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CLEAR/CRIMINAL JUSTICE TASK FORCE

Historical Narrative Project

*Faneuil Hall: The Monument of Peter Faneuil's
Legacy and a Catalyst for Change*

Every year millions of people flock to Boston, Massachusetts, to connect with the historic roots of the United States. Tourists and locals walk The Freedom Trail, watch historic reenactments, stand in awe of the development of the city and reflect on the country since the American Revolution. One of the most popular of these Boston stops is Faneuil Hall, affectionately nicknamed “The Cradle of Liberty,” which attracts approximately 20 million people per year.¹ A symbol of the American Revolution and the first establishment in a now large marketplace, Faneuil Hall maintains its historic purposes as a meeting space and an armory for the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company.² However, today’s experience of Faneuil Hall – whether a tourist’s or Bostonian’s – fails to acknowledge the real social dynamics of Boston in the mid-1700s, which involved an active hand in slavery.

Although 18th-century Boston was not home to centralized, designated slave markets of the kind that southern states are infamous for, slavery found a steady market in New England.³

¹ “Faneuil Hall,” NATIONAL PARK SERVICE (last updated Sept. 29, 2020), <https://www.nps.gov/bost/learn/historyculture/peter-faneuil.htm>. Faneuil Hall is a common placeholder on lists of most-frequented tourist destinations. In 2015, Faneuil Hall was ranked the seventh most visited tourist attraction in the world. “The world’s 50 most visited tourist attractions,” LOVE HOME SWAP (Jan. 1, 2015) <https://www.lovehomeswap.com/blog/latest-news/the-50-most-visited-tourist-attractions-in-the-world>.

² “Faneuil Hall,” NATIONAL PARK SERVICE (last updated Sept. 29, 2020), <https://www.nps.gov/bost/learn/historyculture/peter-faneuil.htm>.

³ Boston was not considered the preferred market for slave-sales, though enslaved persons were indeed exchanged there. Instead, many merchants travelled to Rhode Island, which was considered the center of the colonial slave trade. JARED HARDESTY, UNFREEDOM: SLAVERY AND DEPENDENCE IN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY BOSTON, 21 (2016).

Humans were auctioned from ships docked in Boston Harbor, from local pubs that served as makeshift clearinghouses and throughout the city.⁴ Slaves were inherited, purchased through estate sales and private sales, and often advertised in the newspaper.⁵ In the mid-1700s, between 10 and 15 percent of Boston's population was enslaved, meaning there were more than 1,600 enslaved people in Boston or one of every four households owning a slave.⁶

Faneuil Hall, erected in 1740, owes its existence to the monetary success its namesake found in the slave trade and northern slave market. Accordingly, this narrative provides a brief history of the Faneuil Family and creation of Faneuil Hall in order to help academics, politicians and the greater community understand the true legacy of Faneuil Hall. Following the historical component is a discussion of restorative justice and a call to hold Boston accountable today for years of retelling an incomplete history through its silence about slavery in the city.

Peter Faneuil: The Namesake

Peter Faneuil was born in New York in 1700.⁷ When Peter was 19 years old, his father passed away, causing Peter and his brother, Benjamin, to move to Boston to live with their uncle, Andrew Faneuil.⁸ Andrew was a successful estate agent and a merchant with a vast Atlantic trading network in the "Protestant International."⁹ The Protestant International allowed the Faneuils to

⁴ For example, Jacob Royall auctioned enslaved persons near the Dorchester burial ground. Robert E. Desrochers, Jr., "Slave-for-Sale Advertisements and Slavery in Massachusetts, 1704-1781," 59.3 *THE WILLIAM AND MARY QUARTERLY* 623, 630 (July 2002). Jacob Royall was brother of Isaac Royall, Sr., a prominent Boston figure and patriarch of the largest slaveholding family in Massachusetts. For more information about the Royall family, see ALEXANDRA A. CHAN, *SLAVERY IN THE AGE OF REASON: ARCHAEOLOGY AT A NEW ENGLAND FARM*, 49 (2007).

⁵ Robert E. Desrochers, Jr., "Slave-for-Sale Advertisements and Slavery in Massachusetts, 1704-1781," 59.3 *THE WILLIAM AND MARY QUARTERLY* 623, 623, 626-27, 630 (July 2002).

⁶ <https://bostonbook.org/tag/isaac-royall/>

⁷ BEAGLE, JONATHAN M., REMEMBERING PETER FANEUIL: YANKEES, HUGUENOTS, AND ETHNICITY IN BOSTON 1743-1900, *THE NEW ENGLAND QUARTERLY* 389 (Sept. 2002).

⁸ BEAGLE, JONATHAN M., REMEMBERING PETER FANEUIL: YANKEES, HUGUENOTS, AND ETHNICITY IN BOSTON 1743-1900, *THE NEW ENGLAND QUARTERLY* 389 (Sept. 2002).

