



## **New Hampshire's Underground Railroad And African Burial Ground Are Focus Of May 13 Symposium**

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DURHAM, N.H. -- Portsmouth's African Burying Ground and Underground Railroad activities in New Hampshire will be the focus of a symposium Saturday, May 13, 2006, at Strawberry Banke Museum. The symposium will include the Geraldine Copeland Teacher Institute, which will explore African-American historic sites in the Strawberry Banke neighborhood.

The symposium will take place at the Education Center, Hancock Street, Strawberry Banke Museum from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. This is one of a series of public programs and teacher institutes that has been sponsored by the Portsmouth Black Heritage Trail to share information on "safe houses" and 19th century abolitionists who gave refuge to escaping slaves.

"While there are many reports of houses believed to have been a part of the Underground Railroad in New Hampshire, few have been documented. The Portsmouth Black Heritage Trail is leading an effort to record these sites before they are lost from memory," says Valerie Cunningham, president of the Portsmouth Black Heritage Trail.

The featured speaker will be Sherri Jackson, Northeast regional director of the Network to Freedom, based in Philadelphia. The Network to Freedom is a project of the National Park Service, mandated by Congress to document the Underground Railroad routes, which went into Canada, the Western Territories, Mexico and the Caribbean. Jackson will demonstrate methods of documenting relevant sites.

Ellen Marlatt of Independent Archeology Consultants, LLC, will present an overview of Portsmouth's African Burying Ground on Chestnut Street and update attendees on recent research results. The Portsmouth Black Heritage Trail has held several public information meetings with experts to discuss the findings of African burials that were revealed during a public works project in the city in October 2003. DNA analysis of the disinterred remains has confirmed that those people were of African ancestry. The historical record indicates that the burials occurred prior to 1800, during the period of slavery in Colonial New Hampshire.

Martha Pinello, chief archeologist at Strawberry Banke Museum, will conduct the afternoon teacher institute using on-site artifacts and tours to discover ways that African American stories are interwoven into local history. Suggestions for applications of this information will be of value to teachers across disciplines.

The teacher institute is named in honor of Geraldine Copeland, a former teacher and guidance director at Portsmouth High School. Copeland was a founding member of the Portsmouth Black Heritage Trail and was its guided tours coordinator before she relocated out of state.

She worked tirelessly to ensure that teachers and students would have access to local Black history.

The Center for the Study of Community, the Center for New England Culture, and Black Heritage Partnerships at the University of New Hampshire are cosponsors of the symposium and the teacher institute.

Concurrent with the symposium and teacher institute will be an African American Book Fair at the Tyco Visitor Center at Strawberry Banke Museum. Several New England authors will be available for book purchases and signings. All books will be by and about African Americans. There is no admission fee for the book fair.

The symposium/teacher institute is open to the public and requires \$25 registration, which includes lunch. To register, call 603-862-3520 or [pbhtrail@aol.com](mailto:pbhtrail@aol.com).