

Genevieve McMillan and the Winthrop Park Stairs

By Christopher Mackin

March 4th 2026

On the matter of who was responsible for underwriting the cost of building the sculpted stairs that function as a kind of centerpiece for Winthrop Park, what I now understand to be the [Quiet Cornerstone sculpture](#), I was told by our dear friend and my former office landlord, [Richard Diamond](#), who passed in the Fall of 2025, that it was [Genevieve McMillan](#). As the article at the link explains, Genevieve was an eccentric and beautiful artist who once owned and lived in the Red House building on Winthrop Street.

For many years she ran a restaurant-disco there called HenriIV. She also had a little museum of African-American art down Mount Auburn Street in the Gerald Chan 40 Bow Street building above the Blue Bottle Coffee Shop. I believe that in addition to the Red House building, she owned both 40 Bow Street and the Shays Bar building at 58 JFK. Richard used to place tenants at 58 JFK. Genevieve had willed the building to a non-profit trust that sponsored scholarships for art students. The staff would come over to our/my office building at 17 Story for occasional meetings that Richard would attend.

I recall HenriIV when I first came to town in 1972 and I once climbed the stairs to visit the African Art museum and met Genevieve. I chatted pleasantly with her during that visit.

Richard told me that back when Kitty Dukakis stepped forward to fix up the park, Genevieve agreed to pay for the Quiet Cornerstone step sculpture which has graced the park since. I would bet that Charlie Sullivan could verify all this and give a date when the sculpture was installed. It seems to me that she is deserving of some kind of recognition in there sooner or later. I can't tell you how many young children I have seen take their first steps up those steps with their parents holding on.