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## **Ground is Broken for new Homestead Heritage Center**

### **Striking new Facility will Commemorate the Homestead Act and Significantly Enhance the Visitor Experience at the Homestead National Monument of America**

April 21, 2006 (Beatrice, NE). Ground was broken today for the new Homestead Heritage Center at Homestead National Monument of America. The new 10,600-SF facility, designed by GWWO, Inc./Architects (GWWO) of Baltimore, Maryland, will commemorate the Homestead Act of 1862, one of the most significant and enduring events in the westward expansion of the United States.

Approved as part of the Park's General Management Plan in December 1999, the \$4.79 million center will include 21 exhibit areas displaying many of the more than 52,000 artifacts in the Monument's collection, most of which have never been available for public viewing due to limited space in existing facilities. The center will also house a theater, information services, bookstore, curatorial and office spaces and an area for viewing the homesteading land records that the Monument hopes to soon bring online and make available for public research.

The dramatic design is based on the homesteading experience and is a distinguished form on the landscape. "The building is intended to grow from the land and to symbolize the struggles and triumphs of the original homesteaders," says GWWO President and Design Principal Alan Reed.

“The new facility will have a significant impact on our ability to not only tell the homesteading story, but to protect and preserve its artifacts and history,” says Mark Engler, Superintendent of Homestead National Monument of America.

Homestead National Monument of America, located in southeast Nebraska, commemorates the Homestead Act of 1862 and the far-reaching effects it had upon the landscape and people of the plains. By granting 160 acres of free land to claimants, the Act allowed nearly any man or woman a chance to live the American dream. Located on the site of the one of the first homesteads claimed, the National Monument is a tribute to the courage and tenacity of the early settlers.

GWWO, Inc./Architects is a full service architectural firm that specializes in the planning and design of cultural and educational facilities, with emphasis on quality design that is both inspirational and evocative. Other current projects include the new Ford Orientation Center and new Donald W. Reynolds Museum and Education Center at George Washington’s Mount Vernon, a new Education Center for the Russell W. Peterson Urban Wildlife Refuge in Wilmington, Delaware and the adaptive reuse of an historic bank complex to house new facilities for the Fredericksburg Area Museum and Cultural Center in Fredericksburg, Virginia. The firm celebrates its 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2006.

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