**Press Release**

**For Immediate Release**

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**Re:** Mississippi Heritage Trust Purchases Oldfields

The Mississippi Heritage Trust is pleased to announce that it has purchased the Lewis House, also known as Oldfields, in Gautier, Mississippi. “Due to a generous donation from a longtime supporter of the Mississippi Heritage Trust, we are able to purchase Oldfields to ensure its preservation. The Mississippi Heritage Trust will work with the citizens of Gautier and preservation advocates statewide to identify a use that respects the residential character of the neighborhood while protecting the architectural and artistic legacy of this important historic place,” said Lolly Rash, Executive Director of the Mississippi Heritage Trust.

Constructed c. 1845 as a residence for planter, merchant, politician and Civil War officer Alfred E. Lewis, the front gallery of this Greek Revival-style house faces the Mississippi Sound. Named for the orchards and agricultural fields that once surrounded it, Oldfields was later acquired by the Grinstead family. Agnes (Sissie) Grinstead married renowned artist Walter Anderson and the couple and their children lived at Oldfields for several years, during which time Walter Anderson did some of his most significant work.

“The Anderson story could not be written without the Oldfields property. It was during the family’s time living in this historic home in the 1940s that Walter Anderson began producing the large-scale block prints that made him famous. And it was from the Oldfields shoreline that he launched his skiff for the barrier island wilderness. The Museum is excited to be a part of preserving this important piece of Mississippi architectural and art history", said Julian Rankin, Executive Director of the Walter Anderson Museum of Art.

Damaged in Hurricane Katrina, Oldfields was named to the Mississippi Heritage Trust’s list of the 10 Most Endangered Historic Places in Mississippi in 2011 and today sits vacant and deteriorating. Former MHT board member and Lewis family descendant Martha Duvall has long been a champion for saving Oldfields. “I am thrilled that the Mississippi Heritage Trust is purchasing the Lewis House, the organization is the perfect steward for this historic gem. I am committed to helping with the restoration in any way I can”.

Retired Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer Ken P’Pool, who worked for years following Hurricane Katrina on coast recovery efforts with the Mississippi Department of Archives and History’s coast field office, lauded the news. “MDAH attempted to provide grant assistance for the rehabilitation of Oldfields after the storm,” P’Pool explained, “but because of a protracted legal dispute between the owners of the property at the time, the grant could not be awarded. Oldfields is much too important to the history of Mississippi to loose”.

Established in 1992, the Mississippi Heritage Trust works to save and renew places meaningful to Mississippians and their history. To learn more, visit mississippiheritage.com.