

## Chapter 22: Place-Based Podcasting: From Orality to Electracy in Norfolk, Virginia

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### 2. “Ceremonial Norfolk: The Amazing Mace” by Kimberly Goode and Matthew Pawlowski

In this playfully-titled podcast episode, “Ceremonial Norfolk: The Amazing Mace,” Kimberly Goode and Matthew Pawlowski focus in on one specific object that connects the city of Norfolk, the Commonwealth of Virginia, and the king of England, and symbolizes the complicated power relationships between all three: the Norfolk Mace (<https://chrysler.emuseum.com/objects/29714/the-norfolk-mace>). While many city maces exist, the Norfolk Mace is the only one to still reside in the city to which it was originally commissioned. This, as Kimberly and Matthew found out, is not by coincidence.

#### Transcript

[*Music: acoustic guitar-driven instrumental folk rock in a major key and upbeat tempo, with prominent accordion melody; fades but continues playing as hosts begin speaking*]

**Kimberly:** Hello, everyone. I’m Kimberly.

**Matthew:** And I’m Matthew.

**Kimberly:** And this is *Ceremonial Norfolk*. Today’s podcast is about the mace of Norfolk. As you can infer from our intro, not many people know about the mace of Norfolk.

**Matthew:** So before we begin, we need to offer a little bit of background as to why we’re focusing on this topic. [*music fades out*] Norfolk is in the midst of an image crisis. People don’t have the best thoughts of Norfolk, or they don’t think about Norfolk at all. People get a sense Norfolk is a dangerous place, or some see it as boring, what have you. Many people have the wrong impression of this city.

**Kimberly:** Yeah, there are a lot of hidden gems to Norfolk.

**Matthew:** So many hidden gems! Like a ceremonial artifact, the mace of Norfolk.

**Kimberly:** Definitely. It’s a ceremonial mace, so it’s not used for fighting. It’s just used in ceremonies.

**Matthew:** Yeah! Linked to the “detestable rule of kings”—quote Oliver Cromwell.

**Kimberly:** And it is an intricate part not only of Norfolk’s history but of American history as well. Norfolk’s political birth commenced with the arrival of the mace in 1754.

**Matthew:** So it’s 1754, it’s colonial America, we are on the verge of the Revolutionary War, the French and Indian War is occurring, tensions between the British and the American colonists are rising—so the arrival of the mace is perplexing in that it came during very turbulent times, and it is a symbol of the relationship between the crown and Norfolk, specifically Norfolk’s seaport.

**Kimberly:** Yeah, that’s so true. Norfolk at the time was Virginia’s most prosperous town in the mid-18th century. It has been an important and influential trading mecca since its founding in 1682. All kinds of things were traded in Norfolk, you know, naval supplies, corn, animal hides, tobacco, lumber, and so on.

**Matthew:** Hm, well back to the mace— it seems we’re getting a little sidetracked. [*laughs*] So the mace was a symbol of civic authority and of honor to acknowledge a transference of power/seat of governmental authority. And just a quick fact: The mace of

Norfolk is the only municipal mace in the United States still retained by the city for which it was commissioned. So the mace is the only mace that still resides in its city. However, the mace was not created in Norfolk.

**Kimberly:** Yeah, it was commissioned by Robert Dinwiddie, and it was made in London. Robert Dinwiddie—or should I say the Viceroy, Honorable Robert Dinwiddie since he was the Lt. Governor and Commander-in-Chief of Virginia. He commissioned Fuller White to make the mace.

**Matthew:** Fuller White was this master silversmith of London. He was pretty renowned. He also made George II a sauce server in 1751, so that's, I guess, pretty cool. He was definitely the one to go to if you wanted something made in silver. He also engraved his initials into all of his work. So on the mace, there is a FW for Fuller White etched in it.

**Kimberly:** But before we get into describing what the mace looked like, another thing I found interesting about the mace was that it was created in 1753, but it did not arrive in Norfolk until 1754, on April Fool's Day. *[laughs]*

**Matthew:** On April's Fool's Day.

**Kimberly:** Yeah, which is interesting because the mace was a symbol of the relationship between England and Norfolk, but the colonies were on the verge of rebelling from the British sovereignty.

**Matthew:** Talk about April Fool's Day. Here's a symbol of our relationship, but, oh wait, it's about to collapse. The bridge between us is about to be burned, literally, but yay, we still have a symbol of friendship!

**Kimberly:** So, yeah, I have a reference from the Norfolk Chapter, which is a historic society in current operation in Norfolk, citing the documented arrival of the mace. So . . .

*[Colonial-sounding flute or piccolo music plays as Kimberly reads the following quotation.]*

At a Common Council held this 1st day of April, 1754, the Honourable Robert Dinwiddie, Esq., his Majesty's Lieutenant Governor and Commander in Chief of this Dominion, this day presented to the Borough of Norfolk a very handsome Silver Mace, which was thankfully received...as a Token of his great Regard and Affection for the said Borough.

