent communities, and the City of New Orleans. We hope that this demonstration restoration project, and those that follow, will serve as a model and a resource for all New Orleanians struggling to address the particular needs of their own communities.”

“We are all elated to the highest degree that the World Monuments Fund is coming to the rescue of our church,” said the **Reverend Gilbert Scie, the pastor of Greater Little Zion Baptist Church**. “This is the most important thing that’s happened for the entire membership of Zion—once the floor is restored, we are really looking forward to getting back to normal as soon as possible.”

“The Preservation Trades Network is honored to join the World Monuments Fund and local partners in helping to rebuild heritage in New Orleans,” said **Lisa Sasser, President of PTN**. “It is a reflection of the commitment of our network of traditional tradespeople that the workshop instructors are coming from as far as California and Maryland to work with the community.”

Greater Little Zion Baptist Church

The Greater Little Zion Baptist Church, located at 5130 Chartres Street, was founded in 1900. Located in the historic neighborhood of Holy Cross in New Orleans’s Ninth Ward, the small wooden church, constructed in 1916, was damaged by the flooding that inundated the Lower Ninth Ward and Holy Cross communities following Hurricane Katrina and the breach of the Industrial Canal levee. Among the flood damage, the historic wood floor and pews were lost and the electrical system destroyed, rendering the church uninhabitable. The Reverend Gilbert Scie, Greater Little Zion pastor’s, is working to keep his 200-member congregation, who live in neighborhoods throughout New Orleans, connected until the church is repaired. Sunday services are currently held under a tent in the side yard of the church. Most of the Ninth Ward’s more than 70 churches were damaged by flooding. Given the severity of the damage in the Lower Ninth Ward neighborhood, Reverend Scie believes the recovery of many churches will take years. In the meantime, he and his congregation hope to repair and expand their church to accommodate an anticipated increase in members.

Greater Little Zion Field Demonstration Project and Workshop

In March 2006, PTN members undertook an assessment of the Greater Little Zion Baptist Church at the request of Revered Scie. The principal problem was the floor. At some point in the church’s history, the original wood floor—attached directly to the floor joists—was covered with another wood floor. Typical of many houses in Holy Cross where the original floor has been covered or replaced with contemporary flooring over a subfloor, the double layer trapped moisture from the flood and caused the wood to swell and buckle. Volunteer workers removed the floors as part of a massive cleanup and “gutting” campaign in the months following Hurricane Katrina. The floors

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could possibly have been saved and repaired, and the wholesale removal of salvageable historic materials and building elements has been one unfortunate side effect of efforts by well-intentioned, but untrained relief workers.

The Greater Little Zion Baptist Church was selected as a demonstration project and workshop site not only because it deals with conditions common to many structures in Holy Cross, but also because recovering the churches in Holy Cross can become a focal point for the neighborhood, helping bring the residents of Holy Cross back to their homes and community. The workshop at the Greater Little Zion Baptist Church will concentrate on repairs to the floor framing and installation of a new floor.

Holy Cross Neighborhood

Bounded by the Mississippi River to the south and St. Claude Avenue and the Lower Ninth Ward to the north, the Holy Cross Neighborhood is a largely African-American community of approximately 5,500 low- and moderate-income residents who either owned (42%) or rented (58%) the mostly nineteenth- and early twentieth-century shotgun houses and vernacular wood cottages that contributed to the neighborhood's designation as a National and Local Historic Landmark District. Holy Cross, like the Lower Ninth Ward, was flooded by the breach in the Industrial Canal levee. More than 3,200 homes were inundated by as much as six feet of water. Today, most of the buildings suffer wind and flood damage ranging from leaking roofs to mold to structural destabilization.

Representative of many neighborhoods in New Orleans where economic resources are scarce, Holy Cross is threatened as much by pre-catastrophe conditions as it is by flood-related damage. Some historic residences were in a state of advanced disrepair, improperly maintained by landlords or abandoned by owners before the hurricane struck. These pre-existing conditions were not taken into account when the City's Department of Safety and Permits "red-tagged" more than 50 houses in Holy Cross for demolition. Over eight months after the storm and the evacuation of New Orleans, the neighborhood of Holy Cross remains largely vacant.

WMF's Program for Community Recovery and Rebuilding in Holy Cross

The World Monuments Fund and the Preservation Trades Network are working closely with the Holy Cross Neighborhood Association and the University of Florida College of Design, Construction and Planning to help address immediate needs identified by residents and to plan for sustained community reoccupation and rebuilding. They are completing a comprehensive assessment of the neighborhood and developing a holistic, multifaceted approach for short- and long-term rebuilding. In addition to housing, the neighborhoods need the social and economic bonds of schools, merchants, churches, social centers, and clinics to reclaim their sense of place, their sense of community.

