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SOUTHERN CULTURAL
HERITAGE FOUNDATION

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Endowment initiated in honor of Mother Clementine Phelan and the Sisters of Mercy

A fund for the rehabilitation of the 1868 SCHF Convent

VICKSBURG, MS (September 24, 2008): The Southern Cultural Heritage Foundation is honored to accept the contributions of Mrs. Edna Henry Hosemann, Mrs. Elizabeth Henry Nelson and Mr. George Nelson and Pat and Lance Dichter as they initiate a memorial fund in honor of their aunt, Mother Clementine Phelan, and the Sisters of Mercy. These funds will be limited to the rehabilitation and maintenance of the 1868 SCHF Convent.

“This funding will be an important part of the many significant items that need to be addressed with the maintenance and rehabilitation of the Convent,” said Annette Kirklin, Southern Cultural Heritage Foundation executive director. *“We are so grateful to Ms. Hosemann and her family for initiating this special memorial.”*

Mother Clementine Phelan was the eldest child of James and Elizabeth ODonnel Phelan. She succeeded Mother Margaret May in 1920 as Mother Superior. Mother Clementine worked in advancing the cause of education and is well-known to the people of Vicksburg. Under her direction, St. Francis Xavier worked diligently to meet increasing demands of the state. This opportunity led the Sisters to attend standard colleges and meet the requirements of accredited schools. It was due to the foresight of Mother Clementine that funds for the Academy building were formed.

The Sisters of Mercy opened the first convent in Mississippi in 1860 located in Vicksburg. Under the guidance and protection of Father Francis S. Leray, who was pastor at St. Paul’s, six Mercy sisters came to establish St. Francis Xavier Academy. They set up one of the most influential schools in Mississippi’s history. The Civil War disrupted the operation of the school only temporarily. During the war the Sisters ministered to the sick and wounded throughout Mississippi and Alabama, impacting everyone they met. By 1864, the sisters were back in Vicksburg, reopening their school. They taught in the historic buildings until 1991 when the few remaining nuns moved to a new convent and the school relocated to more modern facilities. The Old St. Francis Xavier Convent and Academy consists of 5 buildings covering an entire city block in downtown Vicksburg. In 1994, the City bought the block and formed the Southern Cultural Heritage Center. In 2001, the City of Vicksburg signed over the deed for the Cultural Center to the Southern Cultural Heritage Foundation. Since that time, the SCHF provides services through funding from corporate and private gifts, membership fees, and national, state, and local grants.

The Southern Cultural Heritage Foundation is non-profit organization that strives to preserve the history, culture and architecture of this area and provide all citizens with the opportunity to experience cultural, artistic and educational enrichment.

Anyone wishing to contribute to this memorial fund for the 1868 Convent can send your donation to the Southern Cultural Heritage Foundation, 1302 Adams Street, Vicksburg, MS 39180 and specify that the funds are designated for the Convent memorial fund. Your donation is tax-deductible. For more information please contact the SCHF office at 601-631-2997 or email info@southernculture.org.

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