

## St. Mark's Street Park Working Group (SMSPWG)

### Meeting Minutes

June 28 2023

### REMOTE ZOOM MEETING

Working Group Members Present: Grant Farrington, Kevin Miller, Marguerite Landry, Bill Sines, & James Nichols-Worley. Absent: Andrew Dennington.

#### Administrative

1. Meeting called to order at 7:07pm by Chair Marguerite Landry

#### Naming for the Park

2. Presentation from Miller on Historical Commission's discussion on park name, with a focus on not prioritizing one specific piece of history over others. The Historical Commission voted 5-0 on "Southborough Heritage Park."
3. Landry moves to recommend the park's name as "Southborough Heritage Park" and submit to the Select Board, Miller seconds. Approved 4-1. Aye: Grant Farrington, Kevin Miller, Marguerite Landry, and James Nichols-Worley. No: Bill Sines.

#### Administrative

4. Amend/Approve Minutes
  - a. June 28, 2023. Nichols-Worley moves, Sines seconds. Approved 5-0. Aye: Grant Farrington, Kevin Miller, Marguerite Landry, Bill Sines, and James Nichols-Worley.
5. Landry moves to adjourn, Sines seconds. Approved 5-0. Aye: Grant Farrington, Kevin Miller, Marguerite Landry, Bill Sines, and James Nichols-Worley.

Meeting adjourned at 7:43pm

#### Documents

"Heritage Day in Southborough," *The Boston Globe*, September 17, 1967.

"Rift over Jewish holiday mars Southborough festival," *The Boston Globe*, October 1, 1989.

[The Problem with Heritage by Andrew Hartman](#)

[Why is heritage a dirty word? Trump, Robert E. Lee, and the global rise of the right by Mary](#)

Presentation from Kevin Miller, "Heritage Parks and Cultural Institutions in Massachusetts"

***Submitted by James Nichols-Worley, Secretary, June, 2023***

## In Southborough

**SOUTHBORO** — Selectmen have proclaimed Sept. 30 as Heritage Day and have asked citizens, organizations and schools to provide suitable programs in recognition.

The special event, selectman say, is to "preserve for our children their rapidly disappearing heritage of traditional pride in craftsmanship that was the lifeblood of this young nation.

# Rift over Jewish holiday mars Southborough festival

By Linda Hall  
SPECIAL TO THE GLOBE

**S**OUTHBOROUGH — Southborough celebrates its traditional Heritage Day festival next weekend, but the high school band has dropped out of Monday's parade and religious leaders have organized an interfaith service on Sunday to try to heal the wounds sustained in a battle over a Jewish holy day.

A spring of hostility and a summer of anger and

►“It's Heritage Day — it reflects the deep variety and diversity of those who live in town, even the new, and what they bring needs to be noted and celebrated.”

REV. ELVEN RIGGLES  
Pilgrim Church

# Heritage Parks and Cultural Institutions in Massachusetts



# Massachusetts State Parks:

1. Blackstone River and Canal Heritage State Park (Uxbridge)
2. Fall River Heritage State Park
3. Holyoke Heritage State Park
4. Lawrence Heritage State Park
5. Lynn Heritage State Park
6. Lowell Heritage State Park
7. Roxbury Heritage State Park
8. Western Gateway Heritage State Park (North Adams)

# Massachusetts Museums and Gardens:

1. Heritage Museums and Gardens (formerly Heritage Plantation of Sandwich) – Sandwich, MA
2. American Heritage Museum - Hudson, MA

# Municipal Parks in Massachusetts:

1. Heritage Park (East Longmeadow)
2. Heritage Park (Fitchburg)
3. Upton Heritage Park (Upton)
4. Heritage Park (Sudbury)
5. Heritage Park (Amesbury)
6. Heritage Park (Weymouth – dedicated in December of 2022)

# Southborough Heritage Park:

- Would embrace all the components of the site's long and complex history, including Nipmuc history, colonial settlement, town incorporation, the story of William Washington and his family, and the nearly 750 artifacts recovered from the site.
- Would reflect Southborough's history on a daily basis as well as Southborough's annual celebration of Heritage Day. This October will mark the 49<sup>th</sup> Heritage Day celebration.

