

ARTICLE 13

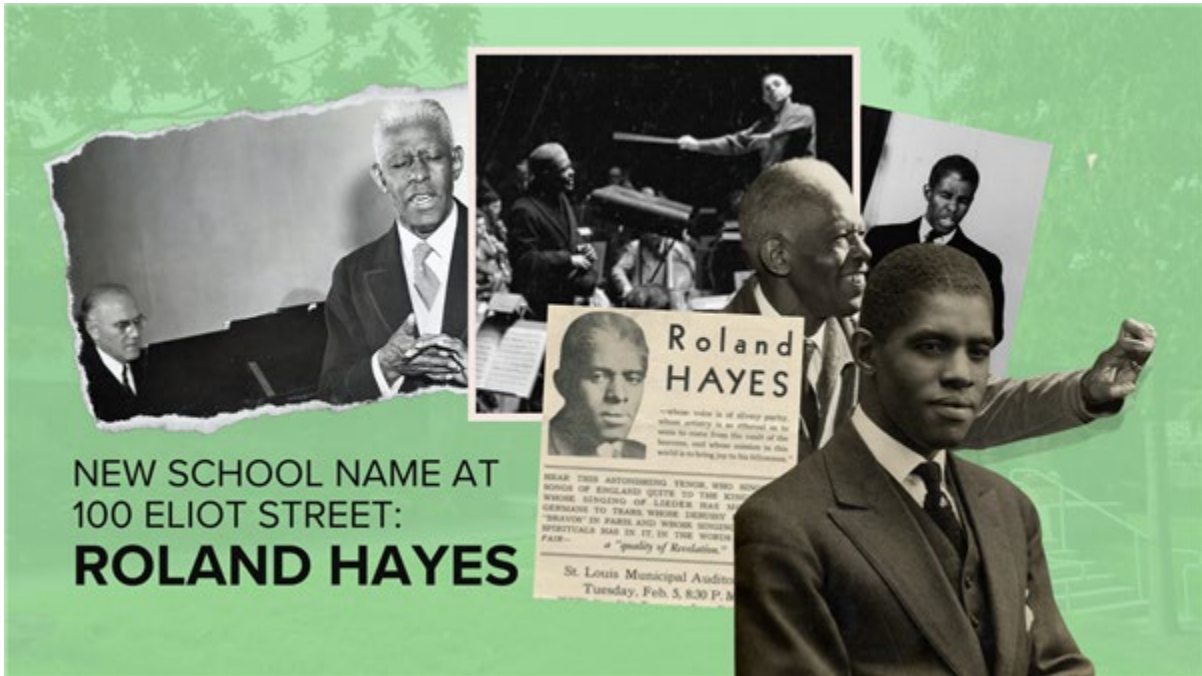
THIRTEENTH ARTICLE

Submitted by: David Gacioch, TMM-14 (corresponding petitioner); Miriam Aschkenasy, Select Board Member and TMM-AL; Rob Daves, TMM-4; Dr. Asa Sevelius, Principal; the School Committee

To see if the Town will vote to change the name of the school located at 100 Eliot St, Chestnut Hill, MA 02467 from the “Heath School” to the "Roland Hayes School”, effective no later than January 1, 2024, or act on anything relative thereto.

PETITIONER’S ARTICLE DESCRIPTION

This warrant article asks Town Meeting to consider renaming the Heath School in honor of trailblazing musician and longtime Brookline resident, Roland Wiltse Hayes. The School Committee and co-petitioners propose the name “Roland Hayes School” following a two-year public process in the Heath School community that resulted in the selection of Roland Hayes as the school’s preferred new name through a vote by students, families, and staff in June 2023. More detail on that process is below.



Why rename the school?

This process arose from the discovery that the Heath School’s unofficial and indirect namesake, the Heath family (wealthy landowners in Brookline in the 18th and 19th Centuries), had enslaved at least four human beings to work on the family’s farm and in

their home before slavery was outlawed in Massachusetts. The four people known to have been enslaved by the Heath family were named Primus, Kate, Ben Boston, and Dinah.

