

Blues festival draws a crowd

By SEAN MURPHY
Staff Writer

Once again, the Portsmouth Blues Bank Collective drew a huge crowd of people Saturday singing, dancing, and feeling the blues at the 18th annual Portsmouth Blues Festival.

As in previous years, the festival took over the field at Strawberry Banke's museum grounds, with a colorful array of performances from groups like Sisters of the South, the Campbell Brothers, and Rhythm Method. The field's capacity is 4,000, and more than half of it was filled with people, about the same amount as last year's event.

More than half a dozen vendors ringed the field, selling a variety of food and other items.

Patti Krukoff and Monica King, co-owners of Blondie's Italian Ice, in Portsmouth, have been selling food of all kinds at the festival for six or seven years.

This time, in addition to chicken sandwiches, they were selling ice treats, a good idea in the hot, sunny weather of the morning and early afternoon.

The point of Saturday's festivities was to draw attention to all things blues, but there were ongoing efforts both before and after to take that message much farther.

As usual, the performers in this year's festival agreed to participate in a number of workshops all week long prior to the day of the festival, playing and offering instruction to a number of smaller groups and organizations in the area.

In addition, all proceeds from



Andrew Moore/staff photo

LITTLE FREDDIE KING performs at the Portsmouth Blues Festival on Saturday at Strawberry Banke.

Saturday's festival will go to programs and initiatives by the Portsmouth Blues Bank Collective, according to Valerie Cunningham, one of the collective's co-founders.

Cunningham said the nonprofit collective sponsors a number of work-

shops, artist-in-residence programs, and other instructional and educational endeavors, all of which strive to connect the blues to its roots in America's black history.

Originally an outlet for the impoverished and enslaved; the real meaning

of the blues is often lost on the public today, she said.

"There's a lot of people, especially

☆ **Draws**

Please turn to Page 12A