

Rochester's Frederick Douglass

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for Rochester History

From an impoverished birth into chattel slavery in America¹, Frederick Douglass (c.1818-1895) rose to the heights of fame and celebrity. The self-made leader gained eminence as a powerful and eloquent orator, renowned author, newspaper editor, and statesman. He became the most celebrated African American of the 1800s, and the century's most prominent African American intellectual. Douglass assumed the status of an American icon: a visible public representative of African Americans, and the public conscience of a great moral struggle familiar to all Americans.²

Frederick Douglass spent twenty-five years (1847-1872) – arguably the most productive time of his life – in Rochester, New York. Few publications have focused on his Rochester years, however.³ On December 19, 2003, in collaboration with the Rochester-Monroe County Freedom Trail Commission, the Rochester Museum & Science Center (RMSC) opened *Rochester's Frederick Douglass*, the largest exhibition on Frederick Douglass ever assembled.⁴ The exhibition brings together 300 artifacts and images that explore the reasons Frederick Douglass chose Rochester to launch his national reform, the person behind the symbol, and the inspiring personal characteristics and choices that made him a great leader.

¹ Born into enslavement in Maryland, Frederick Douglass inherited the legacy of chattel slavery shared by enslaved peoples taken from Africa and applied to their descendants in North America. Until 1865 when the 13th Amendment pronounced an end to all chattel slavery, American law described enslaved people as property rather than human beings. As a result, they enjoyed none of the rights granted to citizens of the United States under the Constitution.

² Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *A Dangerous Literacy: The Legacy of Frederick Douglass*, *New York Times Book Review*, May 28, 1995, p.3; and David W. Blight, "For Something beyond the Battlefield": Frederick Douglass and the Struggle for the Memory of the Civil War, *Journal of American History*, March 1989, p.1156-1178. Both scholars have examined Douglass' place in American history.

³ A notable recent exception is William McFeely, *Frederick Douglass*, New York, 1991.

⁴ *Rochester's Frederick Douglass* opened in 2003 as part of the "Year of Douglass" declared by Dr. David Anderson, Chair of the Rochester-Monroe County Freedom Trail Commission. 200 community volunteers helped shape and create the exhibition, which was funded in part by grants from Monroe County and the Empire State Development Corporation (ESDC), with additional support from the August Foundation, and the *Democrat and Chronicle*. The exhibition was dedicated to historians Howard Wilson Coles (1903-1996) and Lewis E. Bracey (1922-2003). The Howard W. Coles Collection, RMSC, provided an essential source of research material as well as artifacts for the exhibit

Part 1 - The World of Frederick Douglass's Birth

Why Am I A Slave?

“Why am I a slave? Why are some people slaves and others masters? These were perplexing questions and very troublesome to my childhood.”⁵ –Frederick Douglass

Frederick Douglass began life in Tuckahoe, Maryland, as Frederick Augustus Washington Bailey, enslaved on a plantation on the state's Eastern Shore. For twenty years, he experienced the pain of separation from family, the bitterness of working without being paid, the brutality of whippings and beatings, the pangs of hunger, and the injustice of being denied the rights of an American citizen.

Douglass never knew his birthday. He recognized the year of his birth to be 1817 or 1818⁶ based on a comment made by his master. Douglass later wrote, “By far the larger part of the slaves know as little of their ages as horses know of theirs, and it is the wish of most masters within my knowledge to keep their slaves thus ignorant... [a] want of information concerning my own [age] was a source of unhappiness to me even during childhood...I was not allowed to make any inquiries of my master concerning it. He deemed all such inquiries impertinent, and evidence of a restless spirit.”⁷

Frederick Douglass knew little about his ancestral roots⁸ - or his parents or siblings. He later observed that it was common practice in Maryland to separate children from their mothers before they reached one year of age, and to hire the mother out to other employers far away while placing the child in the care of a woman too old for field labor. A product of this practice, Douglass only saw his mother, Harriet Bailey, on a handful of

⁵ Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, New York and Auburn, 1855, p.89.

⁶ Both dates appear on gravestones in the Douglass plot in Mt. Hope Cemetery in Rochester. 1818 is the accepted date of Douglass's birth today.

⁷ Douglass, *op.cit.*, p.35.

⁸ The transatlantic slave trade legally transported Africans to North America from 1619 until 1808, when it was officially banned. During this time historians estimate that 400,000 to 500,000 Africans survived the voyage to North America, where European-descended slave-owners used their labor to develop the blossoming plantation economy. This number accounts for just 6% of all of the enslaved people brought to the Americas; the other 94% went to destinations in Central and South America, as well as the Caribbean. The early trade centered in West Africa, but by the 1800s most enslaved people came from the Congo-Angola area of Central Africa. Douglass came into contact with some newly arrived Africans. “There were several slaves on Mr. Lloyd's place who remembered being brought from Africa. There were others that told me that their fathers and mothers were stolen from Africa.” (Douglass, *op.cit.*p.91). Despite their best efforts, African culture in America did not dissolve at the hand of the slave owners. Enslaved African Americans disguised old messages in new forms, rendering even subversive interchanges undetectable to the slave masters. This resourceful blending of cultural elements resulted in the gradual development of a distinctly African American culture – characterized by improvisation and innovation – so pervasive that it continues to inform trends today. Examples include African American textiles, music and language.

occasions.⁹ Separated from her in infancy, Douglass was raised by his grandparents, Betsey and Isaac Bailey.

Frederick Douglass never knew his paternal side. He wrote, “[my] father was a white man. He was admitted to be such by all I had ever heard speak of my parentage. The opinion was also whispered that my master was my father, but...the means of knowing was withheld from me.”¹⁰ He speculated that his father was Aaron Anthony, the master of the plantation, since it was common practice for slave owners to have affairs with or rape enslaved women in their custody.

Douglass’s grandmother Betsey Bailey, born 1774, was an early and extremely important influence in his life. In her cabin on the Choptank River in Maryland, she raised him until he was six, encouraging him and giving him hope for a life free from enslavement. Although Betsey Bailey was enslaved, her husband Isaac was free. “Living thus with my grandmother, whose kindness and love stood in place of my mother's, it was some time before I knew myself to be a slave,” Douglass wrote¹¹. In later years, Douglass wrote to his former owner entreating him to send his grandmother to him in Rochester, so that Douglass might care for her in her remaining years.¹² The request was not fulfilled.

Douglass Starts Work at Age Six; Endures Hunger and Cold

Douglass learned what it meant to be enslaved at the age of six, when he went to live and work on the plantation of Colonel Edward Lloyd. The wealthy Maryland landowner held 1000 enslaved workers, including Betsey Bailey. Douglass’s grandmother alternately carried him and walked with him on the “dreaded journey” of 12 miles to his new home. There he worked at tasks such as cleaning the yard, driving cows and running errands. He also met siblings he never knew he had: older brother Perry and sisters Sarah and Eliza.

Frederick Douglass described the daily hardships on the Maryland plantation where he grew up:

“There were no beds given the slaves, unless one coarse blanket be considered such, and none but the men and women had these...They find less difficulty from the want of beds, than from the want of time to sleep; for when their day's work in the field is done, the most of them having their washing, mending, and cooking to do, and having few or none of the ordinary facilities for doing either of these, very many of their sleeping hours are consumed in preparing for the field the coming day; and when this is done, old and young, male and female, married and single, drop down side by side, on one common

⁹ Frederick Douglass kept much of his personal life private, and he wrote conflicting reports of his contacts with his mother. She died when he was about 7.

¹⁰ Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, By Himself*, Boston, 1845, p.2.

¹¹ Douglass, *My Bondage...*, p.38.

¹² “Letter to His Old Master,” *Ibid.*, p.427

bed,--the cold, damp floor,--each covering himself or herself with their miserable blankets; and here they sleep till they are summoned to the field by the driver's horn.”¹³

“In hottest summer and coldest winter, I was kept almost naked--no shoes, no stockings, no jacket, no trousers, nothing on but a coarse tow linen shirt, reaching only to my knees. I had no bed. I must have perished with cold, but that, the coldest nights, I used to steal a bag which was used for carrying corn to the mill.”¹⁴

Douglass’s grandmother was well known for her fishing skills and her success in growing sweet potatoes. Her services were in demand in the region, and Douglass likely did not go hungry in her care. When he went to live at Lloyd Plantation, he suffered from constant hunger. Despite Colonel Edward Lloyd’s great wealth (he owned 20-30 plantations), his enslaved workers suffered great privations. Douglass’s daily meal consisted of corn mush, served in a wooden trough on the ground, and eaten without utensils - and he competed with all the other children for his share.

On the plantation, Douglass first witnessed the physical brutality of enslavement. The first whipping he saw, at the age of seven, left a lasting impression. “I never shall forget it whilst I remember any thing. It was the first of a long series of such outrages, of which I was doomed to be a witness and a participant. It struck me with awful force. It was the blood-stained gate, the entrance to the hell of slavery, through which I was about to pass.”¹⁵ Douglass also saw 15 close family members sold south.

House Servants and Field Hands Were Worlds Apart

All enslaved people shared the trauma of a life without freedom, yet major differences existed between the lives of field hands and house servants. As a house servant on the home plantation of Colonel Edward Lloyd, whose extensive properties were managed by Douglass’s “owner,” Captain Aaron Anthony, Frederick Douglass fared better than most enslaved field hands, including his mother.

Field hands typically worked from sunrise to sunset at every aspect of farming from planting to weeding to preparing the harvest for shipment to market. After the harvest, they mended fences, dug ditches, repaired tools, and built structures needed on the plantation. With little in the way of food, clothing or rest to sustain them, this was a difficult and grueling life at best.

As slave owners established households, they brought some field hands, particularly women, into their homes to take on duties as servants, nurses, dressmakers, and cooks. Though less demanding physically than fieldwork, the workday of an enslaved domestic was long and rigorous. Officially on duty from five in the morning until nine or ten at night, they could be called upon at any hour.

¹³ Douglass, *Narrative...*, pp10-11.

¹⁴ Douglass, *Narrative...*, pp,26-27.

¹⁵ Douglass, *Narrative...*, p.6.

Every major commercial venture in areas like the Chesapeake Bay involved the labor, skills, and ingenuity of African Americans. Large plantations such as the one where Frederick Douglass began work needed skilled mechanical workers as well as house and field workers. Many enslaved workers brought craft skills from Africa and were put to work as carpenters, metalworkers and blacksmiths, watch smiths, gun makers, coopers, cartwrights, grain grinders, weavers and sailors.

Douglass Was Subjected to the Whims of Slaveholders

Like other enslaved African Americans, Douglass had no control over his domestic or work life. When Captain Anthony died in 1826, Douglass became the inherited property of Anthony's son-in-law, Thomas Auld. Thomas Auld sent the eight-year-old boy to Baltimore to work for his brother, Hugh Auld.

Frederick Douglass considered it fortunate that he left rural Maryland and spent most of his formative years in the home of Hugh and Sophia Auld in Baltimore. Like many other enslaved African Americans who lived in cities, he had more freedom there and the opportunity to learn a trade. Although he had to give most of what he earned to Hugh Auld, he was allowed to keep a small portion of his cash wages. He no longer experienced the daily pain of hunger, and wore better clothing and lived in improved quarters. "I had resided but a short time in Baltimore, before I observed a marked difference in the manner of treating slaves, generally, from that which I had witnessed in that isolated and out-of-the-way part of the country where I began life. A city slave is almost a free citizen, in Baltimore, compared with a slave on Col. Lloyd's plantation. He is much better fed and clothed, is less dejected in his appearance, and enjoys privileges altogether unknown to the whip-driven slave on the plantation,"¹⁶ Douglass explained.

In Baltimore, Frederick Douglass learned the shipbuilder's caulking trade, important work in a port city. When the planking was in place on a ship, caulkers filled the seams between planks. They laid a thread of cotton in the seam, and with the small mallet and chisel, tapped it into place. Next they laid tarred hemp on the seam and pushed it into place with the larger mallet and chisel. When the work was done correctly, the caulking material swelled to fill the space between planks and keep the interior dry.

Learning to Read Was A Step Toward Freedom

While enslaved, Frederick Douglass made three crucial and risky choices that changed the course of his life. The first of these choices occurred while he lived in Baltimore: he learned to read.

Douglass's introduction to reading began when Sophia Auld began teaching him alongside her son. Before her husband Hugh Auld, stopped them – most southern states enacted laws with severe penalties for teaching any African Americans to read or write – Douglass learned the alphabet and could spell words of three or four letters.

¹⁶ Douglass, *Narrative...*, p.34.

When Frederick Douglass learned to read and write he took a giant step toward freedom. Literacy opened the world of thought, ideas, religion, and abolitionism to him, providing a lifeline to the outside world and a pathway from slavery to freedom. Reading was "a new and special revelation, explaining dark and mysterious things, with which my youthful understanding had struggled, but struggled in vain. I now [understood] what had been to me a most perplexing difficulty - to wit, the white man's power to enslave the black man. It was a grand achievement, and I prized it highly. From that moment, I understood the pathway from slavery to freedom."¹⁷

Despite the risk of severe punishment, Douglass determined to continue his studies in secret. He worked through a Webster's spelling book by himself. He carried old newspapers and books with him when he ran errands, and he tricked young white boys into helping him learn.

At 13, Douglass secretly purchased his first book, a popular students' compilation of speeches, *The Columbian Orator*. This book deeply moved him, and he kept it for the rest of his life. Douglass described the book as "a rich treasure...These were all choice documents to me, and I read them, over and over again, with an interest that was ever increasing, because it was ever gaining in intelligence; for the more I read them, the better I understood them. The reading of these speeches added much to my limited stock of language, and enabled me to give tongue to many interesting thoughts, which had frequently flashed through my soul, and died away for want of utterance."¹⁸ One speech, in which a slave was freed after convincing his master in a debate that slavery is wrong, influenced Douglass's future.

In 1833, Thomas Auld brought Douglass back to rural St. Michael's, Maryland, where he hired Douglass out for field work. After seven years in Baltimore, the teenaged Douglass found the hunger and other privations unbearable. Finding Douglass "unmanageable," Thomas Auld declared that city life had "ruined" the young man.

Douglass Stands Up To A Slave Breaker

Auld hired Douglass out for a year to Thomas Covey, a slave breaker with a reputation for "taming" difficult cases. For the first time in his life, Douglass worked as a farm hand and endured constant beatings. After six months, Douglass made a dangerous decision, the second of his critical choices. He resisted a beating, and then fought back.

Perhaps because of a desire to maintain his reputation as a slave breaker, Covey did not turn Douglass in for raising a hand to a white man, and no further punishments ensued. Once again, Douglass experienced renewed self-respect and hope for freedom from enslavement. "This battle with Mr. Covey was the turning point in my career as a

¹⁷ Douglass, *Narrative...*, p.33.

¹⁸ Frederick Douglass, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass Written by Himself*, Boston, 1892, p.104.

slave...It recalled the departed self-confidence, and inspired me again with a determination to be free.”¹⁹

After three difficult years, during which he tried unsuccessfully to break Douglass’s spirit, Thomas Auld sent Douglass back to his brother in Baltimore.

Frederick Douglass Takes His Freedom

From the time that he was 7 or 8 years old, Frederick Douglass knew that escape from enslavement was possible, because he had an aunt and uncle who successfully took their freedom. As a teenager, Douglass planned to go north with a group of friends. One of them revealed the conspiracy, and Douglass spent a week in jail, a relatively light punishment for such a serious offense.

Taking one’s freedom required great courage and determination, as well as survival skills. Starvation, difficult terrain, lack of knowledge of where to go and safe places along the way were among the challenges. Punishments for unsuccessful freedom seekers included attacks by tracking dogs, sale to plantations in the Deep South, severe beatings, shackling with heavy iron collars or leg irons, and foot amputations.

“I hated slavery, always, and the desire for freedom only needed a favorable breeze, to fan it into a blaze, at any moment. The thought of only being a creature of the present and the past, troubled me, and I longed to have a future -- a future with hope in it. To be shut up entirely to the past and present, is abhorrent to the human mind; it is to the soul -- whose life and happiness is unceasing progress -- what the prison is to the body; a blight and mildew, a hell of horrors,”²⁰ Douglass wrote.

