Heath School Renaming Process

School Committee Presentation, February 9, 2023

Mission Statement

Heath School, nestled in the Chestnut Hill enclave in Brookline, has played a central role in so many lives for more than 100 years. Generations of children have established their educational foundations here, while their families have turned to this space with great trust, boundless hope, and expectations for excellence. Countless educators have made this place their professional home, dedicating part or all of their careers to the work inside these walls.

We have learned in recent years that our school was named for the street on which it originally sat (Heath Street), which in turn was named for a family that owned much of the land surrounding that street. Because the Heath family were also enslavers, our school therefore carries the name of a family that enslaved other people during their time here in Brookline.

Knowing that our beloved school is named indirectly for a family that enslaved other humans has made it increasingly difficult to intentionally promote a vision that aligns with our stated values.

Our school came to be called "Heath" somewhat <u>unintentionally</u>; we now have a chance as a community to affirmatively and intentionally choose a new name. We seek collectively to understand our history and the role of slavery in Brookline, the impact of that history on our school, and choose a name that represents us and our aspirations, and reinforces a safe learning environment for those in our care.

Reckoning with this past is essential to building a better future for our students. Renaming our school is a part of that process.

The Research

HIDDEN BROOKLINE

Q

Home

Slavery & Freedom

Recommended Reading

Tours & Events v

THE HEATH FAMILY: SLAVERY AND INHERITED WEALTH

2020 photograph: Ebenezer Heath's home at 30 Heath Street, built in 1794 as a wedding gift from his father, John Heath

From the Hidden Brookline website:

https://hiddenbrookline.weebly.com/heath-the-school--the-family.html

THREE GENERATIONS IN THE HEATH FAMILY:

John Heath: 1732-1804

His son Ebenezer: 1765-1845

Ebenezer's son Charles: 1801-1868

John Heath (1732-1804) enslaved four people to work on his farms and in his stately home. [1]

They were Primus, Kate, Ben Boston, and Dinah. John and Susannah Heath had a son, Ebenezer (1765-1845) and two daughters. Ebenezer and his sisters grew up in luxury and came of age in an enslaving home. [2] In 1790, Ebenezer married at age twenty-five, about the time that slavery ended in Massachusetts. When he married, John Heath signed his wealth over to his son. John Heath built Ebenezer and his bride an elegant home, just a stone's throw from John Heath's own house. Ebenezer's oldest surviving son was Charles, who married in 1828 and moved to Boston. Some years later, Charles and his family returned to Brookline to live on Heath family land and to build a new house where his grandfather's home had once stood. Charles' home was also a mere stone's throw from his father's.



Charles Heath's home, built 1855

INHERITING WEALTH FROM SLAVERY

First Ebenezer Heath and then his son Charles inherited the wealth that derived in part from John Heath's slavery practice.[3] John Heath's social capital was also passed down, first to his son and then his grandson, giving them entrée into elite society, where they could make valuable financial and social connections.

HEATH: A STREET AND THEN A SCHOOL

In 1841, the Town chose Heath as the name for an existing road, stating that it "stretched from the Worcester turnpike or Boylston Street by Mr. Heath's to the Newton line." [4] In 1847, the school on that road changed its name from the "Middle District School" to the more specific "Middle District School on Heath Street". For a number of years, teachers boarded with the Heaths, who prized their companionship.[5] A few decades later, the school shortened its name to the Heath School, a name it continues to carry today, even in its new location on Eliot Street.



Heath School, 2020

Complete List of Nominees

(in no particular order)

Roland Hayes

Bernard Pendleton (former art teacher) #

Ellen & William Craft

Heddy Lamarr

Michael Dukakis

Francis Ouimet

Edward Kirrane

Massasoit ***

Eunice Kennedy Shriver

Bill Russell

Manuel Del Valle Jr

Ruth Bader Ginsburg

Frederick Law Olmsted

Ruth Batson

Sybil Holmes

John Wilson

The Settlement

Montowampate (aka Sagamore James)

Harmony

Kindness

Judith Heumann

Charles Sprague Sargent ***

Quabbin Reservoir ***

Harriet Tubman

^{# &}lt;u>Of note</u>: early in our process, Mr. Bernie Pendleton, the art teacher here for 30 years, was listed as a nominee. Mr. Pendleton was appreciative of the consideration, but humbly declined the honor. We remain grateful for his service to our community!

