

From: "Katherine Haque-Hausrath" <KHAUSRATH@helenamt.gov>
Subject: Re: Confederate Fountain in Hill Park
Date: July 7, 2015 at 9:31:00 AM MDT
To: "Pam Attardo" <PAttardo@lccountymt.gov>
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Pam,

Thank you for your email and letter. I would like to clarify something that I believe may be the main source of opposition to Commissioner Haladay's and my proposal. We have never proposed to file down the inscription or otherwise touch the fountain. We recognize the aesthetic and historic value of the fountain. Instead, our proposal would just involve renaming it the "Civil War Memorial" fountain on our city website, etc, and a sign (as you suggest) with the new name at the fountain explaining the history, including the fact that the Daughters of the Confederacy donated the fountain as part of its national campaign. As you noted in your letter, the fountain as it currently exists does not have the full historical context. I know that constituents and visitors to Helena have expressed concern to me about Helena having a Confederate memorial. Confederate symbols are being widely acknowledged to stand for racism and white supremacy. The fact that we have a Confederate memorial, combined with Montana's unfortunate history of white supremacist groups, gives the inaccurate perception that our city is not open and welcoming.

We think our proposal will maintain the historical integrity of the fountain, honor all of the Civil War dead, while not having the government support a publicly-owned Confederate symbol. As is being discussed across the country, we do not believe an explicitly Confederate memorial and its attendant support for slavery and more recent symbol for white supremacy and exclusion of minorities, is appropriate for our city.

(Note that we had originally proposed a renaming contest by the Parks Board, but the Mayor opposes this idea, so we suggest a simple renaming by the Commission.)

Again, thank you for reaching out. We would hope to work with you on the sign explaining the history of the fountain. I also am very excited about your suggestion to honor the history and contributions of African Americans in Helena.

Thanks,

Katherine

Pam Attardo 07/06/15 5:16 PM >>>

Dear Mayor Smith and Commissioners,

I am attaching a copy of a Letter to the Editor that I wrote and submitted to the Helena Independent Record last week. Excerpts of that letter were printed in an article on the front page on Saturday, July 4, but I wanted you to have a complete copy of the letter.

I hope that you will consider the alternative to destroying the fountain's inscription that I suggest in my letter. This professor's opinion, excerpted from article from the Hartford Courant (Connecticut) newspaper regarding a petition at Yale University to rename Calhoun College (see link:

<http://www.courant.com/nation-world/hc-charleston-institutions-renaming-racists-0705-story.html> ; also appears online at http://helenair.com/news/national/to-rename-or-not-institutions-reconsider-honors-for-racists/article_0ce73a4b-6686-5d2d-846f-316cb07966f1.html) makes much sense:

'For some, changing the name would be too easy an answer. Temple University professor Christopher Rabb, a black 1992 Yale graduate who lived in Calhoun College when it still had a stained glass window depicting Calhoun standing over an enslaved black man, said he would rather see a deeper reckoning with issues of race and the role of white supremacists in building American institutions, such as Yale and other schools. "Removing a name, removing a symbol is easy and we can say, 'problem solved,'" Rabb said. "But we're dealing with a symbol and we're not dealing with the root cause. And the root cause is systemic racism." He contends that if Yale was "serious about addressing institutional racism and white supremacy," it would make sure every student knows about that part of the school's history. "Yale has the ability to transform itself, but it first has to be

honest about its roots, just like America has to be honest about its roots," Rabb said.'

I hope that the Commission will consider using this fountain as a teaching tool in a constructive rather than destructive manner. Interpretive signage can be placed beside the fountain, and we as a community can consider educating the Helena community about Black Americans' contributions to Helena. Over the past 10 years, I and others in the preservation community have researched Black Helenans, including Clarissa Jane Crump, who left the South as a slave and arrived in Ft. Benton a free woman after the Emancipation Proclamation. She eventually settled in Helena. In 2010, her great-granddaughter portrayed Clarissa in a monologue at the History Fair using a script that I wrote based on a wonderful collection of letters and records that have passed down through her family.

The Haight-Bridgwater House is another story of Helena's early black community. Samuel Bridgwater was born a slave in Tennessee, but eventually made his way to Ft. Harrison, MT after serving as a "Buffalo" soldier and fighting in the Spanish-American war. His family's house was under threat of demolition in 2012, but through work by his out-of-state descendants, the Heritage Tourism Council (HTC) and, and a willing buyer at auction, the house has been rehabilitated and is now on the National Register of Historic Places. The home received a Preservation Award from the HTC in 2013.

More information on African Americans in Montana is available at this link on the Montana Historical Society's website: <http://svcalt.mt.gov/research/AfricanAmerican/AfricanAmericanInMT.asp>, including a timeline: <http://svcalt.mt.gov/research/AfricanAmerican/AAinMTTimelineMain.asp> . The State Historic Preservation Office recently received a grant to continue research on African-American's in Montana, including Helena, and further research and documentation is currently happening. A public display or monument can be created with this information to educate the Helena community in a positive manner about Helena's historic Black community. Let's focus on education rather than punishment.

This approach reminds me of a story I heard about Norman Winestine, one of the last active members of the Jewish Temple Emanu-El here in Helena (it is now the Catholic Diocese headquarters, behind the Cathedral). Norman married Belle Fligelman, daughter of pioneer merchant Herman Fligelman (Herman was a Romanian Jew who obtained a forged German passport and fled the spectre of army conscription and religious conversion forced on many Jews by Russia; he emigrated to the US, arriving in Helena in 1885 and his New York Store was located in the New York Block on the Walking Mall). Norman, who was a

member of the Montana Club, was asked about his reaction during World War II to the 1904 swastikas on the Montana Club tile step mentioned in my attached letter. His response was, "We covered them up with a rug," a reversible solution that did not destroy them.

I will be at the Administrative meeting on Wednesday night and hope to answer any questions you might have then.

Thank you,

Pam

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