



Office of the City Manager

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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City to Hold Program for Freedom & Remembrance Memorial Park on June 14 *Park is located near the previous site of Moffatt Cemetery in South Peoria*

May 17, 2023 (Peoria, IL) The City of Peoria will host a program on Flag Day, Wednesday, June 14 at 10:00 AM to acknowledge the naming of a parcel located at 3917 S.W. Adams Street as Freedom & Remembrance Memorial Park. The program will be held across the street at the corner of West Montana and South Griswold Streets. Street parking will be available.

In 1836, this parcel was part of a larger tract of land granted to Aquilla Moffatt and subsequently became known as Moffatt Cemetery. Between the 1850s and 1905, more than 2,700 persons were buried there as well as remains of unknown persons placed in a mass grave after being removed from another Peoria cemetery. In 1905, the Peoria City Board of Health ordered the closure of the cemetery which was then abandoned. Records show that by the 1950s the property was untended and overgrown, many gravestones had been removed or damaged, and the cemetery records were said to be lost.

The area was then prepared for commercial development and street expansion. Around 100 individuals are known to have been removed to other cemeteries from 1887-1936, including nine members of the Moffatt family. However, more than 2,600 Peoria residents remain buried at the site. Included are 52 veterans, 49 of whom are Union Civil War veterans, and Nance Legins-Costly, the first enslaved person that Abraham Lincoln helped free when he won her case before the Illinois Supreme Court in 1841. Several buried there have links to the American Revolution.

A group of local volunteers has led the effort to create Peoria Freedom & Remembrance Memorial, which includes three large Illinois State Historical Society markers, a lighted flagpole, and an information storyboard. The mission of these volunteers was to establish a “fitting tribute to these forgotten citizens of Peoria.” Their efforts have received national recognition from the Illinois State Historical Society, the Abraham Lincoln Association, Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, Daughters of Union Veterans of the Civil War, Sons of the American Revolution, Daughters of the American Revolution, and the William G. Pomeroy Foundation of New York.

The memorial site was donated by the United Union of Roofers Local #69 for a nominal amount and approved for purchase by the City Council at the February 22, 2023, meeting.

Questions may be directed to the City of Peoria by calling Stacy Peterson at 309.494.8560 or speterson@peoriagov.org. Please refer questions to the Memorial Project Team at hello@peoriafreedommemorial.org

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