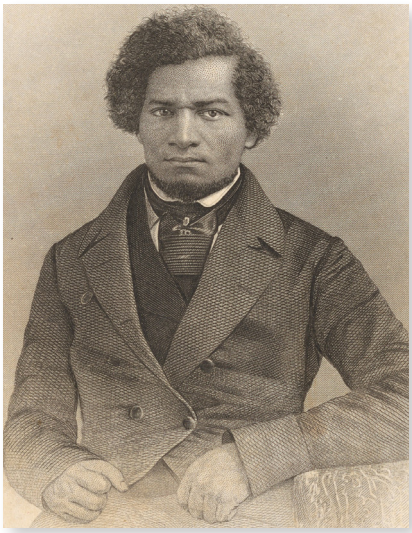
# Helen Pitts & Frederick Douglass

## Clan Hannah (Thomas Munson's Daughter)

# Love, Abolition, Suffrage, and Frederick Douglass

## Clan Ephraim

Ephraim > Jared > Anna Munson Wells > Jane Wells m. Gideon Pitts > Helen Pitts m. Frederick Douglass



On 14 Feb 1818, Frederick Augustus Washington Bailey, who would later become known as Frederick Douglass, was born in what was most likely his grandmother's cabin on the property of his owner. The scenic property was on the shore of Cheseapeake Bay in Maryland. Frederick would later become the most influential African-American and abolitionist in the United States in the days before the Civil War.

His mother was an enslaved woman and his father was reportedly white, though the definitive identity of his father was never ascertained. As often happened, he was separated from his mother in his infancy and raised by his grandmother, a slave, and grandfather, a free black man. His mother worked on a property twelve miles away. It might as well been 100 miles. He saw her only a handful of times before she died when he was seven.



2nd wife Helen Pitts and 1st wife Anna Murray

He was separated from his grandparents and moved to the Way House Plantation and then moved again, in a series of exchanges, to the Baltmore home of Hugh & Sophia Auld in 1828. Douglass reported Sophia had a tender heart. She ensured he had a bed to sleep in with sheets and blankets and that he was properly clothed. According to Douglass, city slaves were almost free men and treated far better than plantation slaves. When he was about 12, Sophia also began to teach him to read and write, but was quickly influenced by her husband, Hugh, to shut it down. Douglass caught on that literacy must be the pathway to freedom and success. He began to teach himself.

Douglass ended up in a couple different new situations in the coming few years, one of which was a brutal time on a plantation where the oveseer believed all slaves needed to be broken. By age 16, he was beaten frequently by the overseer until he fought back and was returned to Hugh Auld. Auld then sent him to William Gardiner to do ship caulking. Also while here, he met Anna Murray, a free woman. She encouraged him to consider escape and he saw freedom on the horizon. In 1838, he escaped disguising himself as a sailor and with papers of a free black sailor and money for traveling from Anna. He jumped a train and then a steamboat to Philadelphia to "Quaker City," an abolition stronghold, and then to a abolition safehouse in New York City. Eleven days later, Anna arrived with all they needed to start life together. They were married on 15 Sep 1838. His career as an abolition speaker and writer began almost as soon as he arrived. Anna and Frederick started their family with the arrival of their first daughter, Rosetta. Three boys and another daughter would eventually join her—all born into freedom.

He was not only a dedicated abolitionist, but also supported equality for women and the suffrage movement. By now, his work took him all over the free places he could go.

Gideon Pitts, Jr. was an faithful 19th-century abolitionist. He was an "Underground Railroad" conductor who hid slaves in his basement along the route to their next stop. He lived in Honeoye, New York, and was a close friend and supporter of Douglass. Pitts provided financial aid to him and even hosted him in his home starting in the 1840s when Douglass spoke in his area, which he did often. Gideon's wife, Jane, was the great granddaughter of Ephraim Munson, namesake of Clan Ephraim. The couple also fought for suffrage.

Jane and Gideon had five children, the oldest of whom was Hellen "Mary" Pitts. Mary attended Mount Holyoke Female Seminary, one of the "Seven Sisters," and graduated in 1859. Mary returned home and continued to work with her father against slavery and for the woman's vote.

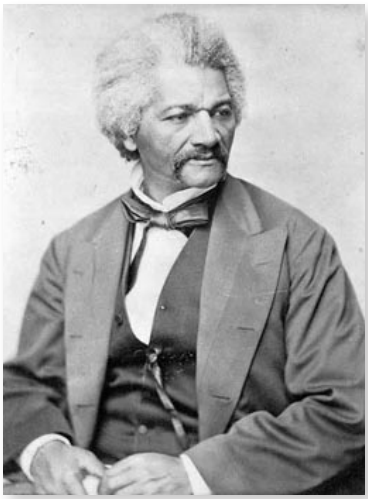
In the meantime, Frederick Douglass spent a few years living in England in the mid 1840s, where he convinced abolitionist Thomas Clarkson to abolish slavery throughout

living in England in the mid 1840s, where he convinced abolitionist Thomas Clarkson to abolish slavery throughout the English Commonwealth. One of his fans led the charge to raise the money to have him freed from owner Thomas Auld in 1846. When returned to the U.S. in 1847 he took the 500 pounds his British friends had given him to start his first abolitionist newspaper, the *North Star* in New York.In 1848, he was the only person of color who attended the first suffrage convention where he started his long friendship with Elizabeth Cady Stanton. He began using his paper to push for women's rights.

