

Unveiling of the Statue of William B. Gould [1837-1923]:
The Flame Kept Alive

Remarks Delivered By:

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Gould Park - Dedham, Massachusetts

On behalf of the entire Gould Family on this 100th commemoration of William B. Gould's death here in Dedham, today I express our thanks to Dedham's citizens who made this day possible. Specifically, Joe Castiglione, Voice of the Boston Red Sox and my friend for nearly forty years, for his kindness in accepting this position as Master of Ceremonies of this event.

And I thank Father Wayne L. Belschner of St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church which William B. Gould helped construct in the 1880s. I shall never forget your eloquent and vivid speech 18 months ago here in Dedham about him and his work and I thank you for it.

And thank you Father Chitral De Mel, Rector of the Church of the Good Shepard here, where we attended the Eucharist this morning and where the first four of the six William Benjamin Goulds were baptized.

Penultimately, thank you Pablo Eduardo for your fine artistry in sculpting this statue of my great-grandfather.

Finally, I thank Brian Keaney, who along with Dan Hart, and so many others here in Dedham discovered William B. Gould three years ago and set in motion a chain of events which have led to this day.

“Bring the good old bugle, boys, we'll sing another song” writes Henry C. Work when he wrote *Marching Through Georgia* which my father sang to us so often in our New Jersey household.

“Sing it with a spirit that will start the world along – Sing it as we used to sing it, fifty thousand strong, While we were marching through Georgia.”¹

These words, sung with gusto by my father, along with the Battle Hymn of the Republic, have been with me since childhood and throughout my three decade long search for my great grandfather, gone from this world thirteen years before my birth.

¹ *Marching Through Georgia*, Henry C. Work (Boston Ticknor and Company 211 Tremont Street) (1889).

As we arrived in Boston a few days ago after a visit to Savannah, Georgia, I thought anew about those days, reflecting upon General Sherman’s great “march to the sea” when “treason fled before us” as the United States marched through Georgia and presented a Christmas present of Savannah to President Lincoln.

Two decades ago, when some of the Gould Family traveled to Wilmington, North Carolina, William B. Gould’s birthplace and the site of his audacious escape from slavery to join the United States Navy in the War of the Rebellion, we noted the absence of any statues for the Black veterans of that conflict.² Contrarily, we noted the many Confederate statues throughout the country, a phenomenon made graphic today as some have been pulled down, relocated or destroyed. In Wilmington in 2003 I said:

“..There is little or no mention or acknowledgment of the black military involvement in this effort, the “holiest of all causes” as William B. Gould called it, to obtain the New World’s central political and legal achievement.”³

Statues cannot be viewed as neutral and they do not exist in a vacuum.⁴ They project the memories of the past and the values associated with them. Their oldest confirmed examples of stone and portrait are said to be before recorded history, 35,000 to 45,000 years ago. When the time capsules contained within this statue are opened, one hundred and two hundred years from now, it may be that William B. Gould’s values, expressed in war and in peace here in Dedham, will in some way shape or promote the discussions of future generations.

Of course, it was my father, William B. Gould III, raised here on the Boston-Dedham boundary line, who truly lit the spark for this day. It was he who bequeathed the cadence of the Civil War, its’ principles, music, literature and knowledge of its military battles as part of our upbringing. It was he who found the diary itself here in Dedham. It was he who manifested an ever courteous reverence toward my great uncles who had fought in France in World War I. It was he who kept the flame alive.

² William B. Gould IV, Speech at the Wilmington Riverwalk Watermen Sign Dedication (October 21, 2003), *in* 150 CONG. REC. 972 (2004).

³ *Id*

⁴ Alex von Tunzelmann, *Fallen Idols: Twelve Statues That Made History*, (2021).

On this Memorial Day weekend, we remember the first William B. Gould's service to the United States and his well-written words at sea in 1865. "We were born under the Flag of the Union and we never will know no other,"⁵ he said in response to ideas which abounded before and during the War about Black colonization in Africa, while pursuing Confederate vessels near Southampton, Great Britain. "My sentiment is the sentiment of the people of the states", he said.⁶ And for my great grandfather, this flag was the "Flag of Right" and "the Flag of Equality."

This day marks honor for that commitment and for those previously forgotten. For until my father discovered the diary and the citizens of Dedham took notice of it three years ago, William B. Gould had been forgotten. To be forgotten was illustrative of what I described a number of years ago, i.e., "...the old order against which my parents had struggled. In their day the struggle was against hopeless odds-hopeless because all who possessed African blood were isolated, ridiculed, despised- and thus regarded as unfit for occupations and work that the white man was willing to perform."⁷ It was the forgotten who, in the words of the Book of Common Prayer, "travail" and are "heavy laden." This is what William B. Gould had in mind when, in his diary, he railed against the tearing of "benighted Africans" from their "loved homes on the free plains of Africa's shores" to be "transferred to the Wilderness of America so that they would become "...the Hewers of the Wood and Drawers of Water to clear their Land, to Build their Cittys and feed their Mouths?"⁸

I cannot speak for what William B. Gould would say about the current discussion and debate on recompense or reparations and what form, if any, they should take. But today we can experience firsthand the exhilaration of victory at sea as well as on land, the conclusion of what, in his Second Inaugural Address President Lincoln called "the bondman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil" and "every drop of blood drawn with the lash."

⁵ William B. Gould IV, *Diary of a Contraband: The Civil War Passage of a Black Sailor* at (2002) 251

⁶ *Id*

⁷ William B. Gould IV, *Remarks at Meeting with Chief Justice Earl Warren at Stanford Law School* (May 17, 1974) in 120 CONG. REC. 16229 (1974).

⁸ *Supra* note 7 at 18

In 2023, these wounds still exist in our country today more than one hundred and sixty years after William B. Gould's service. For his generation of family and war comrades, who were ever devoted to full freedom and equality, surely today he would want us to repair the inequality in our country, as he did through his work, with great care and honesty. As St. Mary's parishioners know today, he was a smart, capable and practical craftsman who worked with his mind as well as his hands. He would be, as he was then, promoting that which is compatible with Lincoln's overriding goal to "bind up the nation's wounds" so that we may live with equity in dignity with respect for one another.

Thank you, Dedham, Massachusetts, for this honor to William B. Gould. God bless you in your efforts to reflect upon the past and affect the future.