⁹ BEAGLE, JONATHAN M., REMEMBERING PETER FANEUIL: YANKEES, HUGUENOTS, AND ETHNICITY IN BOSTON 1743-1900, *THE NEW ENGLAND QUARTERLY* 389 (Sept. 2002). *CONNECTING WORLDS AND PEOPLE: EARLY MODERN DIASPORAS* 38 (Dagmar Freist & Susanne Lachenicht eds. 2016). The Protestant International was a strong network of Protestant social circles characterized by trade, family life, and religion. J. F. Boshier, "Huguenot Merchants and the Protestant

maintain merchant and familial connections throughout the colonies and across Europe.¹⁰ Though Peter's business relied less on family and Huguenot merchants in the Protestant International than Andrew's, he was a successful merchant under Andrew's tutelage.¹¹ Peter created his own primary markets in England, France and Portugal.¹² Beyond his European connections, Peter traded in the Caribbean, the West Coast of Africa and Canada.¹³ On the promise that Peter would remain a bachelor, Peter inherited Andrew's business in 1738 upon Andrew's death.¹⁴ From this inheritance, Peter acquired the majority of his wealth,¹⁵ but his personal trade business ultimately defined his success.

As for the nature of their Boston markets, Andrew was known for his work as a slave trader¹⁶ and Peter predominantly traded wine and liquor, and had a strong presence in the fishing industry.¹⁷ If slave trading was not yet a business venture of his¹⁸, Peter undoubtedly adopted the

International in the Seventeenth Century," 52.1 *THE WILLIAM AND MARY QUARTERLY* 80 (Jan. 1995). As French Huguenots who fled France after Louis XIV revoked the Edict of Nantes, the Faneuils were well-established in the Protestant International. BEAGLE, JONATHAN M., REMEMBERING PETER FANEUIL: YANKEES, HUGUENOTS, AND ETHNICITY IN BOSTON 1743-1900, *THE NEW ENGLAND QUARTERLY* 389 (Sept. 2002).

¹⁰ ABRAM ENGLISH BROWN, FANEUIL HALL AND FANEUIL HALL MARKET; OR PETER FANEUIL AND HIS GIFT, Lee and Shepard, 9, 29-30 (1900). J. F. Bosher, "Huguenot Merchants and the Protestant International in the Seventeenth Century," 52.1 *THE WILLIAM AND MARY QUARTERLY* 90-91 (Jan. 1995).

¹¹ *CONNECTING WORLDS AND PEOPLE: EARLY MODERN DIASPORAS* 38-39 (Dagmar Freist & Susanne Lachenicht eds. 2016).

¹² ABRAM ENGLISH BROWN, FANEUIL HALL AND FANEUIL HALL MARKET; OR PETER FANEUIL AND HIS GIFT, Lee and Shepard, 18-20 (1900).

¹³ *CONNECTING WORLDS AND PEOPLE: EARLY MODERN DIASPORAS* 38-39 (Dagmar Freist & Susanne Lachenicht eds. 2016).

¹⁴ ABRAM ENGLISH BROWN, FANEUIL HALL AND FANEUIL HALL MARKET; OR PETER FANEUIL AND HIS GIFT, Lee and Shepard, 23, 26, 40 (1900).

¹⁵ ABRAM ENGLISH BROWN, FANEUIL HALL AND FANEUIL HALL MARKET; OR PETER FANEUIL AND HIS GIFT, Lee and Shepard, 23, 26, 40 (1900).

¹⁶ *CONNECTING WORLDS AND PEOPLE: EARLY MODERN DIASPORAS* 38 (Dagmar Freist & Susanne Lachenicht eds. 2016).

¹⁷ ABRAM ENGLISH BROWN, FANEUIL HALL AND FANEUIL HALL MARKET; OR PETER FANEUIL AND HIS GIFT, Lee and Shepard, 40-41 (1900).

¹⁸ Whether Peter's trades regularly involved the slave trade prior to his inheritance of Andrew's business is unclear. However, in 1737, he wrote Thomas Kilbey: "Captain sends you for his private account two young negro men, w^{eh}, if you can get a good price for, pray dispose of them." ABRAM ENGLISH BROWN, FANEUIL HALL AND FANEUIL HALL MARKET; OR PETER FANEUIL AND HIS GIFT, Lee and Shepard, 45 (1900). In 1738, Peter commissioned the enslavement of a boy for his own home, writing to Captain Peter Buckley: "Herewith you have Invoice of six hhds Fish and 3 bbls of Alewives, amo to £75 9s 2d, which you, when you arrive at Antigua, be pleased to sell for my best advantage and with the net proceeds of the same purchase for me, for the use of my house, as likely a strait negro lad as possibly you can, about the age from twelve to fifteen years, and if to be done, one that has had the smallpox, who, being

practice upon inheriting Andrew's business. Peter's ship, the *Jolly Bachelor*, was described as a "fixture in the Boston slave trade."¹⁹ Before his death, Peter planned a voyage with friend John Jones and Captain John Cutter for the purpose of gathering people to enslave.²⁰ Peter died before this occurred, but his estate was entitled to one-half of his share of the sale of the 20 enslaved persons stolen and sold for £1644.²¹ Upon his death in 1743, Peter left all of his property – which included "5 Negroes" – to Benjamin.²²

The History of Faneuil Hall

Though Peter Faneuil was now growing in infamy as a Boston slave-trader, he is most famously known for funding the construction of Faneuil Hall in Dock Square in 1740. At the time, though, the gift was disfavored by many Bostonians. Boston had an unpromising history with marketplaces and many Bostonians were hesitant to support what would likely be another failure. Additionally, many Bostonians simply preferred the open, door-to-door market practices that were common of the time instead of formalized market spaces.

