

Frederick Douglass helped to organize the famous 1850 Anti-Fugitive Slave Law Convention in Cazenovia

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By **The Post-Standard**

Frederick Douglass — abolitionist, eloquent orator, writer, editor, and women's rights advocate — was born a slave in Maryland in February 1817 or 1818. He chose Feb. 14 as his birthday.

Douglass succeeded on his second attempt at freedom in 1838, and settled in New Bedford, Mass. William Lloyd Garrison heard Douglass speak at an antislavery meeting and invited him to join the American Anti-Slavery Society. After moving to Rochester in the 1840s, Gerrit Smith of Peterboro convinced Douglass to join his effort to abolish slavery by political means.

Douglass spoke at anti-slavery conventions in Peterboro and throughout Central New York and worked with Smith in organizing the famous 1850 **Anti-Fugitive Slave Law Convention** in Cazenovia.

In 1863, after the **Emancipation**, Douglass traveled to Syracuse and elsewhere delivering passionate recruitment speeches. "The arm of the slave is the best defense against the arm of the slaveholder," Douglass implored.

His work as an abolitionist, his stance on behalf of justice and equal opportunity, and his defense of women's rights brought international recognition. His friendship with President Abraham Lincoln expanded the president's thinking about the Civil War.

Douglass was inducted to the **National Abolition Hall of Fame and Museum** in Peterboro in 2005 — the first year of inductions.

*This story is adapted from a 2003 research project by Donna Dorrance Burdick, Smithfield town historian, and from The Post-Standard archive. It is part of The Post-Standard's 2012 observance of **Black History Month**. This year*



Courtesy OHA

This daguerreotype, from the collection of the **Onondaga Historical Association**, is the earliest known photograph of Frederick Douglass. It was taken in the early 1840s, when Douglass was about 26.

coincides with the 150th anniversary of the Civil War. The Post-Standard observes the month with accounts of Central New York's African-Americans who lived in the Civil War era, especially those who risked their lives as abolitionists and those who fought for the Union.

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» **"On the Front Lines of History,"** *the story of local blacks' military service.*

» **"Witnesses: Scars of a Southern Childhood,"** *how Syracusans who grew up in the American South experienced legal segregation before the great changes brought about by the Civil Rights movement a century after the Civil War.*

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