That “favorable breeze” came at the age of 20, when Frederick Douglass met his future wife, Anna Murray, at an African American Improvement Society in Baltimore. Murray’s parents, Bambarra and Mary Murray were enslaved, as were her seven older siblings. She and her four younger brothers and sisters were born free.²¹ Like her future husband, she grew up in rural Maryland. Murray moved to Baltimore at 17 to support herself as a domestic worker. She worked first for a French family, and later in the home of a postmaster named Wells.²²

Anna Murray’s courage and loyalty strengthened Douglass’s resolve. Their eldest child, Rosetta, later recounted her mother’s importance in her father’s early life: “Frederick

¹⁹ Douglass, *Narrative...*, p.72.

²⁰ Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*. New York, 1855, Chapter 19.

²¹ To ensure a cheap labor source in the 1700s and 1800s, plantation owners encouraged and sometimes forced their enslaved workers to have children to replace those who died under the brutal conditions of chattel slavery. In some cases, owners promised enslaved women freedom after bearing a certain number of children.

²² *My Mother As I Recall Her*, by Rosetta Sprague Douglass. Reprinted by Fredericka Douglass Sprague Perry, 1923. Presented by Rosetta Douglass Sprague before the Anna Murray Douglass Union, W.C.T.U., on May 10, 1900. Howard W. Coles Collection, RMSC.

Douglass's hopes and aspirations and longing desire for freedom has been told...It was a story made possible by the unswerving loyalty of Anna Murray...Her courage, her sympathy at the start was the main-spring that supported the career of Frederick Douglass.”²³

On September 3, 1838, at the age of 20, Frederick Douglass left Baltimore dressed in a red sailor's shirt, and carrying a friend's Seaman's papers. Anna Murray had helped Douglass pay for the train ticket that would enable him to free himself from enslavement in Maryland. Despite questioning by a railroad conductor, and the possible betrayal by an acquaintance who recognized him, Douglass's journey north by boat and by train lasted less than 24 hours. Douglass kept details of his route and the names of the people who aided him secret for forty years in order to protect them. He stayed briefly in New York City, where Anna Murray, having given up everything and everyone she knew in Maryland, joined him. The two married and made their way to Massachusetts, where Douglass hoped to put his shipbuilding skills to work. Douglass became part of the small percentage of enslaved African Americans who successfully freed themselves.

Throughout his life in enslavement in Maryland, Frederick Douglass held hope that he would some day be free. His quest for freedom depended on luck, as well as difficult and courageous personal choices. Douglass was lucky to have a loving grandmother who encouraged him; a master who did not sell him south or maim him when he tried to free himself; the relative independence of a skilled ship caulker's trade in Baltimore; and the financial help of a woman who loved him. His choice to break the law and learn to read and develop his knowledge and intellect; his self-confidence born from successful defiance of a slave breaker; and his willingness to leave all that was familiar behind him forever; all contributed to a successful outcome.

When Douglass left a life of enslavement behind in Maryland and began life anew in the North,²⁴ he described it as “a time of joyous excitement which words can but tamely describe.”²⁵ Within a decade, Douglass's life changed dramatically, and his new life, one that he chose himself, would bring him to Rochester, New York – a city named for the Maryland slaveholder who founded it.

²³ *Ibid.*, p.6.

²⁴ Slavery existed in all 13 British colonies. Massachusetts became the first colony to recognize slavery as a legal institution in 1641; Georgia was the last in 1750. In the North, where the economy developed around trade and family farming rather than cash crop agriculture, slavery proved less profitable. Although slavery did exist in the North, enslaved people only grew to about five percent of the total. Most of the original Northern colonies implemented gradual emancipation in the late 1700s and early 1800s, or upon admission to the Union. Until 1827, slavery was legal in New York State, where an increased police presence restricted African Americans' movement. Most enslaved New Yorkers suffered in isolation, because they lived in small numbers, apart from each other on scattered farms and in cities.

²⁵ Douglass, *My Bondage...*, p.336.

Part 2 – The World Frederick Douglass Chose

“To those who have suffered in slavery I can say I, too, have suffered.”

“To those who have battled for liberty, brotherhood and citizenship I can say I, too have battled.”²⁶ –Frederick Douglass

Prejudice Tempers Douglass’s Hopes In New Bedford

Anna and Frederick Douglass arrived by coach in the bustling seaport of New Bedford, Massachusetts in September 1838. They made their way to the home of Mary and Nathan Johnson, African American Quakers and abolitionists, who offered hospitality, safety and advice on starting a new life in New Bedford.

New Bedford seemed a promising destination for an ambitious, young African American ship’s caulker. The flourishing whaling industry created wealth for the Quaker community and provided jobs for skilled and unskilled workers on the docks. African Americans enjoyed a degree of independence not known in most Northern cities. Resident Quakers committed themselves to antislavery – and to equality of opportunity.

Northern prejudice thwarted Douglass’s plan to find employment in the seaport’s major industry, however. When Douglass went to the docks wearing “the clothes of a common laborer,” the foreman of a caulking crew told him that “every white man would leave the ship...unfinished...if [Douglass] struck a blow at [his] trade upon her.”²⁷ Instead, Douglass earned a living in New Bedford as a day laborer²⁸ while his wife turned to domestic work.

Frederick Douglass chose a new name for himself when he took his freedom, changing from Frederick Bailey to Frederick Johnson. In New Bedford, the name caused confusion among the many Johnson families, including the Douglasses’ first friend Nathan Johnson. Nathan Johnson suggested the name “Douglass” from a character in a book he was reading, *Lady of the Lake* by Sir Walter Scott, and Frederick Douglass adopted it.

Reverend Thomas James Spurs Douglass to Speak Out

New Bedford’s AME (African Methodist Episcopal) Zion chapel became an anchor for newly arrived Frederick and Anna Douglass. Douglass served as sexton, clerk and class leader. Church Pastor, the Reverend Thomas James, formerly of Rochester, New York, licensed Douglass to serve as a lay preacher and encouraged him to speak out on slavery issues. Douglass’s first public speech before an audience took place in this church when

²⁶ Douglass, *Life and Times...*, p.582.

²⁷ Douglass, *Life and Times...* Reprinted from revised edition 1892. Toronto, 1962, p. 211.

²⁸ For three years, Douglass “sawed wood, shoveled coal, dug cellars, moved rubbish ... worked on the wharves, loaded and unloaded vessels and scoured their cabins.” *Ibid*, p.211; cited in William McFeely, *Frederick Douglass*, NY, 1991.

he argued against the movement to create a new colony in Liberia for African Americans. Later Douglass publicly related his personal journey from enslavement into freedom for the first time when Rev. James called upon him to step forward and tell his story during a meeting.²⁹

The Rev. Thomas James was the first to play an important role in launching Douglass's career as an anti-slavery activist. James had much in common with Douglass. Born enslaved in Canajoharie, New York, Thomas James took his freedom by making his way, alone, to Canada. He returned to the U.S. and settled in Rochesterville, New York, a fast-growing village on the Erie Canal. Like Douglass, James supported himself by working at odd jobs while learning to read and write and educating himself. He became an ordained minister in the African Methodist Episcopal Church and traveled throughout New York and New England organizing new congregations and speaking against slavery. From 1843 to 1845, while serving as pastor of Douglass's church in New Bedford, he recognized and encouraged Frederick Douglass's oratorical skills.

A second individual influenced Douglass long before the two met. William Lloyd Garrison led the "moral suasion" or non-violent resistance wing within the abolitionist movement. In 1831 Garrison became editor of *The Liberator*, the single most important abolitionist publication. Within weeks of taking his freedom, Douglass subscribed to the paper. He later wrote: "*The Liberator* was a paper after my own heart. It detested slavery – exposed hypocrisy and wickedness ...made no truce with traffickers in the bodies and souls of men; it preached human brotherhood...and demanded the complete emancipation of my race. I not only liked—I loved this paper and its editor."³⁰

In August 1841, William Lloyd Garrison listened to Douglass at a New Bedford Anti-Slavery meeting. Days later he urged Douglass to speak before a European-American audience on Nantucket Island, a seaport city 50 miles southeast of New Bedford, at the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society. Calling on all he had learned about orations from the *Columbian Orator* and from his own deepest feelings about slavery, Douglass told the story of his life. The leaders of the New England antislavery movement – William Lloyd Garrison, Parker Pillsbury and Samuel J. May –were all deeply moved. That night they invited him to become an agent of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society. Garrison's words, "I will be heard," became Douglass's own.

That same year, the Douglasses left New Bedford with their two children – Rosetta, born in 1839 and Lewis Henry, born in 1840 – and relocated to Lynn, Massachusetts outside Boston. Their family grew as Anna Murray Douglass gave birth to sons Frederick, Jr. and Charles Remond, born in Lynn in 1842 and 1844.

²⁹ "I called upon Fred. [sic] Douglass...to relate his story... He did so, and in a year from that time he was on the lecture field with Parker Pillsbury and other leading abolitionist orators.," the Rev. Thomas James later wrote. Rev. James founded the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Rochester. *Wonderful Eventful Life of Rev. Thomas James, by himself*. 3rd edition. Rochester, NY, 1887.

³⁰Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, Chapter 12.

Douglass's Autobiography Makes Him A Celebrity

Less than a decade out of enslavement, Frederick Douglass emerged as a leading agent for the American antislavery movement and became a national celebrity. The publication in 1845 of his first autobiography, the best selling, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, constituted a major step in this transition. Douglass used his own life as a weapon against slavery.

As Douglass's reputation grew on the anti-slavery lecture circuit, so did questions about the authenticity of his life in enslavement. How could such a polished and confident orator ever have been in bondage? Douglass wrote his autobiography, which included a signed photograph and letters of verification from leading abolitionists, in part to validate the story he told audiences.

In his autobiography Douglass recounted the horrors of slavery – just as he did on the lecture circuit. He lashed out at the hypocrisy of Christian slaveholders who beat their human chattel, broke up families, and fathered children who remained enslaved. Douglass's literary abilities and his compelling story earned him critical as well as popular acclaim. An instant success, *The Narrative*, priced at 50 cents, sold 30,000 copies within five years.

For further proof of the veracity of his story, Douglass mailed a copy of *The Narrative* to his former master, Thomas Auld, challenging him to refute the story. That bold act, combined with the fame that resulted from the overnight success of his book, placed him in danger of capture and return to enslavement. To remain safe, Douglass left his wife and children in Massachusetts and sailed for England, Ireland and Scotland on an anti-slavery lecture tour. Anna Murray Douglass supported their family with her wages as a shoe binder, while he lectured abroad for almost two years. In 1846, British friends paid Hugh Auld 150 pounds sterling - \$711.66 in U.S. currency at the time – and Auld no longer had legal claim to Douglass as his property.

Why Rochester?

In 1847, Frederick Douglass returned to the United States from his 18-month lecture tour in the British Isles a free man with signed manumission (freedom) papers. He also brought \$4,000 in contributions from English abolitionists to start an anti-slavery newspaper. To his surprise and dismay, his colleagues in the New England anti-slavery movement opposed his newspaper and predicted failure if he persisted.

Douglass chose to move to Rochester, New York, which he had first visited in 1843, to start his newspaper because:

- It was far away from the Boston branch of the American Anti-slavery Society and competition with William Lloyd Garrison's anti-slavery newspaper, *The Liberator*. It

was also far enough away from circulation of New York City's anti-slavery paper, the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*.³¹

- It was a young and fast-growing city suitable for a new venture.
- It was home to an active, enterprising, free African American community.
- It was a hotbed of reform movements, including abolitionism.
- It was home to a community of Quakers who embraced abolition and racial equality.
- Its location near Canada made it a critical site on the Underground Railroad.

1847 Rochester was a vibrant, growing city on the Erie Canal with opportunities to establish a business and raise a family, as well as find reform-minded supporters. Frederick Douglass came here to launch an assault on slavery through the power of the press, established the *North Star*³² on Dec. 3, 1847, and developed it into one of the most influential African American antislavery papers. He prepared to use the written and spoken word to put an end to slavery in the United States.

Directly across Lake Ontario from Canada, Rochester was a vital hub on the Underground Railroad. Many freedom seekers came to Rochester from the Southern Tier (south of the city) and from Syracuse (to the east), continuing on to Canada by heading west to Buffalo, crossing the Lake from the Port of Rochester at Charlotte, or from another site, such as Pultneyville to the east.³³

Douglass described the city as “the center of a virtuous, intelligent, enterprising, liberal, and growing population. The surrounding country is remarkable for its fertility, and the city itself possesses one of the finest water-powers in the world. It is on the line of the New York Central railroad--a line that, with its connections, spans the whole country. Its people [are] industrious and in comfortable circumstances--not so rich as to be indifferent to the claims of humanity, and not so poor as to be unable to help any good cause which commanded the approval of their judgment.”³⁴

Rochester Was A Center for National Reform Movements

Part of Rochester's appeal for Frederick Douglass lay in its openness to new ideas about social reform. From the 1840s to the 1870s, Rochester was a hotbed for reform movements, including moral reform, temperance³⁵, women's rights, charitable activities,

³¹ Howard W. Coles, *The Cradle of Freedom*, Rochester, NY, 1941, p.12.

³² Named for the celestial body used by freedom seekers to find their way North.

³³ Ruth Rosenberg-Naparsteck, Ed., *Network to Freedom: A Guide to the Underground Railroad and the Abolitionist Movement*, Rochester/Monroe Co. Freedom Trail Commission, 2003, and Emerson Klees, *Underground Railroad Tales: With Routes Through the Finger Lakes Region*, Rochester, NY 1997.

³⁴ Douglass, *Life and Times*, p. 332. Douglass's final autobiography contains the most specific references to his Rochester years.

³⁵The temperance movement opposed the habitual use of alcohol and public drunkenness. Temperance literature aimed to convince readers that spending money on alcohol would lead to ruined lives and families. In Rochester, where the Erie Canal brought thousands of seasonal wage earners through town, the temperance movement became part of an effort to “civilize” the population.

the peace movement, abolitionism, and the fight for African American equality. The region also spawned new religious groups such as Spiritualists, Mormons and Millerites (Seventh Day Adventists) and hosted Protestant religious revivals. Free African Americans and European-Americans, women, Quakers and evangelical Christians all participated in reform activities, including Rochester's active anti-slavery network. National reform leader and human rights advocate Susan B. Anthony made Rochester her home base during this time.

Rochesterians tolerated radical reform movements. Although most Rochesterians did not actively support the anti-slavery movement or the Underground Railroad, and many openly opposed them, nevertheless reformers flourished in their midst. "I know of no place in the Union where I could have located at the time with less resistance, or received a larger measure of sympathy and cooperation," Douglass later reflected.³⁶

Douglass found support for his Rochester anti-slavery newspaper through funds raised from items sold at anti-slavery fairs in Western New York, which also supported freedom seekers who passed through the region on the Underground Railroad.

A Reform-Minded African American Community Welcomes Douglass

An important factor in Frederick Douglass's decision to move to Rochester was the presence of an active and enterprising free African American population. As they purchased property and established businesses, homes and churches, Rochester's African American citizens contributed to reform activities far beyond their numbers³⁷ and could be counted on to advertise and publicize events in Douglass's anti-slavery newspaper. Douglass likely knew of the characteristics of Rochester's African American citizens through the Rev. Thomas James.

Austin Steward was a distinguished leader of Rochester's African American community prior to Douglass's arrival. Enslaved first in the South and later in Bath, New York, Steward legally took his freedom and moved to Rochesterville during the earliest days of settlement in 1816. Despite open hostility, he opened a meat market on what is now West Main Street and eventually enjoyed the patronage of many of Rochester's prominent citizens. Steward helped establish a Sabbath School for African Americans where the future Rev. Thomas James learned to read. In 1827, Steward gave an important speech during the local celebration of Emancipation in New York State.³⁸

³⁶ Douglass, *Life and Times*... Reprinted from revised edition 1892. Toronto: Crowell Collier, 1962, p. 270.