The Marketplace Debate and the Vote for Faneuil Hall

In 1696, the first regulated marketplace was authorized by the Massachusetts General Court, but this venture failed the next year.²³ Public marketplace discussions were revived in 1715 and for nearly 20 years Boston Town Meetings alternated between supporting such endeavors and vehemently opposing them.²⁴ Proponents of the marketplaces promised that the formalized market

for my own service, I must request the favor. You will let him be one of as tractable a disposition as you can find. . . ."
" ABRAM ENGLISH BROWN, FANEUIL HALL AND FANEUIL HALL MARKET; OR PETER FANEUIL AND HIS GIFT, Lee and Shepard, 32-33 (1900).

¹⁹ JARED HARDESTY, UNFREEDOM: SLAVERY AND DEPENDENCE IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY BOSTON, 20 (2016).

²⁰ ABRAM ENGLISH BROWN, FANEUIL HALL AND FANEUIL HALL MARKET; OR PETER FANEUIL AND HIS GIFT, Lee and Shepard, 45 (1900).

²¹ ABRAM ENGLISH BROWN, FANEUIL HALL AND FANEUIL HALL MARKET; OR PETER FANEUIL AND HIS GIFT, Lee and Shepard, 45 (1900).

²² JARED HARDESTY, UNFREEDOM: SLAVERY AND DEPENDENCE IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY BOSTON, 143 (2016).

²³ BOSTON LANDMARKS COMMISSION, REPORT ON THE POTENTIAL DESIGNATION OF THE FANEUIL HALL AS A LANDMARK UNDER CHAPTER 772 OF THE ACTS OF 1975, AS AMENDED, 9-10 (1994).

²⁴ BOSTON LANDMARKS COMMISSION, REPORT ON THE POTENTIAL DESIGNATION OF THE FANEUIL HALL AS A LANDMARK UNDER CHAPTER 772 OF THE ACTS OF 1975, AS AMENDED, 10 (1994).

would help families maintain financial stability should Boston transition from the use of provincial currency back to the specie standard (i.e., gold and silver measures for currency).²⁵ This framing was persuasive for merchants and wealthier families as they already held the majority of the specie and would likely benefit from the transition in currency.²⁶ However, working families relied on provincial currency and feared marketplaces would only lead to greater concentration of money in the hands of the gentry.²⁷

The utility of marketplaces was an equally divisive issue. Proponents argued that marketplaces would “combat idleness and maintain order in the community.”²⁸ Common complaints of open selling were the noise level and high volume of carts and carriages traveling through town.²⁹ A popular counterargument, however, was that marketplaces would create even greater chaos than traditional street selling. Many people were concerned that marketplaces would draw crowds, concentrate competition and potentially drive sellers to different communities altogether.³⁰

After years of debate, Bostonians voted for and established three marketplaces in 1734.³¹ These markets were unpopular and closed two years later.³² The abandoned market stalls remained

²⁵ Jonathan McClellan Beagle, “The Cradle of Liberty”: Faneuil Hall and the Political Culture of Eighteenth-Century Boston, 75, 80 (Sept. 2003) (Ph.D. dissertation, University of New Hampshire).

²⁶ Jonathan McClellan Beagle, “The Cradle of Liberty”: Faneuil Hall and the Political Culture of Eighteenth-Century Boston, 75-76 (Sept. 2003) (Ph.D. dissertation, University of New Hampshire).

²⁷ Jonathan McClellan Beagle, “The Cradle of Liberty”: Faneuil Hall and the Political Culture of Eighteenth-Century Boston, 75, 80 (Sept. 2003) (Ph.D. dissertation, University of New Hampshire).

²⁸ Jonathan McClellan Beagle, “The Cradle of Liberty”: Faneuil Hall and the Political Culture of Eighteenth-Century Boston, 76 (Sept. 2003) (Ph.D. dissertation, University of New Hampshire).

²⁹ Jonathan McClellan Beagle, “The Cradle of Liberty”: Faneuil Hall and the Political Culture of Eighteenth-Century Boston, 79 (Sept. 2003) (Ph.D. dissertation, University of New Hampshire).

³⁰ Jonathan McClellan Beagle, “The Cradle of Liberty”: Faneuil Hall and the Political Culture of Eighteenth-Century Boston, 78 (Sept. 2003) (Ph.D. dissertation, University of New Hampshire).

³¹ ABRAM ENGLISH BROWN, FANEUIL HALL AND FANEUIL HALL MARKET; OR PETER FANEUIL AND HIS GIFT, Lee and Shepard, 71 (1900).

³² BOSTON LANDMARKS COMMISSION, REPORT ON THE POTENTIAL DESIGNATION OF THE FANEUIL HALL AS A LANDMARK UNDER CHAPTER 772 OF THE ACTS OF 1975, AS AMENDED, 10 (1994).

standing for another year and kept the marketplace debate alive until March 1737, when a mob destroyed the market shelters and stalls in an effort to snuff out the marketplace debate entirely.³³ This market riot seemed to quell the debate for a little while, but Peter started the discussion again a few years later.

At the July 2, 1740, town meeting, the town selectmen considered a petition signed by 340 residents for Peter's new market proposal.³⁴ Peter found support for a new marketplace in earlier market advocates, especially among those concerned about currency redemption and the uncertain effects of Britain's declared war on Spain at the time.³⁵ Peter personally favored the convenience of a marketplace. He was concerned that the lack of a formalized marketplace would disadvantage families, businesses and the town by requiring "people to go out upon the neck" or otherwise endure continual disruption by the door-to-door sales of countrymen.³⁶ These arguments were reminiscent of the earlier debates and stirred up the previously dormant opposition.

