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1889 South Fork Fishing and Hunting Club Receives R.K. Mellon Family Foundation Grant

Over a hundred years ago, Andrew W. Mellon was one of the original members of the South Fork Fishing and Hunting Club. Now, a foundation formed by his family is coming to the aid of those fighting to preserve the historic Clubhouse, located in Saint Michael, PA.

On December 20, 1999 the R. K. Mellon Family Foundation, a private philanthropic organization founded by the family of Richard King Mellon, former chairman of Mellon Bank and conservationist, awarded a \$17,500 grant to the 1889 South Fork Fishing and Hunting Club Historic Preservation Society to support its second phase of development. This phase involves completion of roof repairs to the 118 year-old Clubhouse and creation of a feasibility and development package that the Society will use to attract a developer to complete restoration of the structure. "Mr. and Mrs. Seward Prosser Mellon expressed a particular interest in the fine work being done by the Society," said R. K. Mellon Family Foundation Director, Michael Watson.

Since it was founded on December 27, 1988, the South Fork Fishing and Hunting Club Historical Preservation Society has been recognized by the local community, the State of Pennsylvania and the United States Department of the Interior National Park Service for its continuing efforts to

preserve the St. Michael Historic District's significant structures and interpret the story of the South Fork Fishing and Hunting Club. The failure of the nearby South Fork Dam resulted in the devastating Johnstown Flood of May 31, 1889. Club members and cottage owners included such other preeminent 19th century industrialists as Henry Clay Frick, Andrew Carnegie, Philander C. Knox, Henry Phipps, Jr. and Robert Pitcairn. The South Fork Fishing and Hunting Club Historic District, located in the town of St. Michael, Pennsylvania, is currently listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

The Society has hosted annual field trips by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission's Young Historian Program and the Smithsonian Institution for the past four years. Regular visits to the Clubhouse and Historic District total approximately 62,530 people annually. The Society strongly believes that this grant, future alliances and investments like it, forged between the public and private sectors, will result in the full restoration and development of key St. Michael historic structures. The Society intends to create a sustainable heritage destination and educational attraction along the Path of Progress National Heritage Tour Route.

Within the past 11 years, the Society and its partners have helped complete phase one of its operational plan. This plan included stabilizing and rehabilitating three historic structures: the original St. Michael Clubhouse, the Clubhouse Annex, and the Brown Cottage in accordance with the U.S. Secretary of The Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. Moorhead Cottage, the fourth property, has had its foundation stabilized and has been slated for restoration, as additional funding becomes available.

"The recent R.K. Mellon Family Foundation grant will be used in accordance with the Society's mission and vision," said Stanley Pinkas, Society Chairman. "This is the first foundation grant provided by descendents of the original cottage owners. We are truly grateful for the forward-

thinking attitude of the Mellon family and their desire to support our efforts in preserving their family heritage and interpreting the history of this region.”

The mission of the Society is to define and develop the Forest Hills area historic assets as a means to encourage economic revitalization and development by making the St. Michael Historic District a significant tourism destination. The Society’s vision and firm commitment is to make the Forest Hills area a better place to live, work and play by interpreting conserving and making available to the public the unique history and heritage of the town, through its people and stories.

“We have been providing the Society’s property management services at no cost for approximately one year,” said David Kahley, Executive Director of The Progress Fund. “The Society and The Progress Fund Board of Directors have mutually agreed to use a large portion of the funding received by the R. K. Mellon Family Foundation to start developing and marketing the clubhouse for rehabilitation and reuse while preserving its historic integrity. We are very excited about the potential opportunities this can create. We share the mission and vision of the Society and have helped other tourism and travel related businesses in a 12 county region remove roadblocks and become highly successful operations.”

More information about The Progress Fund and the 1889 South Fork Fishing and Hunting Club Historical Preservation Society Project can be found at www.progressfund.org. Information about the R. K. Mellon Family Foundation is available at www.fdncenter.org/grantmaker/rkmellon.html.

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The Progress Fund is a nonprofit corporation working to create economic opportunity in southwestern and south-central Pennsylvania by lending needed capital and providing technical assistance to small businesses. The Progress Fund is a “Westsylvania Partners” affiliate.