

**APRIL 30, 2018**

**Brookline School Committee Ad Hoc Task Force on School Names:  
Recommendation on Renaming of the Edward Devotion School**

The Ad Hoc Task Force on School Names, established by the Brookline School Committee on March 22nd, voted unanimously on April 24th to recommend that the School Committee vote favorably on Town Meeting Warrant Article 23 calling for the removal of Edward Devotion's name from the Edward Devotion School. The Devotion question is only one part of the work of the Task Force. The Task Force was charged with examining the names of all of the Brookline schools and will continue to meet and to research school names and the naming process.

The Task Force members are a representative, diverse group of Brookline citizens and interested parties. They include:

School Committee Capital Subcommittee Chair/Naming Committee Member Helen Charlupski  
Hidden Brookline Chair Barbara Brown  
Brookline High School History Teacher/Devotion Alum Malcolm Cawthorne  
Past Devotion Teacher, Vice Principal, and Principal John Dempsey  
Brookline Office of Diversity, Inclusion & Community Relations Director Lloyd Gellineau  
Devotion Alum/Community Member/Town Meeting Member Mark Gray  
Devotion/Steps to Success Parent Misti Jaynes  
Brookline Historical Society President Ken Liss  
Devotion Student Farah Mamedova  
Devotion Parent/Community Member Pam Roberts  
Brookline High School Student Sari Gubar

The Task Force conducted research on the legacy of Edward Devotion. Edward Devotion's father or grandfather was a French Huguenot (Protestant) who came to Brookline from France at a time when Protestants were being persecuted. He was an early settler in the Muddy River hamlet, which in 1705 became the Town of Brookline. The school is named after either his son or his grandson, the second Edward Devotion, 1668-1744. The second Edward Devotion was a resident of colonial Brookline who held several local offices and who left money in his will for the town toward the establishment of a school in the center of town, which was then Walnut Street. An inventory of his property compiled after his death included land, livestock, household goods and "one Negrow" valued at 30 pounds. (see attached 1. chronology of Devotion and the school 2. his will)

The Task Force was working under a tight deadline ahead of the School Committee's discussion and possible vote on April 26th — less than a month before Town Meeting. The Task Force carried out its work in a thoughtful and respectful manner despite the urgency. The Task Force listened to current and former students, parents, and teachers at the school and to other members of the community. There are strong opinions and emotions on both sides of the question, but the members of the Task Force felt the reasons for changing the name outweighed those for keeping it the same.

The local debate is taking place amid a national conversation on the propriety of honoring slave holders and supporters of slavery on public and private buildings and monuments. The Devotion question provides an opportunity to recognize and discuss the fact that slavery and its legacy had and have an impact in Brookline as well as nationally.

The minutes of the Task Force and documents compiled by its members are available on the School Committee website: <https://www.brookline.k12.ma.us/Page/2339>. A fuller report on the Task Force's charge to look at all Brookline School names will be forthcoming. (Given the upcoming School Committee meeting 4/26/18, the Task Force members felt it was important to make our recommendation known even before this full report could be written.)

## Edward Devotion and the Edward Devotion School: A Chronology

**1645** - Edward Devotion (1621-1685), an immigrant French Protestant (or Huguenot) first appeared in the records of Muddy River, a hamlet of the Town of Boston.

**c.1680** – This first Edward Devotion, or possibly his son John, built a house on what is now Harvard Street.

**1740** - Edward Devotion (1668-1744), the son or grandson of the first Edward Devotion — records are unclear — sold the Harvard Street house and land to Solomon Hill. (Devotion's primary residence at this time was another house on Washington Street.) The current Edward Devotion House was probably built by Hill over the frame of the c1680 house.

**1744** - Death of the second Edward Devotion. His will, executed the year before his death, decreed that any money left over after payment of his debts and funeral expenses and other bequests be used "towards building or maintaining a School as near the centre of the said town as shall be agreed upon by the town." If a site for a new school could not be agreed upon, the money was to be used to purchase a wood lot for use by the town to support the town's school and church. An inventory of his property compiled after his death included land, livestock, household goods, and "one Negrow" valued at 30 pounds.

**1762** - The former Devotion land and house on Harvard Street reverted to Devotion's widow Mary upon the failure of Solomon Hill to pay the mortgage on the property. It was then sold, and the town, as stipulated in the will, received funds. In 1837, these funds were recorded as amounting to \$2,281.01. The town added additional funds received from the Federal government, bringing the total amount to just over \$4,500.

**1844** - The money in the Edward Devotion Fund was allocated toward the construction of the new Brookline Town Hall on Prospect Street, near the location of the current Town Hall. The building contained two rooms used as school rooms.

**1884** - Town Meeting, apparently considering the use of the funds for the Town Hall not to have fulfilled Devotion's bequest, voted to add \$5,000 to the Devotion Fund to be put toward expansion of the Brookline High School on School Street. A large hall in the school was named the Edward Devotion Hall in recognition of Devotion's bequest, and a plaque commemorating his gift was placed in the school. (The plaque was lost when the old Brookline High School was replaced by a new building on Greenough Street in 1893.)

**1891** – A large portion of the former Edward Devotion property, including the Edward Devotion House, was purchased by the Town from the estate of a later owner, Nahum Smith, for \$61,000. The property had passed through several owners after 1762, including William Marshall, Israel Thorndike, and George Babcock.