To assuage his opponents, Peter promised that the market's function would not interfere with the traditional market practices as the time.³⁷ He also pledged to privately fund the construction of the market in its entirety (recall the source of Peter's wealth) which was a relief for the town treasury that had previously suffered from the failed markets.³⁸ These promises proved

³³ BOSTON LANDMARKS COMMISSION, REPORT ON THE POTENTIAL DESIGNATION OF THE FANEUIL HALL AS A LANDMARK UNDER CHAPTER 772 OF THE ACTS OF 1975, AS AMENDED, 9-10 (1994).

³⁴ Jonathan McClellan Beagle, "The Cradle of Liberty": Faneuil Hall and the Political Culture of Eighteenth-Century Boston, 92 (Sept. 2003) (Ph.D. dissertation, University of New Hampshire). The warrant for the town meeting at which Peter's proposal was raised and which the details of his proposal can be found at ABRAM ENGLISH BROWN, FANEUIL HALL AND FANEUIL HALL MARKET; OR PETER FANEUIL AND HIS GIFT, Lee and Shepard, 80-81 (1900).

³⁵ Jonathan McClellan Beagle, "The Cradle of Liberty": Faneuil Hall and the Political Culture of Eighteenth-Century Boston, 96 (Sept. 2003) (Ph.D. dissertation, University of New Hampshire).

³⁶ ABRAM ENGLISH BROWN, FANEUIL HALL AND FANEUIL HALL MARKET; OR PETER FANEUIL AND HIS GIFT, Lee and Shepard, 79 (1900).

³⁷ Jonathan McClellan Beagle, "The Cradle of Liberty": Faneuil Hall and the Political Culture of Eighteenth-Century Boston, 94 (Sept. 2003) (Ph.D. dissertation, University of New Hampshire).

³⁸ Jonathan McClellan Beagle, "The Cradle of Liberty": Faneuil Hall and the Political Culture of Eighteenth-Century Boston, 94 (Sept. 2003) (Ph.D. dissertation, University of New Hampshire).

worthwhile as Peter's proposal was approved at the July 14, 1740, town meeting. The official count was 367 "yeas" to 360 "nays."³⁹ This count was contested, but the selectmen refused to reconsider the vote.⁴⁰

Faneuil Hall as a Common Marketplace

Despite lingering antipathy, the building process began September 2, 1740, and the market officially opened on September 10, 1742.⁴¹ Per Peter's request, the first floor was filled with vendor stalls for the market and the upper level was reserved for public meetings.⁴² The hall comfortably fit 1,000 people and it regularly served as the venue for Boston town meetings.⁴³ The meeting hall on the second floor was immediately popular, but the market had a slow start.

The first recorded vendor rented a stall for one month in December 1742 and the second stall was rented nearly a year later in November 1743.⁴⁴ Unsuccessful efforts to popularize the market led to its closing in September 1747.⁴⁵ The market reopened the following spring under new regulations and operated relatively successfully until 1752, when it again closed.⁴⁶ In 1753, the market was revived with new regulations and new stall lease terms.⁴⁷ Still, people were

³⁹ BOSTON LANDMARKS COMMISSION, REPORT ON THE POTENTIAL DESIGNATION OF THE FANEUIL HALL AS A LANDMARK UNDER CHAPTER 772 OF THE ACTS OF 1975, AS AMENDED, 10 (1994).

⁴⁰ BOSTON LANDMARKS COMMISSION, REPORT ON THE POTENTIAL DESIGNATION OF THE FANEUIL HALL AS A LANDMARK UNDER CHAPTER 772 OF THE ACTS OF 1975, AS AMENDED, 10 (1994).

⁴¹ BOSTON LANDMARKS COMMISSION, REPORT ON THE POTENTIAL DESIGNATION OF THE FANEUIL HALL AS A LANDMARK UNDER CHAPTER 772 OF THE ACTS OF 1975, AS AMENDED, 10-11 (1994).

⁴² HOWARD S. ANDROS, BUILDINGS AND LANDMARKS OF OLD BOSTON: A GUIDE TO THE COLONIAL, PROVINCIAL, FEDERAL AND GREEK REVIVAL PERIODS, 1630-1850, 71 (2001).

⁴³ BEAGLE, JONATHAN M., REMEMBERING PETER FANEUIL: YANKEES, HUGUENOTS, AND ETHNICITY IN BOSTON 1743-1900, THE NEW ENGLAND QUARTERLY, 395 (Sept. 2002). HOWARD S. ANDROS, BUILDINGS AND LANDMARKS OF OLD BOSTON: A GUIDE TO THE COLONIAL, PROVINCIAL, FEDERAL AND GREEK REVIVAL PERIODS, 1630-1850, 71 (2001).

⁴⁴ ABRAM ENGLISH BROWN, FANEUIL HALL AND FANEUIL HALL MARKET; OR PETER FANEUIL AND HIS GIFT, Lee and Shepard, 90, 92 (1900). A copy of the lease agreement for a vendor stall at Faneuil Hall market can be found at ABRAM ENGLISH BROWN, FANEUIL HALL AND FANEUIL HALL MARKET; OR PETER FANEUIL AND HIS GIFT, Lee and Shepard, 93 (1900).