³⁷ As early as 1834, African Americans in Rochester supported three religious societies, two anti-slavery groups (one male, one female), and a temperance organization which opposed the habitual use of alcohol and public drunkenness. William Clough Bloss, editor, *The Rights of Man*, 1834. Dr. Ena L. Farley, "The African American Presence in the History of Western New York," *Afro-Americans in New York Life and History*, Vol.14, No.1, Jan. 1990, pp.27-91. Musette Castle, "A Survey of the History of African Americans in Rochester, New York 1800-1860," *Afro-Americans in New York Life and History*, Vol.13, No.2, July 1989, pp.7-32.

³⁸ Austin Steward, *Twenty-two Years a Slave and Forty Years a Freeman*, Rochester, 1857.

The 1830 census shows that most African American families lived in Rochester's first and third wards, and few occupied areas outside the city limits. An 1834 survey³⁹ counted 360 people of color – 3% of the city's total population. Skilled workers included five blacksmiths, two shoemakers, masons, clergymen, and stonecutters; a tailor, cabinetmaker, merchant and physician, as well as farmers, boatmen, barbers, waiters and seamstresses. The majority found work as laborers, however – the same kind of work Frederick Douglass did when he arrived in New Bedford. By 1850, most African American residents lived in the third ward, near the homes of wealthy European-descended Rochesterians who provided work.

Despite their status as free people⁴⁰ and their many varied contributions to the growth of the city in its formative years, African Americans living in Rochester endured many forms of what Douglass called the “vulgar prejudice against color, so common to Americans.”⁴¹ These included segregated reform organizations – even anti-slavery societies – separate schools and limited employment opportunities. Douglass believed that his efforts made a difference in the treatment of African Americans in Rochester. “There were barriers erected against colored people in most places of instruction and amusement in the city, and until I went there they were imposed without any apparent sense of injustice and wrong, and submitted to in silence; but one by one they have gradually been removed....”⁴² The first year he lived in Rochester, Frederick Douglass's name appeared in a section of the *Rochester Directory* reserved for African Americans, one of many examples of prejudice toward African Americans that Douglass encountered in Rochester.

In 1850, a group of African American citizens of Rochester met to strategize following the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law. Jacob P. Morris, Frederick Douglass's partner in coordinating Underground Railroad activities in the Rochester area, presided over the meeting. William C. Nell, who wrote for Douglass's *North Star*, recorded the minutes.⁴³ The Fugitive Slave Law made it possible for free African Americans as well as enslaved freedom seekers to be kidnapped and sent South. In response, Rochester's African American citizens devised a secret password to shout out in the event of attempted kidnappings. Only once was a formerly enslaved person seized in Rochester after this meeting. The captive slit her throat rather than return South.⁴⁴

³⁹ In 1834, William Bloss, editor of the *Rights of Man*, surveyed the African American population in Rochester. “Colored” citizens and their residences and occupations were also designated in the *Charter and Directory of the City of Rochester*, Rochester, 1834.

⁴⁰ New York State emancipated its enslaved population in 1827.

⁴¹ Douglass, *Life and Times*...p.331.

⁴² Douglass, *Life and Times*...p.333.

⁴³ Minutes of the Anti-Fugitive Slave Law Meeting of the Colored Citizens of Rochester, manuscript, Rochester, NY. Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, University of Rochester Library.

⁴⁴ Amy Post, “The Underground Railroad,” in William F. Peck, *Semi-Centennial History of Rochester*, Syracuse, 1884, p.459-460.

Douglass Finds Lifelong Friends in Rochester Quakers Isaac and Amy Post

Rochester's significant population of Quakers supported the abolitionist, women's rights and temperance movements. Members of this religious society, which began in England in the 1600s, believed that every person – male or female, enslaved or free – was of equal worth. Also known as The Friends, Quakers did not use alcohol, lived and dressed simply, and worshipped without ritual and ceremony. While they opposed slavery, they believed that active involvement in reform movements was too worldly. As a result, radical Quaker reformers who supported Douglass and the Underground Railroad, including Susan B. Anthony's family and Douglass's close friends Isaac and Amy Post, resigned from local Quaker meetings.

Isaac and Amy Post were among Rochester's most active reformers and were two of Frederick Douglass's closest friends. They met Douglass on his first visit to the city in 1843 and welcomed him into their home. Douglass expressed his affection for Posts in a letter from Edinburgh, Scotland, written the year before he moved to Rochester

My Dear Amy,

I must say a few hurried words to you in the way of friendship. Amy your family was always dear -- very dear to me, you loved me and treated me as a brother before the world knew me as it ^{now} does. & when my friends were fewer than they now are and let me tell you that I never loved and admired you more, than since I last met you in Rochester. You may however believe me that Isaac is as dear to me -- Oh! how glad I should be could I but look in upon you all. could I but clasp your kind hands and look you all full in the face, yea more mingle my voice with yours in the discussions of the many interesting subjects which are constantly presenting themselves to your consideration. ...In great haste, I am most sincerely yours

Frederick Douglass
28 April

1846⁴⁵

Hicksite Quakers, the Posts came to Rochester from Long Island, via Scipio, New York in the late 1830s. Isaac Post operated a drug store in Rochester. In the 1840s they became involved in the antislavery movement. Their Sophia Street (now Plymouth Avenue) home, on the site of the present day Hochstein Music School, harbored more freedom seekers on the Underground Railroad than any other single location in Rochester.⁴⁶ The Posts embraced a variety of the reform movements centered in Western New York. Douglass said of the Posts: "They were not more amiable than brave, for they never seemed to ask, 'What will the world say?' but walked straight forward in what seemed to

⁴⁵ From The Isaac and Amy Post Papers, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, University of Rochester Library.

⁴⁶ Shirley Cox Husted, *Sweet Gift of Freedom*. Rochester, NY, 1986, p.22.

them the line of duty, please or offend whomsoever it might.”⁴⁷ Their active efforts to secure equality for women and African Americans led them to resign from the Quaker meeting. They converted to Spiritualism, and Isaac Post became a medium who wrote a book of messages he received from well-known persons.⁴⁸

In 1847, Douglass revealed to the Posts his decision to move his family to Rochester and start his anti-slavery newspaper. Douglass stayed with the Posts when he first arrived in Rochester, and they helped him settle his family in the city. The three remained friends for the rest of their lives.

Boston, 28 October 1847

My dear Amy,

I have finally decided on publishing the North Star in Rochester, and to make that city my future home. I am now buying type and all the little etc. of a printing establishment. I shall probably be able to issue my first number as early as the middle of November, any delay can only do the enterprise harm, I have therefore resolved to commence at once. As I shall see you soon and having no time now must delay further communication til I see you - My best love to every member of your family

Yours sincerely,

F Douglass⁴⁹

Lynn Mass 3rd Feb [1848]

My Dear Isaac,

I have now full resolved to bring my family to Rochester with me – and I shall probably reach there – as early as one week from to morrow which is Friday. I write to request that you will secure me a tenement – the rent of which will not exceed one hundred dollars per annum.

I regret to be absent from Rochester so long as I shall have to be this time – but the length of time now may prevent a longer period in future. I am getting subscribed – which is no unimportant item. With love to all the members of your Dear family – I am yours ever – in great haste
Frederick Douglass⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Douglass, *Life and Times*...p.229.

⁴⁸ Nancy Hewitt, “Amy Kirby Post,” *University of Rochester Library Bulletin*, 1984, No. 37, pp.5-21. Dr Hewitt, Professor of History and Women’s Studies at Rutgers University, is writing a biography of Amy Post.

⁴⁹ From The Isaac and Amy Post Papers, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, University of Rochester Library.

Frederick Douglass Becomes A Remarkable Fundraiser

No longer a salaried employee of the American Anti-Slavery Society when he came to Rochester, Douglass had to raise all the funding needed to maintain his family and support his “great work of renovating the public mind, and building up a public sentiment, which should send slavery to the grave.”⁵¹ The celebrated orator and author developed impressive fundraising skills that contributed to his success as a national reform leader.

“There were many times when, in my experience as editor and publisher, I was very hard pressed for money, but by one means or another I succeeded so well as to keep my pecuniary engagements, and to keep my anti-slavery banner steadily flying during all the conflict from the autumn of 1847 till the union of the States was assured and emancipation was a fact accomplished,”⁵² Douglass proudly recalled.

Douglass inspired many influential people to support his work. Hon. Gerrit Smith, a Congressman, wealthy landowner, and dedicated abolitionist from Madison County, New York, subscribed to the *North Star* and generously gave Douglass financial help in times of crisis. Samuel D. Porter, an early resident of Rochester, wealthy merchant, landowner, and ardent anti-slavery activist, also financially supported Douglass’s newspaper and Underground Railroad activities. The Porter family became close friends of Douglass, who later wrote, “The late Samuel D. Porter and his wife Susan F. Porter, and his sisters, Maria and Elmira Porter, deserve grateful mention as among my steadfast friends, who did much in the way of supplying pecuniary aid.”⁵³ Samuel Porter also joined Douglass in successfully desegregating Rochester’s public schools.

To finance his reform efforts, Douglass sold newspaper subscriptions, lectured weekly one winter in Rochester’s Corinthian Hall, traveled extensively to speak out against slavery, solicited donations from friends in England and western New York, networked with women’s and antislavery organizations that conducted revenue-generating activities, mobilized volunteers, and built up his real estate holdings.

The Western New York Anti-Slavery Society, which included African Americans and European-descended Americans, women and men, had been founded in Rochester in 1842. After 1847, it turned a large portion of the funds raised at annual fairs over to Douglass’s *North Star*. Through sales of needlework and other hand-sewn articles at festivals and bazaars including textiles imported from Ireland, members of the Rochester Ladies Anti-Slavery Sewing Society also raised money for Douglass’s newspaper and other abolitionist activities.

⁵⁰ From The Isaac and Amy Post Papers, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, University of Rochester Library.

⁵¹ Douglass, *Life and Times*..., p. 320.

⁵² Douglass, *Life and Times*..., p. 321.

⁵³ Douglass, *Life and Times*...,p.325.

Abolitionist and women's rights lecturer Sojourner Truth spent so much time in Rochester that she joined the Rochester Ladies' Anti-Slavery Society. Like Douglass, she stayed often in the home of Isaac and Amy Post. Born enslaved in eastern New York State, Truth successfully sued to rescue her young son who was sold South when the state mandated gradual emancipation. She and Amy Post helped find jobs in Rochester for newly freed people following the Civil War. In later years, Douglass and Amy Post contributed funds for Truth to retire in Battle Creek, Michigan.

Douglass Assaults Slavery Through The Power Of The Press

Frederick Douglass established the *North Star* in Rochester, New York on December 3, 1847, and developed it into one of the most influential African American antislavery papers published. He later described the challenges he faced, "A wood-sawyer offering himself to the public as an editor! A slave, brought up in the depths of ignorance, assuming to instruct the highly civilized people of the north in the principles of liberty, justice, and humanity! The thing looked absurd. Nevertheless, I persevered."⁵⁴ With the motto on the *North Star* masthead "Right is of no Sex - Truth is of no Color - God is the Father of us all, and we are all brethren," Douglass denounced slavery and fought for the emancipation of women and other oppressed groups, including children and animals. The *North Star* circulated to more than 4,000 readers in the United States, Europe, and the West Indies.

Slowly, support for Douglass's efforts grew in Rochester. "The New York Herald...counselled [sic] the people of [Rochester] to throw my printing-press into Lake Ontario and to banish me to Canada, and, while they were not quite prepared for this violence, it was plain that many of them did not well relish my presence amongst them. This feeling, however, wore away gradually, as the people knew more of me and my works,"⁵⁵ Douglass observed.

In June 1851 the *North Star* merged with the Liberty Party Paper of Syracuse, NY and became *Frederick Douglass' Paper*. It circulated under this new name until 1860. Douglass devoted the next three years to publishing an abolitionist journal called *Douglass' Monthly* before he stopped publishing to begin recruitment of African American soldiers for the Union Army in 1863.

Douglass could not have produced the paper and continued his busy lecture schedule without the help of numerous talented and dedicated colleagues. These colleagues included Martin Delaney, William Cooper Nell, and Julia Griffiths. John S. Jacobs, the son of the formerly enslaved Harriet Jacobs, who gained fame as the author of her own autobiography, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, (1861), also assisted Douglass.

⁵⁴ Douglass, *Life and Times...*, p.321.

⁵⁵ Douglass, *Life and Times...*,p.326.

Physician, author, abolitionist, and early African American nationalist, Martin Delaney (1812-1885) joined Douglass in Rochester in 1847 as co-editor of the *North Star*. Delaney's own Pittsburgh-based abolitionist newspaper, the *Mystery*, went out of business earlier that year. Like Douglass, Delaney addressed anti-slavery gatherings throughout the East and Midwest. Delaney left the *North Star* in 1849 to study medicine and pursue other career interests. During the Civil War, like Douglass, Delaney recruited African American troops in Massachusetts and other New England states. He became the first African American field officer in the Union Army in 1865 when he was commissioned major.

William Cooper Nell (1816-1874) acted as a subscription agent and contributor to many newspapers including the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, the *Weekly Elevator*, the *Provincial Freedman*, and the *Pine and Palm*. From 1847 to 1851 he assisted Frederick Douglass on the *North Star* and served as acting editor when Douglass traveled on speaking tours. Nell remained loyal to William Lloyd Garrison and left the *North Star* when Douglass broke ties with Garrison. An activist for equal rights, integrationist and organizer, he became the first published African American historian, the first African American to hold a federal government position, and a leader in the desegregation of Boston public schools.

Julia Griffiths (?-1895) met Frederick Douglass in England and became his assistant newspaper editor in Rochester in 1851. She helped raise money in England to launch the *North Star*, and then came to Rochester to ensure its survival by putting the finances in order.⁵⁶ "To no one person was I more indebted for substantial assistance than to Mrs. Julia Griffiths Crofts," Douglass later wrote of her.⁵⁷ Douglass and Griffiths worked opposite each other at a table and a desk in the newspaper's office. The sight of an African American man living with, working with and escorting a white English woman on the streets of Rochester in the mid-1800s distressed many citizens, even abolitionist friends.⁵⁸ By 1855 the criticism of Julia Griffiths and of what was viewed by many to be an unorthodox relationship with Douglass had become intense and distracting.⁵⁹ Griffiths returned to England, where she continued her antislavery activities and eventually married. She corresponded with Douglass until his death three months before hers.

An eyewitness described Douglass's newspaper office in 1859 as consisting of a single room on the second floor of the Talman block at 25 Buffalo Street, now West Main

⁵⁶Julia Griffiths created *Autographs for Freedom*. Second Series. Edited by Julia Griffiths for the Rochester Ladies Anti-Slavery Society. Auburn: Alden, Beardsley; Rochester: Wanzer, Beardsley & Co., 1854 RMSC Collection. Proceeds resulting from the sales of this book, featuring anti-slavery essays by famous abolitionists, helped finance Douglass's national reform activities.

⁵⁷ Douglass, *Life and Times*...,p.321.

⁵⁸ Jenny Marsh Parker, "Reminiscences of Frederick Douglass," *The Outlook*, 51, April 1898, p.552-53. In a letter of January, 1852, Douglass chided Samuel Porter for writing him of the "scandalous reports" instead of confronting him face to face. From The Porter Family Papers, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, University of Rochester Library.

⁵⁹ Samuel Porter letter to Frederick Douglass, cited in William McFeely, *Frederick Douglass*, New York, 1991.

Street. The three-story Talman block stood on the south side of Main Street. Douglass's desk sat in one corner, with cases of type around the sides. His son Frederick, Jr. and his daughter Rosetta set the type with the help of printer Horace McGuire. When the forms were locked up, they carried them into the adjacent offices of the *Rochester Democrat*, which printed the edition. The papers were then folded, single-wrapped and mailed to subscribers. The small press in Douglass's office turned out small jobs for paying clients.