ANDREW HARTMAN

AUGUST 12, 2015

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## The Problem with Heritage

*The following guest post is by T.R.C. Hutton, who teaches at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville and is the author of Bloody Breathitt: Politics and Violence in the Appalachian South.*

We live in a world of buzzwords and catchphrases, memetic speech that recreates itself across the Internet and unrestrained by context. In a political context, some have been called “dogwhistles,” terms with arcane meaning special to particular ideological communities used to stir up or condemn (Sarah Palin’s 2011 reference to “blood libel” stirred up accusations of Anti-Semitism against a white evangelical community that usually idealizes God’s chosen people). It is an imprecise concept because buzzwords are themselves imprecise, malleable even with a core association and an affinity to a select set of folks; ‘catnip’, taken literally or as a metaphor will probably serve as a better buzzword among people who own kitty cats. Not all buzzwords are dogwhistles, but almost any term has the potential to become one.

Here’s an old one: *heritage*, a common word in many contexts but with an undeniable continuity. ‘Heritage’ suggests that the past not only did not go anywhere but it has also worked to the present’s benefit even when the present does not acknowledge it. It is just as likely the past dressed up to affirm or validate elements of the present we like or condemn the ones we don’t. Invocation of “heritage” is useful, politically or commercially. Writing in the 1980s, David Lowenthal wrote that the American landscape “seems saturated with ‘creeping heritage’ – mansarded and half-timbered shopping plazas, exposed brick and butcher block décor in historic precincts, heritage villages, historic preservation...once confined to a handful of museums and antique shops, the trappings of history now festoon the whole country.” [1] Anyone who has visited the South or the Midwest and noticed the bric a brac nailed to the wall – rusty ice skates, black-and-white photos of who-knows-who, products festooned with the Red Ryder and Radio Flyer brands – knows this to be even truer in the 21<sup>st</sup> century than it was in the Reagan era. But what does this (faux) antique collection mean exactly? Judging by the restaurant’s use of the word on their website, it means a peculiar, but not altogether unfamiliar, concoction of patriotism and consumerism.

Speaking of patriotism, *heritage* has had a special currency of late during the coinciding (if not co-incidence) of the Black Lives Matter movement with the renewed controversy over the Confederate battle flag that followed a mass shooting in Charleston, South Carolina. The buzzword gets the most buzz when it is used as a defense of the flag as a past artifact preserved not for political purposes but as a symbol of “pride” (another word that might deserve unpacking at a later date). “Heritage[,] Not Hate” is the bumper sticker slogan seen most often in the company of the familiar

emblem. In its defense, it is both alliterative (slogans are more believable when they're alliterative) and believable; you can have things passed down to you that are yours alone even if they resemble other less appealing cultural lineages. And yet, as Joan Walsh, Salon.com's leading ideologue, pointed out in July, 'heritage' and hate are not necessarily antithetical. But they are certainly not antipodes to one another either. The separation of the two is conceivable, probably grossly disingenuous, but conceivable nonetheless. Most of those who adhere to "Heritage Not Hate," and it is safe to say they are mostly white Southerners, would happily relate to John Crowe Ransom's self-assessment: he (or she) "persists in his regard for a certain terrain, a certain history, and a certain inherited way of living. He is punished as his crime deserves. He feels himself in the American scene as an anachronism, and knows he is felt by his neighbors as a reproach." [2] Anyone who would cling so tightly to a symbol just for its historical associations probably does not mind being a reproach all that much. And anyone who displays said symbol superimposed with an image of a largemouth bass would have to admit that 'heritage' runs the risk of becoming kitsch.

In most contexts as far as I can make out, *heritage* is a buzzword presented with unalloyed positive connotations. So why does the Right seem to like this word more than the Left? Both white and black leftists spent a fair chunk of the 20<sup>th</sup> century making use of folk traditions as a unifying theme to muster their respective working classes. Pete Seeger's banjo was rarely seen in the same company as anyone wearing a dashiki, nevertheless, it is conceivable that *heritage* might buzz in the ear of the Occupy movement if put to the right beat. Yet it does not; the current Left, the most culturally heterogeneous Left in American history, has far less interest in volkish symbols than the Old Left and the New Left in the twentieth, because today's Left has concerns that are almost completely material rather than cultural (apologies to Joan Baez). *Heritage* has a relative: 'inheritance', a word more closely related to material gain. And the twenty-first century Left represents those with nothing to inherit.

