WORLD MONUMENTS FUND AND AMERICAN EXPRESS ANNOUNCE
RESTORATION OF PUNING SI STATUES IN
CHENGDE, CHINA

GRANT KICKS OFF MAJOR CONSERVATION PROJECT AT SITE PLACED ON
WORLD MONUMENTS WATCH

For Immediate Release - Chengde, China, October 29, 2008 - Hua Yao, Vice
President of the Political Consultative Conference of Chengde City, joined Jinhua
Wang, Dean of Research Department, Chinese Academy of Cultural Heritage
(CACH); Henry Ng, Executive Vice President of World Monuments Fund (WMF);
and Dave Keung, Vice President & Group General Manager, Global Network &
Merchant Services, Greater China, American Express International, Inc., at a press
conference today to announce a major grant to restore the famed wooden statues that
dominate the interior of Puning Si (Temple of Universal Peace), built by the
Qianlong Emperor (r. 1735–1796) in 1755 in Chengde, China. Constructed to
celebrate a military victory against the Dzungars of Mongolia, Puning Si is one of
nine temples to survive at this sprawling Qing dynasty (1644–1912) mountain resort,
and the only one that is still an active religious site.

The US$80,000 grant is being made through the American Express Partners in
Preservation program, and will focus on two 15.60-meter-high wooden statues,
known as “Buddhist Boy” and “Dragon Princess,” that flank the central Buddha,
believed to be the tallest wooden statue of Buddha in the world. The local
government and religious organizations were able to raise sufficient funds to restore
the Buddha statue in 1999, but were unable to fund the restoration of the other two.
This new grant will enable urgent structural stabilization work and research to
develop the best restoration techniques to prevent further deterioration.
This is the first project undertaken by the World Monuments Fund with CACH since a memorandum of understanding was signed with CACH earlier this year. The agreement was WMF’s first with a state-level cultural heritage authority in China and is designed to help CACH and WMF work together to identify and support endangered heritage sites in China.

“The World Monuments Fund first became aware of the conservation needs at Puning Si in 2004 when it was placed on the World Monuments Watch and its list of 100 most endangered sites,” said WMF Executive Vice President Henry Ng. “This program was established in partnership with American Express to help WMF draw attention to important historic sites that are in need of conservation assistance. American Express’s generous support for this important site completes the circle that began in 2004. It is an auspicious beginning for this new partnership between the World Monuments Fund and CACH.”

Jinhua Wang, Dean of Research Department of CACH, welcomed the support from WMF and American Express, “The restoration of the Puning Si statues represents the first project stemming from the new partnership between WMF and CACH. This public-private partnership to support heritage conservation will help to attract more international assistance for the preservation of cultural heritage in China. The Puning Si project represents the first of what we believe will be many collaborative opportunities with WMF.” Dean Wang added, “WMF and CACH share a common goal of promoting the highest standards of cultural heritage conservation.”

The American Express Partners in Preservation program, announced in June 2006, builds on the company’s decade-long relationship with the World Monuments Fund. “American Express is pleased to support the first project under the new state-level CACH-WMF agreement” said Dave Keung, Vice President & Group General Manager, Global Network & Merchant Services, Greater China, American Express International, Inc. “We have a long-term commitment to historic preservation
because we understand how critically important it is to secure cultural assets such as the Puning Si statues for the future. Not only are sites such as these a great source of local pride, but they are also a witness to our shared history, and by attracting visitors from all over the world, they promote a better understanding of that history.”

**The Imperial Mountain Resort at Chengde**

The buildings at the imperial mountain resort at Chengde were built in stages between 1703 and 1792 and were where Qing emperors from Kangxi (r. 1661–1722) onwards spent much of their time between the spring and autumn. Chengde was one of the three imperial centers of the Qing dynasty, along with the Forbidden City and the Summer Palace. During the Cultural Revolution, Chengde, due to its imperial provenance, received armed protection so that the religious community could remain active. Chengde was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1994. It is now a burgeoning tourist destination just three hours’ from Beijing. Puning Si, which incorporates Tibetan and Mongolian architectural influences, remains the only active religious site at Chengde, with an unbroken Buddhist monastic presence dating back to its construction in 1755.

**World Monuments Fund**

World Monuments Fund (WMF) is the leading independent organization devoted to saving the world’s most treasured places. For over 40 years, working in more than 90 countries, our highly skilled experts have applied proven and effective techniques to preserve important architectural and cultural heritage sites around the globe. Through partnerships with local communities, funders, and governments, we inspire an enduring commitment to stewardship for future generations. Headquartered in New York, WMF has offices and affiliates worldwide. www.wmf.org

**Chinese Academy of Cultural Heritage**
Chinese Academy of Cultural Heritage (CACH) is a state-level scientific research institute on cultural heritage conservation. It is under the direct supervision of the State Administration of Cultural Heritage (SACH) of China.

CACH was first established as the Commission for the Preservation of Old Capital Cultural Property founded in 1935. It was renamed as “Peking Commission for the Preservation of Cultural Property” in 1945. The commission was reorganized in 1949 with the founding of People’s Republic of China, and was renamed “Beijing Commission for Preservation of Cultural Property.” In 1956 that title was replaced by the “Institute for Restoration of Historic Buildings.” In 1962, the “Research Institute of Cultural Property and Museums” was added as an additional title. In 1973 the institute was again renamed as the “Research Institute of Science and Technology for the Conservation of Culture Property.” In 1990 the institute and the Research Unit of Ancient Chinese Literature of the Ministry of Culture merged into one single institute which is entitled “China National Institute of Cultural Property.” On August 2007 it was officially renamed as “Chinese Academy of Cultural Heritage.”

American Express
American Express Company (www.americanexpress.com) is a leading global payments, network and travel company founded in 1850.

In June 2006, American Express announced its US$10 million, five-year commitment to historic preservation through the American Express Partners in Preservation program. Partners in Preservation, which expands the company’s focus on securing the use of cultural assets for the future, was launched with two critical partners, the World Monuments Fund (WMF) and the U.S. National Trust for Historic Preservation. The program is dedicated to preserving sites both in the U.S. and around the world. Sites supported through the partnership with WMF are selected from the biennial World Monuments Watch list of 100 most endangered
sites as well as from among other sites identified by WMF. Each of the partners will receive US$5 million in support from American Express over the next five years.

American Express was the founding sponsor of WMF’s World Monuments Watch program, which was established in 1995 to call international attention to and ensure the preservation of cultural heritage sites around the world threatened by neglect, vandalism, armed conflict or natural disaster. During the first ten years of the Watch program, American Express contributed more than US$10 million to help preserve 126 historic sites in 62 countries. American Express’ commitment to this program has enabled WMF to leverage millions of dollars of additional funding from local and national governments, global corporations, foundations, and individuals, and has encouraged new preservation activism worldwide.

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