

Black Heritage Trail Markers Project

March 11, 2026



Sponsors

The Robbins House
Concord DEI Committee
Concord Visitors Center
Economic Vitality and Tourism
Divisions
Mass Office of Travel and Tourism

Context: Why Now

- Missing Pages in American and Concord History
- Framing: history we don't see shapes what we don't understand
- Monuments and public realm

Grounding the Work in Existing Scholarship



Robbins House Self-Guided Walking Tour (2011)

Sharing Untold Stories: Ellen Garrison, George Dugan, Patriots of Color

Visitors Center Map and tours

Project Description

8 -10 trail markers

Centers Black heritage, including former Black residents and Concord's abolitionist history

Grounded in documented scholarship and community knowledge

Pilot-scale: modest, informative

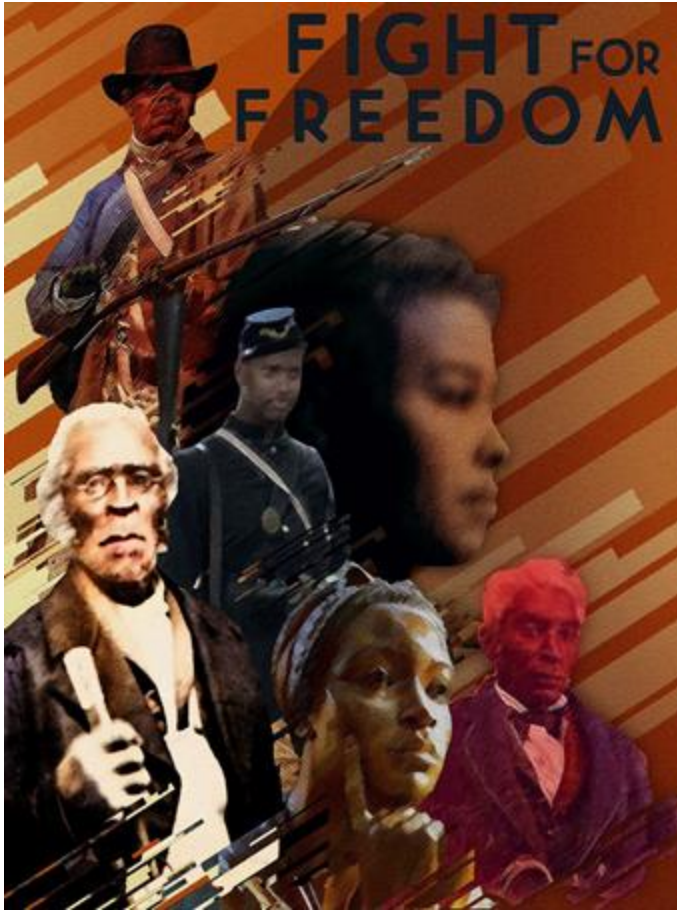
Designed as a coordinated set that work together

Functional trail markers, not historic or commemorative monuments



Why Black Heritage Visibility Matters

6



In the US:

- The Black population grew from 36.2 million (2000) to 49.2 million (2024).
- People identifying as Black and multiracial (non-Hispanic) increased 295%
- Growth fastest in areas that historically had smaller Black populations

Local Context:

- Black population has grown 44% in Massachusetts since 2010
- Concord is one of only three communities in MA that lost Black population between the 2010 and 2020 Census
- Annual Black visitor market of \$145 B important for visitor-based economy

The Black Heritage Trail is an opportunity to make history visible while reinforcing Concord's commitment to being welcoming, inclusive, and relevant today.

Project Description

Small budget of \$28,000

\$14,000 MOTT Destination Capital Grant

\$14,000 ARPA

Limited time frame due to funding constraints



Selection of Locations

Site considerations

Balance of individual context and collective narrative

Examples (not finalized)



Possible Locations

9



The Great Field:
Historic Black
Neighborhood

Possible Locations

10



Universalist Meeting House
(Holy Family Church):
Frederick Douglass Speaks
at the Universalist Meeting
House

Possible Locations

11



Old Hill Burying Ground: The grave of John Jack (c.1706-1773)

- Formerly enslaved in Concord and self-emancipated
- One of a handful of pre-Revolutionary grave markers for free Black men in North America