Tense Moments Follow Douglass's Move To Alexander Street

Thirty-year-old Frederick Douglass purchased his first home in Rochester at 4 Alexander Street near the corner of East Avenue (then Main Street) in April 1848. The two-story brick house of nine rooms stood on a city lot in a neighborhood described as "suburban and aspiring."⁶⁰ "So far as my domestic affairs are concerned, I can boast of as comfortable a dwelling as your own." Frederick Douglass wrote to Thomas Auld, his former owner.⁶¹ A magnolia bush beside the archway of the porch welcomed visitors, and there was room in the small yard behind the house for Anna Douglass's garden.⁶²

A future neighbor, Joseph Marsh,⁶³ engineered the sale of the house, owned by anti-slavery activist and jeweler John Kedzie,⁶⁴ to Douglass. Like Douglass, Marsh maintained an office in the Talman block, where he published an Adventist newspaper. The home was flanked on both sides by abolitionists.⁶⁵ Other neighbors on the block protested openly.

Local opposition waned as neighbors found Frederick Douglass to be "a gentleman and a good neighbor;" Anna Murray Douglass a "model housekeeper" with "very aristocratic ideas;" and the children, -- Rosetta, Frederick, Charles, and Lewis "trained to self-

⁶⁰ *Reminiscences of Frederick Douglass*, by Jane Marsh Parker, typescript, unpublished. Howard W. Coles Collection, RMSC.

⁶¹ Frederick Douglass to Thomas Auld, September 3, 1848, in Douglass, *My Bondage....*, Appendix III.

⁶² William McFeely, *Frederick Douglass*, New York, 1992, p. 154, 400 (Notes). McFeely cites a letter from Mrs. George D. Van Zandt to Anna M. Douglass [March 1848], Rochester Ladies' Anti-Slavery Society Papers, University of Rochester Library.

⁶³ Amy Hamner-Croughton, "Anti-Slavery Days," *Rochester Historical Society Publication Series*, Volume 14, Rochester, 1936, p.126. Joseph Marsh's daughter Jenny [Jane] Marsh Parker met the Douglass family when a child, and she followed their activities with great interest. Her eyewitness accounts of the Douglasses are among the few sources of inside information about their personalities, daily life, and impact on fellow Rochesterians.

⁶⁴ *Daily American Directory of the City of Rochester for 1847-8*. Rochester, 1847, p.143 John Kedzie is listed as owning a house at 4 Alexander the year before Douglass purchased a house of the same address.

⁶⁵ The families of skilled European-American woodworkers William Billinghamurst and Nelson Bostwick, desirable artisans in a growing city like Rochester, lived on either side of the Douglasses. Both Billinghamurst and Bostwick were abolitionists, as was neighbor, Joseph Marsh, a Millerite pastor and leader in the new religion advanced during the era of reform in Rochester. Millerites, who eventually became Adventists, predicted the world would end on October 22, 1844. Joseph Marsh became editor of the *Advent Harbinger* and a firm abolitionist. He purchased Billinghamurst's home and moved in next to Douglass around 1849. His daughter, author Jenny Marsh Parker, recorded many of her memories of the Douglass family and provides lively eyewitness accounts.

helpfulness and systematic industry.”⁶⁶ The Douglasses’ fifth child, Annie, was born in the Alexander Street house. Charlotte Murray, believed to be Mrs. Douglass’s younger sister, lived with the seven members of the Douglass family and Douglass’s assistant editor Julia Griffiths in this house on Alexander Street in Rochester.⁶⁷

Regardless of how their parents felt, the children of Alexander Street held Frederick Douglass in high esteem.⁶⁸ Having a national celebrity for a neighbor, especially one who generated controversy and courted danger, was a source of great interest to the neighborhood children. Neighbor and future historian Jenny [Jane] Marsh Parker⁶⁹, herself a child when the Douglass family moved in, observed and recorded the exciting goings-on that captured the attention of her childhood friends. “Every one [sic] of note who came to the city was pretty sure to call upon Frederick Douglass; we had only to watch his front door to see many famous men and women; which, with his connection with the Underground Railroad (known only to anti-slavery neighbors), added much to a locality which before had been rather dull.”⁷⁰

According to Parker, children especially loved to hear Frederick Douglass sing and play the violin. She wrote, “If he knew that a group of children were gathered before his window on a warm summer night when he was singing to his violin, he was sure to give them what he knew they were waiting for – ‘Nelly was a Lady’ or ‘Old Kentucky Home,’ coming to the door and bowing his acknowledgement of their hearty applause. ...He has a rich baritone voice and a correct ear and it was something to hear him sing...from *The Seraph*, the very same old singing-book which he has slipped into his bundle when he skipped out of Maryland for freedom.”⁷¹

⁶⁶ *Reminiscences of Frederick Douglass*, by Jane Marsh Parker, typescript, unpublished. Howard W. Coles Collection, RMSC.

⁶⁷ **Frederick Douglass 1850 Census** 7th Ward Sept. 4, 1850 p.318-1/2

Dwelling House #59	Family #711				
Frederick Douglass	33 M	Mulatto	Editor	val. of real est. 6000	b. Maryland
Anna Douglass	35 F	Black			b. Maryland
Rosetta Douglass	11 F	Black	attended school in last yr.		b. Mass.
Lewis H. Douglass	10 M	Black	attended school in last yr.		b. Mass.
Frederick Douglass	8 M	Black	attended school in last yr.		b. Mass.
Charles Douglass	5 M	Black	attended school in last yr.		b. Mass.
Anna Douglass	1 F	Black			b. NY
Charlotte Murray	30 F	Black;	person over 20 who can't read or write		b. Maryland
Julia Griffith	32 F				b. Scotland

⁶⁸ “Frederick Douglass was highly esteemed by his neighbors and most popular with the children. When the boys stole his apples he made them ashamed, and they became his loyal admirers forever after.” *Reminiscences of Frederick Douglass*, by Jane Marsh Parker, typed, unpublished. Howard W. Coles Collection, RMSC.

⁶⁹ Jenny Marsh Parker, *Rochester: A Story Historical*, Rochester, NY, 1884.

⁷⁰ *Reminiscences of Frederick Douglass*, by Jane Marsh Parker, typed, unpublished. Howard W. Coles Collection, RMSC.

⁷¹ Frederick Douglass loved music, and especially the violin. He first learned to play in Baltimore in 1838, with the encouragement of his future wife, Anna Murray. One biographer described Douglass as “no mean
“Rochester’s Frederick Douglass” 21

Surrounded by abolitionists, Frederick Douglass began his national reform efforts and conducted the activities of the Underground Railroad in Western New York from his Alexander Street home, where he established a home ‘among strangers’⁷² and a national headquarters for his reform efforts.

Douglass’s Rochester Homes Sheltered Freedom Seekers

The Douglass family only lived on Alexander Street for four years before relocating in 1852 to a hillside farm south of the city on what is now South Avenue. Douglass’s farm stood on the outskirts of town, amongst sparsely settled hills not far from the Genesee River.

The Douglasses did not sell their Alexander Street house. They held it as the first of several real estate investments, which were the foundation of financial security for them as for many enterprising African American families.⁷³

The Douglasses’ second residence consisted of a farm with a framed dwelling, orchard and barn. In 2005, a marker in front of School 12 on South Avenue locates the site, near Highland Park.⁷⁴ A “neighborless place”⁷⁵ atop a hill with a private roadway and a view of the city, the Douglass farm became a reliable stop for freedom seekers making their way to Canada on the Underground Railroad. An eyewitness described both Douglass homes as "a labyrinth of secret panels and closets, where he secreted the poor human wretches from the man hunters and the blood-hounds, who were usually not far behind."⁷⁶

Both of Frederick Douglass’s Rochester homes featured a study where Douglass wrote letters, books and speeches; supervised Underground Railroad activities; and played his violin. “That little den-like upstairs study of Frederick Douglass with its small table and a few books – how well I remember it! And how he used to keep there a list of the words

performer on the violin, in his prime.” In Washington, D.C., Douglass accompanied his second wife, Helen Pitts Douglass, with this violin while she played piano. Douglass was very proud of his grandson, Joseph Douglass, who played classical violin publicly many times in his grandfather’s honor.

⁷² Douglass, *Life and Times...*,p.321.

⁷³ Recent research by Mt. Hope Cemetery Archivist Jean Czerkas reveals that Douglass owned homes on Hamilton Street (occupied by his daughter Rosetta Douglass Sprague and her family), and on Madison Street where the Anthony family resided.

⁷⁴ Henry McCartney, Executive Director of the Landmark Society of Western New York, spearheaded the effort by the Rochester-Monroe County Freedom Trail Commission to create and install the marker, February, 2005.

⁷⁵ William S. McFeely. *Frederick Douglass*. NY, 1991, p.172.

⁷⁶Howard W. Coles, "Frederick Douglass Story (picture story)," typescript, p. 2. Howard W. Coles Collection, Rochester Museum & Science Center.

he found it hard to spell,” wrote neighbor Jenny Marsh Parker.⁷⁷ Over time Douglass acquired a large personal library.⁷⁸

Marsh Parker also recorded her recollections of Douglass’s distinctive countenance during the years that the family lived on their farm. “At that time, Mr. Douglass rode a large, white horse, and being so tall and handsome, with such a massive and commanding figure, and such unusual dignity of bearing, he was a striking personality. His flowing gray hair also helped to give him a most distinguished appearance.”⁷⁹

Although Frederick Douglass said “I shall always feel more at home there [Rochester] than anywhere else in the country,”⁸⁰ and chose to be buried here, little tangible evidence of his days here remains. Neither of his homes exists today. The brick house on Alexander Street was demolished to make way for a parking lot in the 20th century. The house and barn on South Avenue burned to the ground in a fire in 1872, reportedly the work of arsonists. The only complete run of Douglass’s newspapers and hundreds of personal letters burned in the fire. The books, pictures and furniture that the family and firefighters managed to save went to Washington, D.C. where Douglass lived for the last two decades of his life. No known photograph portrays the Douglass home on South Avenue during the 20-year period that the family lived there. Trees that Frederick Douglass planted at his South Avenue home are known to have survived until at least 1920.

Anna Murray Douglass Manages A Growing Household And A Dangerous Calling

For nearly half a century, Anna Murray Douglass (1813-1882) devoted her life to managing a suitable home for her husband. “Father was Mother’s honored guest,” her daughter Rosetta later recalled. In Rochester, Anna Douglass cared for her five children; managed a busy household alone while Douglass traveled for months at a time; and entertained visitors of all backgrounds – from national figures to freedom seekers on the Underground Railroad – who regularly came to their home. Her daughter recalled that as an Underground Railroad agent, “it was no unusual occurrence for mother to be called up at all hours of the night...to prepare supper for a hungry lot of fleeing humanity.”⁸¹

⁷⁷ Frederick Douglass’s spelling list, courtesy of the National Park Service, Frederick Douglass National Historic Site, shows some of the words that Frederick Douglass found challenging to spell: “comfortable equitable explicable hospitable preferable vegetable crucible edible fallible forcible terrible legible plausible credible possible sensible terrible visible pitiable remarkable variable practicable unusable”

⁷⁸ *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*, April 12, 1885.

⁷⁹ *Reminiscences of Frederick Douglass* by Jane Marsh Parker, typescript, unpublished. Howard W. Coles Collection, RMSC. Parker’s manuscript is published in Howard W. Coles, *The Cradle of Freedom*, Rochester, NY, 1941, pp.156-162.

⁸⁰ *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass, Written by Himself*, 1892, p.334.

⁸¹ *My Mother As I Recall Her*, by Rosetta Sprague Douglass. Reprinted by Fredericka Douglass Sprague Perry, 1923. Presented by Rosetta Douglass Sprague before the Anna Murray Douglass Union, W.C.T.U., on May 10, 1900. This booklet is the most detailed personal account of Anna Murray Douglass in existence. Rosetta Douglass Sprague wrote it in 1900 as a presentation for the Anna Murray Douglass

Anna Douglass devoted herself to her husband, her children, her garden and her home. An expert and gracious hostess, neighbors described her as a “model housekeeper” whose “watchful supervision of expenditures” laid “the foundations of [Frederick Douglass’s] prosperity.”⁸² A tutor taught her the basics of reading and writing, but her many household duties took precedence over learning her letters.⁸³

In Rochester, Anna Douglass remained a private figure. Her daughter reported that Mrs. Douglass found it difficult to leave the many anti-slavery friends she had made in Lynn, Massachusetts. The prejudice that “ran rampant” in Rochester made her “distrustful.” As a result, only a few people in Rochester “learned to know her, for she drew around herself a certain reserve...that forbade any very near approach to her.”⁸⁴

Despite evidence that Frederick Douglass had close relationships with other women, the Douglass’s marriage lasted 44 years. Anna Murray Douglass remained committed to her husband until her death in Washington, D.C. in 1882. Rosetta Douglass Sprague described her mother’s dedication to her father and the role she took in his life: “She watched with a great deal of interest and no little pride the growth of the public life of my father, and in every possible way that she was capable of aided him by relieving him of all the management of the home as it increased in size and in its appointments.”⁸⁵

Rosetta Douglass Sprague (1839-1906), the oldest of the Douglass children, was very close to both her parents throughout her life. She described her parents as “Two lives whose energy and best ability were exerted to make my life what it should be, and who gave me a home where...a cultivated brain and an industrious hand were the twin conditions that led to a well balanced and useful life.”⁸⁶

Union of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union. Her daughter, Fredericka Sprague Perry, later published the speech, the only published record describing Anna Douglass. Rosetta Douglass Sprague was very close to her mother. She read to her and wrote letters to her father for her. Frederick Douglass wrote little about his first wife in any of his autobiographies. Since she learned only the very basics of reading and writing, this publication, along with unpublished accounts by Rochester neighbors and friends provide the only recorded descriptions of her character and accomplishments while in this city.

⁸¹ *Reminiscences of Frederick Douglass* by Jane Marsh Parker, typescript, unpublished. Howard W. Coles Collection, RMSC.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *My Mother As I Recall Her*, by Rosetta Sprague Douglass. Reprinted by Fredericka Douglass Sprague Perry, 1923. Presented by Rosetta Douglass Sprague before the Anna Murray Douglass Union, W.C.T.U., on May 10, 1900.

⁸⁵ *My Mother As I Recall Her*, by Rosetta Sprague Douglass. Reprinted by Fredericka Douglass Sprague Perry, 1923. Presented by Rosetta Douglass Sprague before the Anna Murray Douglass Union, W.C.T.U., on May 10, 1900.

⁸⁶ *My Mother As I Recall Her*, by Rosetta Sprague Douglass. Reprinted by Fredericka Douglass Sprague Perry, 1923. Presented by Rosetta Douglass Sprague before the Anna Murray Douglass Union, W.C.T.U., on May 10, 1900.

“Rochester’s Frederick Douglass” 24
for Rochester History

8-28-05

A monograph based on the Rochester Museum & Science Center exhibition

Born in their first home in New Bedford, Massachusetts, Rosetta Douglass was raised to be an intellectual, resourceful, independent woman. Frederick Douglass sent his eldest daughter at a young age to live and study in Albany with well-known abolitionist sisters Abigail and Lydia Mott. In Rochester, where public schools were segregated, Douglass enrolled nine-year-old Rosetta in the prestigious Seward's Seminary. When he learned that his daughter took classes apart from the other scholars (despite their willingness to sit beside her), he withdrew her and used the *North Star* to expose the parent who objected to Rosetta's presence. After that, Rosetta Douglass and her brothers and sisters studied at home with a tutor.

Rosetta Douglass went on to attend the Girls Preparatory Department of Oberlin College and Salem Normal School. After a brief teaching career she married Nathan Sprague. Born enslaved in Maryland, Sprague joined his new brothers-in-law in enlisting for service during the Civil War. Nathan Sprague has alternately been described as "dashing," and a man who endured legal and employment challenges.⁸⁷ The Spragues were living at the Douglass's South Avenue farm the night their house burned in 1872⁸⁸ and Nathan Sprague helped save many of the Douglass's possessions. The couple later lived in a home owned by Frederick Douglass on Hamilton Street in Rochester.⁸⁹ They had seven children, and many of their descendants still live in the Rochester area.

