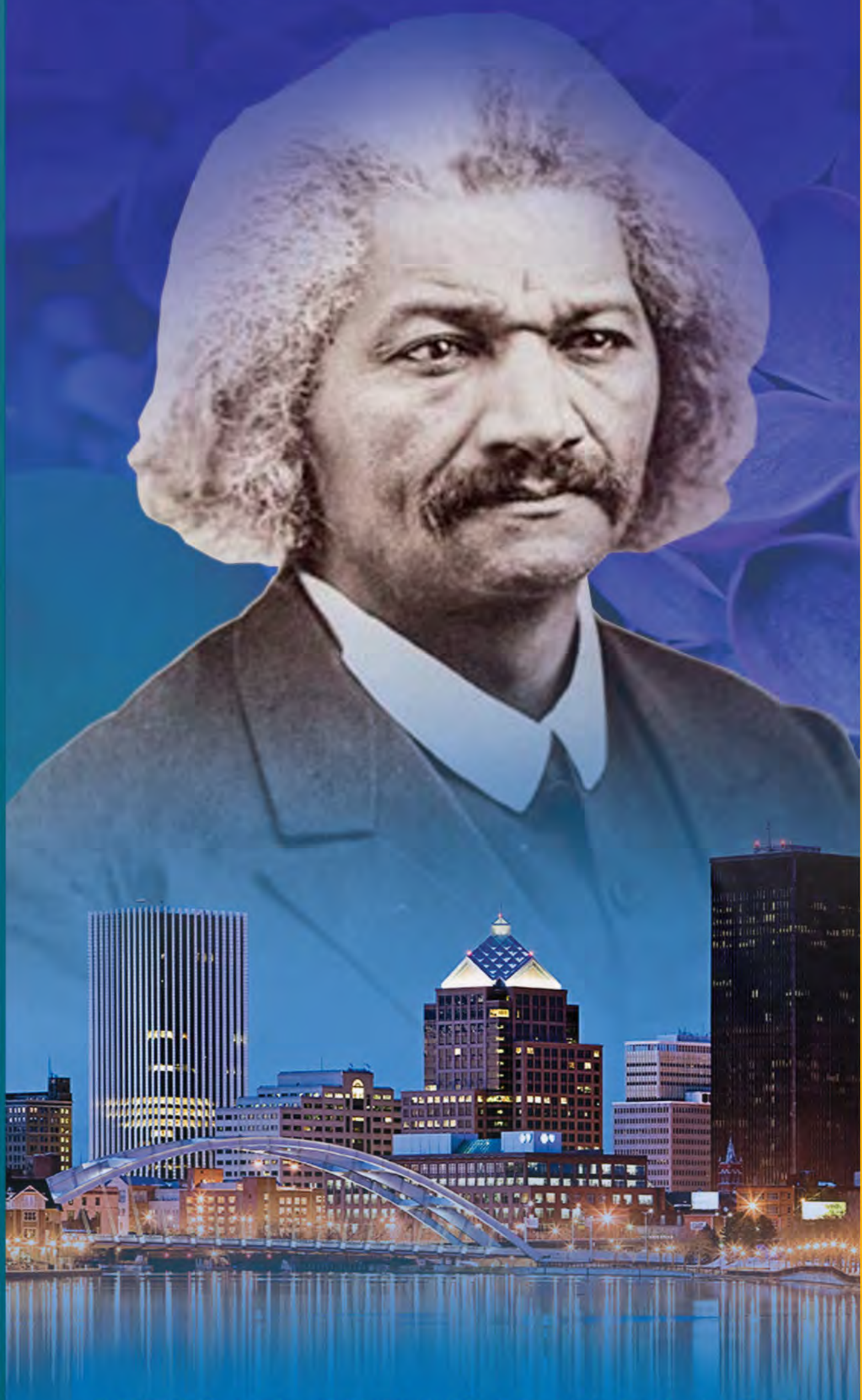
ROCHESTER
NEW YORK



AFRICAN AMERICAN HERITAGE
HISTORICAL & CULTURAL GUIDE

Erich Camping

MUST SEE PLACES

AKWAABA: The Heritage Associates, Inc.
585-482-5192
info@akwaabatours.org
www.akwaabatours.org
Book a custom River Walk or River Stroll Underground Railroad Tour with AKWAABA, that showcases outstanding contributions by African Americans in Rochester toward achieving peace, freedom and equality in this country. A talented cast of Rochester resident enactors bring historical figures to life with compelling accounts of incidents that allowed hundreds of freedom seekers to pass through Rochester on-route to Canada, many of whom returned to settle here.

