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Funds Improve & Expand the Visitor Experience at New Jersey's Heritage Sites

Trenton, NJ – New Jersey Department of Community Affairs (DCA) Acting Commissioner Charles A. Richman today announced that New Jersey Historic Trust, an affiliate of the DCA, has recently awarded three grants for heritage tourism projects from the "Discover NJ History" License Plate Fund. The funding program offers assistance to develop materials, marketing and promotion to improve and expand the visitor experience at New Jersey's sites of heritage.

"At the DCA we recognize the economic importance of heritage tourism in New Jersey and its ability to contribute to the vitality of New Jersey's economy and communities," said Acting Commissioner Richman. "These grant awards demonstrate our commitment to increased visibility for heritage preservation."

This year, the Atlantic Highlands Historical Society will receive \$3,800 to expand its tour ability by compensating and training docents. A \$4,600 grant to the Essex County Park Foundation will help fund interpretive signage throughout the heavily visited South Mountain Reservation. The final grant of \$1,600 to the Somerset County Cultural and Heritage Commission will support the promotional campaign for its "Weekend Journey Through the Past" event.

"The Historic Trust is pleased to support these heritage tourism projects that call attention to the breadth of New Jersey's resources," said Dorothy P. Guzzo, executive director of the New Jersey Historic Trust. "Our state has a rich history and potential for creating tourist destinations that explore cultural, architectural and social themes."

The "Discover NJ History" License Plate Fund was established at the recommendation of the 2010 Heritage Tourism Master Plan for New Jersey. Since 2012, 17 projects have been awarded grants totaling \$58,185. Successful projects include creation of wayside and interpretive signage, a smartphone app, a marketing guide for historic sites, and collaborative tour development.

Successful grant projects will develop and promote visitor-ready sites. Eligible applicants are nonprofit, county, or municipal entities that may request up to \$5,000. The preferred method of application is an on-line form, and grants are awarded quarterly. For more information visit: www.njht.org/touring

The fund is supported by sales and renewals of the "Discover NJ History" license plate, which is available as a "dedicated plate" from the Motor Vehicles Services. Plates may be ordered from dealerships at the time of automobile purchase, or during on-line or in-person registration renewal.

Established in 1967, the New Jersey Historic Trust is the only nonprofit historic preservation organization in New Jersey created by state law.

The Trust, a DCA affiliate, advances historic preservation in New Jersey for the benefit of future generations through education, stewardship and financial investment programs that save our heritage and strengthen our communities.