Like her father, Rosetta Douglass spoke publicly and lectured alongside famous speakers including Sojourner Truth. In 1896 she joined with prominent African American leaders Harriet Tubman and Ida Wells Barnett to found the National Association of Colored Women (NACW), the oldest national African American secular organization in existence today. Her daughters went on to become prominent national clubwomen as well. Rosetta Douglass Sprague became one of the first African Americans to convert to Adventism. Her gravesite, and that of three of her daughters, was recently re-discovered in Rochester's Mt. Hope Cemetery.⁹⁰

Anna and Frederick Douglass had three small boys when they moved to Rochester: Lewis Henry (1840-1908), Frederick Jr. (1842-1892) and Charles Remond (1844-1920). Both Anna and Frederick Douglass required their sons to be "models of behavior," because of the hostility in Rochester toward African American children. "For them to run wild though the streets was out of the question."⁹¹ Anna Douglass suggested that the boys go to the office with their father and learn the printer's trade. At the ages of 11 and 9,

⁸⁷ Letter to U.S. Marshal from Frederick Douglass regarding Nathan Sprague, June 27, 1876. RMSC Collection.

⁸⁸ Jean Czerkas, "Rosetta Douglass Sprague (1839-1906), *Epitaph*, Vol. 22, No. 3, Summer 2003, p.3.

⁸⁹ Recent research by Friends of Mt. Hope Cemetery Archivist Jean Czerkas is documenting real estate that Frederick Douglass owned in Rochester. Czerkas has also researched all of Rosetta and Nathan Sprague's children.

⁹⁰ Richard O. Reitem, "Historic Gravesite Discovery by Jean Czerkas," *Epitaph*, Vol. 22, No. 3, Summer 2003, p.3.

⁹¹ *My Mother As I Recall Her*, by Rosetta Sprague Douglass. Reprinted by Fredericka Douglass Sprague Perry, 1923. Presented by Rosetta Douglass Sprague before the Anna Murray Douglass Union, W.C.T.U., on May 10, 1900.

Lewis and Frederick Jr. were “perched upon blocks and given their first lessons in printer’s ink, besides carrying papers and mailing them.”⁹²

When Frederick Douglass began recruiting African American men for the Union Army, the first man he signed up was his youngest son, Charles. His oldest son, Lewis Douglass, also signed on and became Sergeant Major of the Massachusetts 54th Regiment.

After the war, Lewis Douglass, who had married Amelia Loguen, the daughter of prominent abolitionists from Syracuse, worked in the Government Printing Office in Washington, D.C. Frederick Douglass, Jr. entered the printing trade and tried unsuccessfully to join the Typographer’s Union. Charles Douglass took a job in Washington, D.C. at the Freedman’s Bureau. Charles Douglass may have played for the Unexpected, a local African American baseball team, before joining the Mutuals, an African American team in Washington, D.C. in 1870. In 1873 both Lewis and Frederick Douglass, Jr. joined their father’s new newspaper, *The New Era*, in Washington, D.C.

Annie Douglass (1849-1860) was the youngest of the Douglass children, and the only one born in Rochester. Her father described her as “the light and life of my house.”⁹³ She spent all of her life in Rochester, living mainly on the isolated family farm on what is now South Avenue.

Annie Douglass died from “brain congestion” on March 1, 1860, a few days before her 11th birthday. Her death was especially devastating because her father was in Glasgow, Scotland, having left the U.S. when he was implicated in John Brown’s attack on Harper’s Ferry. Annie was originally buried in Samuel Porter’s family plot in Mt. Hope Cemetery because the Douglasses did not own a burial site, and the City would not take the African American child in the public mausoleum.⁹⁴ When Frederick Douglass returned from abroad, the family buried Annie in a plot they selected at Mt. Hope.⁹⁵

Frederick Douglass Coordinated Rochester’s Underground Railroad Activity

“One important branch of my anti-slavery work in Rochester... must not be forgotten... my prominence as an abolitionist, and as the editor of an anti-slavery paper, naturally made me the station-master and conductor of the underground railroad passing through this goodly city,”⁹⁶ Douglass wrote of his Underground Railroad activities in Rochester.

⁹² *My Mother As I Recall Her*, by Rosetta Sprague Douglass. Reprinted by Fredericka Douglass Sprague Perry, 1923. Presented by Rosetta Douglass Sprague before the Anna Murray Douglass Union, W.C.T.U., on May 10, 1900.

⁹³ *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass, Written by Himself*, 1892, p.323.

⁹⁴ Frederick May Holland, *Frederick Douglass The Colored Orator*, New York, 1895, p.229.

⁹⁵ Information from Mt. Hope Cemetery records provided by Mt. Hope Archivist Jean Czerkas, 5-1-99: Frederick Douglass purchased Lot 26, Section T on July 5, 1860. He paid \$60.00 for the 400 square foot lot. Annie buried March 16, 1860 [this would have been in the Porter plot]. Died at 10 years, 11 months , 21 days of congestion of the brain.

⁹⁶ Douglass, *Life and Times*...p.328.

Rochester's location near Canada made it a strategic site on the Underground Railroad, a secret network of African Americans and European-descended Americans who assisted enslaved African Americans seeking freedom in Canada. Frederick Douglass coordinated the network of Underground Railroad activities in the Rochester region. He named his newspaper the *North Star*, for the celestial body used by freedom seekers to find their way North. Douglass's friend Jacob P. Morris assisted him in organizing local Underground Railroad activities. Morris' barber shop on Main Street⁹⁷ in Rochester provided a natural gathering place for Underground Railroad agents and freedom seekers alike.

After the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law in 1850, it became a crime to aid freedom seekers on the Underground Railroad. The following year, the Douglass family moved to the outskirts of the city. Their new house featured a private road and no neighbors, making it an ideal location for the secret work of the Underground Railroad. It became a first stop in Rochester for many freedom seekers. One Underground Railroad agent recalled the frightening experience of being sent as a child to guide one "gigantic" freedom seeker to Douglass's home at dusk.⁹⁸ Under the cover of darkness freedom seekers went by wagon from Douglass's home to a variety of locations, such as Isaac and Amy Post's home, Samuel and Susan Porter's barn, Joseph Bloss's woodshed or E. C. William's sail loft.

Frederick Douglass's children often delivered notes on the Underground Railroad. These notes rarely survive. They were usually destroyed for fear that the note would become incriminating evidence of breaking the law. For the same reason, the wording of the notes was often unclear to those outside the network. Sometimes the writer tried to disguise his identity, as Douglass did by reversing his initials in a note to Samuel Porter, following. Several notes have been preserved in the University of Rochester Library collections.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Morris appears in the Monroe County Census Records of 1840, 1850 and 1860. According to newspaper accounts, he was appointed as agent to "look after the interests of the Colored Schools." In January 1854, his barber shop at the corner of Main and North Street caught fire, and then was burglarized a month later. In March 1854 he departed for California. He returned to Rochester, according to an unidentified newspaper obituary dated Sept. 5, 1866: "J.P. Morris, a well-known colored citizen, died this morning at his residence in Bowery St., after a lingering illness. Mr. Morris was long a resident of this city, following the profession of a barber, and always conducted himself so as to secure the respect and esteem of all classes. He was a little over 57 years of age." Jacob P. Morris is buried in Mt. Hope Cemetery.

⁹⁸ Amy Hamner-Croughton, "Anti-Slavery Days in Rochester," *Publication Fund Series*, Rochester Historical Society, 1936, p. 133. A story about how Douglass's barking dog frightened a freedom seeker and her two young children is recorded in Howard W. Coles, *The Cradle of Freedom*, Rochester, NY, 1941, p.146.

⁹⁹ The Isaac and Amy Post Papers, of the Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, University of Rochester Library includes a rare letter from a freedom Seeker to Isaac Post, dated 1850. This is the only known letter from a freedom seeker who passed through Rochester on the Underground Railroad. The writer indicates that Isaac Post, harbored him in Rochester during the last leg of his journey. The writer asks for news about his pursuers and tells of the difficulty of finding suitable work in Canada. His appreciation for Isaac Post is expressed as he signs the letter, "Your friend until death."

Note from Frederick Douglass to Samuel Porter. No date
My Dear Sir [Samuel Drummond Porter]

“There are three men now at my house -- who are in great peril. I am
unwell.
I need your advice. Please come at once.

D. F.”¹⁰⁰

Note from Frederick Douglass to Amy Post. No date
"My Dear Mrs Post:
Please shelter this Sister from the house of bondage
till five o'clock - this afternoon - She will
then be sent on to the land of freedom.

Yours truly--
Fred. D.”¹⁰¹

Letter from Frederick Douglass to Miss Porter, October 18, 1857
Courtesy of the William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan

Miss Porter

William Osborne - came to us last
night from slavery. He looks fully
able to take care of himself, but
being destitute, he needs for the
present, a little assistance to
get him to Canada. \$2.50
will be quite sufficient.

Frederick Douglass
Rochester, Oct. 13, 1857¹⁰²

Many enslaved African Americans spent their last night in the slave-holding United States in Rochester, before leaving for Canada. Douglass and his anti-slavery colleagues

¹⁰⁰ From the Isaac and Amy Post Papers, Courtesy of the Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, University of Rochester Library.

¹⁰¹ From the Isaac and Amy Post Papers, Courtesy of the Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, University of Rochester Library.

¹⁰² Courtesy of the William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan

secretly provided food, clothing, cash, directions, and encouragement. Although it is estimated that Douglass aided 400 freedom seekers on the Underground Railroad, Douglass likened the system to “an attempt to bail out the ocean with a teaspoon.” Because of his own status as a former freedom seeker, however, Douglass found the work “congenial, attractive, fascinating, and satisfactory,” though not “altogether free from danger.”¹⁰³

Douglass described his portion of the Underground Railroad network in his third and final autobiography: “The Underground Railroad had many branches; but that one with which I was connected had its main stations in Baltimore, Wilmington, Philadelphia, New York, Albany, Syracuse, Rochester, and St. Catharines (Canada)... J. P. Morris and myself received and dispatched passengers from Rochester to Canada, where they were received by Rev. Hiram Wilson. When a party arrived in Rochester it was the business of Mr. Morris and myself to raise funds with which to pay their passage to St. Catharines, and it is due to truth to state that we seldom called in vain upon whig or democrat for help. Men were better than their theology, and truer to humanity than to their politics, or their offices.”¹⁰⁴

Famed Underground Railroad leader Harriet Tubman lived in nearby Auburn, New York. Like Frederick Douglass, Tubman grew up enslaved in Maryland. After freeing herself, she returned to the South 19 times and led 300 freedom seekers north on the Underground Railroad. She served as a spy during the Civil War. Tubman had many friends in Rochester, including the Douglasses. “Last Sunday Harriet Tubman called and took dinner she had her books with her,”¹⁰⁵ Rosetta Douglass Sprague wrote to her father in 1869.

Frederick Douglass Supports Women’s Rights

The women’s rights movement began in Western New York in the summer of 1848, not long after Frederick Douglass moved to Rochester. Believing that antislavery reform and women’s rights went hand in hand, Douglass became one of 37 men to attend the historic Woman’s Rights Convention in Seneca Falls in July 1848. His friend Amy Post also made the trip, and both signed the Declaration of Sentiments endorsing the rights outlined by the Convention.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ Douglass, *Life and Times*...p.329.

¹⁰⁴ Douglass, *Life and Times*...p.329.

¹⁰⁵ Rosetta Douglass Sprague to Frederick Douglass, Feb. 25, 1869, The Frederick Douglass Papers in the Library of Congress (General Correspondence) <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=mfd&fileName=04/04002/04002page.db&recNum=13&itemLink=/ammem/doughtml/dougFolder3.html&linkText=7>

¹⁰⁶ Douglass took handbills advertising his new newspaper the *North Star* to the Convention. One of those handbills survives, on the back of which an unidentified person, possibly Amy Post, made notes of the Convention. The document is preserved in the Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, University of Rochester Library.

In the office of the *North Star* Douglass printed the Proceedings of the Seneca Falls Conference and the Declaration of Sentiments – stating that all men and women are created equal. These were bold declarations at a time when women had no rights over their children or their wages, and could not own property or vote.¹⁰⁷

Two weeks later, Douglass attended a second woman’s rights convention at the Unitarian Church in Rochester, which continued the work begun in Seneca Falls. In Rochester, participants broke with tradition and elected women, rather than men, to lead the meeting.

Douglass regarded the vote as the surest route to full citizenship, After the Civil War, he concluded that African American suffrage must come before women’s suffrage. Douglass defined his position in a letter to Josephine Griffing: “I am now devoting myself to a cause [if] not more sacred, certainly more urgent because it is one of life and death to enslaved people of this country, and this is negro [sic] suffrage...As you well know, woman has a thousand ways to attach herself to the governing power of the land and already exerts an honorable influence on the course of legislation...but it cannot be pretended I think that her cause is as urgent as ours.”¹⁰⁸

The Anthony Family Expands Douglass’s Circle Of Rochester Friends

Among the friends that Douglass made at the women’s rights convention were Quakers and anti-slavery activists Daniel and Lucy Anthony. The Anthony family moved to Rochester three years before the Douglasses, and were among the first friends Frederick Douglass made here. The Douglass family spent many Sundays with the Anthonys and other new friends at the Anthony farm, on what is now Brooks Avenue near Genesee Park Boulevard – at that time the outskirts of town. The Anthony home became the center for lively discussions on abolitionism, women’s rights and temperance. There Douglass met other dedicated abolitionists and gained devoted supporters, including Samuel Porter. Douglass described the group as “the society of our little circle at our Sunday meeting.”¹⁰⁹

In 1848 the Anthonys introduced their daughter, Susan B. Anthony, to Frederick Douglass while she was home on vacation from her teaching position in Canajoharie, New York. At the time she was becoming a persuasive public speaker in support of temperance. By the 1850s, Anthony was traveling on the anti-slavery lecture circuit and emerging as a leader in the women’s rights movement.

¹⁰⁷ *Proceedings of Seneca Falls Conference* is part of the collection of the Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, University of Rochester Library.

¹⁰⁸ Letter to Frederick Douglass from Josephine Griffing, September 27, 1868, cited in McFeely, *Frederick Douglass, op.cit.*, p.268-69.

¹⁰⁹ Letter from Frederick Douglass to Amy Post, April 28, 1846. Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, University of Rochester Library.

Douglass Delivers A Searing Indictment of Slavery on July 5, 1852

On July 5, 1852, in Rochester's Corinthian Hall, Frederick Douglass delivered what many historians believe is the greatest anti-slavery speech ever given. In the long (40 pages), scholarly speech, he blasted the hypocrisy of a nation of slaveholders celebrating independence, and predicted a painful future. He received a standing ovation from the crowd of Rochesterians who gathered to hear him.

Douglass wrote the speech at the invitation of the Rochester Ladies' Antislavery Society who asked him to speak in celebration of the Fourth of July. He chose to speak on the day *after* Independence Day – "This Fourth of July is *yours*, not *mine*. *You* may rejoice, I must mourn,"¹¹⁰ he declared – and his passionate address came to be known as Douglass's "Fifth of July Speech."

This was a second important July Fifth for African Americans in Rochester. Twenty-five years earlier, on July 5, 1827, they celebrated the official end of enslavement in New York State – the day after the law took effect.

Douglass Is An Insider On John Brown's Raid

One of the pivotal events leading up to the Civil War was John Brown's raid on the federal arsenal in Harper's Ferry, Virginia in October 1859. Frederick Douglass, who first met the deeply religious radical abolitionist John Brown in Springfield, Massachusetts in 1847, was implicated in the attack.

John Brown followed the Biblical teaching, "Remember them that are in the bonds as bound with them," and "Who would be free, themselves must strike the blow,"¹¹¹ and he came to see himself as the liberator of enslaved people in the U.S. In the mid-1850s, Brown joined his oldest sons in Kansas where he became famous leading violent confrontations to prevent Kansas from becoming a slave-holding state. Two of Susan B. Anthony's brothers joined John Brown's effort to keep Kansas free from slavery.

John Brown stayed at the Douglass home in Rochester many times before his death in 1859. There he shared his ideas for an armed revolt of enslaved African Americans in Virginia. In Frederick Douglass's South Avenue home, Brown met Shields Green,¹¹² who accompanied him to Pennsylvania and then Virginia.

Douglass secretly visited John Brown and his army of 18 men in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania in October, 1859 as they prepared to attack the Harper's Ferry arsenal to secure weapons for a rebellion. Douglass warned Brown that the effort would be subdued by government forces, and he withdrew his support.

