AFRICAN BURYING GROUND

Memorial park set to open in May

Multiple events planned to celebrate

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PORTSMOUTH — City officials have announced a series of events to celebrate the planned completion of the African Burying Ground Memorial Park at the end of May.

The official opening of the park will be highlighted by “a reburial” of the remains recovered from the burial ground on Saturday, May 23 at the Chestnut Street location. The ceremony will start at 9 a.m.

“We are returning the Chestnut Street site to sacred ground; the Portsmouth community has found a meaningful and powerful way of honoring those buried beneath the street,” said Vernis Jackson, chair of the African Burying Ground Committee, in a statement. “These events are about remembering the dead and returning the remains to the earth, as well as acknowledging the site’s history and celebrating the community-wide effort that has made this project possible.”

Other events will include the African Burying Ground Ancestral Vigil, which will be held at the New Hope Baptist

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Church on May 22, with services at 7 a.m., 7 p.m. and midnight, according to the city.
There will also be an unveiling of the art work at the memorial park at 8:30 a.m. on May 23.
Community Development Director David Moore, one of the people coordinating the celebration, said the African Burying Ground Committee expects "hundreds of people" will turn out for the events in May.
"We are planning on somewhat larger crews than have turned out for past events," Moore said Wednesday.
Moore acknowledged the city’s long winter has impacted the schedule for completion of the project, but committee members expect to be ready on time.
"Weather is a factor in any construction project but we think we have sufficient contingencies in place," Moore said.

African Burying Ground celebration

May 20: On-site event with artist and sculptor Jerome Meadows, Portsmouth Middle School students and the community for artist discussion and to view student-designed tiles in the park’s decorative railing.

May 22: African Burying Ground Ancestral Vigil at New Hope Baptist Church on Peverly Hill Road. Services at 7 p.m., midnight and 7 a.m. with opportunities throughout the night for members of the community to participate.

May 23: Unveiling of art work on-site at the burying ground, 8:30 a.m.; reburial ceremony at burying ground, 9 a.m.; public celebration in the Portsmouth Middle School auditorium, 10:30 a.m.; Blind Boys of Alabama concert at The Music Hall, 7 p.m.

For full schedule and details, visit www.AfricanBuryingGroundNH.org