The Baobab Cultural Center
728 University Ave • 585-563-2145
www.baobabcultural.org/
The Baobab is a community gathering-place and resource center for arts, culture, and dialogue on Africa and the Diaspora. Weekly programs include a Friday night film and dialogue series, African World History class, Yoga, and West African drum classes for all ages with Fana Bangoura.

BREAKING BREAD

French Quarter Café
130 Spring St • 585-413-1151
Cozy, eclectic restaurant set in a converted home featuring Cajun classics such as étouffée.

Fusion4 Restaurant and Bar
719 S. Plymouth Ave
585-328-1302
Fusion4@yahoo.com

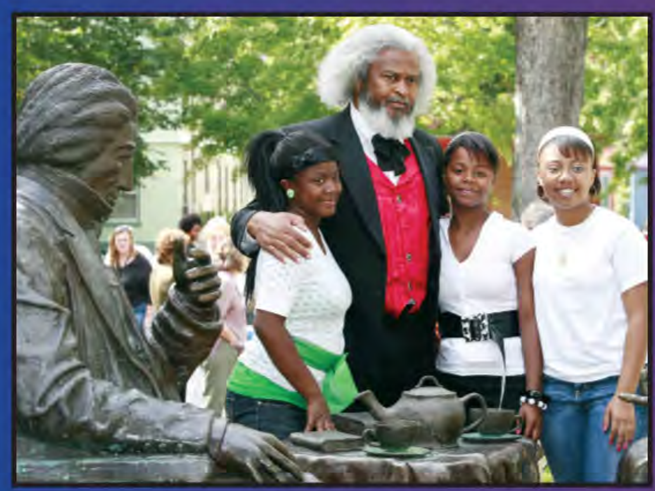
Peppa Pot Restaurant
133 Gregory St • 585-473-3663
peppapot@ymail.com
http://eatatpeppapot.com/
Jamaican Restaurant & Catering

People's Choice Kitchen
575 Brooks Ave
585-464-8790
BEST DAMN JERK CHICKEN
Fast Food, Jamaican and Family Style Restaurant

Dinosaur Bar-B-Que
99 Court St • 585-325-7090
Serving Southern-style meats & draft brews in a retro setting.

Unkl Moe's Bar-B-Que & Catering
493 West Ave • 585-464-8240
Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

** Additional restaurants are listed at www.visitrochester.com*



History & Heritage

African American Contributions from Rochester to the Nation

Rochester stands as an American beacon on several fronts, but none as noteworthy as its African American residents' historical contributions to the culture of the United States. Many stories can be told about New York State's third largest city and its area. These residents have helped build the city and the nation since its incorporation in 1834. A large part of that legacy is tied to abolitionist, author and ambassador **Frederick Douglass** who lived here for 25 years.

Take an Underground Railroad tour downtown, or just go to the Memorial African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, and pieces of Douglass' life and work are celebrated. Information can be obtained from **visitrochester.com** and its free ***Rochester, New York African American Heritage Historical & Cultural Guide.***

A number of historical markers designate significant events in Douglass' life during his stay in Rochester, including his Highland Farm off South Avenue. Those who want to see the great advocate for freedom and women's rights today can visit his eight-foot likeness on a monument near the Highland Park amphitheater along South Ave., and also go down the block on Reservoir Ave. to the 196-acre Mount Hope Cemetery, along Mt. Hope Ave., where Douglass and Susan B. Anthony, two of the city's most historic former residents are among the cemetery's 350,000 souls.

Douglass' story is not alone when it comes to African Americans who contributed to the growth of the city and the country. **Harriet Tubman**, a former slave dubbed "Moses" for the numbers of slaves she led to freedom in the North and Canada, often visited the city. Or, take the hour drive east to Auburn, N.Y. to visit the **Harriet Tubman House and Museum** at 180 South St. For more information, check www.harriethouse.org, or call 315-252-2081. Rochester history shows that African Americans of all backgrounds, many not as well-known as Douglass, helped build the road to freedom.

The **Rev. Thomas James**, an escaped slave, was the founding pastor of the **Memorial African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church.** The original church building's basement was home to **Douglass' *North Star* newspaper**. The congregation holds an unparalleled place in Rochester's African-American history and those of the nation. The original building provided shelter for hundreds of escaped slaves led to freedom by Harriet Tubman, and was a site for Susan B. Anthony's last public address. The 190-year-old congregation now worships at 549 Clarissa St.. where some memorial windows and other memorabilia are displayed. For more information, call 585-546-5997, or check www.memorialamez.org.