¹¹⁰ Frederick Douglass, *Oration Delivered in Corinthian Hall, Rochester....* July 5, 1852

¹¹¹ James Redpath. *The Public Life of Captain John Brown*. Boston: Thayer and Eldridge, 1860, pp.44-45. RMSC Collection.

¹¹² Shields Green guided freedom seekers on the Underground Railroad to Douglass's South Avenue home. *From The Cradle of Freedom* by Howard Wilson Coles. Rochester: Oxford Press, 1941.

Once Brown attacked, Douglass realized that incriminating evidence implicating him in the plot remained in his desk on South Avenue. He sent a message to his son Lewis through Rochester telegraph operator and friend, Burton Blackall¹¹³: “Tell Lewis to secure all important papers in my high desk.”¹¹⁴

Back in Rochester following John Brown’s arrest, Douglass learned from friends Amy and Isaac Post that he, too, would be arrested. The Posts sent Douglass to Canada on the same Underground Railroad route they had all used many times before – Douglass rowed out on the Genesee River to a waiting steamer flying the British flag.¹¹⁵ Douglass left Canada to spend six months in England. During that time John Brown was hanged in Virginia. Virginians hung Rochesterian Shields Green several days later. While Frederick Douglass was in England, Susan Anthony organized a Memorial Service for John Brown in Rochester.

Douglass returned to Rochester the next Spring, following the March 1860 death of his youngest child, Annie. He found public sentiment had changed to regard John Brown as a martyr for freedom.

John Brown’s execution ultimately changed public opinion in the North and helped to spark the Civil War. “He was one who recognized no unjust human laws, but resisted them as he was bid. No man in America has ever stood up so persistently for the dignity of human nature, knowing himself for man, and the equal of any and all governments. He could not have been tried by his peers, for his peers did not exist,”¹¹⁶ wrote Henry David Thoreau.

¹¹³ Howard W. Coles, *The Cradle of Freedom*, Rochester, NY, 1941, p. 150. Burton Blackall probably saved Douglass’s life when he warned him of imminent arrest following John Brown’s failed raid on Harper’s Ferry in October 1859. The Blackalls lived near the Douglass home on Alexander Street (where 2 Vine Restaurant is now located, behind The Little Theatre). In 1875, the Blackalls purchased a lot on Rowley Street from Douglass’s daughter, Rosetta Douglass Sprague. Douglass later presented a locket containing a piece of his hair (now in the collection of the Rochester Historical Society) to Blackall’s wife Sarah Colman Blackall. According to the Blackall’s daughter, Douglass also gave her the gold pen with which he wrote his last autobiography. (Reminiscences of Gertrude Blackall, Howard W. Coles Collection, RMSC Collection). An abolitionist and women’s rights activist originally from Boston, Sarah Blackall remained friends with Douglass throughout his life and continued to visit him after he moved to Washington, D.C. “Nothing has occurred to me lately to bring back to me so much of my Rochester life as your visit has done.” Douglass wrote to her on February 9, 1892 (RMSC Collection).

¹¹⁴ McFeely, *op.cit.*, p. 199; Douglass, *Life and Times*...1962 reprint of the revised edition of 1892, p.308.

¹¹⁵ Letter from William Still to Amy Post. October, 1859; Letter from Frederick Douglass to Amy Post, October 27, 1859; From the Isaac and Amy Post Papers, Courtesy of the Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, University of Rochester Library.

¹¹⁶ Henry David Thoreau, “A Plea for Captain John Brown.” Read of the Citizens of Concord, Massachusetts, Oct. 30, 1859.

Douglass Recruits for the Union Army

Abraham Lincoln's November 1860 election to the U.S. Presidency led to the secession of Southern states, the formation of the Confederate States of America, and in April 1861, the beginning of the U.S. Civil War (1861-1865). Frederick Douglass believed that the Civil War was a great moral battle against slavery, and that African American men had the right to fight for their liberty. He also had faith that if African Americans successfully fought to preserve the Union, they would earn respect and citizenship. "Once let the black man get upon his person the brass letters, U.S., let him get an eagle on his button, and a musket on his shoulder and bullets in his pockets, and there is no power on earth which can deny that he has earned the right to citizenship in the United States,"¹¹⁷ he wrote.

First Douglass convinced the Lincoln administration that African Americans could help win the war as combat soldiers and not just as Army waiters and laborers. Next, he persuaded African Americans to put aside the "offensive prejudice" of their countrymen and enlist in the Union Army. Once African Americans proved themselves to be courageous and able soldiers, Douglass fought for better treatment and equal pay.¹¹⁸

Massachusetts was the first state to recruit African American troops, and because of the small African American population in the state, the governor asked Douglass to help with recruitment. Douglass wrote an editorial entitled "Men of Color, to Arms!" urging African American men to earn their equality and show their patriotism by fighting in the Union cause. His sons Lewis and Charles were among the first Rochester African Americans to enlist. Lewis Douglass earned the rank of Sgt. Major in the 54th Massachusetts Regiment.

On July 17, 1862, Congress passed two acts allowing the enlistment of African Americans. Official enrollment occurred only after President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation in 1862. By August 1863, 14 Colored Regiments were in the field and ready for service.

The battle of Fort Wagner, South Carolina in the summer of 1863 constituted a major turning point for those opposed to the use of African American soldiers in the Union Army. The courageous actions of United States Colored Troops (U.S.C.T.), hundreds of whom lost their lives, convinced doubters of their bravery and effectiveness. "From this time ...the colored troops were called upon to occupy positions which required the courage, steadiness, and endurance of veterans, and even their enemies were obliged to

¹¹⁷ "Address for the Promotion of Colored Enlistments," speech delivered in Philadelphia, July 6, 1863, in Philip S. Foner, ed., *The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass*, Volume III, 1950 p. 365.

¹¹⁸ Although African Americans proved themselves as capable soldiers, discrimination in pay, equipment and assignments remained widespread. Douglass pleaded for fair treatment in Washington, D.C., and President Lincoln assured him that the case would receive every consideration. However, many regiments struggled for equal pay, and some refused any money until June 15, 1864, when Congress granted equal pay for all African American soldiers. The U.S. Armed forces remained segregated until the Korean War.

admit that they proved themselves worthy,”¹¹⁹ Douglass later wrote. Lewis Douglass fought in this battle and led one of the charges. He wrote of the horror of the charge on Fort Wagner in a letter to his fiancée.

Approximately 186,000-200,000 African Americans comprising 163 units served in the Union Army during the Civil War, and many more African Americans served in the Union Navy. Both free and enslaved African Americans joined the fight. African American soldiers participated in every major campaign of 1864-1865 except Sherman's invasion of Georgia. In actual numbers, African American soldiers comprised 10% of the entire Union Army. Losses were high, and approximately one-third of all African Americans enrolled in the military lost their lives during the Civil War. African American members of the U.S.C.T. and their European-descended officers are among the Civil War veterans buried in Mt. Hope Cemetery.¹²⁰

Lincoln's Policies Both “Stun” Douglass And Give Him Hope

Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln had much in common. Both knew poverty early in life, and both felt the injustice of working without being paid. As a boy, Lincoln's father hired him out for backbreaking farm work – and then collected and kept the wages. Both were also self educated, and studied the *Columbian Orator*.

At the beginning of the Civil War, Lincoln and Douglass were far apart in their objectives for the war. For Douglass, the end of enslavement was the goal of the war; for Lincoln, saving the union was most important. Douglass criticized Lincoln for his policy of returning freedom seekers to their masters, for his plans for colonization of freed people and for not authorizing immediate emancipation.¹²¹ By 1862, a practical Lincoln saw the necessity of emancipation and recruitment of newly freed African American soldiers. Douglass began to understand how events shaped Lincoln's policies. “You are the children of Abraham Lincoln. We are at best only his step-children; children by adoption, children by force of circumstances and necessity... We saw him, measured him, and estimated him ... We came to the conclusion that the hour and the man of our redemption had somehow met in the person of Abraham Lincoln,”¹²² Frederick Douglass wrote.

¹¹⁹Douglass, *Life and Times*...1962 reprint of the revised edition of 1892, p. 342-343.

¹²⁰ Richard O. Reiser, “Two Major Exhibits at Mt. Hope Cemetery Gatehouse,” *Epitaph*, Vol. 22, No. 2, Spring 2003, p.1.

¹²¹ Douglass wrote of his faith in Lincoln during the Civil War, despite the devastating effects of the President's policies on African Americans: “When he strangely told us that we were the cause of the war; when he still more strangely told us to leave the land in which we were born; when he refused to employ our arms in defence [sic] of the Union; when, after accepting our services as colored soldiers, he refused to retaliate our murder and torture as colored prisoners; when he told us he would save the Union if he could with slavery;... when he refused, in the days of the inaction and defeat of the Army of the Potomac, to remove its popular commander who was more zealous in his efforts to protect slavery than to suppress rebellion; when we saw all this, and more, we were at times grieved, stunned, and greatly bewildered; but our hearts believed while they ached and bled.” Douglass, *Life and Times*..., p.590.

¹²² Douglass, *Life and Times*...,p.590.

Douglass met Lincoln personally only twice. The first time, Douglass protested discrimination in pay for Colored Troops. In 1864 Lincoln solicited Douglass's advice and help in recruiting African American soldiers. Despite their frequent differences on policy issues, Douglass liked Lincoln personally: "In his company I was never in any way reminded of my humble origin, or of my unpopular color."¹²³

Douglass was in Rochester when he received the news of Lincoln's assassination. He addressed a crowd of mourners at City Hall. "I had resided long in Rochester, and had made many speeches there which had more or less touched the hearts of my hearers, but never till this day was I brought into such close accord with them. We shared in common a terrible calamity, and this touch of nature made us more than countrymen, it made us 'kin.'"¹²⁴

Frederick Douglass Considered The Emancipation Proclamation A Major Turning Point In American History

"While Abraham Lincoln saved for you a country, he delivered us from a bondage, one hour of which, according to Jefferson, was worse than ages of the oppression your fathers rose in rebellion to oppose."¹²⁵ – Frederick Douglass

When Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, he declared enslaved African Americans living in Confederate states "then, thenceforward, and forever free." Slavery did not officially end in America until the 13th Amendment passed in December 1865. However, the Emancipation Proclamation announced to all Americans that the Civil War was being fought to end slavery (which was a way to cripple the South) – a huge victory for Frederick Douglass, African Americans and abolitionists in the United States.

In a speech Frederick Douglass gave at the dedication of the Freedman's Monument in Lincoln Park, Washington, D.C., in honor of Abraham Lincoln, Douglass recalled the night Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation:

Can any colored man, or any white man friendly to the freedom of all men, ever forget the night which followed the first day of January, 1863, when the world was to see if Abraham Lincoln would prove to be as good as his word? I shall never forget that memorable night, when at a public meeting, in a distant city [Boston], with three thousand others not less anxious than myself, I waited and watched for the word of deliverance which we have heard read today. Nor shall I ever forget the outburst of joy and thanksgiving that rent the air when the lightning brought to us the

¹²³ Douglass, *Life and Times*...p.430.

¹²⁴ Douglass, *Life and Times*...p.451-2.

¹²⁵ Douglass, *Life and Times*...p.582.

emancipation proclamation. In that happy hour we forgot all delay and forgot all tardiness; forgot that the President, by a promise to withhold the bolt which would smite the slave system with destruction, had bribed the rebels to lay down their arms; and we were thenceforward willing to allow the President all the latitude of time, phraseology and every honorable device that statesmanship might require for the achievement of a great and beneficent measure of liberty and progress.¹²⁶

For the rest of his life, Frederick Douglass looked upon the Emancipation Proclamation as the greatest turning point in American history and the most crucial event in African American history.

The 15th Amendment: A Great Breakthrough but New Barriers Arise

Following the Civil War, Frederick Douglass saw the right to vote as the best hope for the future of African Americans. "... regarding as I did, the elective franchise as the one great power by which all civil rights are obtained...under our form of government, I set myself to work with whatever force and energy I possessed to secure this power for the recently emancipated millions,"¹²⁷ he explained. His successful efforts to secure suffrage for African American men caused a longstanding rift in his relationship with Susan B. Anthony, who felt Douglass betrayed women seeking the right to vote.

The Fifteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution (1870) forbids any state to deny the right to vote on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude. Along with the Thirteenth Amendment (1865) prohibiting slavery, and the Fourteenth Amendment defining citizenship and due process of law, these amendments guaranteed civil and political rights to African American men. During the last twenty years of Douglass's life, however, he saw racism surge, the rise of the Ku Klux Klan, lynchings of African Americans, and numerous ways devised to prevent them from voting.

Frederick Douglass Leaves Rochester

Following the Civil War, Douglass "felt that I had reached the end of the noblest and best part of my life."¹²⁸ He began spending more time in Washington, D.C. where he hoped for a national appointment to encourage newly freed and enfranchised African Americans. In 1870, drawing on his 16 years experience in newspaper publishing in Rochester, Douglass purchased a 50% interest in *New National Era*, a national weekly for "colored America."

¹²⁶ *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass, Written by Himself*, 1892, pp.429-430.

¹²⁷ *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass, Written by Himself*, 1892, p.460.

¹²⁸ *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass, Written by Himself*, 1892, p.452.

On June 2, 1872, while he was in Washington, D.C., Douglass's South Avenue home and barn burned. His family got out alive but lost many of their possessions.¹²⁹ Douglass arrived in Rochester the following evening in a drenching rain only to be slighted by a local hotel. He made up his mind to move to Washington, D.C., despite the pleas of his Rochester friends. An arsonist succeeded in ending an era in Rochester.

Rochester newspapers disputed Douglass's claims of prejudice, and that the arson was the work of the Ku Klux Klan.

“Disastrous Fire, Burning of Frederick Douglass's Residence.

The elegant mansion of Frederick Douglass on Douglass hill at the southern extremity of South Avenue, with barn and outhouses, was entirely consumed by fire last night about 12 o'clock. The fire department were promptly on hand, in response to an alarm from box 17, but owing to the absence of water could render no assistance in staying the flames but devoted their services to removing as much as possible of the furniture. The building was erected by Mr. Douglass twenty-one years ago, and has been occupied by him as a residence since that time. It was built of wood, and was an easy prey to the devouring element. The flames lit up the horizon for miles and cast lurid shadows on the surrounding trees, rendering their foliage intensely beautiful. Mr. Douglass and family are in Washington but the house was occupied by his son-in-law, W. Sprague and family, who had a narrow escape from death, so rapid was the progress of the fire. The furniture saved was but of small value excepting the valuable library and private papers. A cow worth \$109, and the coaches, buggies, harness, &c., in the barn were consumed, but Mr. Sprague succeeded in rescuing the horses. The fire originated in the barn, and was undoubtedly the work of an incendiary, as there has been no light used in this building since last winter. Mr. Douglass's residence was surrounded by a beautiful grove, which was entirely destroyed, and with its well-kept walks, neat out houses and picturesque situation was an ornament to our city, and its present destruction will be felt as a loss by all, and one which, it is to be hoped, will soon be repaired.”

-*Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*,

June 3, 1872¹³⁰

“Frederick Douglass vs. the People and Hotel Keepers of Rochester

¹²⁹ “The 2d of June, 1872, brought me a very grievous loss. My house in Rochester was burnt to the ground, and among other things of value, twelve volumes of my paper, covering the period from 1848 to 1860, were devoured by the flames,” Douglass wrote. *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass, Written by Himself*, 1892, p.327.

¹³⁰ Courtesy of the Rochester Public Library.

