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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Mason Libraries is new home for the Appalachian Trail Conservancy archives

FAIRFAX, VA – May 23, 2022: The George Mason University Libraries’ Special Collections Research Center (SCRC) is pleased to announce the donation of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) collection — a significant addition to SCRC’s archival collections of national importance.

The largest donation of materials received by SCRC to date, the core of the collection contains a broad array of items, including maps, letters, trail shelter logs, legal documents, publications, internal corporate documents, and images as well as Trail ephemera, such as patches, signs, and more. Dating from prior to the ATC’s beginnings in 1925 through the present, the collection encompasses more than 850 linear feet of unprocessed materials related to the famous Appalachian Trail (A.T.) spanning the East Coast from Maine to Georgia. The materials correspondingly document the growth of the ATC from a small confederation to a volunteer-centered but fully staffed nonprofit with a unique mission and international support.

Dean of Libraries and University Librarian John Zenelis comments, “The Libraries is pleased to enter this partnership with the ATC and become the home of this remarkable collection – a significant cultural heritage collection, with great promise for research and scholarship. We are committed to ensuring that best curatorial and archival practices are applied in managing both the physical materials (and eventually digital aspects) of the collection.”

About the collection, ATC President and CEO Sandra Marra shares, “The Appalachian Trail Conservancy is proud to partner with George Mason University to ensure these important artifacts of Appalachian Trail history are preserved. Each of these items helps tell the story of the vision that set the construction of the Trail in motion, the thousands of volunteers and advocates who helped make the Trail a reality, and the continued efforts to help ensure the Trail continues to benefit us all for generations to come.”

The history of the A.T. is not only one of outdoor exploration but also of many important facets of twentieth century U.S. history. A close examination of this history quickly leads one to considerations of the conservation movement, economic developments, indigenous peoples, race relations, gender ideology, technological advances, and more.

Lynn Eaton, Director of SCRC, remarks, “This is an amazing collection, reflecting a strong area of research for scholars to explore for years to come. Once we have processed, arranged, and described the materials, we look forward to welcoming students and researchers to examine them. One of SCRC’s main tenets is supporting the research and teaching mission of the university, and this collection will be no exception.” While in the ATC’s care, more than two dozen books and dissertations were derived from these archives.

As the centennial of the ATC approaches, the Libraries is investigating opportunities to support the organization and preservation of these unique and historically important items. We look forward to recognizing this vital national heritage in the future with a fully processed and accessible collection.

ABOUT THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL CONSERVANCY:

The ATC was founded in 1925 by volunteers and federal officials working to build a continuous footpath along the Appalachian Mountains. A unit of the National Park System, the A.T. ranges from Maine to Georgia and is 2,194.3 miles in length. It is the longest hiking-only footpath in the world. The mission of the ATC is to protect, manage, and advocate for the Appalachian National Scenic Trail. The ATC is part of a unique cooperative-management system, working with numbers of local, state and federal partners to ensure greater protections for the Trail. Their partners include the National Park Service, the U.S. Forest Service, dozens of state agencies and 31 local Trail-maintaining clubs. Learn more at www.appalachiantrail.org.

ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES & THE SPECIAL COLLECTIONS RESEARCH CENTER: The University Libraries, as a core academic function of George Mason University, serves as both a repository of and digital portal to the wider universe of knowledge. The Libraries fosters innovation, originality, and imagination by qualitatively managing access to scholarship and information, providing expert consultation in the research process, actively teaching the effective and critical use of information, and disseminating research and scholarship through publishing endeavors. The Special Collections Research Center (SCRC) is the unit within the University Libraries charged with acquiring, documenting, preserving, and providing access to primary research collections and documents. SCRC also manages the non-current and archival records of George Mason University, is responsible for the preservation and access to the University's theses and dissertations, and undertakes, through its Oral History program, the creation of audiovisual documentary resources. SCRC services, collections, and programs support the teaching and research activities of George Mason University and also serve the community at large. Learn more at www.library.gmu.edu.

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