

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Luke Arterburn
The Andrews Agency
615.242.4400
luke@andrewspr.com



Jackson era foundation discovered at The Hermitage **Subsurface remains indicate the existence of agricultural building**

May 2, 2013 – A routine excavation at The Hermitage, Home of President Andrew Jackson, became an archaeological investigation as Jackson era remains were discovered in a maintenance trench earlier this year.

The subsurface remains, which include a stone foundation, were uncovered during the excavation of a trench running along The Hermitage’s maintenance facility. The utility work exposed a thick layer of brick and limestone rubble and displaced a large limestone block. Larry McKee, archaeologists from TRC Solutions and former staff architect at The Hermitage was contracted to analyze the finding.

“I’m always happy to return to The Hermitage and lend a hand on archaeological matters,” said McKee, senior archaeologist at TRC. “The recent find of the intact foundation in the new utility trench adds some more specific information on this area of the grounds. It also proves, once again, that there are still plenty of areas ripe for archaeological investigation on the property.”

McKee was able to clean out a segment of the trench, giving a clear view of the exposed remains. The large limestone block displaced by the trenching was identified as having the size and shape typically seen with other Jackson era masonry. Handmade bricks attached to the stone display the original fine sand mortar seen in the brick construction of antebellum structures elsewhere on the property.

“What makes this find so exciting is that the type of construction matches the remains of other buildings built here in the 1820s and 1830s,” said Tony Guzzi, vice-president of preservation & site operations at The Hermitage. “These two decades are when Jackson was at the height of his national fame and was able to invest huge sums in The Hermitage to make it better reflect American culture and his position in society.”

Hermitage historians, along with McKee, whose tenure as The Hermitage’s staff architect lasted ten years, believe the structure likely played an important role in farm and livestock activities at the plantation. There is documentation of farm buildings, including a brick barn, once existing on The Hermitage grounds. They also noted the presence of a thin layer of black material, mostly wood charcoal, which may have been related to a major fire in the early 20th century.

“It’s long been common knowledge that the current maintenance yard and building were built on top of what was the location of barns, stables, and other structures area,” said McKee. “Explorations in this

area have the potential to help flesh out knowledge of livestock-raising, other agricultural activities, and the Jackson family's general strategies for making The Hermitage a productive operation."

About The Hermitage

The Hermitage, Home of President Andrew Jackson, is one of the largest and most visited presidential homes in the United States. In 1856, the State of Tennessee purchased the property from the Jackson family, entrusting it to the Ladies' Hermitage Association in 1889 to operate as one of America's first historic site museums. Today, The Hermitage is a 1,120-acre National Historic Landmark with more than 30 historic buildings, including restored slave cabins. Thanks to efforts of this nonprofit organization, the mansion is the most accurately preserved early presidential home in the country. The Hermitage is a national model for authenticity, conservation, and historic preservation. In recent years, new interpretive initiatives and educational programs such as archaeology and the history of slavery have enhanced the experience of some 180,000 annual visitors, including 30,000 school children, from all 50 states and many foreign countries; in fact, we interpret The Hermitage mansion in five foreign languages. The property also receives 30,000 annual visits from the local community, including more than 1,000 children who play Little League baseball at The Hermitage's Rotary Park. The Hermitage is a "Partner Place" with the National Trust for Historic Preservation; and a site along the National Park Service's Trail of Tears National Historic Trail. For more information, visit www.thehermitage.com.

###