**1892** – A new school named the Edward Devotion School was built on the site. (No record of a discussion of the naming at the time has been found.) Other buildings were added in 1898 and 1913. The 1892 and 1898 buildings were later replaced. The 1913 building is incorporated into the new school scheduled to open in September 2018.

In the Name of God Amen.

I, Edward Devotion of Brooklyn in the County of Suffolk & Province of Massachusetts Bay, in New England, Yeoman being aged & infirm, Do make & ordain this my Last Will and Testament in manner and form following. Principally and first of all I give & recommend my soul to God who gave it hoping and believing that in the mercy of God through Jesus Christ my Redeemer I shall receive full pardon of all my sins and an Inheritance among them that are Sanctified. My Body I commit to the Earth to be decently buried at the discretion of my Executors hereinafter named, And as for my Temporal Goods and Estate I will that they be Employed & bestowed in manner following:

Imp's I will that all my Just Debts & Funeral Charges be well & truly paid by my Executors herein after named in convenient time after my decease.

Item. I give & bequeath to my well beloved Wife Mary Devotion the sum of Five hundred Pounds Lawfull money of the Province aforesaid and all my House hold Goods to her her heirs & assigns forever.

Item. I give to my beloved friend Mr. James Shedd the sum of Twenty five Pounds Lawfull money aforesd in consideration of my respect for him.

Item. I give to the Grand Children of my Brother John Devotion deceased the Sum of Two hundred & fifty Pounds Lawfull money out of which sum my will is that the Rev'd Mr. Ebenezer Devotion shall have Seventy five Pounds and that the remainder be equally divided amongst the rest of the said Grand Children provided always nevertheless and my Will is that the said Legacy of Two hundred & fifty Pounds is given & bequeathed to the said Grand Children of my sd Brother is upon this Special Condition that they shall Quit claim to my Executors all the Right Title and Interest that they have, or may pretend to have, of and in all that Estate that came to me by my Hon'd Father John Devotion deceased and in case they refuse to give such Quit claim then my Will is that aforesaid Legacy of Two hundred & fifty Pounds shall cease and be void.

Item. I give to Deacon Edward Ruggles the sum of Seventy five Pounds Lawfull money, and to Mr. Samuel Griffin the like sum of Seventy five Pounds.

Item I give to the Church of Christ in Brooklyn one Silver Tankard containing one Quart.

Item. As for the Estate which I sold to Solomon Hill and for which he gave me a Mortgage Deed my will is that in case he should not Redeem the said Estate and Discharge the Mortgage within the time limited then and in such case I hereby authorize & impower my said Executors to dispose of the same together with all my Land in Brooklyn to the Highest Bidders in Order to pay & discharge the aforesaid Legacies and my Just Debts.

Item my will is that in case my Estate shall not be sufficient to pay my Just Debts, Funeral Charges and ye aforesaid Legacies by me given, then in such case my will is that each of the Legacies given in this my will be reduced proportionably. (Saving the Legacies given to my wife and my friend James Shed which are to be first paid without any deduction).

Item in case my Estate prove to be sufficient to pay my Just Debts, Funeral Charges and the aforementioned Legacies and there should be any overplus left then my will is and I hereby give the sd overplus to the Town of Brooklyn towards Building or Maintaining a School as near the Centre of the said Town as shall be agreed upon by the Town. But if the said Town cannot agree upon a Place to set the said School upon then my Will is that the said overplus be laid out in purchasing a Wood Lott for the use of the School and the ministry of said Town forever.

Item. my mind & will is, any thing aforewritten to ye contrary thereof notwithstanding that the aforementioned Legacies by me given are not to be paid untill the aforesd mortgage Deed given me by the said Solomon Hill be Discharged or (in case he refuse to Redeem ye. said Estate) untill the said Estate by him mortgaged as aforesaid can be conveniently sold by my Executors hereinafter named.

Lastly. I do hereby constitute and appoint my beloved wife Mary and my Friend Mr. James Shed of Roxbury to be Executors of this my last Will and Testament hereby revoking all former wills by me made. In witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand and seal this Fourteenth day of June in the Seventeenth year of his majesty's Reign and in the year of our Lord Christ one thousand seven hundred and forty three.

EDWARD DEVOTION. (Seal)

Signed, sealed, published pronounced & declared by the sd Edward Devotion the Testator to be his last Will and Testament, in presence of us the subscribers (ye words. can be conveniently being first intelined) James Clark. Nathaniel Gardner. Elhanan Winchester.



This is an inventory of the Estate both Reall & personal of Mr. Edward Devotion of Brooklyn, late deceased, Apprized by us the subscribers who are hereunder written, Viz :

fifteen Acres and half of land at three Hundred and ten pounds.	310
Seven acres of land apprized at one hundred and five pounds	105
	<hr/>
	415
	<hr/>
One Negrow at thirty pounds —	30
One Cow at fourteen pounds —	14
Wairing Apparril at twenty pounds —	20
Beds & Bedding at forty pounds	40
Tabels & chairs & wooden ware twenty pounds —	20
Puter, Iron and brass at twenty five pounds —	25
	<hr/>
	£149

one Iron bar twenty five shillings —

Apprizers { SAMUEL WHITE  
SAMUEL CLARK  
THOMAS ASPINWALL