Narrowing the Field

Student Renaming Committee: Name Criteria

Required, by <u>Town Bylaws</u>

• Person, Place, or Event

Required, as recommended by Student Committee in partnership with adult committee members:

- Connection to Greater Boston and Brookline
- A helper. Someone who contributed to the community and made a positive impact
- A connection to education and/or commitment to educating others
- *** Not an Indigenous Name. As our school has no historical or current connection to Indigenous Peoples, other than sitting on Native land, we do not want to appropriate Indigenous names or culture for our own gains

Nice to Have, as recommended by Student Committee in partnership with adult committee members:

- Represented elsewhere? We strive to recognize those who are not honored elsewhere in our community
- Is the candidate a Person of Color? We strive to recognize those who are historically under invited into our community
- Is the person still living? Has the person passed? The preference is someone who has passed as we can examine their entire life, contributions, and impact

*** More Perspective on Indigenous Nominees

In the spirit of reflection and reconciliation, the BHS student newspaper, formerly known as *The Sagamore*, has begun the process of changing the newspaper's name. Knowing this, recognizing that the student committee does not feel it is appropriate, and in consultation with Indigenous groups, an Indigenous name will not be forwarded as a finalist for our school. Thus, Sagamore James, Massasoit, and the Quabbin Reservoir will *not* be in consideration moving forward.

Narrowing the Field

Ruth Batson
Frederick Law Olmsted
John Wilson
Roland Hayes
Eunice Kennedy Shriver
The Settlement
Ellen & William Craft

		Required					Nice to House		
		Required Not an					Nice to Have		
	Rank 0= need more data; 1= top candidate; 2= still in consideration, but unlikely; 3= no longer in consideration	Person, Place, or Event	Connection to Greater Boston and Brookline	A helper. Someone who contributed to the community and made a positive impact.	A connection to education and/or commitment to educating others	Indigenous Name. As our school has no historical or current connection to Indigenous Peoples, other than sitting on Native land, we do not want to appropriate Indigenous names or culture for our own gains	Represented elsewhere? We strive to recognize those who aren't honored elsewhere in our community	Is the person BIPOC? We strive to recognize those who are historically under invited to our community	Is the person still living? Has the person passed? The preference is someone who has passed.
Nominee									
Ellen & William Craft	1	0	0	0	0	0	New book; referenced in Hidden Brookline website	0	Passed
Eunice Kennedy Shriver		0	_	_	? (educating others about special education)	_	center in Boston	no	passed
		0	0	0	o education)	0			Passed
Frederick Law Olmstead	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	х	Passed
John Wilson	1	o	o	0	0	0	not too many school of music, park named after	0	passed
B 4 444							him in greater		passed
Roland Hayes		0	0	0	inspired others	0	Boston area	0	P
Ruth Batson The Settlement		0	0	?	?	0	o x	o x	passed
Bill Russell		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	passed
Manuel Del Valle Jr		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	passed
Manuel Del Valle Ji									passeu
Charles Sprague Sargent	2	o	o	0	0	0	0		passed
Edward Kirrane	2	0	o	0	0	0	x	x	living
Francis Oulmet	2	0	o	0	0	0	x	x	passed
Michael Dukakis		0	0	o in role as governor	o professor at northeastern	0	couldn't find much	x	living
Ruth Bader Ginsburg		0	x		0	0	х	x	passed
Sybil Holmes		0	0	0	x	0	0	x	passed
Harmony	3								
Harriet Tubman		o	x						
Heddy Lamarr		0	х						
Judith Heumann		0	x						
Kindness	3								
Massasoit		0				0			
Montowampate (aka Sagamore James)		0				0			
Quabbin Reservoir	3	0	0	?	?	0			

