



NEWS RELEASE

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CONTACT: Estella Espinosa

(713) 845-1135

(832) 465-4782

Emancipation Park Celebrates 135 Years of Freedom

The Houston Parks and Recreation Department, in conjunction with the Friends of Emancipation Park, will celebrate 135 Year Anniversary of Emancipation Park on July 10, 2007 at 10:30 a.m.

In 1872, the Colored People's Festival and Emancipation Park Association bought Emancipation Park as a fairground for Emancipation Day (Juneteenth) celebrations with \$1,000 as a down payment. The organization was formed by Antioch Baptist Church and Trinity Methodist Episcopal Church with some of the communities most well known families of the time as the original trustees, including Richard Allen, Richard Brock, Alias Dibbrels and Rev. Jack Yates. When taxation problems arose, the privately owned park was foreclosed on and the Juneteenth celebration fairground was closed. In 1916, an appeal was made to the city to lift the mortgage and in 1918 the land became city property dedicated to the use of "colored citizens."

Today that history is being honored and preserved with the help of the Friends of Emancipation Park.

"In 1872 freed-slaves purchased the land known today as Emancipation Park. The conscious decision to provide a place where freedom can be celebrated by the whole community for generations to come is a significance legacy," said Bill Milligan, President, Friends of Emancipation Park. "We are happy to celebrate that legacy on July 10, 2007, as we commemorate the 135th Anniversary of Emancipation Park."

The preservation and recounting of Emancipation Park's History is of importance to the Houston Parks and Recreation Department as well.

"Emancipation Park is rich in history for this community and for Houston and we are dedicated to preserving the vision of the men and women who originally purchased the land," said Joe Turner, Director, Houston Parks and Recreation Department. "We believe that understanding where and who our parks came from helps future generations understand why a park should be of importance to a community."

For information on Emancipation Park or the Houston Parks and Recreation Department, please call (713) 845-1135 or visit us online at www.houstonparks.org.