In 1894, when black Civil War soldiers were not included in the city's Soldiers and Sailors Monument in Washington Park, community members affiliated with the **Prince Hall Masons** started a campaign to build national tributes to Douglass and to the U.S. Colored Troops who fought for the Union. The plan was to have a national monument in Rochester. Ultimately, **The Douglass Monument**, was chosen as the project to complete, and became the first statuary in the United States to honor an African American, installed June 9, 1899. Another staunch supporter of the effort was **Austin Steward**, a runaway slave who became one of the city's most prominent businessmen, whose bust is in the hotel atrium across from the Riverside Convention Center.

Other noteworthy and historic residents include **Harriet Jacobs**, author of the anti-slavery classic *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. Published on the eve of the Civil War, in 1861, the most prominent slave narrative written by any former slave other than Douglass sparked a firestorm of reaction similar to that of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The author is featured in **"Flight to Freedom: Rochester's Underground Railroad,"** housed at the **Rochester Museum and Science Center,** one of three permanent exhibitions developed as Regional Underground Railroad Interpretive Centers. Visitors can trace the routes and adventures of Jacobs, Douglass, Steward, the Rev. Thomas James, and others who struggled against the scourge of slavery. Discover how they freed themselves and made new lives. Meet courageous people who helped them on their journey and fought to end slavery.

The city annually holds a ceremony to honor the Civil War **United States Colored Troops.** Information can be obtained from **Akwaaba: The Heritage Associates, Inc.**, 585-482-5192, www.akwaabatours.org. Visitors can also find their graves included in the Grand Army of the Republic section at the Mount Hope Cemetery. Contact **The Friends of Mount Hope Cemetery**, 1133 Mt. Hope Ave., or call (585) 621-3529, or check the website, *www.fomh.org*, for information on walking tours.

Underground Railroad history continues to involve the national, statewide and city efforts to complete the American story. The passage to freedom that flourished from the late 18th century until the end of the Civil War, harbored a string of secret hideaways

through 29 states and Washington, D.C. Thousands of freedom seekers used the trail to northern states and to Canada. For hundreds of those the Rochester area was a hub and a gateway. Among the most prominent former **Underground Railroad stations** are:

- The Henry Quinby farm by Mendon Ponds Pk.
- The David H. Richardson farm on East Henrietta Rd. near Castle Rd.
- The Warrant farm in Brighton, now 1956 West Henrietta Rd.
- The old Frederick Douglass farm home near Highland Pk.
- The Harvey Humphrey, Esp. house at 669 Genesee St.

Visitors can still get a feel for what the freedom seekers might have seen at **Kelsey's Landing,** often the gateway to freedom in Canada. Constructed in 1844 in the Genesee River Gorge just north of the Lower Falls near downtown, the landing served as Rochester's dominant port until rail lines connected the city's downtown to the port on Lake Ontario at Charlotte. The Landmark Society of Western New York's book, ***The City of Frederick Douglass: Rochester's African-American People and Places***, offers another way to explore this rich heritage.

Beyond the Underground Railroad, visitors will find the city's African American vibrant legacy in arts and culture at annual festivals, and a tremendous growth in theater productions. C. Kirkland Rivers, owner of **Mood Makers Books** in Village Gate Mall has sponsored the Sankofa Theatre Festival for more than 10 years, www.moodmakersbooks.com.

Also, Rochesterians continue to hold influence throughout the nation and world. Garth Fagan, head of the renowned **Garth Fagan Dance** company, and the Tony award-winner who choreographed Broadway's *Lion King*, is headquartered in the city. Call *585-454-3260 or www.garthfagandance.org* for more information.

Festivals & Events

JANUARY

MLK Jr. National Holiday Celebration
Sponsored by the Greater Rochester Martin Luther King, Jr. Commission
Eastman Theatre, 20 Gibbs Street
585-851-8441
www.grmlk.org

FEBRUARY

Black History Month Celebrations
City of Rochester's Black Heritage Committee
585-428-9857
www.cityofrochester.gov/bhm

The Bronze Collective Theatre Fest
Promotes black theatre companies and supports artists in Drama, Dance, Film, Spoken Word, Storytelling, & Comedy
585-271-7010
www.bronzecollective.webs.com

JUNE

Frederick Douglass Freedom Festival
Celebrates the 1899 unveiling of the Frederick Douglass Monument, the first statue in America dedicated to a black hero.
Sponsor: Friends of Frederick Douglass
585-482-5192 • 224-701-6914