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Launched in January 2006, the three-part program includes:

- **Information and Resources for Homeowners**
WMF and PTN are disseminating information and offering consultations with residents on how to remediate and repair their homes. As an additional resource, WMF, PTN, and HCNA launched a *Mobile Preservation Unit*, a 32-foot recreational vehicle, in Holy Cross in late May 2006. The mobile unit is operated by rotating full-time experts in building trades and preservation. WMF, PTN, and HCNA are encouraging city agencies, non-profits, and other groups to use the field office as a vehicle for disseminating and coordinating information about all aspects of recovery, including social services, environmental concerns, cultural activities, and educational opportunities.
- **Neighborhood Assessment and Plan for Immediate Reoccupation and Long-term Recovery:** The study, which includes a summary of the neighborhood's history and pre-disaster conditions, is being coordinated by graduate-level architecture, historic preservation, and planning students from the **University of Florida under the direction of Roy Eugene Graham, Director of the Historic Preservation Program.** The students have been traveling to New Orleans and meeting regularly with the Planning Committee of HCNA since January 2006. **The plan will be completed by July 2006 for presentation to the City of New Orleans.**
- **Demonstration Restoration Projects with Workshops:** WMF and PTN are planning a **series of demonstration restoration projects** for Holy Cross that will contain traditional building and historic preservation workshops. Working closely with HCNA to select sites, the partners will undertake five demonstration restoration projects on private residences and properties throughout the community. The sites are being chosen based upon three criteria: historic building types common to the region, such as shotgun houses and Creole cottages; typical post-disaster conditions, including wind and flood damage; and financial need of the owner. The demonstration restoration projects and workshops program will culminate during the 10th annual International Preservation Trades Workshop scheduled for October 26-28, 2006, in New Orleans.

Support

Support for the Holy Cross restoration project has been provided by the American Express Company, The Florence Gould Foundation, the Hickory Foundation, the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, and The David Berg Foundation. The American Express Company awarded its emergency grant to the World Monuments Fund and the National Trust for Historic Preservation for a joint effort to support sensitive reconstruction along the Gulf Coast and in New Orleans, an initiative launched last fall.

The Robinson Lumber Company of New Orleans, Louisiana, has donated the tongue-and-groove finish floor. Historic Restoration Specialists, Inc. of Smithsburg, Maryland, donated power tools. Additional tools and supplies have been donated by businesses in Humboldt County, California, including Almquist Lumber Company, Oldham Chemical Company, Pierson Building Supply, Creative Home Construction, College of the Redwoods Bookstore, LBJ Enterprises, Humboldt Builders Exchange, and Solo Sports.

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Local Partners

The Holy Cross Neighborhood Association was founded by residents and business owners in 1981 with the mission to make the neighborhood a safer, cleaner and more enjoyable place to live and raise a family. Successful Association activities and projects include *Christmas in October*, a community garden and the Delery Street Playground. The Association convinced the New Orleans Redevelopment Authority (NORD) of the need for a playground for neighborhood children. NORD supplied the lumber and the residents designed and built the playground in 1996. Prior to Hurricane Katrina, the Association advocated against the Corps of Engineers' proposed expansion of the Industrial Canal.

National Partners

The **World Monuments Fund (WMF)** is the foremost private, nonprofit organization dedicated to the preservation of endangered architectural and cultural sites around the world. Since 1965, WMF has worked tirelessly to stem the loss of historic structures at more than more than 400 sites in over 80 countries. WMF's work spans a wide range of sites, including the vast temple complexes at Angkor, Cambodia; the historic center of Mexico City; Nicholas Hawksmoor's London masterpiece, St. George's, Bloomsbury, the iconic modernist A. Conger Goodyear house in Old Westbury, New York; and the extraordinary 18th-century Qianlong Garden complex in Beijing's Forbidden City. From its headquarters in New York City—and offices and affiliates in Paris, London, Madrid, and Lisbon—WMF works with local partners and communities to identify and save important heritage through innovative programs of project planning, fieldwork, advocacy, grant-making, education, and on-site training. Every two years, WMF issues its World Monuments Watch list of 100 Most Endangered Sites, a global call to action on behalf of sites in need of immediate intervention. (www.wmf.org)

Preservation Trades Network (PTN) is a non-profit membership organization committed to representing and strengthening the role of the traditional trades in the preservation process through education, networking, and outreach. PTN is an umbrella organization that unites a variety of trades involved in building and preservation including: timber framing, carpentry, masonry, plaster and decorative arts, historic roofing, and metallurgy. PTN has an annual conference based on demonstrations and education and collaboration with other organizations and non-profits to expand educational opportunities and to build a network of trades resources. This networking process, which is fundamental to the PTN efforts, has established a strong foundation for collaboration and exchange with programs in the United States and abroad. PTN is working to sustain the success of existing trades education programs, recognizing the contributions of the masters of the trades, and creating opportunities for future generations of trades people. In 2003, PTN created the International Trades Education Initiative (ITES) to address the needs impacting trades education. (www.ptn.org)

The University of Florida, College of Design, Construction, and Planning Historic Preservation Program is one of the oldest and most respected of its kind in the United States. For half a century, the University of Florida has led the nation with courses in historic preservation and urban conservation. The new, graduate-level (Master and Ph.D.) interdisciplinary concentration and certificate in Historic Preservation at the University of Florida is unique in the country, as no other program offers this kind of concentration in the components of architecture, landscape architecture, urban and neighborhood planning, building construction, and museum studies. In 2004, The University of Florida was chosen by the UNESCO World Heritage Center in Paris to partner for an international Symposium on Modern Architecture in Miami because of its leadership role in the field. The University is an institutional member of US/ICOMOS and a founding member of the National Council for Preservation Education. The College's field schools have been a model for the country, including the *Preservation Institute: Nantucket*; the *Preservation Institute: Caribbean*; and the *Preservation Institute: Miami*. (www.dcp.ufl.edu)