

News Release



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**NATIONAL TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION NAMES
CHINA ALLEY IN HANFORD, CALIF., TO ITS 2011 LIST OF
AMERICA'S 11 MOST ENDANGERED HISTORIC PLACES®**

Washington, D.C. (June 15, 2011) - Today, the **National Trust for Historic Preservation** named **China Alley in Hanford, Calif.** to its **2011** 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 of destruction or irreparable damage. Members of the public can show their support for saving the endangered places by texting "PLACES" to 25383 to donate \$10, which will go towards saving historic places through National Trust outreach programs.

When Chinese immigrants arrived in 1877 to the newly established San Joaquin Valley town of Hanford, Calif., they found themselves in an unfamiliar place with no reminders of home, facing cultural barriers and often out-right racism. As they had throughout the western United States, Chinese men supplied the back-breaking labor that built the railroads and then labored in the increasing acreage devoted to agriculture in California's fertile Central Valley. Despite segregation and oppression, the Chinese community in Hanford flourished and developed a vibrant Chinatown, known as China Alley, which soon boasted restaurants, herb stores, laundries, gambling houses, grocers and a Taoist temple—all constructed of local California redwood and brick fired on site. A short, densely lined street, China Alley was a vibrant hub where immigrants met to talk politics, share a meal, read Chinese newspapers and play mah-jong. Reaching its peak in the pre-World War II years, China Alley increasingly served a more diverse population, especially as racial barriers were challenged and eased.

Through the ensuing years, the Chinese population in Hanford declined and today most of the historic buildings along China Alley, including the famed Imperial Dynasty restaurant and the L.T. Sue Herb Building, sit vacant, suffering from rain damage, vandalism and years of deterioration and disuse. Though China Alley is located in a local historic district, the City of Hanford has neither trained preservation staff, nor a historic preservation

commission, leaving the buildings vulnerable to insensitive development or reuse. In addition, redevelopment funds from the City of Hanford's Redevelopment Agency, which supports the revitalization of China Alley, may no longer be available due to state budget constraints. Although the Taoist Temple Preservation Society completed a stunning renovation of China Alley's temple in the early 1970s and is currently restoring two other properties, the organization does not have the financial resources to acquire and rehabilitate all the buildings along China Alley.

"Hanford's China Alley is one of California's best examples of rural Chinatowns, reflecting the history of the local Chinese American community over the course of more than a century," said Stephanie Meeks, president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. "This richly diverse collection of buildings is a rare and *tangible reminder of a great American story, one that deserves remembering and celebrating.*"

Despite the disrepair of its buildings, China Alley itself remains a valued centerpiece of Hanford's multi-ethnic, predominantly Latino, Downtown East neighborhood. Visitors come to China Alley for the annual Moon Festival and to visit the Taoist Temple, restored as a museum of Chinese-American life.

The China Alley buildings, many with Chinese vernacular details, are a compelling reminder of Hanford's vibrant Chinese community of the 19th and 20th centuries. While many urban Chinatowns continue to thrive, most rural Chinatowns have declined; Hanford's China Alley is unique for its retention of many original features. China Alley's survival is largely because many of its buildings are owned by a single third-generation family corporation that has, through the years, exhibited concern for the site's future.

Members of the public are invited to learn more about what they can do to support this 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/Places. Local preservation groups across the nation submitted nominations for this year's list; the nomination for China Alley was submitted by the Taoist Temple Preservation Society.

The 2011 list of America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places (in alphabetical order):

Bear Butte, Meade County, S.D. - Bear Butte, the 4,426-foot mountain called Mato Paha by the Lakota in the Black Hills of South Dakota, is sacred ground for as many as 17 Native American tribes. A place of prayer, meditation, and peace, this National Historic Landmark is threatened by proposed wind and oil energy development that will negatively impact the sacred site and further degrade the cultural landscape.

Belmead-on-the-James, Powhatan County, Va. - A little-known landmark of African American heritage, the 2,000-acre site along Virginia's James River was transformed by Saint Katherine Drexel from a slave-holding plantation into a pair of innovative schools for African American and Native American students. Closed in the 1970s, the historic buildings set in rolling hills and wooded glades of the riverfront campus, including a striking Gothic Revival manor house designed by Alexander Jackson Davis, are deteriorating and need emergency repairs.

China Alley, Hanford, Calif. - In 1877, Chinese immigrants settled in this San Joaquin Valley town and found strength and community far from home in China Alley, a vibrant rural Chinatown. Today, most of its historic buildings are suffering from deterioration and disuse and are vulnerable to insensitive alteration as there is no local historic preservation staff or commission to enforce preservation protections.

Fort Gaines, Dauphin Island, Ala. - A place of spectacular beauty and stirring history, Dauphin Island is home to Historic Fort Gaines, a nationally significant fortress that played a pivotal role in the Civil War Battle of Mobile Bay. Today, Fort Gaines' shoreline is eroding as much as nine feet per year, and continued erosion threatens this significant historic treasure.

Greater Chaco Landscape, N.M. - Located across a broad swath of northwestern New Mexico are hundreds of Native American archaeological and cultural sites that help unlock the mysteries of the prehistoric Chacoan people. These sacred sites, and the fragile prehistoric roads that connect them, are in jeopardy due to increased oil and gas exploration and extraction.

Isaac Manchester Farm, Avella, Pa. - For more than two centuries, this 400-acre farm—with a stately brick Georgian manor house and historic outbuildings—has been home to eight generations of one family. A remarkable time capsule of colonial farm life, Manchester Farm is threatened by longwall coal mining.

John Coltrane House, Dix Hills, N.Y. - One of America's most widely acclaimed jazz artists, John Coltrane lived with his young family in a ranch house in Long Island, N.Y., until his untimely death in 1967. Today, the home where Coltrane wrote his iconic masterpiece, "A Love Supreme," deteriorates due to lack of funds. Although a local group has taken ownership of the property and hopes to restore and interpret the site as an education center, the effort sorely needs broader attention and support.

National Soldiers Home Historic District, Milwaukee, Wis. - With its bucolic setting and diverse collection of historic buildings, Milwaukee's Soldiers Home offered welcome refuge for generations of American veterans. Today, the campus is threatened by a pattern of deferred maintenance, which has left historic buildings unused and on the verge of collapse.

Pillsbury A Mill, Minneapolis, Minn. - A masterpiece of industrial architecture and the largest and most advanced facility in the world at the time of its completion in 1881, the Pillsbury "A" Mill Complex stands vacant

and is in danger of piecemeal development, which could strip this National Historic Landmark of its tremendous potential for re-use and rehabilitation.

Prentice Women's Hospital, Chicago, Ill. - A concrete and glass cloverleaf-shaped icon, Prentice Women's Hospital has added drama and interest to the Chicago skyline for nearly four decades. Despite its cutting edge, progressive architecture, Prentice Hospital faces imminent demolition.

Sites Imperiled by State Actions, U.S. - In state legislatures across the country, cuts to preservation funding and incentives imperil hundreds of thousands of historic places. If key sources of funding and incentives are lost across the United States, thousands of irreplaceable sites and national treasures may suffer untold consequences.

To download high resolution images of this year's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places in advance of June 15, please contact pr@nthp.org. On or after June 15, visit <http://www.preservationnation.org/about-us/press-center/> to register and download high resolution images and video.

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 a handful of sites have been lost. A one-time donation of \$10.00 will be added to your mobile phone bill or deducted from your prepaid balance when you text to donate.

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.

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