



## EMANCIPATION PARK CONSERVANCY

The Emancipation Park Conservancy was founded in 2014 to enhance Emancipation Park by preserving its integrity and enriching its heritage as a local, state, national and international landmark and community center.

## EMANCIPATION PARK

### About: Carving out a Green Space for the Community

Established in 1872 by recently freed slaves, Richard Allen, Richard Brock, Elias Dibble, Jack Yates and members of the community, Emancipation Park is the oldest park in Houston and the state of Texas. The four founders saw a need for a place dedicated to serving the African American community, especially during the height of segregation. Originally, the park was merely an open field with a racetrack around the perimeter and an open-air pavilion in the center. Now the Park sits on 10 acres in the heart of Houston, Texas' Third Ward neighborhood.

Today, it features recreational resources as well as educational, historical and cultural resources to help enrich the lives of members of the surrounding community. It is a masterpiece of landscape architecture created to provide a scenic retreat from urban life for the enjoyment of all.

### Timeline: History Paves the Path for Emancipation Park

- *January 1, 1863* – President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation declaring “that all persons held as slaves” within the rebellious states “are, and henceforward shall be free.”
- *June 19, 1865* – Union soldiers arrived in Galveston, alerting residents that slavery had been abolished via the Emancipation Proclamation.
- *June 19, 1866* – The first Juneteenth celebrations took place.
- *June 19, 1872* – Reverend Jack Yates, Richard Allen, Richard Brock and Reverend Elias Dibble purchased the land now known as Emancipation Park.
- *January 1, 1916* – The founders donated the park to the city.
- *January 1938* – The park’s recreation center, swimming pool and bathhouse were designed and constructed.
- *January 1, 1974* – Urban redevelopment cleaved the Third Ward from the City of Houston via 59 South Freeway, creating a physical barrier and an imbalance in development and gentrification.
- *January 1, 1980* – Juneteenth officially became a Texas state holiday.
- *June 19, 2006* – Third Ward community members form the “Friends of Emancipation Park” to revitalize the park after decades of neglect.
- *November 7, 2007* – The Houston City Council designates the park as a protected historic landmark.
- *October 26, 2013* – Renovations are initiated for the park.
- *June 19, 2014* – Emancipation Park Conservancy established as a 501 (c)(3)
- *January 19, 2017* – Emancipation Park renovations were completed and the park was rededicated during its annual Juneteenth Celebration.
- *June 17, 2021* – Juneteenth officially became recognized as a federal holiday.

### **Amenities: Creating Community Spaces**

Emancipation Park features indoor and outdoor spaces available for Houstonians' use and enjoyment.

Indoor amenities include conference and meeting rooms, a stage, a gym and other gathering spaces.

Outdoor Spaces include an open-air stage, sprawling lawn, playground and two pavilions. The park also includes picnic table clusters, a swimming pool and fields and courts for multiple sports.

### **Awards & Designations**

In 2007, the city granted a *Registered Protected Landmark Designation* for Emancipation Park and its historic buildings.

The park received a *state historical marker in 2008*, from the Texas Historical Commission, which recognizes it as a significant part of Texas history.

In 2018, the park was designated as an *historic site of the UNESCO Site of Memory Associated with the Slave Route Project*. UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, maintains an international registry of locations associated within the transatlantic slave trade.

In 2019, the park received *Urban Land Institute's Development of Distinction Award*, recognizing Emancipation Park's public open space.

In 2019, the park received the *Preservation Houston's Pier & Bean Future Landmark Award*.

In 2020, the park received the *Emancipation National Historical Trail designation*. The Emancipation National Historic Trail Study Act outlines the trail as a 51-mile route from the former Osterman Building and Reedy Chapel in Galveston to Freedmen's Town and Emancipation Park in Houston, following the path of many newly emancipated blacks as they spread the news of freedom following Major Granger's announcement of emancipation in Galveston on June 19, 1865.

In 2020, the park received the *Third Ward Cultural District Designation* by the Texas Commission in the Arts.

In 2021, the park received the *Preservation Houston's Martha Peterson Award* for carrying on the traditions and legacy of the park's founders through collaborative programs and virtual content.

### **General**

Emancipation Park

3018 Emancipation Ave, Houston, TX 77004

713.528.1872

<https://epconservancy.org/>