Frederick Douglass seems to be 'In bad temper since the burning of his residence,' regarding himself as the victim of Ku-Klux persecution or Northern colorphobia. He has written a letter to the paper at Washington with which he is connected, which we copy for the purpose that our citizens may see what their distinguished townsman says of them, and at the same time to give the facts and circumstances that show how fully Mr. Douglass is mistaken:

DEAR READERS: I am here among the ashes of my old home in Rochester, New York. As soon as I learned of the fire I hurried here from Washington, and have been here ever since. A summons home to find one's house in ashes is almost like going home to a funeral, and though only sadness greets one at the end of the journey, no speed is too great to bring him there. The house destroyed had been my home during more than twenty years; and twenty years of industry and economy had there brought together many things valuable in themselves, and rendered more valuable by association. Several questions are naturally suggested by every fire: First, How did it happen? What was saved? What was lost? What was damaged? I do not mean to answer these questions in detail, nor to indulge in sentimental description. The fire was doubtless the work of an incendiary. It began in a barn well-filled with hay, on the south side of the house, and was first seen at midnight, when the family of my son-in-law (who occupied the dwelling) had been in bed two hours. No fire or light had been carried into the barn by any one of the family for months. What could be the motive? Was it for plunder, or was it for spite, or was it mere wanton wickedness on the part of persons of a baser sort, who wander on the outskirts of cities by starlight at late hours? I do not know and I cannot guess. One thing I do know, and that is, while Rochester is among the most liberal of northern cities, and its people are among the most humane and highly cultivated, it nevertheless has its full share of that Ku Klux spirit which makes anything owned by a colored man a little less respected and secure than when owned by a white citizen. I arrived at Rochester at one o'clock in the night, in thick darkness, and drenching rain, and not knowing where my family might be. I applied for shelter at two of the nearest hotels and was refused at both, with the convenient excuse that "We are full," till it was known that my name was Frederick Douglass, when a room was readily offered me, though the house was full! I did not accept, but made my way to the police headquarters, to learn, if possible, where I might find the scattered members of my family. Such treatment as this does not tend to make a man secure in either his person or property. The spirit which would deny a man shelter in a public house, needs but little change to deny him shelter, even in his own house. It is the spirit of hate, the spirit of murder, the spirit which would burn a family in their beds. I may be wrong, but I fear that the sentiment which repelled me at Congress Hall burnt my house.

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The fire did its work quick and with marked thoroughness and success. Scarcely a trace of the building, except brick walls and stone foundations, is left, and the trees surrounding the building, planted by my own hands and of more than twenty years' growth were not spared, but were scorched and charred beyond recovery. Much was saved in the way of furniture and much was lost, and much was damaged. Eleven thousand dollars worth of government securities (which I have fortunately the numbers) were destroyed. Sixteen volumes of my old paper the North Star, and Frederick Douglass' Papers, were destroyed; a piano worth \$500 was saved, but much damaged, the same with three sofas and many mahogany chairs, and other furniture. My loss, not covered with insurance will reach from \$4,000 to \$5,000. Every effort possible was made by the police and fire department to save property, and the neighbors (all while did everything in their power to afford relief to the shelterless family). Assured of the sympathy of my readers in this calamity, I have felt at liberty to make this brief statement, as an apology for absence from my post of public duty, which after all will not be long.

FREDERICK DOUGLASS.

As to the motive for this act of incendiarism Douglass cannot guess, but he insinuates that the incendiary was prompted by a spirit of Ku-Kluxism and prejudice against color. As the authors of the crime have not yet been detected it is impossible to show with any degree of certainty who they may be, but the testimony thus far obtained points strongest to colored persons as the guilty party. It would not serve the ends of justice to say more on this point now.

Douglass says he was refused shelter at two hotels and therefore concludes that the same spirit that denied him lodgings would prompt the burning of his residence. At the hotels where he was refused shelter on his arrival at one in the morning a considerable number of white men had been refused shelter at earlier hours because the houses were full. The clerk at one of the houses who told Mr. D. there was no bed for him, only a few weeks since cast his vote for this persecuted colored man for member of Assembly, and the clerk at the other in order to accommodate him proposed to induce a white man to give up his bed. One of the [?] of sixty in addition to its other guests.

Careful inquiry has satisfied us that there was not the least cause for complaint in this instance, [?] on our citizens and hotel keepers are wholly unwarranted by the facts. The houses and other property of white people are the objects of incendiarism in this and other towns, and may sometimes be fired by colored people, but it would be unfair to charge the offenses to prejudice on amount of color.

Douglass has resided in Rochester for many years, during which time he has generally been well treated. The only marked instance in which prejudice against his color has been shown is of recent date when the Republicans nominated him to Assembly and then did not sustain him

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by their votes at the polls. But all the white people of Rochester are not blameable for this.”

-*Rochester Union and Advertiser*, June 17,

1872¹³¹

The fire that destroyed Douglass's South Avenue home in 1872 consumed the only complete set of his newspapers. Many individual copies that survive today originally belonged to subscribers. An April 1859 copy of *Douglass' Monthly* survives in RMSC's collection. A handwritten inscription indicates it belonged to Maria Porter, an Underground Railroad agent and member of the family who befriended and supported Douglass in Rochester.

Helen Pitts of Honeoye, Becomes Douglass's Second Wife in Washington, D.C.

When the Douglasses first moved to Washington, D.C., they lived on Capitol Hill. In 1878, Douglass bought a spacious home and 15-acre estate he called Cedar Hill.¹³² Located in Anacostia, a Washington suburb, Cedar Hill was both Frederick and Anna Douglass's last home. Anna Murray Douglass managed the beautifully furnished home in the nation's capital that served as the base for Douglass's political and family life for several years. In 1882, she died after suffering a stroke. Frederick Douglass continued to live at Cedar Hill until his death in 1895.

Eighteen months after Anna Douglass's death, Douglass remarried. His second wife, Helen Pitts Douglass, was the daughter of abolitionists from Honeoye, New York. She had worked for Douglass as a clerk when he was Recorder of Deeds for the District of Columbia. Helen Pitts was a graduate of Mt. Holyoke and descendant of Presidents John and John Quincy Adams. The inter-racial marriage upset both families and outraged many Americans. “Why did I marry a person of my father's complexion instead of marrying one of my mother's complexion?”¹³³ was a question that Frederick Douglass said many people asked after their marriage in 1884. By all accounts, the two were devoted to each other. They traveled extensively internationally, and worked together for human rights. Twenty years younger than her husband, Helen Pitts Douglass devoted the years following his death to preserving his home and legacy.

Presidents Tap Douglass For Service To The Nation

In addition to publishing a national weekly newspaper, Frederick Douglass served in several official posts in Washington, D.C. “Colored people of this country want office not as the price of their votes ... but for their recognition as part of the American people,” he

¹³¹ Courtesy of the Rochester Public Library.

¹³² Today Cedar Hill is the location of the Frederick Douglass National Historic Site, managed by the National Park Service, and features a Visitors Center as well as the restored home.

¹³³ *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass, Written by Himself*, 1892, p.621.

explained in the *New York Times* January 26, 1881. Douglass hoped for a cabinet post in the Grant Administration; however, his first appointment was as a Commissioner to report on the possibility of annexing Santo Domingo.

Other government appointments followed. President Rutherford B. Hays named Douglass Marshal of the District of Columbia, a prestigious position that brought Douglass great visibility. However, because of the prevailing prejudice toward African Americans, Douglass was excused from the traditional function of presentation of guests to the President at White House functions.

Under the Garfield administration, Douglass became Recorder of Deeds for the District of Columbia. In 1889 President Benjamin Harrison appointed Douglass Minister Resident and Consul General to Haiti. In 1892, President Harrison and Frederick Douglass visited Kodak Park in Rochester together.

During his years in Washington, Douglass saw African American men gain freedom and citizenship, and then watched their rights torn away as the era of enslavement, and the Civil War and Reconstruction faded from memory. Douglass spent his final years keeping the memories of America's great moral battle alive, fighting to retain full citizenship for African Americans, speaking out against lynching, and supporting women's rights.

Douglass Dies and Rochester Mourns

On February 20, 1895 Frederick Douglass attended the morning sessions of the National Council of Women. After dinner at home that night, he rose in high spirits to reenact for his wife, Helen the speech he had given. Suddenly Douglass fell to the floor. He died within twenty minutes. "Father dropped dead tonight" Lewis Douglass wrote in a telegram to long-time Rochester friend Sarah Blackall.¹³⁴

Douglass's body lay in state in Washington, D.C., evidence of his status as a national figure. His friend Susan B. Anthony read a eulogy at his funeral. But Washington, D.C. was not to be Douglass's final resting-place. His widow chose to return his body to the place where he had gone "among strangers" to publish an anti-slavery newspaper nearly 60 years before; the place that felt most like home; the place where his most productive public reform activities had taken place: Rochester, New York.

Susan B. Anthony was not able to return to Rochester for his funeral services here. She expressed her thoughts in a letter to an unidentified Rochester friend:

My dear Friend

¹³⁴ Telegram from Lewis Douglass to Sarah Blackall announcing Douglass's death, February 20, 1895. RMSC Collection.

I see that the body of Frederick Douglass is to be taken to Rochester – I hope the Citizens will prepare to give the honor to the great life - that it merits – I wish I were at home to join in the effort to do so - - The papers say the family, with the body - is to take the Monday night train for Rochester - so they would arrive on Tuesday morning–

Dr Farley - is preeminently the man to lead off in the matter - for the love of his dear Aunt Maria - & for that of his dear Uncle Sam.- & all of the Porter Family!! None were quite so near to Mr Douglass as they - Dear Aunt Maria - how I have thought of her - and how she would join with me in saying – how beautiful is the way that Frederick moved out of the old house into the new!! – In spirit I shall be with you in Rochester – as I shall be in both body and spirit with the efforts at honoring the memory here in Washington- on Monday - Rev Anna Shaw, & Mrs Sewall are to speak - & I am to read a letter from Mrs. Stanton –

Command me as you see I ought to say or do –

Love to your dearest self – & the family

Susan B. Anthony¹³⁵

Rochesterians reacted to Douglass’s death with an outpouring of respect and honor. “This man has come back home today...he came in a little circle of his best beloved ones, and our city went forth to meet him at its gates. He has been welcomed for once in the most impressive manner...He has been carried through the streets and the people have stood with their hats lifted as he passed.”¹³⁶

Douglass’s body lay in state in Rochester City Hall. Thousands of adult mourners paid final respects to the great man and thousands of school children joined them. The young people were dismissed from schools and encouraged to “view his remains in order that they might tell their children that it was their privilege to look upon the face of Frederick Douglass.”¹³⁷

The public funeral took place in Central Presbyterian Church at 50 Plymouth Avenue (now Hochstein Music School), the largest church in the city, and was “dignified and impressive.” At a time when newspapers had few photographs, the *Union and Advertiser*¹³⁸ gave its readers a half dozen views of Douglass’s funeral, an acknowledgement of his greatness.

With flags at half-mast and a military band playing dirges, the funeral procession wound through the streets to Mt. Hope Cemetery. Frederick Douglass is buried there now, alongside both of his wives and his younger daughter Annie. Rosetta Douglass Sprague and her family are buried a short distance away.

¹³⁵ Letter from Susan B. Anthony to “Dear Friend” February 22, 1895. RMSC Collection.

¹³⁶ Unidentified newspaper clipping [February 1895]; Douglass, Frederick (Death) Folder 34 of 34; Frederick Douglass Papers at the Library of Congress.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ *Union and Advertiser*. March 2, 1895.

Rochester Honors Douglass's Life

Following Frederick Douglass's death, Rochester citizens recognized his importance in local and national history. "Rochester is proud to remember that Frederick Douglass was, for many years, one of her citizens...for Douglass must rank as among the greatest men, not only of this city, but of the nation as well--great in gifts, greater in utilizing them, great in his inspiration, greater in his efforts for humanity, great in the persuasion of his speech, greater in the purpose that informed it."¹³⁹

In 1899, Rochesterians erected a statue of Douglass, the first public monument to an African American statesman in the United States. The monument project began before Frederick Douglass's death, when in 1895 John W. Thompson, a leader in the local African American community, began raising money for a memorial to African American Civil War soldiers. It may be that Douglass himself suggested the memorial. He had given a speech at the unveiling of the Lincoln Civil War statue in Rochester's Washington Park and remarked that African American soldiers were not represented there.

After Douglass's death, Thompson and his committee decided to devote the funds to a statue of Douglass. The government of Haiti made a large financial contribution for the sculpture. Theodore Roosevelt (then Governor of New York State) unveiled the Douglass monument on a triangle of land at St. Paul St. and Central Avenue. It was prominently placed near Rochester's train station so that all who passed through could see the city's famous citizen. Douglass Days became yearly events celebrated in June around the time the monument was originally unveiled.

In the 1940s when smoke and congestion became too heavy in the St. Paul area, city authorities moved the statue to Highland Park Bowl, where it now stands, not far from the site of Douglass's South Avenue home.

What Made Frederick Douglass A Great Leader?

"If there is no struggle, there is no progress."¹⁴⁰

What made Frederick Douglass a great leader? He started life with little promise – without money, family connections or formal education. Where did he find the courage and persistence to dedicate his life to helping others secure liberty and justice? What motivated him during the decade after freeing himself from slavery to acquire a lifetime of skills –oratory, newspaper publication, international travel, literary writing, and education? When other anti-slavery advocates faded after the Civil War, why did

¹³⁹ Rochester *Democrat and Chronicle*, June 28, 1879.

¹⁴⁰ Howard W. Coles, *The Cradle of Freedom*, Rochester, NY 1941, p132.

Douglass continue to be a leader, urging African Americans “to keep the past in lively memory till justice shall be done to them.”¹⁴¹

We can’t know the answers to these questions; however a listing of some of the qualities that made Douglass an exceptional leader provides insight into his methods and character:

- Douglass reacted to injustice with courage and positive, proactive efforts aimed to change oppressive, unjust conditions.
- He was a successful fundraiser who garnered support around the world to finance his work.
- He developed superb communications skills – as an astounding and eloquent orator, famous literary writer, newspaper editor, and friend.
- His networking skills enabled him to constantly widen his circle of friends, supporters and resources. His friends included an amazing variety of people – people who often disliked each other.
- He inspired others – with his confidence in his abilities and his great moral causes.
- He rose above the divisiveness of his causes. Both African Americans and European-Americans supported him.
- He enjoyed incredible fame and used his celebrity to advance human rights.

GRAPHICS/PHOTOGRAPHS TO ILLUSTRATE Rochester’s Frederick Douglass: Graphic:

Map showing sites where Frederick Douglass lived and worked in enslavement, in Talbot County, Maryland

From *Frederick Douglass Driving Tour of Talbot County, Maryland* by K. Weller
Courtesy of The Historical Society of Talbot County, Maryland

Born the property of Captain Aaron Anthony, manager of the vast Maryland estate of Colonel Edward Lloyd, Frederick Douglass lived first in his grandmother’s cabin on the outskirts of the Lloyd plantation (1). At six, Douglass went to work on Lloyd’s home plantation on the Wye River (2), where Anthony lived in a small home between Lloyd’s mansion and the slave quarters. From there, Douglass went to Baltimore, about 35 miles away. As a teenager, Douglass returned to the Eastern Shore of Maryland, where Anthony’s son-in-law Thomas Auld (who inherited Douglass when Anthony died), lived

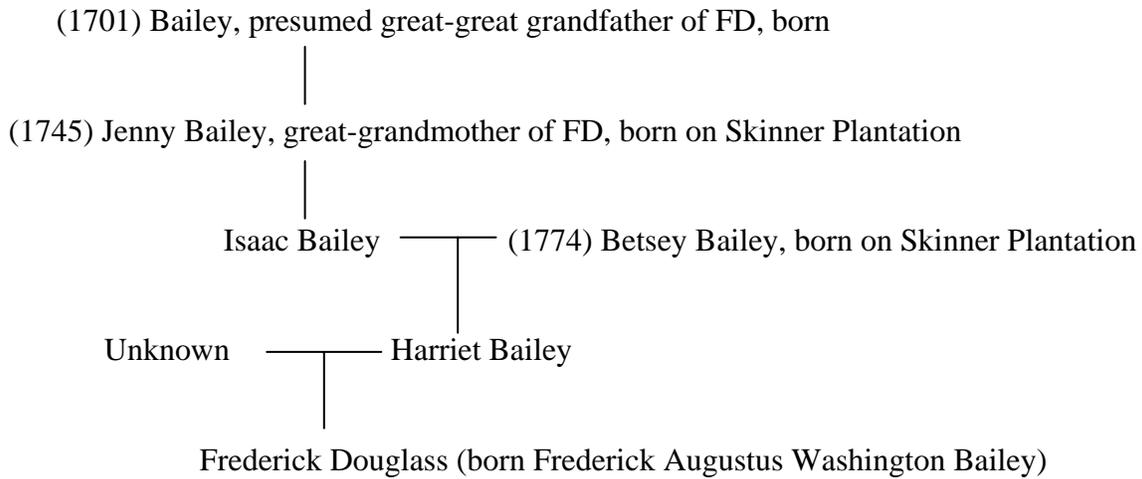
¹⁴¹ Douglass urged African Americans to know their history and keep it in the conscience of all Americans: “Well the nation may forget, it may shut its eyes to the past, and frown upon any who do otherwise, but the colored people of this country are bound to keep the past in lively memory till justice shall be done them.”