**Matthew:** You should've read it with an accent from that era.

**Kimberly:** Moving on.

**Matthew:** I'm just sayin'.

**Kimberly:** Like I said, moving on, um, speaking of handsome, I believe it's time to describe what the mace looked like. So I'm just going to read another reference from the Norfolk Chapter because they do a much better job at describing the mace than I could ever do so.

*[Music once again plays along with the following quotation. It's a tinny reproduction of an upbeat popular orchestra, with brass instruments prominent, sounding perhaps like a low-quality reproduction of an old record or cylinder.]*

It is made of ten interlocking sterling silver pieces centered around a wooden rod. Weighing 104 ounces, it measures 41½" long from the very bottom of the base to the apex of the crown. The bowl, or head, its single largest piece, is surmounted by an openwork crown. Depicted in three places on the Mace, most prominently

outside the bowl (below the crown and inside its base), are the Royal Arms of Great Britain during the reign of George II (1683-1760), its second German king and known for his poor grasp of the English language. The national emblems of his realm are depicted in several places: around the center of the bowl are the emblems of Great Britain (the rose), Scotland (the thistle growing from the same stem), Ireland (the harp, signifying the Irish herald), and France (the fleurs-de-lis, lilies which surround the lid of the cup, revealing the king's claim to the throne of France, maintained at the time and prominently depicted). Crowned center of the Mace supports a globe or orb, above which is a cross. The staff of the Mace is ornamented with alternating leaves, scrolls, and spirals. Around the base of the cup are engraved the inscriptions marked on plain areas of the shaft in two places: "F.W." . . . [is the] crowned leopard's head, lion passant, date letter "4" . . . & [the] maker's mark: "F.W."

**Matthew:** To sum that up, the mace is very intricately designed. It has a wooden rod, it's 104 pounds, and it's 41 and a half inches long. So, the thing is heavy! Heavier than my dog; he's well-fed. But it's used to tap incoming mayors in a ceremony.

**Kimberly:** Yeah, what I think is the most interesting about its design are the symbols from France, Scotland, and Ireland. I knew there would be symbols from Britain since it was made during the time that the colonies in the U.S. were just that: colonies of Great Britain. However, I was shocked that there were symbols from Ireland, Scotland, and France.

**Matthew:** I know what you mean. With Britain's rule over Ireland, we know it could partially stem from that one-sided relationship. As the description say, George was the king of both Britain and [*in Irish accent*] Ireland. When King George was a child, he only spoke [*deliberately mispronounced*] "Francais"; perhaps the French symbol was a shout-out to the king's childhood. There's not a lot of historical facts about it, but it's interesting because France was an enemy of Great Britain during the Revolutionary War, and prior to that, Great Britain was hostile toward France during the War of the Spanish Secession. So it doesn't make a lot of sense to have a reference to the French throne.

**Kimberly:** Yeah, I know.

**Matthew:** There's not a lot of information about that. I do know that England had a long-standing history of claiming the French throne. However, the claim was nominal. So it was in name only. England was once ruled by the French, and ever since, those on the throne bore the title of both King or Queen of England and France.

**Kimberly:** Oh, that's interesting! Very interesting.

**Matthew:** As for [*in Scottish accent every time he says "Scotland"*] Scotland, in 1707, England and Scotland united to form the Kingdom of Great Britain due to the Acts of Union, which included the Union with Scotland Act of 1706 as well as the Union with England Act of 1707. [*takes breath*] Ahh. So. . . .

**Kimberly:** So that's probably why there are references to both France and Scotland. With the exception of the mace's appearance, what I found most interesting about the mace was that it has been lost and found numerous times throughout history. So the mace has been lost . . . and found, lost and found, lost and found lost and found lost and found, and so on and so forth.

**Matthew:** Definitely. However, before we even get into that, I just wanted to mention in the year Dinwiddie gave Norfolk the mace, he started George Washington's military

career. This fact is interesting! Robert Dinwiddie was a British colonial administrator who served as the Lt. Governor of Virginia for the British crown, which is ironic! He started young George Washington on his path for being the Commander and Chief of the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War. Dinwiddie promoted George Washington to general of the local militia to protect the Ohio River Valley from the French. And George Washington was all too giddy to impress Dinwiddie.

**Kimberly:** Then came the war.

**Matthew:** *[with echo effect making his words hard to understand]* Then came the war.

**Kimberly:** The mace was lost during the Revolutionary War. Norfolk was loyal to the crown since the start of the revolution. However, North Carolinian rebels soon invaded Norfolk to seize control. In response, John Murray, also known as Lord Dunmore, ordered for the blockade of Norfolk with his fleet. Unfortunately, his efforts to secure Norfolk went in vain. Several days later, 600 of his soldiers were defeated in the Battle of Great Bridge. 102 of Murray's soldiers were killed or injured. Conversely, only one rebel soldier was injured. Murray and his men immediately fled. The 168-year reign of the British crown had thusly ended. Therefore, Murray was the last royal governor of Virginia.

**Matthew:** It's important to note during these conflicts, much of Norfolk was destroyed. The city completely razed! Burnt. To. The. Ground! Literally, between Dunmore and the rebels, the city was aflame, but with some quick thinking by the rebels, the mace survived. The mace was found buried in a garden—maybe the rebels thought it was a tulip bulb—in Kempe's Landing, which is now known as Kempsville.