⁴⁵ ABRAM ENGLISH BROWN, FANEUIL HALL AND FANEUIL HALL MARKET; OR PETER FANEUIL AND HIS GIFT, Lee and Shepard, 93 (1900).

⁴⁶ ABRAM ENGLISH BROWN, FANEUIL HALL AND FANEUIL HALL MARKET; OR PETER FANEUIL AND HIS GIFT, Lee and Shepard, 93-94 (1900).

⁴⁷ ABRAM ENGLISH BROWN, FANEUIL HALL AND FANEUIL HALL MARKET; OR PETER FANEUIL AND HIS GIFT, Lee and Shepard, 95 (1900).

displeased with the market and sought again to impose new regulations.⁴⁸ Unfortunately, before another market transformation could occur, the building caught fire in 1761.⁴⁹ With opposition still lingering, Faneuil Hall was rebuilt in 1763 and the marketplace was rebuilt according to its pre-fire existence.⁵⁰ In 1805, Faneuil Hall was renovated by Charles Bulfinch. He reinforced the structure and enlarged the building to how it stands today.⁵¹

At no time did Faneuil Hall itself serve as a slave market. The confusion about Faneuil Hall as a slave market may be attributed to its close proximity to Merchants Row, a popular place for slave sales.⁵² Another cause for confusion may be that Faneuil Hall was a popular social space for enslaved people.⁵³ A third explanation for this confusion may be the increased awareness of Peter Faneuil's personal and business affairs in the slave trade. Regardless of its source, this confusion highlights many Bostonians' staggering ignorance of their city's socioeconomic and political history. Bostonians must engage in conversations to understand, spread and confront the truth about Peter Faneuil's legacy that lives on through Faneuil Hall.

Takeaways: Addressing Peter Faneuil and Faneuil Hall's Legacy Today

Today, Bostonians and Americans across the country are beginning to face the historic landmark's unseemly origin. Peter Faneuil's involvement in the slave trade is formally recognized in tours of the area and on the National Park Services websites, yet there is no public marking on

⁴⁸ ABRAM ENGLISH BROWN, FANEUIL HALL AND FANEUIL HALL MARKET; OR PETER FANEUIL AND HIS GIFT, Lee and Shepard, 94-95 (1900).

⁴⁹ ABRAM ENGLISH BROWN, FANEUIL HALL AND FANEUIL HALL MARKET; OR PETER FANEUIL AND HIS GIFT, Lee and Shepard, 96 (1900).

⁵⁰ ABRAM ENGLISH BROWN, FANEUIL HALL AND FANEUIL HALL MARKET; OR PETER FANEUIL AND HIS GIFT, Lee and Shepard, 99 (1900).

⁵¹ HOWARD S. ANDROS, BUILDINGS AND LANDMARKS OF OLD BOSTON: A GUIDE TO THE COLONIAL, PROVINCIAL, FEDERAL AND GREEK REVIVAL PERIODS, 1630-1850, 71 (2001).

⁵² Robert E. Desrochers, Jr., "Slave-for-Sale Advertisements and Slavery in Massachusetts, 1704-1781," 59.3 THE WILLIAM AND MARY QUARTERLY 623, 623, 626-27 (July 2002).

⁵³ JARED HARDESTY, UNFREEDOM: SLAVERY AND DEPENDENCE IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY BOSTON, 93 (2016).

site to explain the role of the slave trade in creating the “Cradle of Liberty.”⁵⁴ The truth of Faneuil Hall remains elusive for the casual visitor, though not for lack of trying otherwise. Efforts to confront the reality of Faneuil Hall have included a vehement debate about changing the name of the building and installing a thought-provoking, commemorative piece of artwork, neither of which came to fruition. Yet to be explored is the use of the hall itself as a forum for the conversation.

Renaming Faneuil Hall

To note, Faneuil Hall was not named as such at the request of Peter. Unlike most public donors at the time, Peter did not condition his gift on naming the structure after him. Instead, Thomas Hutchinson moved for a vote that, “in testimony of the town’s gratitude to the said Peter Faneuil, Esq., and to perpetuate his memory, the hall over the market place be named Faneuil [H]all, and at all times hereafter be called and known by that name.”⁵⁵ Upon learning that the meeting hall would be named after him, history suggests that Peter responded, humbly, “I hope what I have done will be for the service of the whole country.”⁵⁶ In response to Peter’s untimely death shortly after the building was complete, Faneuil Hall became “the monument to the memory” of Peter Faneuil.⁵⁷

Though the original naming of Faneuil Hall is innocuous, the Faneuil name is associated with slavery. As previously discussed, Peter Faneuil was a slaveholder and acquired the majority of his wealth, which funded the building, through his inheritance of his uncle’s slave-trading

⁵⁴ Quigley, Shawn, “Peter Faneuil and Slavery, NATIONAL PARK SERVICES (Aug. 22, 2017),

<https://www.nps.gov/bost/learn/historyculture/peter-faneuil.htm>.

⁵⁵ ABRAM ENGLISH BROWN, FANEUIL HALL AND FANEUIL HALL MARKET; OR PETER FANEUIL AND HIS GIFT, Lee and Shepard, 85 (1900).

