

EMBARGOED UNTIL May 19, 2010 at 3:00 a.m. ET

Contact: Communications, 202.588.6141, pr@nthp.org

**NATIONAL TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION NAMES
METROPOLITAN A.M.E. CHURCH IN WASHINGTON, D.C. TO ITS 2010 LIST OF
AMERICA'S 11 MOST ENDANGERED HISTORIC PLACES**

Washington, D.C. (May 19, 2010) – Today, the **National Trust for Historic Preservation** named **Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Church in Washington, D.C.** to its **2010 list of America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places**. This annual list highlights important examples of the nation's architectural, cultural and natural heritage that are at risk for destruction or irreparable damage.

Since 1821, when a group of free and enslaved African Americans formed its congregation, Metropolitan A.M.E. Church, the national cathedral of African Methodism, has been much more than a spiritual sanctuary. A major landmark of African American heritage and one of the most important religious institutions in the United States, Metropolitan A.M.E.'s red brick Victorian Gothic-style church, completed in 1886, was constructed by donations – large and small – from A.M.E. congregations across the country. Their goal was to establish a permanent presence for the A.M.E. denomination just a short distance from the White House and the U.S. Capitol in order to pressure the federal government for equal treatment of African American people.

Since its inception, Metropolitan A.M.E. Church has been a bastion of advocacy for human rights, and its congregation has been involved in this country's seminal struggles, including the fight for abolition of slavery and the civil rights movement. In segregated Washington, Metropolitan A.M.E.'s stained-glass sanctuary was one of the largest meeting places available to an integrated audience and, therefore, attracted prominent speakers, including President Taft and First Lady Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt and, later, Dr. Dorothy Height, Rev Gardner Taylor, and Bishop Desmond Tutu. It was here that the funeral of congregant Frederick Douglass was held in 1895 and where mourners said goodbye to Rosa Parks a century later. This African American institution was the first to be included as an official host of a Presidential inauguration event during the two terms of President William Jefferson Clinton.

Once at the center of a vibrant residential neighborhood, Metropolitan A.M.E. Church is now in the middle of the downtown commercial district of the nation's capital. Walled in on three sides by recent development projects, the church has suffered numerous structural cracks resulting from vibrations during adjacent construction. While the congregation has been a responsible steward and funded major repairs over the years to maintain the building and begun a restoration drive, previously unknown, ongoing water infiltration has caused extensive damage. Now structurally compromised, the building urgently requires a multi-million-dollar rescue effort, a capital investment that Metropolitan A.M.E. Church's community of dedicated supporters cannot afford.

"From anti-slavery leadership in the mid-19th century to AIDS education and voter registration projects today, Metropolitan A.M.E. Church has been not just a major center of worship but an institution at the forefront of the civic, cultural and intellectual life of African Americans," said Richard Moe, president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. "The church is sadly illustrative of many historic urban houses of worship that are in danger of being lost forever."

Moe announced the 2010 list of America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places while standing in the sanctuary of the Metropolitan A.M.E. Church. He was joined by church leaders and other prominent supporters including Ernest Green -

a member of the Steward Board of Metropolitan AME Church and one of the members of the famed "Little Rock Nine," the students who integrated Little Rock's Central High School in 1957.

Metropolitan A.M.E. Church also is nationally significant as the founding sponsor and home of the Bethel Literary and Historical Association, a highly influential educational institution that sponsored programs with nationally-known speakers, including Carter G. Woodson, Mary Church Terrell, Ida B. Wells, Archibald H. Grimke, and Booker T. Washington. A leading cultural institution in the nation's capital, the association became the model for other literary societies that sought to preserve the legacy of African Americans.

Metropolitan is the oldest A.M.E. church in the District of Columbia and, along with Philadelphia's famed Mother Bethel, remains one of the most prominent A.M.E. churches in the country. The church is known for its 29 stained glass windows, which chronicle the A.M.E. church's phenomenal growth during a period of racial oppression. Despite their significance, the windows are compromised due to deteriorated lead jointing. In addition, the building's original exterior metalwork has rusted, and there is evidence of settlement of the church's grand staircase and sanctuary floors. A poorly designed internal gutter system also has caused water damage to the church's walls and ceiling. The current physical condition of the church threatens its continued use as a place of worship, as well as its role in local and national humanitarian ministries. Recently, when portions of the sanctuary's tin ceiling fell to the floor, the church was forced to halt services in the sanctuary for safety reasons. While preliminary emergency repairs have been made and Metropolitan's congregation is committed to saving and restoring its church, approximately \$11 million is needed to stabilize the structure and restore the building.

The public is invited to learn more about what they can do to support these and hundreds of other endangered sites, experience first-hand accounts of these places, and share stories and photos of their own at www.PreservationNation.org/11Most.

The 2010 list of America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places was made possible, in part, by a grant from History™. Local preservation groups across the nation submitted nominations for this year's list; the nomination for Metropolitan was submitted by the Metropolitan AME Church.

To download high resolution images of this year's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places in advance of May 19th, please contact pr@nthp.org. On or after May 19th, visit <http://www.preservationnation.org/about-us/press-center/> to register and download high resolution images and video.

