

**School Committee Ad Hoc Task Force on School Names**

**Monday, May 21, 2018**

5:30 PM – 7:00 PM

School Committee Room, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor, Town Hall

Ad Hoc Task Force Members Present: Helen Charlupski, Barbara Brown, Malcolm Cawthorne, Lloyd Gellineau, Mark Gray, Ken Liss, and Pam Roberts.

Ad Hoc Task Force Members Absent: John Dempsey, Sari Gubar, Misti Jaynes, and Farah Mamedova.

Staff Present: Robin Coyne.

Others Present: School Committee members David Pollak, Jennifer Monopoli, and David A. Pearlman.

**1) Approval of Minutes of the April 30, 2018 Meeting**

On a motion of Dr. Brown and seconded by Mr. Liss, the School Committee Ad Hoc Task Force on School Names voted (Dr. Gellineau abstained because he was not at the April 30, 2018 meeting) to approve the April 30, 2018 minutes.

**2) Update on Town Meeting Warrant Article 23: Renaming of the Edward Devotion School**

Ms. Charlupski referred to the revised motion to be considered by Town Meeting as the first order of business on May 29, 2018: That the Town change the name of the Edward Devotion School to a name to be selected by the School Committee after receiving public input through a process to be determined by the School Committee. Town Meeting hereby requests the Naming Committee to consider the name so selected by the School Committee and make a recommendation to Town Meeting with respect thereto at the 2019 Annual Town Meeting. In the interim, the name of the School shall be the Coolidge Corner School.

**3) Presentation of Research on Driscoll School Name**

Ms. Roberts presented research on Michael Driscoll.

**Michael Driscoll**

April 18, 1844-April 17, 1926

Sources:

- Driscoll School homepage (“Driscoll School’s Namesake,” written by Elizabeth Perry, June 29, 1951)
- Various 1926 obituaries, Brookline Chronicle & Boston Globe
- John Denehy’s 1906 bicentennial history of Brookline

Michael Driscoll was born in Brookline Village to James Driscoll, a well-to-do contractor. He and his seven siblings were educated in the public schools. After leaving school, he plied his trade in the mercantile business in Boston for a bit, then began working for his father as a contractor. He had five children with his first wife, Margaret Shea Driscoll, who died in 1883. He had three more children with Ellen O’Hearn Driscoll, who died in 1898.

In 1874, Driscoll was first elected to the School Board. He served in this capacity until his death (52 years). During his long tenure, the school population rose dramatically: from 1,234 pupils in his first year to over 4,000 by the time his namesake school opened. Driscoll helped oversee the planning and construction of several new schools, including Pierce, Runkle, Heath, and Driscoll. Per Ms. Perry: “His knowledge of the contracting business, and his ambition to provide good housing facilities for every pupil in every part of town, resulted in a building program which was outstanding for those days, and which drew commendation from far and near.” The new Driscoll School was named in his honor in his 36th year of service.

In 1878, Driscoll was elected Superintendent of Streets, a position that he held until 1925, due to failing health.

Michael Driscoll was a member of the Mass. Catholic Order of Forresters, Knights of Columbus, Catholic Union of Boston, and the Brookline Historical Society.

Anecdotes:

- A proud graduate of the Pierce School, Mr. Driscoll enjoyed the annual presenting of diplomas at both Pierce and Brookline High School. Every one of his children, and many of his grandchildren, nephews, and nieces, received their diplomas from his hands. A member of the finance committee in charge of payrolls, he also personally administered the required yearly arithmetic exams.
- Mr. Driscoll was a taskmaster to students and family members alike. One of his daughters, newly-graduated from Simmons College and employed as his secretary, nevertheless felt his wrath when her handwriting didn't measure up to his legibility standards.

Ad Hoc Task Force Discussion:

The consensus of the Ad Hoc Task Force was that based on the information available at this time, there is no reason to recommend that the name of the Driscoll School be changed. Mr. Driscoll worked hard on behalf of the town and was on the School Board for 52 years.

Ms. Roberts noted that she was unable to find an obituary for Mr. Driscoll's wife. Some members expressed concern that almost all of our schools were named for wealthy white men, as was typical for the times. One member suggested that the Town/Schools might want to establish a policy to change or at least evaluate school names that had been in effect for a certain length of time.

