

# ROCHESTER HISTORY

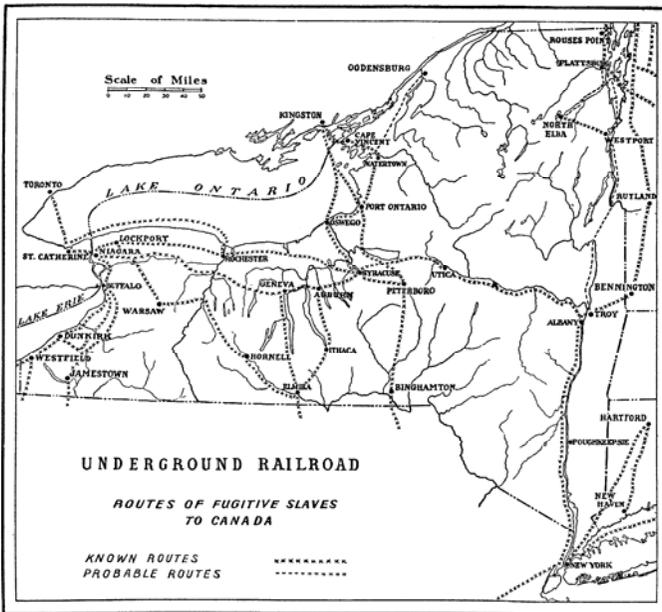
Vol. LXVII

Fall, 2005

No. 4

## Rochester's Frederick Douglass Part Two

by Victoria Sandwick Schmitt



### Underground Railroad

From *History of New York State*, edited by Alexander C. Flick. Volume 7.

New York: Columbia University Press, 1935

Courtesy of the Rochester Museum & Science Center, Rochester, NY



Front page from Douglass' Monthly, Courtesy of the Rochester Museum & Science Center, Rochester, NY

ROCHESTER HISTORY, published by the Central Library of Rochester and Monroe County. Address correspondence to Local History and Genealogy Division, Rochester Public Library, 115 South Avenue, Rochester, NY 14604.

Subscriptions to Rochester History are \$8.00 per year by mail. Foreign subscriptions are \$12.00 per year, \$4.00 per copy for individual issues.

Rochester History is funded in part by the Frances Kenyon Publication Fund, established in memory of her sister, Florence Taber Kenyon and her friend Thelma Jeffries.

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## Douglass 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' 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.<sup>71</sup>

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.<sup>72</sup> A "neighborless place"<sup>73</sup> 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."<sup>74</sup>

Both of Frederick Douglass' 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 he found it hard to spell," wrote neighbor Jenny Marsh Parker.<sup>75</sup> Over time Douglass acquired a large personal library.<sup>76</sup>

Marsh Parker also recorded her recollections of Douglass' 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."<sup>77</sup>

Although Frederick Douglass said "I shall always feel more at home there [Rochester] than anywhere else in the country,"<sup>78</sup> 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 20<sup>th</sup> century. The house and barn on South Avenue burned to the ground in a fire in 1872, reportedly the work of arsonists. The only known complete run of Douglass' 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."<sup>79</sup>

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'] prosperity."<sup>80</sup> A tutor taught her the basics of reading and writing, but her many household duties took precedence over learning her letters.<sup>81</sup>

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."<sup>82</sup>

Despite evidence that Frederick Douglass had close relationships with other women, the Douglasses' 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."<sup>83</sup>

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."<sup>84</sup>

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

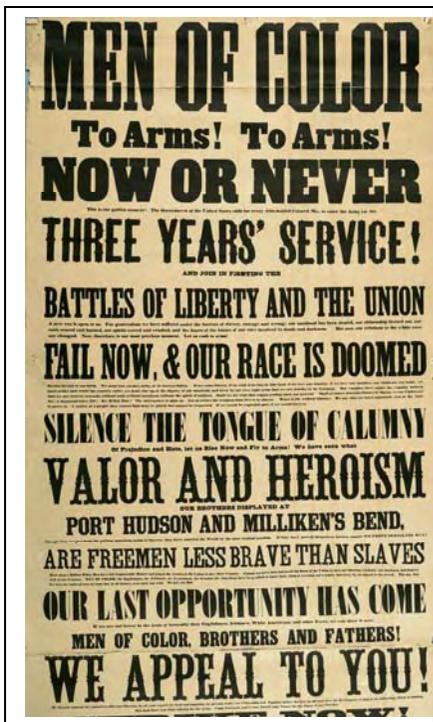
in the prestigious Seward's Seminary. When he learned that his daughter took classes apart from the other scholars (despite their willingness to sit beside her), he withdrew her and used the *North Star* to expose the parent who objected to Rosetta's presence. After that, Rosetta Douglass and her brothers 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.<sup>85</sup> The Spragues were living at the Douglasses' South Avenue farm the night their house burned in 1872<sup>86</sup> and Nathan Sprague helped save many of the Douglass' possessions. The couple later lived in a home owned by Frederick Douglass on Hamilton Street in Rochester.<sup>87</sup> They had seven children, and many of their descendants still live in the Rochester area.