⁵⁶ ABRAM ENGLISH BROWN, FANEUIL HALL AND FANEUIL HALL MARKET; OR PETER FANEUIL AND HIS GIFT, Lee and Shepard, 85 (1900).

⁵⁷ Perhaps unexpectedly, Peter’s burial place is only a simple table monument with the family coat of arms, “M.M.” (*memento mori*), and “P. Funel 1742” inscribed thereon. ABRAM ENGLISH BROWN, FANEUIL HALL AND FANEUIL HALL MARKET; OR PETER FANEUIL AND HIS GIFT, Lee and Shepard, 115 (1900).

business and profits. Faneuil Hall owes its existence to the individuals who were dehumanized and objectified for the monetary benefit of the Faneuils.

In 2018, Reverend Kevin Peterson, founder of the New Democracy Coalition, sought to change Faneuil Hall's name.⁵⁸ He suggested renaming the building for Crispus Attucks, an African American man and former slave, who was the first person killed during the Boston Massacre and whose body laid in rest at Faneuil Hall for three days thereafter.⁵⁹ While this suggestion received support, Boston Mayor Martin Walsh opposed the idea, encouraging instead to "figure out a way to acknowledge the history so people understand it."⁶⁰ In the summer of 2020, amidst national outcry against racial injustice, Peterson and the New Democracy Coalition revived their argument to rename Faneuil Hall: "We call on Mayor Walsh once again to change the name of Faneuil Hall because it represents racism. It is an evil symbol that expresses the city's discrimination practices in so many dimensions. It humiliates black people in Boston."⁶¹

Proponents of renaming Faneuil Hall reached out to Mayor Walsh requesting a conversation on the topic, but as of December 31, 2020, the proponents reached 182 days without a response.⁶² Mayor Walsh was criticized for his inaction on the Faneuil Hall name change as compared to his involvement in prior name-changes that were similarly tied to racial justice, including changing Yawkey Way back to Jersey Street and changing Dudley Square to Nubian Square.⁶³ Mayor Walsh left office in May 2021 and the Faneuil Hall name remained.

⁵⁸ Seelye, Katharine, "Boston Grapples with Faneuil Hall, Named for a Slaveholder," *NEW YORK TIMES* (June 7, 2018).

⁵⁹ Seelye, Katharine, "Boston Grapples with Faneuil Hall, Named for a Slaveholder," *NEW YORK TIMES* (June 7, 2018).
Gavin, Christopher, "The activists pushing to rename Faneuil Hall are boycotting the marketplace. Here's why.," *BOSTON.COM* (July 27, 2018). <https://www.boston.com/news/local-news/2018/07/27/faneuil-hall-boycott>

⁶⁰ Seelye, Katharine, "Boston Grapples with Faneuil Hall, Named for a Slaveholder," *NEW YORK TIMES* (June 7, 2018).

⁶¹ Gavin, Christopher, "The activists pushing to rename Faneuil Hall are boycotting the marketplace. Here's why.," *BOSTON.COM* (July 27, 2018). <https://www.boston.com/news/local-news/2018/07/27/faneuil-hall-boycott>

⁶² Lawton, Barry, "Now is the time to change the name of Faneuil Hall," *COMMONWEALTH* (DEC. 31, 2020) <https://commonwealthmagazine.org/arts-and-culture/now-is-the-time-to-change-the-name-of-faneuil-hall/>

⁶³ See e.g. Lawton, Barry, "Now is the time to change the name of Faneuil Hall," *COMMONWEALTH* (DEC. 31, 2020) <https://commonwealthmagazine.org/arts-and-culture/now-is-the-time-to-change-the-name-of-faneuil-hall/>

In 2022, the debate gained fresh media attention as the New Democracy Coalition performed acts of civil disobedience to draw attention to the unanswered call for a name change. On August 10, 2022, advocates for renaming Faneuil Hall entered Boston City Hall, filed into city council chambers during a council hearing, and silently stood before the council for 15 minutes wearing shirts that read, “Change the Name. Boycott Faneuil Hall. Slave Traders’ Hall.”⁶⁴ After, they went to Faneuil Hall, chanting and making speeches along the way, and finished with a sit-in at Quincy Market that successfully prompted conversation among visitors.⁶⁵ On October 19, 2022, Reverend Peterson, joined by fellow clergy members, chained himself to the doors of Faneuil Hall for over five hours calling for attention to the Boston’s racist culture, a meeting with Mayor Michelle Wu, and a public hearing on renaming Faneuil Hall.⁶⁶

Despite the media attention, there still has not been a public meeting on the issue. On January 12, 2023, the New Democracy Coalition staged a peaceful sit-in at Mayor Michelle Wu’s office to in an attempt to meet with Mayor Wu to discuss renaming Faneuil Hall.⁶⁷ Approximately 30 people participated and four people were arrested for trespassing.⁶⁸ The charges were ultimately dropped. Still, there has been no meeting about the name change.