#### **4) Presentation of Research on Heath School Name**

Mr. Liss presented research on the Heath School name.

### **Heath School**

The Heath School is the only one of the eight K-8 schools in Brookline that is not named in honor of a particular individual.

The first school at the location of the current Heath School opened in 1902. It was a replacement for a school that formerly stood on Heath Street. That school, which opened in the 1850s, was called the “Heath-Street School,” named for the street on which it stood not for any individual. The earliest reference to it in town records as the Heath School (rather than Heath-Street School) was in 1883.

The name Heath Street was first designated by the town in 1841 when a naming committee was formed to oversee the naming of streets. (Other streets named at that time included Washington Street, Harvard Street, Boylston Street, Warren Street, Walnut Street, Cypress Street, and about a dozen others.)

Heath Street was applied to the road “from Worcester turnpike or Boylston Street by Mr. Heath’s to Newton line.” “Mr. Heath” was most likely Charles Heath (1801-1868) although his father Ebenezer (1765-1845) would also still have been alive at the time.

Dr. Brown presented research, comments, and questions on slavery in the Heath family of Brookline.

Summary: the names of five slaves in the Heath family are known: Cuff, Kate, Primus, Ben Boston and Dinah. She was unable to determine which member or members of the Heath family were slave owners, other than to say that one of the sources listed a John Heath as an enslaver. Who was the Heath School named after? As mentioned above, there were also Heaths who lived in Brookline after slavery had died out.

**John Heath enslaved:**

- Cuff
- Kate
- Primus

Source for the 1<sup>st</sup> two enslaved: *Brookline Historical Publications Society, 1929 and Source for the 3<sup>rd</sup> enslaved:* Harriet F Woods, *Historical Sketches of Brookline Mass.*, 1874, p. 320

In 1776, a **John Heath** is listed as owning “2 Negroes or Molattoes.” Source: *A List or Return on Oath of the Names of Householders in the Town of Brookline.* Which Heath is this?

Harriet Woods in *Historical Sketches* p. 221 mentions a **Ben Boston** as “an old slave in the Heath family.” He and Dinah, both slaves, were buried in the Old Burying Ground (Walnut Street cemetery). Woods writes they were buried in the potter’s field, with their names carved onto stones there, though the 1920 list of burials at Walnut Street list “family servants” as buried in the Heath tomb, a common burial practice for the enslaved, who at the time were often referred to as “servants.”

Again, from Harriet Woods, p.221, she mentions a woman named **Dinah**, enslaved to “a still more ancient Heath.” Dinah is listed as buried in the Old Burying Ground.

#### Ad Hoc Task Force Discussion:

It was noted that the Heath name does not show up on the map of slave owners' property in Brookline in 1746 (Attachment A). Mr. Liss will add citations to his research. Up until the Pierce School was named for a person, all of the Brookline schools were named for their location. Members understood that the school was named after the street and not after or in honor of a specific person. Nonetheless, some Ad Hoc Task Force members were concerned that the school bears the name of a family that at one point owned slaves and most likely derived a portion of its wealth from this ownership. It is not entirely clear when the Heaths ended this practice. Slavery in Massachusetts fell away around 1800. As was mentioned above, the earliest reference to the name Heath School (rather than Heath-Street School) was in 1883.

It was agreed that the Ad Hoc Task Force would see if there is any additional information available that would clarify which Heaths owned slaves, how money was passed down, and whether the Heath family made any contributions to the Town and/or Schools. The Ad Hoc Task Force will continue discussion of the Heath School name. Members of the Task Force shared their differing initial views on whether the school's name should be changed. Recognizing that they might not come to unanimity, the Ad Hoc Task Force discussed the possibility of presenting different views in a report to the School Committee. Members noted that the final report should indicate that the recommendations are based on the information available at this time.

#### **5) Meeting Schedule, Next Steps, and Agenda for Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Ad Hoc Task Force will take place on Monday, June 11, 2018, 5:30 PM-7:00 PM, in the Walsh School Committee Room, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor, Town Hall. The agenda will include presentation of Ad Hoc Task Force research on Lawrence (continuation from the April 30, 2018 meeting), Baker, Pierce, and Runkle.

The meeting adjourned at 7:00 PM.