Tribute to the U.S. Colored Troops
Freedom Trail Commission
585-482-5192

Rochester MusicFest
(585) 428-6690, 585-428-5990
www.cityofrochester.gov/MusicFest/

Rochester Juneteenth Celebration
MLK Memorial Park – Free family event
353 Court St
GR MLK Jr. Commission, RCSD & City of Rochester

From My Mind to Your Soul
"Bringing Life to the Stage" through a week of plays, short stories and poetry by playwright C. Kirkland Rivers
Presented by MMB Theatre I Project
585-271-7010
www.moodmakersbooks.com

JULY

MAAFA Day of Remembrance
Honors slave trade's victims and survivors during the Middle Passage Crossing
Annually on July 3rd by the Rochester Maafa Celebration Committee
Durand Eastman Park shoreline, Lake Ontario
585-278-6530 • 585-748-7727
www.facebook.com/maafa.rochester

AUGUST

Afrikan American Festival
Entertainment, Food, Drumming
585-935-1068 • www.aboveny.org

Carifest Festival & Parade
Rochester West Indian Festival Organization, Inc.
585-234-0909 / www.rwifo.com

Clarissa Street Reunion
Neighborhood Reunion and Festival with Jazz, Blues, Gospel and R&B
585-234-4177
clarissastreetreunionfestival.weebly.com

Gateways Music Festival in Association with Eastman School of Music
The only event of its kind, "Celebrating Classical Musicians of African Descent"
585-234-2582
www.gatewaysmusicfestival.org

Sankofa Theatre Festival
Sponsored by MMB Theatre I Project
585-271-7010
www.moodmakersbooks.com

OCTOBER

Blackstorytelling League Festival
585-482-5192
www.blackstorytelling.org

DECEMBER

Kwanzaa Celebrations
Rochester Kwanzaa Coalition
585-436-6453

Dates, times and locations may change so phone or check website for more current information.

Lovely A. Warren, Mayor, City of Rochester, New York

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to our city. Rochester has some of the finest cultural, educational and recreational assets in the country.

We were ranked the "6th Best Place to Live in America" by *Places Rated Almanac*, and New York City business magazine, *Expansion Management*, rated Rochester No. 1 among metropolitan regions of more than one million people in quality of life. Rochester's contributions to industry, innovation and entrepreneurship are legendary.

Just as great are the city's contributions to freedom, equality and fairness. Trailblazers Frederick Douglass and Susan B. Anthony made long-lasting legacies in our community. Rochester's skyline memorializes their work with the Frederick Douglass - Susan B. Anthony Memorial Bridge, representing Rochester's identity as "One City. One Rochester."

I welcome you to Rochester and invite you to experience its rich cultural heritage and all our city has to offer.

Cheryl Dinolfo, County of Monroe Executive

As County Executive, it is my pleasure to welcome you to Monroe County. I encourage you to experience our vibrant culture and learn about our vast history here in our community.

Monroe County is home to celebrated entrepreneurs like George Eastman and legendary civil rights trailblazers like Susan B. Anthony and Frederick Douglass. We are also incredibly proud of the vision of the Rochester-Monroe County Freedom Trail Commission and work to continue the progress of informing and inspiring right here in Monroe County.

Our community is a well-known hub for music, theater and the arts. We are also known for our beautiful outdoor attractions from spacious parks and golf courses to our beaches and world-class Seneca Park Zoo. Monroe County truly offers something for everyone!

On behalf of Monroe County, I welcome you and encourage you to enjoy our wonderful community. We stand proud and welcome visitors to share in the wealth of our heritage.

The Rochester Visitors Association is the information center for tourists and event planners. The Association offers free literature, tour assistance, personalized itineraries, and detailed information about the greater Rochester area attractions, events, facilities, and services. **Office:** Visit Rochester, 45 East Avenue, Suite 400, Rochester, NY 14604-2294. **Telephone:** 585-279-8300; Fax: 585 232-4822; TTY: 585 546-8484. Or, please check Online at: www.visitrochester.com.

Tim James
585-279-8342

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www.monroecounty.gov

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www.monroecc.edu

JOSEPH A. FLOREANO ROCHESTER RIVERSIDE CONVENTION CENTER
www.rrcc.com

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PRODUCTION CREDITS

ABOUT TIME PRODUCTIONS — Publisher
VINCENT F.A. GOLPHIN — Writer
FELIX HOLMES — Art Director