According to [research conducted by Hidden Brookline](#) (founded and led by Dr. Barbara Brown), assisted by Brookline Historical Society President Ken Liss, in 1841, the Town of Brookline chose Heath as the name for an existing road that “stretched from the Worcester turnpike or Boylston Street by Mr. Heath’s to the Newton line” (present day Heath Street, which runs roughly parallel to and just south of Route 9). 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 at the school boarded with the Heath family, who reportedly prized their companionship (according to a Heath family descendant, Mrs. Thomas Dobler, in the 1905 Brookline Historical Society Proceedings). A few decades later, the school shortened its name to the Heath School, a name it continues to carry today, even after moving from its original location on Heath Street to its present-day location north of Route 9 on Eliot Street. In short, Heath Street was so named because it passed through the Heath family’s lands and the Heath School subsequently was so named because it was at that time located on Heath Street—but the school had additional, informal connections to the Heath family.

More information is available here: <https://hiddenbrookline.weebly.com/heath-the-school-the-family.html>

Why choose Roland Hayes?

As written by the Heath School’s Student Renaming Committee:

Roland Hayes was born in 1887 to farmers in Curryville, GA. He first learned how to sing by attending church as a child. Hayes' voice impressed many people. With only five years of schooling, he was admitted to Fisk University where he joined the famous Fisk Jubilee Singers.

Hayes believed in himself and his ability. When the Fisk singers performed in Boston, Hayes chose to remain here for further voice training, becoming renowned for his vocal talents. At the beginning some orchestras and concert halls would not let him perform, because he was Black. By the 1920’s, he had become one of the best classical tenors in the world. In his sold-out concerts, he sang different kinds of music; audiences were amazed when he sang songs from Italy, Germany, and France. Hayes was proud of being Black, so he always included African-American folk songs and spirituals in his programs.



Hayes believed that music was crucial to understanding and expressing yourself. During his tours, he would also try to find time to visit local schools

and meet with musical students. Hayes encouraged them to incorporate their cultures and histories into their singing. He performed his last concert at 85 in Cambridge, MA.

He and his family lived in Brookline for many years.

Did You Know? Hayes was the first African-American soloist to appear with the Boston Symphony Orchestra in 1923.

Quote: "The beauty of what could be done with the voice just overwhelmed me." - Roland Hayes

Additionally:

Roland Hayes's father, William Hayes, died when Roland was 11 years old. His mother, Fanny Hayes, worked as a tenant farmer to raise her seven children—on a plantation on which she formerly had been enslaved. Years later, Hayes bought that plantation.

Roland Hayes began touring in the US and internationally in the late 1910s and early 1920s. His performances with the Boston Symphony Orchestra and Aeolian Hall in London were instrumental in breaking the color barrier in the music community.

For his first Boston Symphony Hall concert, after being denied other opportunities to perform, Hayes raised funds to rent the hall and orchestra, printed and sold his own tickets, and did his own promotion—including spending weeks calling random names in the phone book to encourage people to come to the concert. His entrepreneurial hard work paid off with a successful performance.

While touring in England, Hayes was summoned before the king and queen for a command performance. In Weimar Republic Berlin, he won over a hostile audience that had begun his concert with minutes of sustained booing. For his performances, Hayes received enthusiastic praise and won the NAACP Spingarn Medal for outstanding achievement by an African American in 1924.

In 1948, Hayes published a collection of spirituals known as *My Songs; Aframerican Religious Folk Songs Arranged and Interpreted*. Hayes played a key role in introducing African-American spiritual music to broader audiences.

Hayes lived in Brookline, on Allerton Street (on High Street Hill, near Olmsted Park), for nearly 50 years. Brookline declared June 3, 1967 Roland Hayes Day. At a Town Hall ceremony that day, Hayes (then 80 years old) said: "My career has demanded a great deal of travel. When I look at a map of the world, certain cities have significance—Nashville, Chattanooga, Louisville, Boston, London, Paris, Moscow. I was making interesting discoveries about these places and their people. Then in 1925 I discovered Brookline... No other place in the world has been so happy for me."

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Roland Hayes died in 1977. In 2016, the Town posthumously dedicated a plaque in his honor and memory outside of his longtime Allerton Street home.

Sources (and for more information):

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roland_Hayes
- <https://www.wqxr.org/story/trailblazing-singer-roland-hayes-turned-struggles-triumphs/>
- <https://radiolab.org/podcast/vanishing-harry-pace-episode-5>
- <https://www.wickedlocal.com/story/brookline-tab/2016/06/15/town-dedicating-memorial-to-roland/27652721007/>

How was Roland Hayes chosen as the new school name?

