



HISTORY CENTER OF OLMSTED COUNTY

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Director

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History Center of Olmsted County Receives Jeffris Family Foundation Challenge Grant

Launches \$3 Million Campaign to Restore the Historic George Stoppel Farmstead

Rochester, Minnesota – The History Center of Olmsted County (HCOC) announces a \$3 million capital campaign to restore the George Stoppel Farmstead, a rare, intact mid-1800s farmstead in Rochester built by German immigrant brothers. HCOC received a challenge grant of \$833,000 from the Jeffris Family Foundation to spur on the campaign.

The George Stoppel Farmstead is listed on the National Register of Historic Places for its statewide significance in the areas of architecture, immigration, settlement, and agricultural history. The capital project focuses on four authentic structures in close proximity on the HCOC campus: the Barn, Stone House, Smokehouse, and hand-dug caves. Post-restoration, these will all come to life in a next phase that includes interactive exhibits, activities, and recreation spaces as outlined in HCOC's award-winning interpretive plan. Educational themes will center on farming and farm life, immigration, and Indigenous culture.

"The George Stoppel Farmstead is a Midwestern jewel," said Thomas M. Jeffris, president of the Jeffris Family Foundation, which funds projects committed to high historic preservation standards for sites of national or statewide significance. "Historic preservation is an important way for us to transmit our understanding of the past to future generations."

Using a \$500,000 state-funded Legacy Grant and \$58,000 in other early donations, HCOC has nearly completed restoration of the Smokehouse and begun work on the Barn. Under the guidance of Miller Dunwiddie Architects, the project follows historic preservation best practices and entails meticulous restoration of the Stoppels' old-world stonemasonry.

The History Center is seeking to raise an additional \$1.6 million by June 30, 2026 to meet the Jeffris Foundation's 2:1 challenge grant and plans to complete the restoration work by 2028.

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Realizing the Potential of 54 Acres

Restoration of the George Stoppel Farmstead is the first phase of HCOC's re-imagining of its entire 54-acre campus to become a premier educational and recreational destination for southern Minnesota. Funded by a \$65,000 Heritage Partnership Program grant awarded by the Minnesota Historical Society, HCOC is embarking on an interdisciplinary master planning process to reinvigorate its historically significant property for the benefit of Olmsted County residents and visitors.

"History has called our generation to restore and preserve this precious piece of yesteryear and make it available for the public to enjoy and learn from for generations to come," said David Senjem, Olmsted County Commissioner, former Minnesota State Senator, and member of the HCOC Board of Directors.

The early concept, anchored by restoration and activation of the George Stoppel Farmstead, includes a significant expansion of the History Center museum and offices, creation of an historic town square (1860-1920), crop demonstration plots, community gardens, and multi-purpose outdoor spaces with nature trails and playgrounds. The vision is to create an integrated and interconnected campus that will serve educational, recreational, agricultural, and community-building purposes.

"We have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to preserve and revitalize this unique property to create an intergenerational and cross-cultural learning hub," said Wayne Gannaway, HCOC executive director. "I look forward to engaging with the community on this important undertaking. Community support will be vital to the project's success."

To craft the master plan, HCOC will work closely with community groups, including long-time partner and campus tenant the Mechanical History Roundtable, members of the Dakota tribe, the Roosters vintage base ball club, Village Agricultural Cooperative, community gardeners, and others.

The master planning process will be completed in 2025 with implementation over the following decade.

About the History Center of Olmsted County

The mission of the History Center of Olmsted County is to give people of all ages and backgrounds access and opportunity to learn about the past through interpretive programs and exhibits, research, publications, and events. HCOC was established in 1926 and is an independent, not-for-profit 501(c)(3). Each year HCOC, together with enthusiastic volunteers, provides presentations, educational and outreach programs, special events, museum exhibits, and more. We currently own and operate two historic buildings and two historic farmsteads in addition to operating seasonal tours of Mayowood. Museum and Grounds are open Tuesdays - Saturdays 9 am to 5 pm. For more information, visit olmstedhistory.com.

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HCOC Social Media

Facebook: www.facebook.com/OlmstedHistoryCenter

Instagram: olmstedhistorycenter

Attachments:

- Rendering of restored farmstead by 106 Group {Stoppel Family Field.jpg}
 - Rendering of History Center expansion by CRW Architecture {History Center Prelim Exterior.jpg}
 - Preliminary master plan rendering by CRW Architecture (HCOC Prelim Masterplan.jpg)
- Hi resolution .jpgs available upon request.**

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