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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

PRESERVATION GROUPS & GENEVA CITY COUNCIL REQUEST ALTERNATIVES TO DEMOLITION OF PARROTT HALL, HISTORIC GENEVA BUILDING

Preservation coalition announces results of engineering report.

(Geneva, NY – June 14, 2018) The Landmark Society of Western New York, The Preservation League of New York State, Geneva Historical Society and key government officials are joining with the Friends of Parrott Hall as the Parrott Hall Coalition, trying to delay the demolition of Parrott Hall by its owner, New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation. They presented the results of a building assessment performed by a structural engineer at a news conference on Thursday, June 14 at 2 p.m. in front of the building on the campus of Cornell's Experiment Station and urged the owners to explore alternatives to preserve the building.

Parrott Hall, built in 1852, and initially called Denton House, was the original farm homestead purchased by the State of New York to establish the Agricultural Experiment Station in Geneva. It was the first building in the city of Geneva listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In 1975 ownership was transferred to the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) for the express purpose of creating a State Historic Site.

The Parrott Hall Coalition recently hired a structural engineer to prepare a report assessing the structural integrity of the building. The report was funded, in part, by a \$2100 grant from The Landmark Society's Preservation Grant Fund. With permission from NYS OPRHP, the Coalition's structural engineer, James D'Aloisio, P.E., SECB, LEED AP, Managing Partner of Klepper, Hahn & Hyatt in Syracuse, conducted a review of the interior of the structure.

“As we suspected, the report concludes that the building is not in imminent danger of collapsing,” said Kerry Lippincott, Executive Director of the Geneva Historical Society. “A simple tarp over the roof would go a long way towards halting further deterioration as the building awaits a plan for reuse.”

“Despite significant localized distress to some areas of roof and floor framing, the overall building is stable,” said D’Aloisio.

“Little was done to maintain the building,” said Bruce Reisch, Chair, Friends of Parrott Hall. “As a result of neglect, it is in a deteriorated state, but it is not beyond repair. It was the responsibility of NYS Parks to preserve this building, but now they are seeking bids to demolish Parrott Hall this summer, rather than use taxpayer funds more wisely to repair and stabilize.”

Officials of The Landmark Society of Western New York and Preservation League of New York State agree. “We find it very ironic that OPRHP, the agency responsible for helping New York communities preserve their historic resources, is pursuing demolition of an iconic historic structure,” said Wayne Goodman, Executive Director. “We strongly oppose the demolition of this historic building and we are committed to its preservation and its role in continued community revitalization. So we are asking OPRHP to put the brakes on demolition and give us a chance to further evaluate.”

“The Preservation League of NYS stands with the rest of the Parrott Hall Coalition in asking NYS OPRHP, the state agency dedicated to historic preservation, to allow the newly-formed Parrott Hall Coalition time to develop a reuse plan and fund the immediate work necessary to eliminate any public health and safety threat posed by Parrott Hall,” said Jay DiLorenzo, President. “We have seen NYS OPRHP afford that opportunity to other sites around the state in similar condition and ask the agency for consistency in how it treats historic properties under its stewardship.”

The City of Geneva has experienced a wave of revitalization over the last few years, much of it based on protection of its historic heritage, a pillar of the City's Comprehensive Plan. Local officials are also opposed to the demolition. "With this new information, City Council urges OPRHP to pause the demolition of Parrott Hall for one year for Parrott Hall Coalition to obtain a private developer willing to remedy the environmental issues and restore the building for a determined use; work with Cornell University to agree on a use that would align with the rebranding of the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station as Cornell AgriTech; and work with OPRHP on the plan to transfer ownership to an appropriate entity," shared Sage Gerling, Acting City Manager.

“It is a shame the state would choose demolition over preservation given New York’s rich land-grant history and commitment to partnerships advancing agriculture and the economy,” said Louis Guard, County Supervisor representing District 2 in Geneva. “Parrot Hall should stand as a symbol of this partnership.”