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Chaffee Crossing Expands National Historic Register Listing

FORT SMITH, Ark. (April 30, 2015) – Chaffee Crossing Historic Preservation Organization (CCHPO) is proud to announce the expansion of the Camp Chaffee Historic District at Chaffee Crossing, Fort Smith, Arkansas. With the assistance of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, 14 additional buildings and structures have been added to the existing listing on the National Register of Historic Places that was established in 2011. The district, comprised of WWII-era barracks, administration, dining and recreational buildings and structures, is primarily located between Terry St., Taylor Ave., Ward Ave., Ellis St. and Darby Ave.

New additions to the listing are the Fort Chaffee Redevelopment Authority office, 7020 Taylor Ave., Fort Smith, which served as a Headquarters Building #100 from 1941 to 1997, as well as the complex of administration buildings on each side of the office. Also included is the Vietnam Veterans Chapter #467 Museum, a theater building currently occupied by the McCafferty Irish Dance Council, a fire station remodeled in 2011 now being used by ATU-Ozark Campus, the Enchanted Doll Museum, Fantasies at the Fort, and one other privately owned building. Other structures added to the register listing include a chimney from a camp recreational hall, two building foundations, a fountain foundation, and a section of railroad between Taylor Avenue and Ward Avenue.

Buildings listed on the National Historic Register of Historic Places are eligible for up to 45% tax credits on approved restoration. Currently there are 35 buildings in the Chaffee Crossing Historic District available for sale or lease.

The value of a historic district such as this is an integral part of Chaffee Crossing development. FCRA executive director Ivy Owen says, "FCRA completely supports the expansion of the historic district because we feel like it will enhance our quality of place. More than 1,100 residences have been built at Chaffee Crossing and we want to provide fun, entertaining and educational opportunities to those families who are making this their home. It is important for museums and historical exhibits to be an integral part of a community. This expansion helps us fulfill that goal."

FCRA Historic District and Museum director, Joseph Chasteen, says this is an ongoing effort to memorialize the impact of Camp Chaffee (known as Fort Chaffee since 1956) on the region. He says, "Fort Chaffee has had an economic and cultural impact on Fort Smith, the state of Arkansas and U.S. Army history for 74 years. Fort Chaffee Redevelopment Authority (FCRA) created the Chaffee Crossing Historic Preservation Organization non-profit and the historic district designation to help future generations know, honor and respect this history. This is just one of many Chaffee Crossing Historic District projects we are exploring to further promote the importance and vitality of the site. Our next project is a campaign to construct a Chaffee Veterans Memorial Plaza with engraved bricks honoring veterans and loved ones that will be launched later this year."

Chasteen also gives credit to the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program and the National Register and Survey Program team who worked to help CCHPO achieve the additional listings. Those team members are Travis Ratermann, Survey Historian; Ralph Wilcox, Survey Coordinator; and Callie Williams, National Register Historian.

The district is currently home to the Museum of Chaffee History and the Chaffee Barbershop Museum, open Monday-Saturday 9:00 am to 4:00 pm. The Vietnam Veterans Museum is also open by appointment (Stanley Kilgore, 479-461-0647). Field trips and group tours are welcome and can include guided walking tours. The museums house and display the largest collection of artifacts related to the historic eras of the Camp Chaffee Army military base from WWII to more current Fort Chaffee eras. Research materials are also available upon request. Questions may be directed to Joseph Chasteen, Director of Historic District and Museums, (479) 434-6774 or history@chaffeecrossing.com.

Chaffee Crossing is Arkansas' premiere economic development project located within the cities of Fort Smith and Barling. The 7,000-acre development was formerly part of Fort Chaffee Army National Guard Joint Readiness Training Center. Operated by the Fort Chaffee Redevelopment Authority trust, Chaffee Crossing is bringing industrial, commercial, residential, historical and recreational growth that is boosting the economy of the entire region. More information about Chaffee Crossing and the Camp Chaffee Historic District can be found at www.chaffeecrossing.com.