Like her father, Rosetta Douglass Sprague 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.<sup>88</sup>

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."<sup>89</sup> 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, Lewis and Frederick Jr. were "perched upon blocks and given their first lessons in printer's ink, besides carrying papers and mailing them."<sup>90</sup>

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.



"Men of Color to Arms" poster reproduction from the Howard W. Coles Collection, Rochester Museum & Science Center, Rochester, NY

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 Rochester African American baseball team, before joining the Mutuels, 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."<sup>91</sup> 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 11<sup>th</sup> 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.<sup>92</sup> When Frederick Douglass returned from abroad, the family buried Annie in a plot they selected at Mt. Hope.<sup>93</sup>

### **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,”<sup>94</sup> Douglass wrote of his Underground Railroad activities in Rochester.

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' friend Jacob P. Morris assisted him in organizing local Underground Railroad activities. Morris' barber shop on Main Street<sup>95</sup> 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' home at dusk.<sup>96</sup> Under the cover of darkness freedom seekers went by wagon from Douglass' home to a variety of locations, such as Isaac and Amy Post's home, Samuel and Susan Porter's barn, Joseph Bloss' woodshed or E. C. William's sail loft.

Frederick Douglass' 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.<sup>97</sup>

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.* <sup>98</sup>

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* <sup>99</sup>

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, 1857* <sup>100</sup>

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 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.”<sup>101</sup>

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.”<sup>102</sup>

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,”<sup>103</sup> Rosetta Douglass Sprague wrote to her father in 1869.

### **Support of 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.<sup>104</sup>

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.<sup>105</sup>

Two weeks later, Douglass attended a second women’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.”<sup>106</sup>

### **Anthony's Expand Douglass' 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.”<sup>107</sup>

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.

### **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 a forty page 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 Sewing 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.”<sup>108</sup> he declared – and his passionate address came to be known as Douglass' “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.

## **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,"<sup>109</sup> 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' South Avenue home, Brown met Shields Green,<sup>110</sup> 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.

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 Blackall:<sup>111</sup> "Tell Lewis to secure all important papers in my high desk."<sup>112</sup>

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.<sup>113</sup> Douglass left Canada to spend six months in England. During that time John Brown was hanged in Virginia. Virginians hanged Rochesterian Shields Green several days later. While Frederick Douglass was in England, Susan B. Anthony and others stood vigil outside City Hall and 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," <sup>114</sup> wrote Henry David Thoreau.

### **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," <sup>115</sup> 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. <sup>116</sup>

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 admit that they

proved themselves worthy,”<sup>117</sup> 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 other 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.<sup>118</sup>

### **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.<sup>119</sup> 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,”<sup>120</sup> Frederick Douglass wrote.

Douglass met Lincoln personally only twice. The first time, Douglass protested discrimination in pay for Colored Troops. In 1864 Lincoln solicited Douglass' 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.”<sup>121</sup>

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.'<sup>122</sup>

## **The Emancipation Proclamation A Major Turning Point**

*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.*<sup>123</sup> – 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 13<sup>th</sup> 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 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.*<sup>124</sup>

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 15<sup>th</sup> 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,"<sup>125</sup> 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' 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."<sup>126</sup> 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 fifty per cent interest in *New National Era*, a national weekly for "colored America."

On June 2, 1872, while he was in Washington, D.C., Douglass' South Avenue home and barn burned. His family got out alive, but lost many of their possessions.<sup>127</sup> Douglass arrived in Rochester the following evening in a drenching rain only to be denied lodging by a local hotel. He moved to Washington, D.C., despite the pleas of his Rochester friends.

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

*Disastrous Fire, Burning of Frederick Douglass' 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' 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, 1872* <sup>128</sup>

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

*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 color phobia. 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.

