Guide to the Papers of

Frederick Douglass

Prepared by Asia K. Bender, 2022

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**Tuskegee University**

**Archives**

**Tuskegee, AL 36088**

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**Collection Summary**

**Creator:** Douglass, Frederick (1817-1895)

**Title:** Papers of Frederick Douglass

**Dates:** 1817-1895

**Quantity:** 6.0 cubic feet

**Identification:**

**Abstract:** Frederick Douglass was a former captive slave who

became a respected political leader, antislavery

writer and acclaimed orator. He was a pioneer

leader in the abolitionist movement and advocated

for many social causes like black suffrage and the

gender rights movement. Douglass held the position

of becoming the first Black U.S Marshall of the

District of Columbia. Frederick Douglass published

his infamous memoir *Narrative of the Life of*

*Frederick Douglass*.

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**Administrative Information**

**Preferred Citation**

Papers of Frederick Douglass (1817-1895)

**Acquisition Information**

No information available

**Processing Information**

The papers were received for processing in various containers, with the documents in folders. From their arrangement in the containers, the folders were not arranged in any particular order. Many of the folders were not labeled, or were mislabeled in reference to their actual contents.

The processors decided to separate the folders into series according to subject matter that would be arranged alphabetically within each series.

In processing the collection, original folders were replaced with acid-free folders. Folders were labeled, either following the original labeling, or in the case of missing or incorrect labels were assigned folder titles. All metal fasteners were removed.

**Index Terms**

The papers are indexed under the following headings in the Tuskegee University Library’s online catalog. Researchers seeking materials about related subjects, persons, organizations or places should search the catalog using these headings.

**Subjects:**

African American Abolitionist

African American Political Activism

Anna Murray

President Abraham Lincoln

Howard University

**Persons:**

Frederick Douglass

**Biography**

Frederick Douglass, original name Frederick Augustus Washington Bailey, was born enslaved approx. February 1817, on Holmes Hill Farm in Talbot County, Maryland. His mother, who was also enslaved, was Harriett Bailey, and his father was possibly a slaveowner. At age 8, Douglass worked at Hugh and Sophia Auld of Fells Point, Baltimore, where he was secretly taught how to read and write. After multiple attempts to escape slavery, Anna Murray (whom he eventually married) helped Douglass escape his bondage. In 1838 at the age of 20, Douglass disguised himself as a sailor. He used someone else’s traveling documentation that granted him protection to travel from Baltimore through Wilmington, Delaware, by train, and Philadelphia by steamboat and then arrive at his destination in New York.

After meeting William C. Coffin, an abolitionist, at a Bristol Anti-Slavery Society Convention in 1841, Coffin invited him to speak at the organization’s general body. With high praise and admiration from the audience, this event sparked the start of his journey as an abolitionist, orator, writer, and social reformer. In 1842, Douglass wrote his first public letter defending George Latiner, a fugitive slave. He published his first autobiography, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass,* in 1845. Douglass published several newspapers throughout his life, including *The North Star*, which first issue appeared on December 3, 1847. He also published two additional autobiographies: *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855) and *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* (1881).

Douglass worked with governmental officials, including President Abraham Lincoln. Douglass and President Lincoln met on a few occasions, with Douglass advocating for Black soldiers in the Union Army during the upsurge of the Civil War. In hopes of increasing their pay and bettering their work conditions for the Black soldiers. Additionally, Frederick Douglass held numerous governmental positions. He was the first Black U.S Marshal (1877) appointed for the District of Columbia location by President Rutherford B. Hayes. In 1881, President James Garfield appointed him Recorder of Deeds for the District of Columbia. Then, President Benjamin Harrison designated Douglass as Charge d’Affaires for Santo Domingo and Minister to Haiti. Douglass would eventually resign in 1891 due to disagreements with Harrison's administration. In addition, he served on Howard University’s board of trustees from 1871-1895.

Douglass died on February 20, 1895, in his Anacostia home, “Cedar Hill”.

**Scope and Contents**

The Papers of Frederick Douglass consists of documents spanning from 1817- 1895. A large portion of the contents includes his life accomplishments and dedication to Frederick Douglass. Newspaper and magazine excerpts documenting Frederick Douglass's impact and the conservation of his home and monuments. Included are speeches and addresses that were delivered by Frederick Douglass. Additionally, there are pictures of Frederick Douglass, his Anacostia home, Cedar Hill, and a photo of Anna Murray Douglass, his first wife. It also includes William Pickens's *Frederick Douglass and the Spirit of Freedom* and *Collections of Clippings Complied* by Bertie L. Sowell.

**Arrangement**

The papers are arranged into one series.

**Restrictions**

**Restrictions on Access**

There are no restrictions on access to these papers.

**Restrictions on Use**

Researchers are responsible for addressing copyright issues on materials not in the public domain.

**Inventory**

**Box Folder**

1 1 Phenological Character of Frederick Douglass – Copies

1 2 The Crisis Magazine – Erection of a Memorial to Frederick Douglass

1 3 William Pickens “Frederick Douglass and the Spirit of Freedom”

1 4 Photos and Biographies of Frederick Douglass

1 5 Photos and Speeches of Frederick Douglass

1 6 Memorial of Frederick Douglass

1 7 Newspaper of Accomplishments – Frederick Douglass

1 8 Douglass Estate and Remembrance

1 9 Dedications to Frederick Douglass

1 10 The Frederick Douglass Years Exhibition

1 11 Frederick Douglass Washington, DC Home

1 12 Newspaper clippings “ The Douglass Monument, Rochester, New York”

1 13 Collection of Clippings Complied by Bertie L. Sowell

1 14 Pictures of Frederick Douglass Throughout the Years

1 15 Addresses “Self-Made Men” by Frederick Douglass

1 16 Two Speeches, West India Emancipation and Dred Scott, May 1857