**Kimberly:** I think that's interesting, you know. Who buried the mace? Do we know? Has there been evidence of someone hiding the mace?

**Matthew:** Not to my knowledge. Maybe the Dutch. They were enamored by the tulips. It is a very interesting question. Perhaps you should dedicate another podcast to exploring the topic.

**Kimberly:** That's a great idea! However, I do have another question. What happened to the mace after the Revolutionary War? Does anyone know? I know it was lost again in the Civil War, but where was the mace immediately after the Revolutionary War?

**Matthew:** We do know! The mace was actually featured in a parade after the Revolutionary War. Here's another excerpt from the Norfolk Chapter.

*[Again, the reading of the following quotation is accompanied by tinny music of an unbeat, brass-heavy band.]*

The first recorded appearance of the Mace after the great disruption in the government of the land was its presence in a parade held on July 4, 1788 in celebration of the ratification of Virginia's new Constitution. It was returned to Norfolk's Clerk of Court in 1790. Though proposals were made in 1794 and 1836 to rid the Mace of its royal symbolism, it remained unaltered in form, which is fortunate, since the latter year marked the 150th anniversary of Norfolk's Royal Charter, which was paraded together with the Royal Mace through the streets of the City on September 15, 1836. To mark the 250th anniversary of Virginia, it was recalled with the Mace's presence at Jamestown's Commemoration on May 13, 1857.

**Kimberly:** Wow. I understand people’s contention. Why use the mace as well as keep the mace when it was a symbol of a disintegrated friendship? I don’t understand the rationale.

**Matthew:** Yeah, I know. It’s kind of weird, eh? However, some countries still use the language of their former colonizers, so perhaps it’s like that? "Hey, we already learned the language, so why get rid of it?" you know? "Hey, we have this nice shiny mace—why get rid of it?"

**Kimberly:** Perhaps it was a symbol of triumph over the crown? You know, “We kicked you out of our country, so we get to keep your loot,” It’s like people who cling to the Confederate flag but the inverse.

**Matthew:** How so?

**Kimberly:** Well, the Confederate flag was a symbol of failure, but people still cling to it because it reminds them of their ancestors who fought in the war. I don’t know, but I do see a parallel.

**Matthew:** And speaking of the Civil War, like you and I both stated numerous times throughout this podcast, the mace was lost during the Civil War as well. Specifically, in May of 1862, as Confederate troops prepared to evacuate Norfolk, the mayor, Colonel William Wilson Lamb of the Confederate Army, concealed the argent Mace beneath the library fireplace in his house at 420 Bute Street. Although this house was occupied by Union troops, the mace was not discovered.

**Kimberly:** So once again, the losing side conceals the mace. It’s interesting because the mace is a symbol of transfer of authority, yet the side with the mace or quote unquote “power” always stashes the mace, and the side without the quote unquote “power,” or the side who never has the mace, always finds the mace. I just think that is such an interesting dynamic.

**Matthew:** Great point! Maybe the mace has magical properties that can literally transfer power. Whomever finds it gets the power.

**Kimberly:** Another thing. It amazes me how much history repeats itself, yet in the opposite ways. The winners of the Revolutionary War were the people who rebelled— a.k.a. the people who found the mace—yet the losers of the Civil War were the ones who rebelled— a.k.a. the ones who stashed the mace. So I just thought that was a very fascinating dynamic.

**Matthew:** Fascinating! So do we know what happened after the Civil War regarding the mace? Did it just vanish to suddenly reappear in a Civil Rights protests or movement since the mace has a habit of being involved in conflict?

**Kimberly:** That’s funny, but um, no. Following the Civil War, the mace was passed between various mayors, falling on “evil days” and for decades becoming practically forgotten. From 1881 to 1885, it rested in the vault of the Exchange Bank of Norfolk and, when the bank eventually foreclosed, the mace disappeared, only to reappear nine years later. A police officer by the name of C.J. Iredell discovered it. Alerting officials, the bank and the officials agreed the mace would be stored in the bank in a glass case at its main branch. Also, over the next hundred years, the mace would go on to make several appearances at parades and celebrations, including the 1907 Jamestown Exposition, as well as the 1935 celebration of Cape Henry Day. So the mace has been around a lot in our history. Perhaps more than what we realize.

**Matthew:** Oh! And the mace appeared on a half dollar coin in 1936.

**Kimberly:** That too. However, the original mace is now viewable at the Chrysler Museum in Norfolk, so you can actually go to the museum and look at it. You can talk to the curators about the mace; they'll probably tell you a lot of fun facts. So definitely check out the mace at the Chrysler Museum!

**Matthew:** There you have it! The mace has been around more than what we realized. I did not know that. Thank you very much!

**Kimberly:** No problem. And there you have it, folks. This was *Ceremonial Norfolk*, and I'm Kimberly.

**Matthew:** I'm Matthew.

**Kimberly:** And this has been *Ceremonial Norfolk*. Signing off.

[*Outro music fades in: Southern-sounding acoustic guitar and bass. Gravelly male voice sings, "I don't dream anymore when I sleep."*]