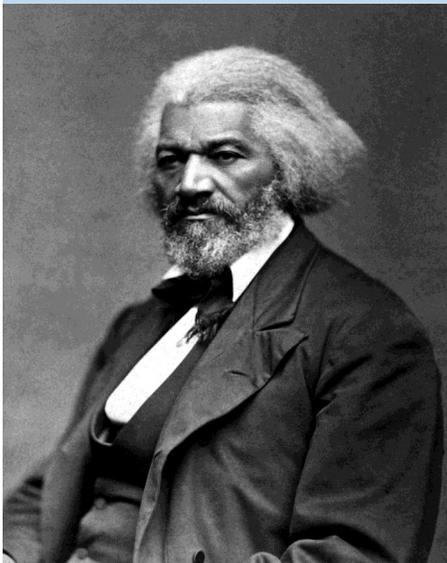


# Walking In Frederick Douglass' Footsteps

## An Extraordinary Life

- 1818** Born into slavery in Maryland. Given name "Frederick Augustus Washington Bailey"
- 1827** Taught how to read by his owner's wife, Sophia Auld
- 1838** Escaped the bondage of slavery, married and settled in New Bedford, MA
- 1841** Spoke to an integrated audience for the first time at the Nantucket Atheneum
- 1845** First autobiography published, *Narratives of the Life of Frederick Douglass*
- 1845** Left America for Ireland & England to avoid capture
- 1846** Became a free man when English supporters purchased his freedom from the Aulds
- 1847** Began publishing the *North Star*, an abolitionist newspaper
- 1848** Gave a speech at the first Women's Right Convention in Seneca Falls, NY
- 1872** Ran for Vice President on Equal Rights Party ticket
- 1889** Served as US resident minister & consul general to Haiti for two years
- 1895** Frederick Douglass died on February 20th

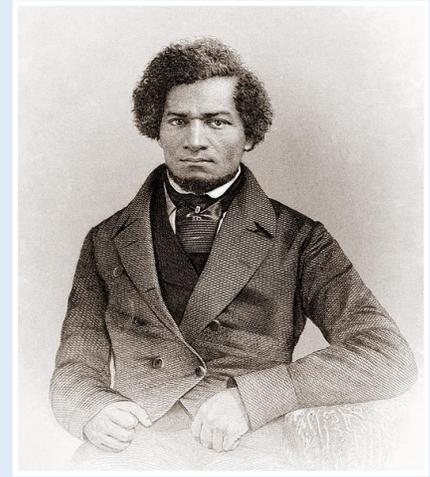


An American icon, Frederick Douglass became famous for his oratory skills, his dedication to the abolishment of slavery, and for being a fervent defender of equality for all. He was born into slavery in Maryland, escaped around age 20, and spent the rest of his life advocating for oppressed people in the United States and around the world. Douglass visited Nantucket five times. His career as a public speaker was launched on the island during his first visit in 1841.

Nantucket businessman William C. Coffin was an abolitionist who also worked in New Bedford. In 1841, Coffin invited Douglass to the island's first anti-slavery convention after he "heard him (sic) speak before a black assembly in a little school house and church on Second Street in New Bedford," (Farr & Burne, 1991).

Still a fugitive slave, Douglass' first trip to Nantucket was fraught with racial tensions before the boat left New Bedford. "Captain Lot Phinney [refused] to leave the dock until the black passengers aboard the *Telegraph* [agreed] to take separate quarters from the white passengers ... [but] a compromise is reached," (Farr & Burne, 1991). Once landed, "When Coffin spots Douglass disembarking among the crowd, he makes his way toward him to welcome him, defying the unwritten rule of social separation of the races," (McFeely, 1991).

During that trip, Douglass would have likely been invited to the homes of abolitionists and spent time with families of New Guinea, where most of the island's black



population lived. At the urging of famed abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, Douglass spoke at the anti-slavery convention held in the Nantucket Atheneum's Great Hall on August 11, 1841. It would be his first address to a mostly white audience.

He also visited in 1842, 1843, 1850, and 1885. Each time Douglass lectured at the Nantucket Atheneum, he enjoyed the sincere sympathy and goodwill of residents here. On the final visit of 1885, he revealed with deep sentiment that he "had not come to ask a hearing, but to stand once more on the island of Nantucket," (Kelley, 2017).



African Meeting House

## Imagine...

Nantucket's 1800s landscape: unpaved roads, no sidewalks, horses and carriages, the downtown aroma of the world's whaling capital.

Douglass' impression of black prosperity on Nantucket as he visited with black whaling captains, homeowners, and businessmen.

Island gender and racial dynamics in an atmosphere of progressive thinking that advocated for women's rights and an end to slavery.



Nantucket Atheneum

# Walking In Frederick Douglass' Footsteps

**[1] Steamboat Wharf:** The *Telegraph* steamboat with Douglass on board most likely docked here. Formally New North Wharf.

**[2] 1 India Street, Nantucket Atheneum:** On August 11, 1841 Frederick Douglass spoke in front of his first “mixed race” audience at age 23. Douglass later wrote of the event, *“It was with the utmost difficulty that I could stand erect, or that I could command and articulate two words without hesitation and stammering.”*

**[3] 43 Centre St., David Joy House\*:** Co-founder of the Nantucket Atheneum, Joy was an active abolitionist and invited Douglass to the island. The two shared a special friendship for the rest of their lives.

**[4] 11 Orange St., Unitarian Church:** On August 16, 1885 Douglass spoke before another large crowd. Even before the service began, the aisles and gallery were at full capacity.

There Douglass said, *“If you establish a schoolhouse in every valley throughout the South and send a minister from every religious denomination in the land among them, it would not atone for the injury you have done by 250 years of bondage; it isn't fair to leave us alone; you should make a provision for education. Massachusetts men are doing it today. For myself, I am profoundly grateful.”*

**[5] 30 Orange St., Sherburne House\*:** Sherburne House was originally a captain's house but it was later converted into a hotel. On August 15, 1885, Frederick Douglass and his second wife, Helen Pitts Douglass, checked into the hotel during his final trip to Nantucket.



**[6] 29 York St., African Meeting House:** Douglass visited Nantucket's New Guinea neighborhood during all of his trips. There, the African Meeting House was the primary gathering place of the island's black residents and it is presumed that Douglass spoke here as well.

**[7] 100 Main St., Eliza & Nathaniel Barney House\*:** The Barneys were deeply involved in the anti-slavery movement and welcomed to their home many of the movement's leaders, such as William Lloyd Garrison, Frederick Douglass, Charles Sumner, and Horace Mann.

**[8] 95 Main St., Catherine & Matthew Starbuck House\*:** It was here that Anna Gardner gave a reception for Douglass on his final visit to Nantucket. August 22, 1885 *Inquirer and Mirror* described it as a “brilliant affair attended by about one hundred and fifty invited guests, largely representing the intellectual element of the island... The evening is pleasantly enjoyed, and a collation is served of ice cream and cake.”

**\*PRIVATE RESIDENCE  
PLEASE DO NOT DISTURB**