The Civil War came and his sons Frederick, Lewis, and Charles all served in various capacities. Finally, the Emancipation Proclamation was issued in 1863 and all slaves were free, if in name only. Frederick, on the other hand, met with Abraham Lincoln in 1863 and 1864 on the treatment of black soldiers and how to mobilize the southern slaves in the war effort for the Union. Come the election of 1864, Douglass endorsed John C. Fremont as he was deeply disappointed in Lincoln for not moving fast or hard enough.

In 1865, the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments were passed, changing everything for former slaves, but again, mostly in name only. They were free, but not really free at all.

During reconstruction, Douglass took some political appointments. He was on the board of the Freedmen's Savings Bank. His next political enemy was the Klu Klux Klan, freshly rerisen from the ashes of the South to end the progress blacks may have made in the few years following the War. He supported U. S. Grant for president and started his last newspaper, *New National Era,* in hopes that his country would live by their agreement for equality.



U.S. Grant affixed his signature to the Civil Rights Act of 1871 (the Klu Klux Klan Act) and the second and third Enforcement Acts.

In 1872, Douglass got a surprise—he was nominated as Vice President with Victoria Woodhull as President on the Equal Rights Party! He never acknowledged this honor. He did serve as a presidential elector in New York and delivered the electoral votes in Washington D.C.

Coincidentally, Mary Pitts was at that time teaching black children at the Hampton Institute of Virginia. Later, she found herself in Anacostia in 1882 when she moved in with her uncle who lived next door to the Douglass family.

Mary worked with partner Caroline Winslow to publish the feminist newspaper, *The Alpha*, the newspaper of the Moral Education Society in D.C. Caroline was the 5th woman to graduate from medical school in the United States.

Douglass' Rochester home also burned down in 1872. Arson was suspected. It was a big loss of belongings and all of his volumes of two of his newspapers. He decided then to move to Washington D.C. He and his wife built their final home above the Anacostia River in D.C. They called it Cedar Hill. They expanded it from 14 to 21 rooms and bought some adjoining property that would extend the property to 15 acres.

Douglass' newspaper had failed and the bank went bankrupt. Douglass was struggling financially. President Rutherford B. Hayes named Douglass the United States Marshall of Washington D.C., and he was confirmed in 1877.
He was also appointed Recorder of Deeds in D.C. in 1881. In 1882, his beloved wife died.

Douglass hired Mary, the daughter of his good friend Gideon Pitts, as a recorder of deeds clerk in 1882. After a period of mourning, he started working with famed Ida B. Wells, journalist and co-founder of the NAACP.

Mary later went to work for Douglass helping him complete his final autobiography and handling his correspondence. Their shared intellectual pursuits led to a relationship that culminated in their 1884 marriage. This, of course, was anathema to nearly everyone. Mary brought her new husband to visit her father and he refused to let Douglass cross the threshhold of his home. Douglass' children were furious, but particularly his oldest daughter, Rosetta Douglass Sprague. Rosetta had warned her father not to get involved with the Freedman's bank, and now this.



Frederick and Helen Mary Douglass seated, sister Eva Pitts standing

In 1888 he became the first black man to get a vote in the Republican National Convention. And by "a" vote, he got one. Still historic. He continued to lecture and urge other African-Americans to turn away from the idea of going back to Africa. In 1889, President Hayes named him Consular General to Haiti, the first black-run country, a position from which he resigned in 1891 when he discovered that the U.S. had every intention to take control of the country.



Rosetta Douglass Sprague

On 20 Feb 1895, after giving a speech to the National Council of Women in D.C., Douglass went home and had a massive heart attack that took his life.

Despite the feelings of others, Frederick and Mary lived a  happy 11 years together. Frederick's body was taken to Rochester after his service at the Metropolitan AME Church for burial. He was buried beside his first wife. Mary would eventually be buried there without fanfare in 1903.

The children fought the will, which had some technical errors. Mary was to be the beneficiary of the house and property.  She proposed to the children that she be allowed to live in the house until death and then the house would become a memorial to Douglass. The children disagreed and had it sold—to Mary. Mary spent the last eight years of her life speaking and organizing his papers to keep her husband's place in history alive. She started and funded the Frederick Douglass Memorial and Historical Association. At her death, the National Association of Colored Women raised funds to buy Cedar Hill. It is now run by the National Park Service.

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