Timeline

Proposed and Not Finalized

February & March	April & May	June & Summer		
Continued educational work with students	Voting; process TBD	Announce proposed new school name		
Continued research into proposed finalists	April: Decide final 2 or 3 finalists	Education about and celebration of proposed new school name		
Messaging in school community Messaging throughout Town	• School-wide & Town-wide May:	Write/prepare Remove and Replace Warrant Article for fall Town Meeting		
 Meet with Renaming Committee; need to be re- convened Meet with School Committee, continued 	Decide final choice • School-wide & Town-wide	Submit WA at Fall 2023 Town Meeting Continue education and outreach		

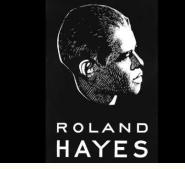
Opportunities to Learn

Roland Hayes



"The beauty of what could be done with the voice just overwhelmed me."





Roland Hayes was the first African American singer to achieve success on the classical concert stage. For more than 40 years he performed in major cities throughout the United States and Europe.

Ellen and William Craft

Ellen and William Craft were a married couple who escaped slavery. William came up with a plan for Ellen to pretend to be a white, male, cotton planter travelling with William as her slave. They successfully escaped by train to Philadelphia before moving to Boston and later to England where they raised a family.

"We felt perfectly justified in undertaking the dangerous and exciting task of running a thousand miles."



Ruth Batson

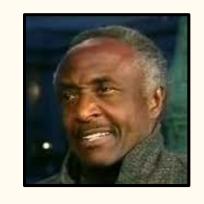


For more than than thirty years, Ruth Batson fought for fair and equal education for Boston's public school children and for the civil rights of African Americans. She started out as a young mother trying to improve her children's neighborhood school and ended up improving all the schools of Boston *and* Brookline through her work launching the METCO program.

When we fight about education, we're fighting for our lives. We're fighting for what that education will give us, we're fighting for a job, we're fighting to eat, we're fighting to pay our medical bills; we're fighting for a lot of things"

John Wilson

John Wilson was a sculptor, painter, printmaker and educator whose art reflected the Black experience. He lived and worked out of his Brookline home/studio for over 50 years. He is best known for a bronze bust of Martin Luther King, Jr. in Washington, D.C.





"I wanted to make a Black image you could not ignore."



We Thank Our Volunteer Committee Members

Adult Committee

Asa Sevelius, Principal Kirtan Patel, Vice Principal Tatiana Beckwith, Teacher Alex Borns-Weil, Teacher Karen Shashoua, Teacher Emily Redburn, Teacher Kyssandra Perkowski, Teacher Melissa Gordon, Teacher Bob Miller, Former Teacher/Community Member David Gacioch, Parent/Community Member Lauren Post, Parent/Community Member Miriam Aschkenasy, Parent/Community Member Karla Weathers, Parent/Community Member Margaret Monteith, Parent/Community Member Jennie Lopez Segel, Parent/Community Member Angelica Contreras, Parent/Community Member Arif Bhimani, Parent/Community Member

Student Committee

Marin Cagnina, Grade 4
Elisa Eddy, Grade 5
Bruno Rona, Grade 5
Madison Searcy, Grade 6
Francesca Taranto Montemurro, Grade 6
Sofi Ugalde, Grade 8
Asha Hug, Grade 10
Rowan Packard, Grade 10

Special thanks to:

- Dr. Barbara Brown, founder and chair of Hidden Brookline
- The team who shepherded the name change process at the Florida Ruffin Ridley School
- Dr. Linus Guillory, Superintendent
- Our school's students, faculty, and families

Resources to Explore & Staying Connected

Each week, we report updates on the renaming process here. Past "*Community Notes*" newsletters can be found here:

https://www.brookline.k12.ma.us/domain/718

The "School Name: History & Resources" website page is also updated regularly:

https://www.brookline.k12.ma.us/renameheath

