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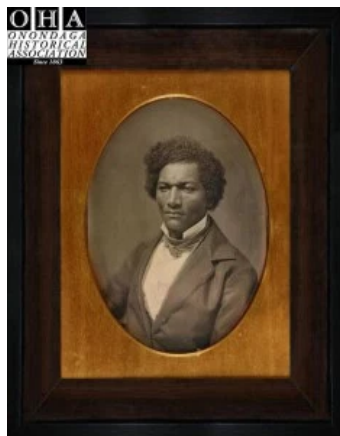


Rare Frederick Douglass daguerreotype now on display at Onondaga Historical Museum

Feb 08, 2017 Ashley M. Casey Eagle Bulletin, Eagle Observer, History, News, Star Review



BLACK HISTORY MONTH



Onondaga Historical Association (OHA) is proud to announce that after receiving conservation treatment at the University of Rochester by Ralph Wiegandt, a Research Conservator and Visiting Scientist in the Department of Physics and Astronomy, its rare daguerreotype of Fredrick Douglass is now on display at the Onondaga Historical Museum in downtown Syracuse as part of its celebration of Black History Month. The daguerreotype is a welcomed addition to the already popular traveling exhibit from the Smithsonian's Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington D.C. The exhibit also includes objects from OHA's collection such as original photographs, artwork, newspapers, and visual biographies of African American citizens.

OHA's daguerreotype photograph is the largest known of Douglass, measuring 6.5 inches wide by 8.5 inches high, making it an extraordinary piece of 19th



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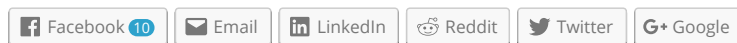
century photography. The photograph was possibly taken about 1848 by the notable Boston photography firm of Southworth & Hawes, the pre-eminent daguerreotypists of notable Bostonians and world figures. The photograph is a remarkable portrait of Douglass, focusing on his face in three-quarter view, and beautifully capturing his persona.

There are nine known daguerreotypes of Frederick Douglass that roughly correspond to his time as a fugitive slave and as an Underground Railroad operator between 1840 and 1860. For Douglass, this earliest medium of photography and this very daguerreotype, allowed him to project his powerful narrative for the cause of abolition.

While the daguerreotype was in good overall condition, the conservator noticed several minuscule scratches on the photograph's surface. Without attention, these scratches will oxidize and tarnish through exposure to ambient air, causing them to become more visible, thus damaging the photograph over time. Although current scientific knowledge and technology do not offer a solution to eliminating these scratches, the conservator was able to arrest further deterioration by enveloping the photograph in a hermetically sealed enclosure that contains inert argon gas. The hermetically sealed enclosure is now surrounded by a new frame that resembles those used during the mid 19th century so the photograph remains displayable to the public.

The Onondaga Historical Museum, located at 321 Montgomery St. in Syracuse, is open 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Wednesday through Friday and 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. weekends. To learn more, visit cnyhistory.org or call 315-28-1864.

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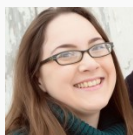
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Ashley M. Casey

Ashley M. Casey is a reporter for The Baldwinsville Messenger and The Eagle Star-Review. She graduated from Le Moyne College in 2012 and previously worked for the Scotsman Press.



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