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

*-Rochester Union and Advertiser,  
June 17, 1872 <sup>129</sup>*

The fire that destroyed Douglass' 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.



Photograph of Cedar Hill  
From the Howard W. Coles Collection,  
Rochester Museum & Science Center, Rochester, NY

### **Helen Pitts of Honeoye, Douglass' Second Wife**

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. <sup>130</sup> Located in Anacostia, a Washington suburb, Cedar Hill was both Frederick and Anna Douglass' last home. Anna Murray Douglass managed the beautifully furnished home in the nation's capital that served as the base for Douglass' 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' 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?"<sup>131</sup> 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.



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

### **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 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. Hayes 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.

### **Rochester Mourns Douglass' death**

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.<sup>132</sup>

Douglass' 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 this funeral, but Washington, D.C. was not to be Douglass' 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. She expressed her thoughts in a letter to an unidentified Rochester friend:

*My dear Friend*

*I see that the body of Frederick Douglas 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. Anthony*<sup>133</sup>

Rochesterians reacted to Douglass' 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.”<sup>134</sup>

Douglass’ 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.”<sup>135</sup>



Douglass’ Funeral in Rochester, *Union and Advertiser*. March 2, 1895.  
Courtesy of the Rochester Museum & Science Center, Rochester, NY  
The Rochester *Union and Advertiser* included in its coverage of Douglass’ funeral this view of the sanctuary of Central Presbyterian Church as it appeared during the funeral service.

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*<sup>136</sup> gave its readers a half dozen views of Douglass’ funeral, an acknowledgement of his greatness.

With flags at half-staff 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.

### **Rochester Honors Douglass’ Life**

Following Frederick Douglass’ 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.”<sup>137</sup>

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’ death, when in 1895 John W. Thompson, a leader in the Rochester 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’ 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 by could see the city’s famous citizen. Douglass Days became an annual event celebrated in June around the time the monument was originally unveiled.



1911 ceremony at the Frederick Douglass monument. From the Albert R. Stone Negative Collection, Rochester Museum & Science Center, Rochester, NY

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’ South Avenue home.

## Frederick Douglass- A Great Leader

*If there is no struggle, there is no progress.* <sup>138</sup>

Frederick Douglass

Douglass started life with little promise – without money, family connections or formal education. He developed the courage and persistence to dedicate his life to helping others to secure liberty and justice. During the decade after freeing himself from slavery he acquired a lifetime of skills –oratory, newspaper publication, international travel, literary writing, and education.

When other anti-slavery advocates faded after the Civil War, Douglass continued to be a leader, urging African Americans “to keep the past in lively memory till justice shall be done to them.” <sup>139</sup>

Through the 20th century and into the 21st, Douglass’ words and exceptional leadership qualities continue to ring true and provide inspiration.

*Victoria Sandwick Schmitt is Executive Director of the not-for-profit Corn Hill Waterfront & Navigation Foundation, operators of the Erie Canal tour boats Sam Patch and Mary Jemison. She was lead writer for the Rochester Museum & Science Center exhibit "Rochester's Frederick Douglass" from which this two-part article is drawn.*

### Acknowledgements

Victoria Sandwick Schmitt is Director of Development and Marketing for 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’ 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’ early years. Curator of Regional History Brian Nagel researched U.S. Colored Troops, as well as overseeing the re-creation of Douglass’ 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.

Additionally, the following institutions, historians, educators and generous individuals contributed to the research and interpretation of Frederick Douglass: Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Museum, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, VA; Adwoa Boateng and family; Almeta Whitis; Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Inc., Eta Rho Lambda Chapter; Alex S. Bracey; Anna Bibb Rodriguez; Assemblyman David Gantt; August Family Foundation; Avery Research Center for African American History and Culture, College of

