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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Historic Dr. J. A. Brown Mansion in Danger of Demolition
The Wilmington Housing Partnership Applies for Permit to Demolish the House
Listed on the National Historic Register to Make Way for New Housing

WILMINGTON, DE – March 11, 2021 – The mansion once owned by Dr. J. A. Brown and listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1979, is in danger of demolition. In February, the Wilmington Housing Partnership (WHP) presented a plan at the monthly meeting of The Wilmington Design Review and Preservation Commission (WDRPC) to demolish this historic house to develop the land for a housing complex. While there are development alternatives that would allow for the mansion to remain onsite, Bob Weir, president of WHP did not indicate that they are actively considering alternatives. The WDRPC tabled the proposal due to an incomplete application, but the WHP plans to submit a complete plan, possibly as soon as the next meeting on March 17.

The property, a late-Federal stone dwelling that formerly included several out-buildings forming a 100-acre farm, is located at 7th and Anchorage Streets. The Browntown neighborhood of Wilmington gets its name from Dr. Brown and his property, which was originally built between 1819 and 1827 by Jeremiah Woolston, a prominent Wilmington banker and an abolitionist. In 1803, J. Woolston signed a petition to the Delaware state legislature along with 9 others stating that they, “conceive it be our duty to call the attention of our Representatives once more to the situation of the People of Colour among us.” They uphold that “the recent calamities in the West Indies” and “the alarms which have disquieted the minds of our brethren in the Southern States and rendered property less secure, are motives we believe sufficiently strong to induce such steps as may lead to a gradual Abolition of Slavery.”

Woolston sold the house to Captain John Gallagher of the U.S. Navy, who served in the War of 1812 as a lieutenant on the frigate “United States” under Captain Stephen Decatur and participated in the defeat of the British ship *Macedonian*. Upon his retirement from the Navy, Gallagher named the property “The Anchorage.” Dr. Brown purchased the house in 1848, after coming to Wilmington to expand his business selling medicinal tonics and sodas. Brown was also a philanthropist who, after 1856, built The Living Home nearby to provide housing for the sick, poor, and mentally ill.

Preservation Delaware, CHAD, and the Delaware Historical Society contend that the house should not be demolished owing to the many contributions to history of the house’s owners, and the architectural features that merited addition to the National Register of Historic Places in 1979.

Anyone who wishes to voice their support for saving the Dr. J. A. Brown house from demolition may contact Patricia A. Maley, AICP, Senior Planner/Wilmington Design Review and Preservation Commission Coordinator via email at pmaley@WilmingtonDE.gov. The seven-member Design Review

and Preservation Commission includes Patricia A. Maley and six Mayoral appointments. The chairperson of the committee is Peter Von Glahn.

About Preservation Delaware

Preservation Delaware, Inc. is the statewide nonprofit organization dedicated to the preservation of Delaware's architectural heritage and historic settings through education, public policy initiatives and technical assistance. For more information, call (302) 322-7100, email info@preservationde.org, or visit www.preservationde.org.

About UD's Biden School of Public Policy and Administration Center for Historic Architecture and Design (CHAD)

The Center for Historic Architecture and Design (CHAD) helps communities preserve their heritage in the face of rapid development and change. CHAD ensures that preservation and historic resources are part of planning and policy development at local, state, national, and international levels. CHAD excels at research and documentation of historic properties and traditional technologies; National Register nominations; and cultural resource surveys that contribute to creation of historic districts, heritage tourism, and similar efforts. For more information, call (303) 831-8097, email clreedy@udel.edu, or visit www.bidenschool.udel.edu/chad

About the Delaware Historical Society

The Delaware Historical Society owns and operates the Delaware History Museum; the Jane and Littleton Mitchell Center for African American Heritage; a nationally recognized Research Library; Old Town Hall; Willingtown Square, four 18th-century houses surrounding a picturesque urban courtyard located in downtown Wilmington; and the Read House & Gardens, a National Historic Landmark. For more information, call (302) 655-7161, email deinfo@dehistory.org or visit www.dehistory.org.

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