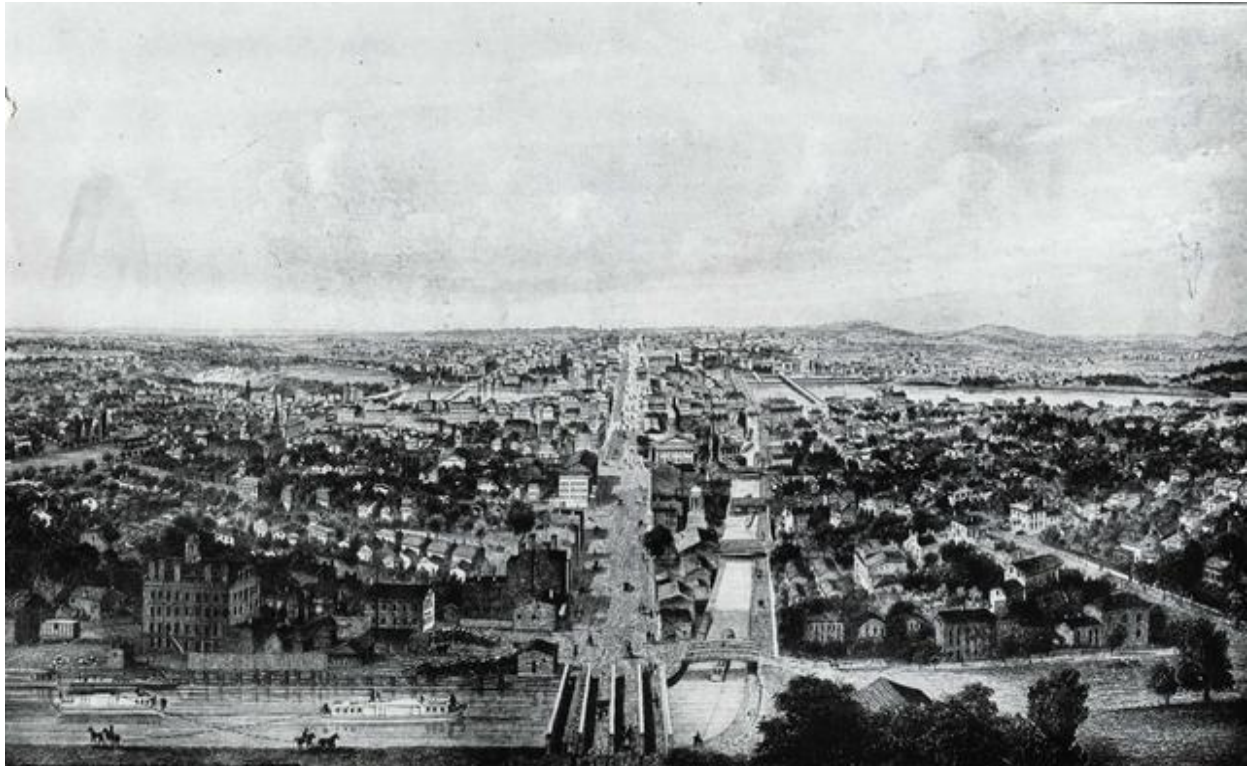




Charles H. Wright Museum
of African American History

RESEARCH

Rochester, New York



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Rochester's proximity to Lake Ontario made it an ideal destination for fugitives seeking freedom in Canada and thus home to many abolitionists and anti-slavery societies and newspapers. Isaac and Amy Post and the Porter family sheltered runaways in their homes and helped them into Canada. These families were also founding members in Rochester's anti-slavery societies including the Western New York Anti-Slavery Society and the Rochester Ladies' Anti-Slavery Society. Rochester was also home to famed abolitionist Frederick Douglass and his newspaper the North Star.

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Some of the most active abolitionists were Isaac and Amy Post and the Porter family. The Posts were Hicksite Quakers that hosted abolitionist meetings in their home and used it as a "station" on the Underground Railroad. The radical couple settled in Rochester in 1836 and immediately began sheltering fugitives. Together they helped found the Western New York Anti-Slavery Society in 1842. Their activities caught the attention of prominent abolitionists William Lloyd Garrison, Sojourner Truth, Susan B. Anthony and Frederick Douglass, who frequently visited their home. Per their encouragement, Douglass would later move to Rochester to publish the *North Star* in 1847 (Foner 82).

The Porters were one of the wealthiest families in Rochester. Samuel Porter sheltered, fed and clothed runaways seeking freedom in Canada. He was also known to provide fugitives with money for their journey. When freedom seekers came to Frederick Douglass, he would often send them to the Porters.

Other Rochester abolitionists include Gideon Pitts, Isaac Moore, Lindley Moore, Sarah Fish, Edward Williams, Ashley Sampson, Thomas Warrant, William Clough Bloss, George Avery, William Falls and former slave Thomas James.

One of Rochester's first anti-slavery societies was the Rochester Anti-Slavery Society, founded in 1838 by Quaker abolitionist Lindley Murray Moore and Asa Anthony (Susan B. Anthony's brother). Samuel D. Porter served as corresponding secretary (Holley).

On August 20, 1851 six women organized the Rochester Ladies' Anti-Slavery Sewing Society (the "Sewing" was dropped from the name by 1855). Susan Farley Porter, Maria G. Porter and Julia Griffiths were elected president, treasurer and secretary respectively. Unlike other anti-slavery societies, the Ladies' Anti-Slavery Society refused any partisan political alignment as an effort to broaden their appeal across party lines. The Society also recognized Rochester's "utter coldness, in the community on the slavery subject" and wanted the town to embrace abolitionism (Rochester Ladies' Anti-Slavery Society papers). Although Rochester was widely known as the home of *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, at the time, Douglass' was "the only anti-slavery instrumentality in the community." The society's membership grew each year and with it influence. In the Annual Report for 1855, the society listed 136 fugitives that received help from the organization and several interactions with Harriet Tubman (Rochester Ladies' Anti-Slavery Society papers).

In addition to several anti-slavery societies, Rochester boasted four abolitionist newspapers. William C. Moss and Reverend Thomas James published the *Rights of Man* in 1834, Myron Holley published the *Rochester Freeman* in 1839, Frederick Douglass published the *North Star* (later named *Frederick Douglass' Paper*) in 1847 and publisher Butts & Merrell published the *Northern Freeman* in 1848.

Works Cited & Further Reading

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