Possible Locations

12



Francis & Ann Bigelow House (19 Sudbury Road): Neighbors collaborating with Black Boston abolitionists protect freedom seeker Shadrach Minkins fleeing north to Canada

Possible Locations

13



Town Forest, Brister and Fenda Freeman House:
Site in the "old field" in
Walden Woods was home
to multiple Black families

Advisory Team & Outreach Plan

14

Core Team:

Joe Palumbo, Jen Turner, Beth Williams, Mimi Graney

Institutional Partners:

Robbins House – Dr. Maria Madison, Nikki Turpin

Thoreau Farm – Rebecca Migdal

Revolutionary Valley Tourism Council – Brian Bradbury

Historians:

Dr. Bob Bellinger, Dr. Sandra Harbert Petrilionis

Schools:

Dr. Michael Williams, Andrew Nyamekye, Joe Zellner

Town Committees, Residents, Key Representatives:

Grady Flinn, Rob Munroe, Osamagbe Osagie, Sam Williams

Other Town Staff:

Ann Clifford (Historical Commission, Historic Districts Commission)

Designs and Sites Still to Be Determined

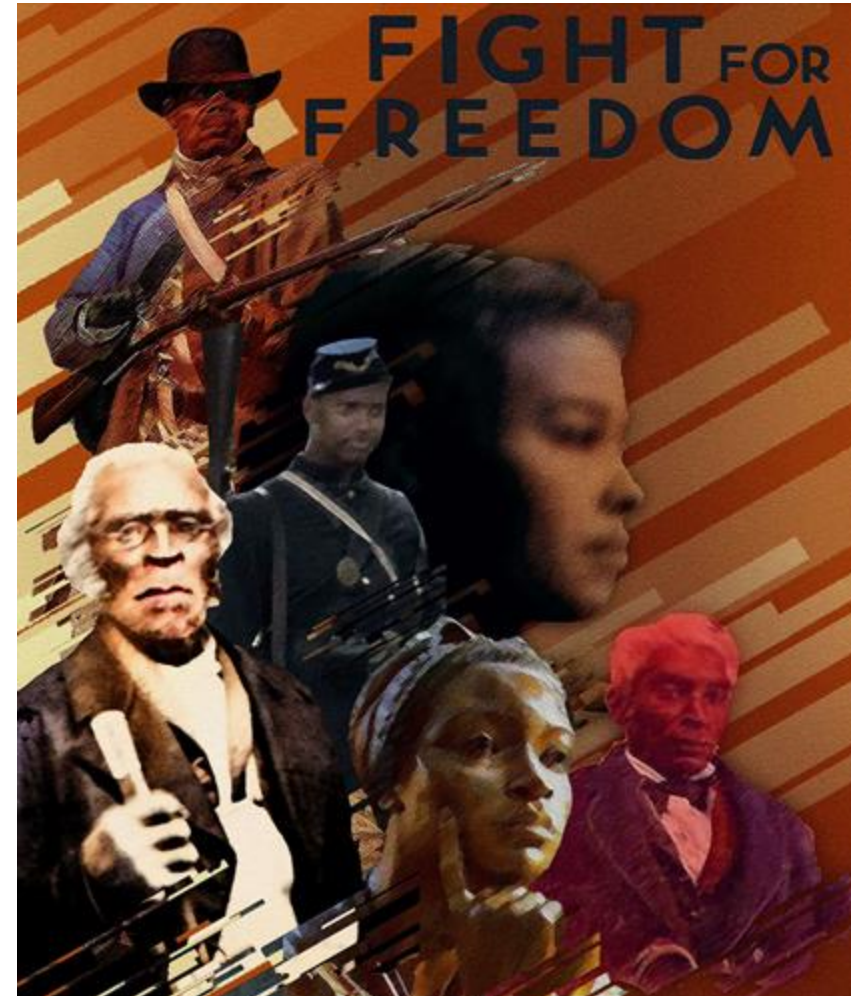
15

Design intent - compatible with
Concord's landscape

Learning from other communities

Modest pilot

Distinction from tercentenary signage



Distinction from Historic/Tercentenary Signage

Separate purpose, process and oversight

Tercentenary signage under separate Select
Board review

Trail markers are educational and programmatic

Clear ownership, authority, terms

Pilot-scale exclusive to Concord





Portrait, John Garrison, Jr

Questions and Reflection

What resonates?
What excites you?
What questions remain?