⁶⁴ Guerra, Cristela, “Activists stage sit-in to demand name change of Faneuil Hall Marketplace,” WBUR.ORG (August 11, 2022). <https://www.wbur.org/news/2022/08/11/faneuil-hall-marketplace-boycott>

⁶⁵ Guerra, Cristela, “Activists stage sit-in to demand name change of Faneuil Hall Marketplace,” WBUR.ORG (August 11, 2022). <https://www.wbur.org/news/2022/08/11/faneuil-hall-marketplace-boycott>

⁶⁶ DiGiammerino, Thea, “Clergy members Chain Themselves to Faneuil Hall in Protest of Building’s Namesake,” NBCBOSTON.COM (October 19, 2022). <https://www.nbcboston.com/news/local/clergy-members-chain-themselves-to-faneuil-hall-in-protest-of-buildings-namesake/2867509/>

⁶⁷ Gavin, Christopher, “Faneuil Hall name change proponents arrested at Boston City Hall sit-in,” BOSTON.COM (Jan. 13, 2023). <https://www.boston.com/news/local-news/2023/01/13/faneuil-hall-name-change-proponents-arrested-at-boston-city-hall-sit-in/>

⁶⁸ “Protesters arrested after Boston City Hall sit-in demanding Faneuil Hall name change,” WCVB.COM (Jan. 12, 2023). <https://www.wcvb.com/article/boston-city-hall-sit-in-protesters-faneuil-hall-name-change/42478075#>. Gavin, Christopher, “Faneuil Hall name change proponents arrested at Boston City Hall sit-in,” BOSTON.COM (Jan. 13, 2023). <https://www.boston.com/news/local-news/2023/01/13/faneuil-hall-name-change-proponents-arrested-at-boston-city-hall-sit-in/>

The acceptance of the peaceful protests at Boston City Hall in August 2022 and January 2023 suggests there may be some support within Boston city government under Mayor Wu for the name change. However, members of the New Democracy Coalition feel that Mayor Wu's inattention shows that she is renegeing on a campaign pledge to advance a hearing on the issue.⁶⁹

Commemorative Monuments

An alternative approach to honor the people whose suffering is overshadowed by the grandeur of Faneuil Hall is to erect a commemorative monument. Such a monument was almost a reality: "Auction Block Memorial at Faneuil Hall: A Site Dedicated to Those Enslaved Africans and African-Americans Whose Kidnapping and Sale Here Took Place and Whose Labor and Trafficking Through the Triangular Trade Financed the Building of Faneuil Hall." Designed and proposed in 2018 by artist Steve Locke as part of the Boston artist-in-residence program (AIR), the monument was to be a 10-by-16 foot bronze plate representing a slave-auction block. By design, the plate was divided into two rectangles with one representing where enslaved persons stood and the smaller rectangle representing the auctioneer.⁷⁰ The plate was supposed to be set flush in the ground and etched with a map of the triangle slave-trade routes and a diagram of a slave ship.⁷¹ It was also going to be heated to the constant temperature of 98.6 degrees Fahrenheit, the average human body temperature. This monument was intended to tie the past to the present and invite visitors to stand and feel the truth of peoples' enslavement in Boston.⁷²

⁶⁹ "Protesters arrested after Boston City Hall sit-in demanding Faneuil Hall name change," WCVB.COM (Jan. 12, 2023). <https://www.wcvb.com/article/boston-city-hall-sit-in-protesters-faneuil-hall-name-change/42478075#>

⁷⁰ Kaplan, Robert, "Steve Locke, Artist of Planned Faneuil Hall installation, Delivers Talk on His Works," UNIVERSITY WIRE (Mar. 27, 2019).

⁷¹ Kaplan, Robert, "Steve Locke, Artist of Planned Faneuil Hall installation, Delivers Talk on His Works," UNIVERSITY WIRE (Mar. 27, 2019).

⁷² Osterheldt, Jeneé, "It's Time to Talk About 'Auction Block'; The NAACP Convention is Coming to Boston this Summer. Will Steve Locke's Memorial to Enslaved People at Faneuil Hall get a Second Chance?" THE BOSTON GLOBE (Mar. 1, 2020).

In September 2020, Locke had raised more than \$48,000 dollars for the artwork, and the City of Boston contributed \$150,000 more.⁷³ Unfortunately, such an interaction with the history and truth of Boston never came to fruition. Locke withdrew his artwork proposal after the Boston Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) opposed the monument.⁷⁴ Tanisha Sullivan, Boston NAACP president, explained that the branch was not against the artwork or the artist; rather, the objection was to the lack of public space and involvement of the Black community in the memorialization process.⁷⁵ The New Democracy Coalition also opposed the monument because it “thwart[ed] renaming efforts.”⁷⁶ but this opposition does not seem to have influenced Locke’s decision to withdraw his proposal. Now “Auction Block Memorial at Faneuil Hall” is simply “Auction Block” until it is reconceptualized to bring another community in touch with its past.

Events at Faneuil Hall to State the Truth

Importantly, pursuing a name change or installing a monument are not the only two options that the city has to reckon with its past. The present focus on the outward appearance of Faneuil Hall via name-changes and monuments distract from the ways in which the city can actively engage with the individuals who use Faneuil Hall. Two regular ceremonies in Faneuil Hall are perfect opportunities to incorporate the truth: the swearing in ceremonies of new United States

⁷³ Osterheldt, Jeneé, “It’s Time to Talk About ‘Auction Block’; The NAACP Convention is Coming to Boston this Summer. Will Steve Locke’s Memorial to Enslaved People at Faneuil Hall get a Second Chance?” THE BOSTON GLOBE (Mar. 1, 2020).

⁷⁴ Osterheldt, Jeneé, “It’s Time to Talk About ‘Auction Block’; The NAACP Convention is Coming to Boston this Summer. Will Steve Locke’s Memorial to Enslaved People at Faneuil Hall get a Second Chance?” THE BOSTON GLOBE (Mar. 1, 2020).