So, for all rhetorical intents and purposes, *heritage* is the sole possession of the Right, and with good reason. *Heritage*, above all, suggests sentimentality. "Heritage," as opposed to history, "allows you to ignore the stuff that looks bad," historian Steven Conn succinctly put it in July. But it also suggests ownership. Perhaps not ownership of the information age's means of production, something that few white Americans can claim (it should not surprise us that the "rebel flag" has its closest associations with the more dispossessed elements of white society). Rather ownership of a memory of when whiteness carried with it an ownership of humanity through slavery and the sole destiny of humanity through imperialism. *Heritage*, like an inheritance, is the exclusive domain of the few, not the many, just like the mechanisms of capital. Those who wave the flag may be consciously sincere when they say that they are not racists, but by keeping it flying in the name of heritage they are transmitting a concept that by itself, with or without colorful cloth, suggests the continuance of an unequal society. And even if you do *not* fool with flags of any stripe, if you apply *heritage* to any subject you speak a language of exclusivity. UNESCO's "World Heritage Sites" notwithstanding, in a fragmented world it seems difficult to apply heritage to anything with truly cosmopolitan value. So "heritage not hate" may not be hateful, but it is certainly not ecumenical.

What's worse, *heritage* suggests a mandate from the past that is meant to be a blessing to the present, a sort of "original intent" nostalgia. Lowenthal's "trappings of history" may appeal to some Americans on a purely aesthetic level, either as an appreciation of beauty or nostalgia. But for others, I suspect that even something so anodyne as a reproduction Red Ryder BB gun (in the aforementioned Cracker Barrel) conjures a past that can be a fictive whiter refuge from a browner America or from whatever other negative stimuli associated with life in the twenty-first century. This may sound like a relatively comical case of commodity fetishism but I believe there is more going on. In 2011 conservative journalist Reihan Salam was quite frank in admitting nostalgia was a thinly-veiled chimera for "same race preferences" among white Americans. But even on a more abstract level, *heritage* privileges an unattainable, evanescent past over a tangible present. I will submit that the implications of *heritage* by itself are just as disturbing and irksome as the symbols they are used to defend. Racism may be an enemy of democracy, but the uncritical veneration of the past, for any reason, is the enemy of historians.

So, is *heritage* simply a sentimental dogwhistle that white conservatives blow at one another and on occasion toot to fend off progressive coyotes? Or is it something far more complex that gets to the root of not just who "owns history," (in Eric Foner's famous phrasing), but who owns the present as well? Not so much the present in the cultural sense but the material as well; *heritage* seems to be the domain of those of us who own the most stuff and want to keep it that way or their less acquisitive allies who may not have as much stuff but still consider transgenerational ownership an article of faith. The flag is one thing, but it is only one thing. It is very likely that those who use the word with a straight face do not do so in the interest of revanchist nationalism (American, southern or what have you), but instead in the interest of neoliberal complacency. Given current economic circumstances, said complacency is nearly as dangerous as any given hate group, and certainly more so than a kitschy flag.

[1] David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge University Press, 1985): xv.

[2] John Crowe Ransom, "Reconstructed But Unregenerate," in *I'll Take My Stand: The South and the Agrarian Tradition* (Baton Rouge, 1930), 1.

# Why is heritage a dirty word? Trump, Robert E. Lee, and the global rise of the right

- BY [MARY](#)
- POSTED ON [SEPTEMBER 11, 2017](#)

In his speech in Phoenix, Arizona on August 22nd, President Trump invoked an ideological trope typical of protectionist and nationalist rhetoric – heritage; “they are trying to take away our history and our heritage. You see that.” In doing so, he joined the current shift in the US and Europe towards protectionist, populist, and even openly right-wing political rhetoric and policies. With the prosperity of the early-2000s gone and global migration, in particular from the Global South, at a record high, messages about a threatened identity and culture are gaining traction, from dog whistles to outright propaganda.

Much like terms such as “homeland,” “fatherland,” or even “identity,” “our heritage” is a clever semantic creation and self-identification with a particular in-group. Whereas terms like homeland or fatherland create a specific geographic reach where these traits are shared, common, or prevalent, “heritage” provides us with a much more amorphous wink and nod, a secret handshake of cultural belonging predicated on shared cultural characteristics and a shared historical narrative. But this is far from just an American issue.