The 2010 list of America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places (in alphabetical order):

America's State Parks and State-Owned Historic Sites—This year, nearly 30 states have experienced cuts to parks' and sites' budgets, and a recent survey estimates as many as 400 state parks could close. These state park systems include places of national significance—from Native American historic sites to Revolutionary War forts to Civil War battlefields to country estates—and welcome an estimated 725 million visits every year.

Black Mountain, Harlan County, Ky. —Nestled at the base of Eastern Kentucky's rugged Black Mountain, the historic mining towns of Benham and Lynch are working hard to define a future beyond coal. The towns, which have created well-respected heritage tourism sites and are working to revitalize their main streets, now face the threat of multiple surface and deep mining permits on and around Black Mountain—a move that would be tremendously harmful to Black Mountain's natural beauty, fragile ecology and growing tourism industry.

Hinchliffe Stadium, Paterson, N.J.—Once the pride of Paterson, N.J., Hinchliffe Stadium is one of the last surviving ball parks of baseball's Negro League. Today, the 10,000-seat, poured-concrete Art Deco stadium that was home to the New York Black Yankees and legendary player Larry Doby, is closed and dangerously deteriorated.

Industrial Arts Building, Lincoln, Neb.—For nearly a century, this dramatic trapezoidal exposition space with natural skylights, intricate roof trusses and a four-story fountained interior, has showcased the best of Lincoln, Neb. Despite its long, proud history, the Industrial Arts Building will soon meet the wrecking ball unless a developer steps forward to rescue and reuse the building.

Juana Briones House, Palo Alto, Calif.—In the heart of Silicon Valley stands the oldest structure in Palo Alto, built by one of the original Hispanic residents of San Francisco, a pioneering woman who was a rancher, traditional healer and entrepreneur. The 1844 adobe home is a rare reminder of California's rich Spanish and Mexican history. Today this California State Historic Landmark sits abandoned, deteriorated, exposed to the elements and threatened by demolition.

Merritt Parkway, Fairfield County, Conn.—Spanning 37.5 distinctive miles and celebrated for its diverse collection of decorative bridges and lush, natural landscaping, Merritt Parkway remains, 70 years after it was constructed, one of America's most scenic roads. To accommodate increased traffic on the parkway, the cash-strapped Connecticut Department of Transportation is not performing necessary maintenance and has moved to realign roads, replace bridges and redesign interchanges, all at the cost of the parkway's unique character.

Metropolitan A.M.E. Church, Washington, D.C.—A major landmark of African American heritage and one of the most important religious institutions in the United States, Metropolitan A.M.E. Church's red brick Victorian Gothic-style building, completed in 1886, hosted the funeral of congregant Frederick Douglass in 1895 and Rosa Parks a century later. Years of water infiltration and damage caused in part by adjacent construction projects have compromised the structure, prompting the dedicated congregation to launch a national capital campaign to rescue and restore this irreplaceable house of worship.

Pågat, Yigo, Guam—The island of Guam, the westernmost United States territory in the Pacific, is home to the Chamorro people who maintain a thriving culture dating back thousands of years. With the United States military's announced plans for a massive buildup on the island, many residents are concerned about the potentially devastating impact on the island's cultural resources, including one of Guam's most treasured sites, the ancient Chamorro settlement of Pågat.

Saugatuck Dunes, Saugatuck, Mich.—Along the shores of Lake Michigan, the 2,500 acres that comprise the Saugatuck Dunes Coastal Area boast a spectacular, sparsely-developed landscape of sand dunes, water, woods and wetlands. Home to several endangered species and a large number of significant historic and archeological sites, Saugatuck Dunes and its surrounding community are threatened by a proposed 400-acre, residential development, to include a marina, hotel, restaurant and retail complex.

Threefoot Building, Meridian, Miss.—For 80 years, this 16-story Art Deco, lavishly decorated, granite-clad skyscraper has been a mainstay of downtown Meridian, Miss. Although a developer expressed interest in rehabilitating the deteriorated building, the City of Meridian has been unable to provide gap financing or other incentives and locals fear that Threefoot's bright future may end in demolition.

Wilderness Battlefield, Orange and Spotsylvania Counties, Va.—One of the most significant and bloodiest engagements of the Civil War, the Battle of the Wilderness marked the first time that legendary generals Robert E. Lee and Ulysses S. Grant faced off against one another. It is here—in an area known for its rolling landscapes and distant Blue Ridge Mountain views—that Walmart intends to trample on American heritage by constructing 240,000 square feet

of “big box” commercial sprawl within the historic boundaries of Wilderness Battlefield and immediately adjacent to the Fredericksburg & Spotsylvania National Military Park.

America’s 11 Most Endangered Historic Places has identified more than 200 threatened one-of-a-kind historic treasures since 1988. Whether these sites are urban districts or rural landscapes, Native American landmarks or 20th-century sports arenas, entire communities or single buildings, the list spotlights historic places across America that are threatened by neglect, insufficient funds, inappropriate development or insensitive public policy. The designation has been a powerful tool for raising awareness and rallying resources to save endangered sites from every region of the country. At times, that attention has garnered public support to quickly rescue a treasured landmark; while in other instances, it has been the impetus of a long battle to save an important piece of our history. The list has been so successful in galvanizing preservation efforts across the country and rallying resources to save endangered places that, in just two decades, only seven sites have been lost.

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.

###