⁷⁵ The director of AIR explained that Locke pushed for a public process, but the logistics surrounding the project interfered. Osterheldt, Jeneé, “It’s Time to Talk About ‘Auction Block’; The NAACP Convention is Coming to Boston this Summer. Will Steve Locke’s Memorial to Enslaved People at Faneuil Hall get a Second Chance?” THE BOSTON GLOBE (Mar. 1, 2020).

⁷⁶ This opposition does not seem to have influenced Locke’s decision to withdraw his proposal. Osterheldt, Jeneé, “It’s Time to Talk About ‘Auction Block’; The NAACP Convention is Coming to Boston this Summer. Will Steve Locke’s Memorial to Enslaved People at Faneuil Hall get a Second Chance?” THE BOSTON GLOBE (Mar. 1, 2020).

citizens and the Massachusetts Bar Admissions ceremony. These ceremonies embody principals that are in stark contrast to Faneuil's legacy. The irony cannot be lost when today's naturalized citizens, standing in the "Cradle of Liberty," abjuring allegiance to their prior State and pledging allegiance to the United States of America, may have been those individuals denigrated by Bostonians or sold along the nearby streets had their arrival been years earlier. New attorneys, swearing to uphold the constitutions of the United States and of Massachusetts, must understand this history in order to appreciate and honor those constitutional principles and effectively serve their communities.

As individuals fill the meeting hall for various events, they should know the history of where they stand so that they can appreciate the evolution of the city and recognize the progress that still needs to be made. Ceremonies, like the naturalization and swearing-in ceremonies, naturally offer an opportunity for officiants to speak on the history of Boston, Faneuil Hall and Peter Faneuil. Such commentary could serve as an introduction to the day's events or act as a reflection at the close. In addition, event programs could include a printed history, naming the unequal treatment and hardships that burdened people of color in Boston, especially that which was caused by Peter Faneuil and created the event space itself – the slave trades. The National Park Service, which operates Faneuil Hall as a visitor center and historic site, and the City of Boston should work together to craft a meaningful statement that is required at each event; they cannot remain passive.

Conclusion

The truth is that Faneuil Hall is a monument to Peter Faneuil's legacy, but many people do not know the depth of that legacy or that Peter Faneuil's legacy actually predates the building. Bostonians have a duty to educate themselves and visitors on this history to foster social and political progress, aligning Faneuil Hall – and the city – with its identity as the "Cradle of Liberty."

Unfortunately, the current controversy around renaming Faneuil Hall and the challenge of selecting an appropriate monument highlights a clear theme: Boston has a difficult time engaging with its citizens about its past. Despite these struggles, events at Faneuil Hall are an immediate opportunity to confront Peter Faneuil's legacy in Boston and speak to American values today through lessons from the past.

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For Further Reading

The New Democracy Coalition

The New Democracy Coalition (NDC) is a Boston-based non-profit and non-partisan organization. The NDC is committed to expanding democratic opportunities for all Americans, but especially for historically disenfranchised groups such as African-Americans, Latinx, Asians, and people with disabilities. The NDC focuses on social change through education and policy reform. For more information about the New Democracy Coalition and its work, visit their website at <https://www.thenewdemocracycoalition.org/>.

“Auction Block Memorial at Faneuil Hall”

Steve Locke’s proposal for “Auction Block Memorial at Faneuil Hall” is still available for viewing in detail on his website, <https://www.stevelocke.com/>. His website contains a portfolio of his past and current public projects and exhibitions. Locke’s work aims to confront history today and encourage his audience to critically evaluate America’s past and present.

More on the Faneuils’ History

For a detailed history of a few of the most prominent Huguenot families, their trading networks and family trees, including that of the Faneuils, see J. F. Bosher’s “Huguenot Merchants and the Protestant International in the Seventeenth Century,” published in *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 52, No. 1 (Jan. 1995).

The Faneuils also contributed to funding King’s Chapel in Boston. The Ad Hoc Committee on Slavery at King’s Chapel published a report about the history of King’s Chapel that detailed the relationship between slavery in Boston and the church. One report entry recognizes Richard, a slave belonging to a “Mr. Faneuil,” who was the first enslaved person to appear in the King’s Chapel baptismal register. The report can be viewed at http://www.kings-chapel.org/uploads/1/2/3/9/12399624/kings_chapel_slavery_report.pdf.

Slavery in Boston

The Massachusetts Historical Society has a collection of Peter Faneuil’s papers. These papers are associated with the colonial period and African American history and document the importation of slaves. For more information about Collections Relevant to African American History at the Massachusetts Historical Society, visit the website at <http://www.masshist.org/collection-guides/view/fa0265>.

Pompey, a Boston slave, sued his master, Benjamin Faneuil, for holding him in “Servitude against his free will” and owing him back wages. Pompey is believed to have previously been one of Peter Faneuil’s slaves that was left to Benjamin when Peter died.

The Royalls were the largest slave-holding family in Massachusetts; they owned over sixty slaves. These enslaved persons helped the Royalls attain their wealth and the land they lived and worked on was left to Harvard College and became the grounds for Harvard Law School. The Royall House and Slave Quarters are now a museum. For more information, see <https://royallhouse.org/>.