In 2021, the Heath School started the process of discussing its name and deciding to move forward with renaming. Two years later, after a robust, community-engaged process, in June 2023, the Heath School community (students, parents/caregivers, and faculty/staff) voted among four amazing finalists for a new school namesake: Ruth Batson, Ellen & William Craft, Roland Hayes, and John Woodrow Wilson. Hayes was the clear winner of that vote.

Those four finalists were selected by a Student Renaming Committee over the course of Spring 2023 from a longer list of nominees submitted by members of the school community and the broader public in late 2022.

This was the culmination of a two-year, transparent, public conversation and process to learn about the history of the Heath School's name, to discuss and decide whether or not it should be changed, and to select a new name for the school. Much more information about that process can be found here: <https://www.brookline.k12.ma.us/domain/938>

The School Committee voted unanimously in June 2023 to support renaming the Heath School as the Roland Hayes School.

Additional information:

This warrant article is brought for similar reasons as Warrant Article 23 in 2018 Annual Town Meeting (under which Town Meeting, by a vote of 171-19, with 14 abstentions, changed the name of the Edward Devotion School to the Coolidge Corner School and initiated a process to select a new, permanent name for the school) and Warrant Article 26 in Fall 2019 Town Meeting (under which Town Meeting, by a vote of 195-15, with 13 abstentions, renamed the Coolidge Corner School the Florida Ruffin Ridley School after that process was completed). It has been, and continues to be, the will of Town Meeting, as reflected by those and other votes, that individuals who held other human beings in bondage generally should not be honored with schools and other public buildings bearing their names. To continue to name any Brookline school after an enslaver (even indirectly) would violate the core values of equity, respect, and inclusion that the Public Schools of Brookline strive to impart to our students.

The Heath School name presently honors no one and we now know that it is closely associated with the practice of slavery in colonial and post-Revolution Brookline—a practice that modern Brookline condemns. This is an opportunity to rename the school after an accomplished, long-time member of the Brookline community who is worthy of recognition: Roland Hayes.

SCHOOL COMMITTEE STATEMENT

On October 12, 2023, the School Committee voted unanimously (8-0-0) to recommend passage of WA13. Voting in favor were Mr. Pearlman, Dr. Liu, Ms. Charlupski, Dr. Ehrenberg, Ms. Federspiel, Ms. Frias, Dr. Linos and Ms. Nobrega.

On August 3, 2023, the School Committee voted 9-0-0 to join as Co-Petitioners on the Warrant Article to rename the Heath School as the Roland Hayes School. This was one of four School Committee meetings this year during which we learned in detail about the thoughtful process that led to the selection of Roland Hayes from among many nominees. We are grateful to Dr. Sevelius, the Heath School staff, and the community members who supported our student leaders as they designed and implemented the selection process. Most of all, we thank these student leaders for the work that they have done to advance the Public Schools of Brookline’s core value of respect for human difference.

The School Committee is pleased to support renaming the Heath School after a man who overcame discrimination to bring joy and beauty with his music to audiences around the world, and who honored Brookline with his presence for almost fifty years.

SELECT BOARD’S RECOMMENDATION

Article 13 is a proposal to change the name of the “Heath School” to the "Roland Hayes School”. This change was proposed after a dynamic community engagement effort by the Heath School community. The Select Board are supportive of this change and thank the petitioners and the School Committee for setting up a process that allowed for such enthusiastic participation. The students should be proud of their work and the Select Board is appreciative of the thoughtful efforts made to bring this proposal forward.

A unanimous Select Board voted FAVORABLE ACTION on the following motion:

MOVED: That the Town will vote to change the name of the school located at 100 Eliot St, Chestnut Hill, MA 02467 from the “Heath School” to the "Roland Hayes School”, effective no later than January 1, 2024.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE’S RECOMMENDATION

Recommendation: NO RECOMMENDATION on Warrant Article 13 by a vote of 15-4-1.