Charleston; Cary Collection, Wallace Library, Rochester Institute of Technology; Cathy Ingram; Charles A. Beyah; Charles Frazier; Chester County Historical Society, West Chester, PA; Cindy Boyer; Emerson Klees; Dale Davis; Daniel M. Barber; David Pankow; David Shakes; Delores Jackson Radney; *Democrat and Chronicle*; Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, University of Rochester Library; Diane Lucas; Dr. Betsy Bauer; Dr. Connie Cox Bodner; Dr. David Anderson-Sankofa; Dr. Frances Murphy; Dr. Juanita Pitts; Dr. Kenneth Goode; Dr. Lisa Wing; Dr. Michael Jarvis; Dr. Nancy Hewitt; Dr. Sonia James-Wilson; Dr. Walter Pond; Donald Newcomb; Downstairs Cabaret Theatre; Empire State Development Corporation (ESDC); ESL Federal Credit Union; Friends of Mt. Hope Cemetery; Genesee Country Village and Museum; George Reitter; Gian Carlo Cervone; Hampton University Museum; HBO; Helen Stone Reinhard; Herbert Johnson; Honorable Jack Doyle; Honorable William A. Johnson, Jr.; Italian-American Businessmen's Association, 1926-2003; Ira Srole; Jacob and Gwendolyn Lawrence Foundation; Jean Czerkas; Jean Morris; Jennifer Leonard; J.K. Langkans; Joan Coles Howard; Joseph Dolson; John Preston; Jonas Perkins; Kevin Klein; Kevin Lootens; Landmark Society of Western New York; Lavery Library, St. John Fisher College; Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division; Local History Division of the Rochester Public Library; LRMP Insurance; Madison County Historical Society; Mark Indelicato; Mary Huth; Maxine Childress Brown; Maureen Rodgers; Melissa Mead; Michael Tuite, University of Virginia/USICOMOS; Michele Rowe; Monroe County; Monroe County Parks Department; Nancy Foster Owen; National Park Service, Frederick Douglass National Historic Site; New Bedford Whaling Museum; Pitts Library, Emory University; Prints and Photograph Collection, Moorland-Springarn Research Center, Howard University; Rev. Errol Hunt; Rev. Sherman Dunmore; Richard Sherin; Rochelle McDaniel; Rochester Historical Society; Rochester-Monroe County Freedom Trail Commission; Rochester Municipal Archives; Rochester Public Library; Rodric Cox-Cooper; Ruth Rosenberg-Naparsteck; Sandy Maniloff; Sarah Roberts; Shawn Dunwoody; Stanley Gordon; Steve Jacobs; Stuart Bolger; Susan Powers; Terrence Chouinard; The Historical Society of Talbot County, Maryland; The Mariners' Museum, Newport News, VA; The University of Wisconsin Press; Tom Boyce; Tom Habecker; Unified Tae Kwon Do; University of Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge, England; University of Rochester Library; Wade Norwood; Wanda Wolf; Wells College Book Arts Center; William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan; Wizard Work Studios.

Special thanks go to Dr. David Anderson for his inspiration, vision, leadership, and generous sharing of historical knowledge; and to City Historian Ruth Rosenberg-Naparsteck for her leadership in contributing to and encouraging the research and publication of information on Rochester's African American heritage.

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Ruth Rosenberg-Naparsteck  
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### Endnotes

71. 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.
72. 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.
73. William S. McFeely. *Frederick Douglass*. NY, 1991, p.172.
74. Howard W. Coles, "Frederick Douglass Story (picture story)," typescript, p. 2. Howard W. Coles Collection, Rochester Museum & Science Center.
75. Frederick Douglass' 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"
76. *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*, April 12, 1885.
77. *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.
78. *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass, Written by Himself*, 1892, p.334.
79. *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. 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 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.

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

81. *Ibid.*

82. *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.

83. *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.

84. *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.

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

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

87. 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.

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

89. *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.

90. *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.

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

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

93. 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.

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

95. 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.

96. Amy Hamner-Croughton, “Anti-Slavery Days in Rochester,” *Publication Fund Series*, Rochester Historical Society, 1936, p. 133. A story about how Douglass’ 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.

97. 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.”

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

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

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

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

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

103. 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>

104. 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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

111. Howard W. Coles, *The Cradle of Freedom*, Rochester, NY, 1941, p. 150. Burton Blackall probably saved Douglass’ 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' 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).

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

113. 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.

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

115. "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.

116. 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.

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

118. Richard O. Reisem, "Two Major Exhibits at Mt. Hope Cemetery Gatehouse," *Epitaph*, Vol. 22, No. 2, Spring 2003, p.1.

119. 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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

127. “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.

128. Courtesy of the Rochester Public Library.

129. Courtesy of the Rochester Public Library.

130. 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.

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

132. Telegram from Lewis Douglass to Sarah Blackall announcing Douglass’ death, February 20, 1895. RMSC Collection.

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

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

135. *Ibid.*

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

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

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

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.”

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

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Celebration at the Frederick Douglass Monument, June 10, 1924

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

From the Albert R. Stone Negative Collection,

Rochester Museum & Science Center, Rochester, NY

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.