Frederick Douglass “Address Delivered on the Twenty-Sixth Anniversary of Abolition in the District of Columbia,” April 16, 1888.

in St. Michael's. During the next three years, Thomas Auld worked Douglass as a field hand and rented him to slave breaker William Covey (4). In 1836, Thomas Auld sent Douglass back to Baltimore, where two years later Douglass took his freedom.

Graphic:

Frederick Douglass's Ancestral Family tree¹⁴²:



Photograph:

Grandmother Betsey Bailey's Cabin in the RMSC exhibition, *Rochester's Frederick Douglass*

Recreated environments and hands-on activities in *Rochester's Frederick Douglass* enable visitors to immerse themselves in Douglass's experiences. A re-creation of the cabin where Douglass spent the first six years of his life offers opportunities to examine a fish net like the ones Douglass's grandmother made and used in Maryland, and open a special pocket to see how a free African American, like Frederick Douglass's grandfather Isaac Bailey, kept the all-important "freedom paper."

Title page of book:

Wonderful Eventful Life of Rev. Thomas James, by himself. 3rd edition. Rochester, NY: Post Express Printing Co., 1887.

Courtesy of Local History Division of the Rochester Public Library

Photograph:

¹⁴² Insert source.

Photograph of William Lloyd Garrison (1805-1879)
From *William Lloyd Garrison* by Goldwin Smith, New York, Funk & Wagnalls, 1892.
Courtesy of Charles A. Beyah.

Title Page and facing illustration:

Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, Written by Himself. Boston: Anti-Slavery Office, 1845
Courtesy of Charles A. Beyah

Graphic:

Bill of sale written by Thomas Auld of Baltimore for sale of slave named Frederick Bailey, alias Frederick Douglass, for \$100 to Hugh Auld of Talbot County, MD on November 30, 1846. Inside on the second page is the continued part of the bill of sale signed by N.H. Arrington, a justice of the peace in Talbot County, MD.
Courtesy of the National Park Service, Frederick Douglass National Historic Site

Graphic:

A bill of sale written by Hugh Auld of Baltimore to Walter Lewis of New York in the sale of a Frederick Bailey, alias Frederick Douglass, for \$711.66 to set him free from slavery on December 5, 1846.
Courtesy of the National Park Service, Frederick Douglass National Historic Site

Graphic:

“Rochester From the West,” 1853
After a drawing by J. W. Hill. Lithographed by D. W. Moody, Smith Brothers & Company.
Hand Colored Lithograph
RMSC Collection

As portrayed in this contemporary view, Rochester was a thriving city on the Erie Canal when Douglass moved here in 1847. The Douglass family lived first on Alexander Street near Main Street, and later on a hillside farm south of the city on what is now South Avenue. Douglass’s farm (not pictured) was located on the far side of the Genesee River in the sparsely settled hills in this view. The three-story Talman block, the location of Douglass’s printing office, stood on the south side of Main Street.

Graphics:

"Colored Persons"
From *Daily American Directory of the City of Rochester, for 1849-50.* Rochester: Jerome & Brother, 1849.
RMSC Collection

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Carte-de-Visite, Sojourner Truth
Howard W. Coles Collection, RMSC

Photograph:

Amy Kirby Post (1802-1889)
Loaned by Nancy Foster Owen, Amy and Isaac Post's great great granddaughter
"You were among the first of American women to give me shelter & make me feel at home under your roof kindness I never forget." Letter from Frederick Douglass to Amy Post, from The Isaac and Amy Post Papers, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, University of Rochester Library

Photograph

Isaac Post (1798-1872)
RMSC Collection

Graphic:

First Annual Report for the Rochester Ladies Anti-Slavery Sewing Society Rochester, NY, 1852.
Howard W. Coles Collection, RMSC
This report includes a thank you note from Frederick Douglass for the group's donation of \$228 to his newspaper.

Photograph

Anti-Slavery Fair, Cazenovia, New York, 1850
Courtesy of the Madison County Historical Society
Frederick Douglass is seated at the table with one of his principal supporters, Gerrit Smith, standing behind him in this view of an outdoor gathering of Western New York abolitionists.

Photograph

Portrait of Samuel D. Porter
Courtesy of the Rochester Historical Society

Photograph

Photograph of Martin Delaney (1812-1885)

Photograph

William C. Nell (1816-1874)

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Title Page

Autographs for Freedom, 1854

Graphic:

Subscription receipt, unsigned, for *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, March 20, 1856.

From the Howard W. Coles Collection, RMSC

In February 1848, Frederick Douglass wrote to his Rochester friend Isaac Post that “I regret to be absent from Rochester so long as I shall have to be this time – but the length of time now may prevent a longer period in future. I am getting subscribed – which is no unimportant item.” (From The Isaac and Amy Post Papers, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, University of Rochester Library.)

Photograph:

Recreation of Douglass’s Newspaper Office, in the *Rochester’s Frederick Douglass* exhibition.

The Morgans & Wilcox Washington-style printing press, made in Middletown, New York, Brayer, Composing stick, and Safety can were loaned by the Cary Collection, Wallace Library, Rochester Institute of Technology; the Pin wedges and Type planer were loaned by the Wells College Book Arts Center; and the Genesee Country Village & Museum loaned the type case and type. Herbert Johnson, retired RIT Professor was the primary consultant for the recreation.

Photograph of Douglass family home at 4 Alexander Street, Rochester, NY

From *The Cradle of Freedom* by Howard Wilson Coles. Rochester: Oxford Press, 1941
RMSC Collection

Map showing the location of Douglass’s and his neighbors’ homes and lots on Alexander Street near Main Street, now East Avenue, 1851

RMSC Collection

Portrait of Frederick Douglass c. 1850, engraved by J. C. Buttre from a daguerreotype.

From *My Bondage and My Freedom* by Frederick Douglass. New York: Miller, Orton & Mulligan, 1855.

RMSC Collection

The engraving records Frederick Douglass’s appearance during his early years in Rochester.

Photograph:

Recreation of Frederick Douglass’s study, in the *Rochester’s Frederick Douglass* exhibition.

1800s furnishings and books from RMSC Collections recreate a study from the time that Frederick Douglass lived in Rochester. Many of the books, similar to the books in Douglass’s library, are from the collection of Charles A. Beyah. Douglass recorded the

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subscriptions that he sold for his anti-slavery newspaper, the *North Star*, in this subscription book (Courtesy of the National Park Service), displayed here on the desk.

Map, 1851, showing A.H. Ross's Grand Avenue (now South Avenue) house and barn near the city line, the year before Frederick Douglass purchased it from Ross.
RMSC Collection

Photograph

Frederick Douglass's South Avenue home site in 1920, by Albert R. Stone for the *Rochester Herald*

Albert R. Stone Negative Collection, RMSC

This photograph, published on December 26, 1920, shows that four trees planted by Frederick Douglass on his South Avenue property still survived fifty years after the fire that destroyed his home there. The house in the background is probably that of J.F. Keller (owner of Keller Nursery), built on a portion of the foundation of the Douglass house. South Avenue remained unpaved.

Graphic:

Portrait of Anna Murray Douglass (c. 1813-1882)

From *My Mother As I Recall Her*, by Rosetta Sprague Douglass. Reprinted by Fredericka Douglass Sprague Perry, 1923.

Presented by Rosetta Douglass Sprague before the Anna Murray Douglass Union, W.C.T.U., on May 10, 1900.

Howard W. Coles Collection, RMSC

Photograph:

Rosetta Douglass Sprague

Photograph Courtesy of the National Park Service, Frederick Douglass National Historic Site

or

Rosetta Douglass Sprague

Photograph From *My Mother As I Recall Her* by Rosetta Douglass Sprague. Reprinted by Fredericka Douglass Sprague Perry, 1923. Presented by Rosetta Douglass Sprague before the Anna Murray Douglass Union, W. C.T.U., on May 10, 1900

Howard W. Coles Collection, RMSC

Photograph:

Lewis Henry Douglass (1840 - 1908)

Photograph

Howard W. Coles Collection, RMSC

Photograph:

Frederick Douglass, Jr. (1842 - 1892)

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Photograph
Courtesy of Prints and Photographs Collection, Moorland-Springarn Research Center,
Howard University

Photograph:

Charles Remond Douglass (1844 - 1920)
Photograph
Howard W. Coles Collection, RMSC

Map, Underground Railroad

From *History of New York State*, edited by Alexander C. Flick. Volume 7. New York:
Columbia University Press, 1935
RMSC Collection

Photograph:

Reproduction of Daguerreotype of Daniel and Lucy Read Anthony
RMSC Collection

Photograph:

Susan B. Anthony, c1848
RMSC Collection
Susan Brownell Anthony (1820-1906) was a schoolteacher in Canajoharie, New York
when this photograph was taken, the year she first met Frederick Douglass.

Photograph:

Frederick Douglass, Photograph of a daguerreotype
Courtesy of the Chester County Historical Society, West Chester, PA
Frederick Douglass gave this daguerreotype of himself to his friend Susan B. Anthony.

Graphic:

Oration Delivered in Corinthian Hall, Rochester.... July 5, 1852
Signed by Frederick Douglass
RMSC Collection
Frederick Douglass inscribed this copy of his Fifth of July speech "To Josiah Bloxom.
From his sincere friend. Frederick Douglass." A search through the *Rochester Directories*
reveals that Josiah Bloxom worked as a laborer, a table waiter on a canal packet boat, and
finally operated his own business as a barber/hairdresser.

Graphic:

John Brown. Engraved by W. Hymper
This image of John Brown appeared in Frederick Douglass's *Life and Times of Frederick
Douglass Written by Himself*. Hartford, Conn: Park Publishing, 1881. RMSC
Collection.

Photograph:

Recreation of Kelsey's Landing: The Last Step To Freedom from *Rochester's Frederick Douglass* exhibition.

Kelsey's Landing near the present Maplewood Park on the west bank of the Genesee River was an important Rochester Underground Railroad site. Under cover of darkness, Underground Railroad agents drove freedom seekers to there by wagon. There they rowed to a ship bound for Canada. Douglass himself used this route when escaping arrest following John Brown's raid on the federal arsenal at Harper's Ferry in October 1859. Visitors to the exhibit often board the rowboat and row silently, imagining being a freedom seeker on the last part of the journey to freedom in Canada.

Graphic:

Poster: Men of Color to Arms
Howard W. Coles Collection, RMSC

Graphic:

Colored Troops Muster Roll (detail)
RMSC Collection

Photographs:

Lewis Douglass in uniform, 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry
Charles Douglass in uniform, 5th Massachusetts Colored Cavalry
Courtesy of Prints and Photograph Collection, Moorland-Springarn Research Center,
Howard University

Photograph:

Mourning badge (ribbon) for Abraham Lincoln, April 15, 1864
RMSC Collection

Graphic:

A. Lincoln, Engraved by John Chester Buttre
From *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass Written by Himself*. Hartford, Conn: Park
Publishing, 1881
RMSC Collection
Frederick Douglass chose this image of President Lincoln for his autobiography.

Photograph of Frederick Douglass, 1866-69

Carte-de-Visite
Made by Woodward & Rundel, Rochester, New York
RMSC Collection

It is likely that this image of Douglass, taken after the Civil War, was sold to the public in the local picture gallery that produced it. Douglass had become one of the city's most famous citizens.

Newspaper (detail with inscription), *Douglass' Monthly*
Vol. I, No. XI, April, 1859
RMSC Collection

Portrait of Helen Pitts Douglass
Courtesy of the National Park Service, Frederick Douglass National Historic Site

Photograph of Cedar Hill
Howard W. Coles Collection, RMSC

Photograph:
Frederick Douglass with President Benjamin Harrison in Rochester, 1892
Courtesy of the Rochester Public Library
President Benjamin Harrison (the bearded man on the far left), visited Kodak Park in Rochester with Frederick Douglass (sixth from right).

Photograph of Douglass's Funeral in Rochester, *Union and Advertiser*. March 2, 1895.
RMSC Collection
The Rochester *Union and Advertiser* included in its coverage of Douglass's funeral this view of the sanctuary of Central Presbyterian Church as it appeared during the funeral service.

Photograph:
Church pew, c.1890
RMSC Collection
Mourners sat on this pew from the Central Presbyterian Church at 50 Plymouth Avenue (today's Hochstein Music School), part of the church sanctuary at the time of Frederick Douglass's 1895 funeral in Rochester.

Graphic:
Pin celebrating the unveiling of the Douglass Monument on June 9, 1899
RMSC Collection
Program from the unveiling of the Douglass Monument, June 9, 1899
Howard W. Coles Collection, RMSC
These souvenirs commemorate the unveiling of the Douglass monument in the city of Rochester. Thousands gathered for the event.

Photograph:

Ceremony at the Douglass Monument, 1911. Photographed by Albert R. Stone

Albert R. Stone Negative Collection, RMSC

A group of Grand Army of the Republic Union Army Civil War veterans surrounds the Frederick Douglass statue for a ceremony during a 1911 GAR Convention in Rochester.

Photograph:

Celebration at the Frederick Douglass Monument, June 10, 1924

Photographed by Albert R. Stone for the *Rochester Herald*

Albert R. Stone Negative Collection, RMSC

The African American community sponsored celebrations at the Frederick Douglass monument each year in June, at the time the monument was originally unveiled. On June 10, 1924, Douglass descendent Miss Althea Sprague posed at the top of the ladder for the photographer after placing a wreath on the Monument. The man to the right of the monument is John W. Thompson, who raised the money for the statue.

Graphic:

Program for the Rededication of the Douglass Monument at Highland Park September 4, 1941

Howard W. Coles Collection, RMSC

Mayor Dicker, Howard W. Coles, and Frank Gannett gave prepared speeches at the rededication of the Douglass Monument when it was moved to Highland Park Bowl, where it stands today.

Photograph of Interactive: Are You A Leader Like Frederick Douglass? from Rochester's Frederick Douglass exhibition.

A young man blends his face into that of Frederick Douglass and asks himself if, faced with the same challenges as Frederick Douglass, he would choose to help others. The photograph of Douglass is from the Howard W. Coles Collection, RMSC.

Photograph of Sculpture:

Frederick Douglass 5, 2003

by Shawn Dunwoody, American (born 1973)

Plaster

Loaned by Shawn Dunwoody

Douglass's legacy continues to inspire Rochesterians in the 21st century. Douglass's spirit is alive and robust in this bust created by contemporary artist and Rochester native Shawn Dunwoody. The hash marks on the base represent the thousands of enslaved Africans and African American freedom seekers who inspired Douglass's life work.

Acknowledgements

Victoria Sandwick Schmitt is Executive Director of Corn Hill Navigation. A former curator and educator at the Rochester Museum & Science Center (RMSC) she served as a researcher and lead writer for this monograph and for the exhibition, *Rochester's Frederick Douglass*. Her work represents the combined efforts of several RMSC colleagues. Principal among them was RMSC Archivist/Librarian Leatrice M. Kemp who headed the exhibit team and was lead researcher on Douglass's New Bedford, Rochester and Washington, D.C. years. Anthropologist and Collections Coordinator Kathryn Murano researched the transatlantic slave trade, slavery in North America and Douglass's early years. Curator of Regional History Brian Nagel researched U.S. Colored Troops, as well as overseeing the re-creation of Douglass's grandmother's cabin, study, and newspaper office. Vice President Bart Roselli and Communications Manager Jan Wyland contributed interpretive section headlines. Deputy Director for Design Lois Shaffer, designed the entire exhibition to actualize the recommendations that came out of six community focus groups facilitated by RMSC President Kate Bennett.

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