



Frederick Douglass

Abolitionist, Orator

(c. 1818-1895)

Frederick Douglass was born into slavery in Talbot County, Maryland. His birth name was Frederick Augustus Washington Bailey. He changed his name to Douglass to hide his identity after he escaped from slavery in 1838.

Douglass never knew his exact date of birth. Records were not always kept for children born into slavery. He came to believe his birth year was 1818, but could not be certain.

When he was a young boy Douglass was sold to Hugh Auld, a slave owner living in Baltimore, Maryland. It was there that he learned to read which opened up the world to

him. When Auld found out that Douglass was learning to read, he forbade anyone to help him, and later sent him to work as a field hand. Douglass realized that slave owners did not want their slaves to learn to read because they would lose their control over them.

During his years as a field hand Douglass was whipped regularly for little or nothing. He began to plan his escape and in 1838, posing as a freed sailor, escaped to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and then to New York. In New York he married a freewoman and the couple moved to Bedford, Massachusetts, where he changed his last name to Douglass.

In Bedford, Douglass became an abolitionist and began to speak out about the evils of slavery. He began to write about his life. His writings were well received. However, they made his whereabouts known and put his life in danger. To avoid capture by slave hunters, Douglass moved to Europe where he spent two years living in Ireland, Scotland and England. Douglass became legally emancipated in 1846 when a couple in Newcastle, England purchased his freedom.

Douglass returned to the United States in 1847 and began publishing his newspaper, *The North Star*. When the civil war began, he helped recruit soldiers for black regiments. He also worked for the government and served as consul-general to Haiti.

He died in Washington, DC on February 20, 1895.