Welcome refugees. Photo: Dellenbaugh-Losse.

Shortly after Brexit, worries began to grow in Europe about a political shift to the right. Protectionist, populist, and openly right-wing political parties were on the rise. Their rhetoric was only too similar to Trump's today, invoking ideas of a shared, traditional, national heritage that looks back on centuries of rich history and is now under attack from outside forces which want to dilute or even destroy it. Heritage and national identity were tied to ethnic and cultural characteristics such as language, social norms, values, and history, which were threatened by outside groups.

It's a clever tactic, and one that resonates in particular with groups who feel that they have been "done wrong." Through its emotional overtones, heritage is intended to stir up feelings of patriotism and togetherness in the intended in-group, thus psychologically binding them together into an entity (and, in turn, motivating them to (political) action). Heritage invokes a great past, a history to be proud of, but, for these groups, also the intervening lack of prosperity and sources of pride. These concepts of heritage dovetail neatly with an America that is not great, but needs to be "made great again." A closer look reveals for whom America has lost its luster, and the autopsy of the 2016 election indicates exactly which groups responded to this rhetoric then and are responding to it now.

But heritage also contains a historical component; it invokes a particular historiography or historical narrative. The heritage that Trump invoked in his speech is not a common American heritage, but one codified in formalized memory in the form of monuments – monuments primarily to white males, erected to create territorial dominance and establish a formalized political and historical status quo. This heritage is not one of a melting pot, not the heritage of first generation Americans, not the heritage of minorities, but “our heritage,” the heritage of the culturally-dominant in-group to which Trump himself belongs. Even that is not a purely American phenomenon.

In places with contested historical narrative like former Yugoslavia, the states of the former Soviet Union, or the former German Democratic Republic, claims about heritage, memory, and identity aren't a dog whistle; they're an outright war cry. More than just the simple negation of individual biographical memory, the invocation of heritage implies a single legitimate heritage – one which delegitimizes all others. The invocation of ‘the’ heritage establishes a form of cultural identity dominance which, with its tautological implicit meaning and the in-group backing it, kicks the knees out from any other possible legitimate heritage. Monuments, street names, and significant buildings simply underline this legitimacy, giving it literal concrete form – history written in stone.

Trump's use of the term “heritage” is not just indicative of the deep racial and cultural divides that exist in the United States today. What's more disturbing is the active promulgation of an “us-versus-them” thinking from the highest levels of our government. And even more worrying – it's nothing new. The rhetorical patterns are things we've seen before from other populist and nationalist leaders. Incendiary rhetoric about shared heritage creates groups whose protectionist stances lead them, as we saw in Charlottesville as in countless other examples, to the point of violence. When this position is condoned by the highest levels of government, and the pluralization of the built symbols of the formal national narrative are called into question, the rhetoric of the right gains a dangerous level of legitimacy.



Nationalist election posters from 2016 in Berlin. “For our language, culture, identity.” Photo: Dellenbaugh-Losse

Which brings us back to Robert E. Lee. Memorials do not remind us of history in a neutral way, but rather highlight particular events or people as worthy of special honor and remembrance. Memorialization helps to codify and solidify a common social and political identity by presenting and representing a formally-accepted version of history. It presents avatars for the characteristics and qualities that we as a society stand for. In memorialization, as with the invocation of “heritage,” history gains a strong ideological component, in part based on the countless other historical figures or events which could have been memorialized, but weren’t. We react against the presence of memorials to Confederate generals as not representative of today’s American society, but even more glaring is the absence of a memorial anywhere in the United States to honor and remember the slaves themselves. Where are the memorials to abolitionists and the slaves brave enough to rise up against a system of hatred and debasement? Why, instead of openly including slavery into the formal history codified by monuments, did Congress instead opt for a more neutral National Museum of African American History and Culture, which only opened last year?

Heritage has the potential to include, but only if the historical narrative that we're drawing on includes more than just the heroes and avatars of the culturally-dominant group. Our modern, globalized world is one of plural identities – multiple nationalities, multiple belongings, multiple homes, and multiple histories. Official history may be written by the victors, but it can't erase the memories of the masses. Thus it remains to us, the public, to establish and re-establish the existence of the historiography that's not included in history books or codified in the urban landscape. It's up to us to remember, and to give voice and form to those memories, even when our political leaders don't.