Executive Summary:	This warrant article asks that the Town consider renaming the Heath School, currently named after the street on which it was established, which was itself named for Brookline resident John Heath (1732-1804). Heath is said to have kept slaves. With the backing of the School Committee, the petitioners propose that the Heath School be renamed for Roland W. Hayes (1887-1977). A longtime Brookline resident, Hayes was a distinguished singer and teacher of opera and gospel music. The determination to honor Hayes was the product of a two-year process within the Heath School community culminating in a vote by students, school community members, and staff in June 2023.
Voting Yes will...	Voting yes will indicate support for changing the name of the “Heath School” to the “Roland Hayes School.”
Voting No will...	Voting no will indicate support for leaving the name of the “Heath School” unchanged.
Financial impact	The costs are to be determined. Heath Principal Dr. Asa Sevelius has asked for estimates but not yet received them. Expenses would include new mats for the gym and a new scoreboard and school sign. A plaque, referencing Hayes, is also being considered. The petitioners believe the costs would be less than \$100,000.
Legal implications	None

Link to Recording

https://brooklinema.zoomgov.com/rec/play/IaWv77sP74Ynb-GUv5r_IlQyZDzRxxXC5UjupFB5YtMGo7RrIqi7-eC9uwqIRTLgEQ1mhF0Uxc7xKKTP.KIfMmjWFJ0wq2-Ty?continueMode=true

Beginning at hour: 2:18

Introduction

This warrant article asks Town Meeting to consider renaming the Heath School in honor of the distinguished musician and Brookline resident Roland W. Hayes.

Evaluation Methodology/Research

- The Heath School name change website:
<https://www.brookline.k12.ma.us/domain/938>

The Heath School name change mission statement:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1JuPSxey6XkzUkC6vgyIUo2j_GL7SSz2c2BdWy_e8Efo/edit

The School Committee's naming criteria: A person / organization of excellent reputation and character who/which has set an example of outstanding citizenship and/or has made an exemplary contribution of time, service, or resources to or on behalf of the community A national noteworthy public figure or official. An event of historical or cultural significance. A significant donation or bequest, establishment of a trust, or other similar action.

- The Town Naming Committee:
<https://www.brooklinema.gov/677/Naming-Committee>

Information about the Heath family:

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

Profile of Hayes from “Afrocentric Voices in Classical Music”

<http://afrovoices.com/roland-hayes-biography/>

Discussion

The discussion centered on these topics:

The Advisory Committee’s role in school renamings.

The processes and outreach that were conducted.

The criteria used in choosing the school name.

The potential costs of renaming the school.

The benefits and consequences of renaming a school.

Some Advisory Committee members questioned whether the committee should get involved in decisions of school naming. Members indicated that there are other school related issues that the Advisory Committee should focus on, such as teaching and learning and disparities in MCAS scores.

Several members argued that there should have been greater public involvement, including with Heath School alumni and neighbors.

Some members questioned the criteria used in choosing the school name. A key point of discussion was whether the school carried the name of John Heath, a slave owner, or others in the Heath family, who did not own slaves. One member asked for more evidence that John Heath was indeed a slave owner, citing limited information in the Hidden Brookline website.

Several members asked if the school should be named after someone else in the community with a direct connection to Heath School, or perhaps someone from the Jewish or Asian communities, which each make up a greater percentage of the Brookline population than the African American community.

One member pointed to potential benefits in renaming the Heath School, including giving Black children a Black person to look up to and relate to and giving White children a Black person to think about in ways they might not have otherwise.

In conclusion, the argument that school renamings are centrally the purview of the schools, school communities, and the School Committee, and not the Advisory Committee, prevailed. A motion of No Recommendation was put forward, which was voted upon favorably.

Recommendation

By a vote of 15-4 with 1 abstention, the Advisory Committee has NO RECOMMENDATION on Warrant Article 13.

ARTICLE 13 ADVISORY COMMITTEE VOTES

Article Description	Rename the Heath School the “Roland Hayes School”
No recommendation	15-4-1
Michael Berger	
Paul Bernard	
Ben Birnbaum	Y
Harry Bohrs	Y
Cliff Brown	Y
John Doggett	Y
Katherine Florio	Y
Harry Friedman	N
David-Marc Goldstein	
Neil Gordon	Y

Susan Granoff	Y
Perry Grossman	N
Kelly Hardebeck	Y
Amy Hummel	
Alisa Jonas	Y
Janice Kahn	
Carol Levin	Y
Pam Lodish	
Joslin Murphy	Y
Donelle O'Neal, Sr.	
Linda Olson Pehlke	Y
Markus Penzel	N
David Pollak	Y
Stephen Reeders	Y
Carlos Ridruejo	
Lee Selwyn	A
Alok Somani	Y
Carolyn Thall	N
Christine Westphal	
Dennis Doughty *	
* Chairperson does not vote except to break a tie	

XXX