Frederick Douglass

SPEECHES & WRITINGS

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Chronology

1818

Born in February at Holme Hill Farm, near Tuckahoe Creek, in Talbot County on Maryland’s Eastern Shore, the son of Harriet Bailey, an enslaved woman, and a white father, and named Frederick Augustus Washington Bailey. (Never learns identity of his father, who was rumored to be Aaron Anthony, born 1767, the white man who claimed ownership of Harriet Bailey and her children. Descended on his mother’s side from a long-established family among Talbot County’s enslaved community. Grandmother Betsey, born 1774, married Isaac Bailey, a free Black who worked as a sawyer. Mother Harriet Bailey was born in 1792; it is uncertain whether Isaac Bailey was her father. In 1797 Aaron Anthony married Ann Catherine Skinner and moved Betsey and Harriet Bailey and several other enslaved workers to Holme Hill Farm.) Siblings are brother Perry, born 1813, and sisters Sarah, born 1814, and Eliza, born 1816.

1819–23

Raised on Holme Hill Farm by grandmother Betsey Bailey, who lives in cabin separate from slave quarters, making and selling seine nets and working as midwife. Rarely sees mother, who works as field hand on farm for tenants of Anthony. (Anthony lives on nearby Wye River plantation of Edward Lloyd and serves as general overseer for the Lloyd estates in Talbot County, which include thirteen farms and more than five hundred enslaved workers.) Sister Kitty born in 1820 and sister Arianna born in 1822.

1824

Taken in late summer to live on the Lloyd plantation on the Wye River, twelve miles from Holme Hill Farm, where he joins older siblings, Perry, Sarah, and Eliza. Feels betrayed when grandmother Bailey, who had brought him to the plantation, returns home without him. Placed in care of “Aunt Katy” (a cousin of his mother), who runs the Anthony kitchen and oversees Anthony’s enslaved people; she mistreats him, often withholding food. Is befriended by Lucretia Anthony Auld, twenty-year-old daughter of Aaron Anthony, who gives him food and cares for him when he is hurt in a fight with another enslaved child.
Chosen to be the companion of twelve-year-old Daniel Lloyd, youngest son of Edward Lloyd. Hunts, plays, and explores the plantation with Daniel. Witnesses beatings and whippings of other enslaved individuals.

1825 Visited by mother early in year; she gives him a heart-shaped ginger cake, calls him “Valentine,” and tells Aunt Katy to treat him better. (Never again sees mother, who dies in 1826; visit is one of four or five meetings with her that he will later remember.) Suffers from cold and hunger. Learns of successful escape from slavery by his aunt Jenny and her husband, Noah, who run away from Holme Hill Farm. Another aunt, Maryann, and three of his cousins are sold to Alabama slave traders by Aaron Anthony.

1826 Sent to Baltimore in March to live with ship carpenter Hugh Auld, brother of Thomas Auld (Lucretia Anthony Auld’s husband), and his wife, Sophia, after Aaron Anthony retires as chief Lloyd overseer and his Wye River enslaved people are dispersed. Lives in house in Fells Point district of Baltimore (site is currently 1815 Aliceanna Street) and serves as companion to Hugh and Sophia Auld’s son, Tommy. Sleeps in a bed for the first time in his life, eats meals with the family (using a fork for the first time), and becomes especially well liked by Sophia Auld. Aaron Anthony dies on November 14 without a will; under the law his property, including twenty-nine enslaved persons, is to be equally divided among his heirs.

1827 Learns the alphabet and words of up to four letters when Sophia Auld begins to teach him to read. Lessons are stopped by Hugh Auld, who believes that learning makes enslaved people discontented and rebellious. Sent to Holme Hill Farm on Tuckahoe Creek in October for division of the Anthony estate. Frederick is awarded to Thomas Auld, widower of Lucretia Anthony Auld (who died on July 6, 1827), who sends him back to Hugh and Sophia Auld. Returns to Baltimore in November.

1828 Moves with Auld family to rented house on Philpot Street in Fells Point after Hugh Auld establishes shipbuilding partnership, Auld & Harrison. Hears enslaved people being led in chains past his house at night as they are taken to ships from nearby pens of slave trader Austin Woolfolk.
1829–30 Begins working in Auld & Harrison shipyard as errand boy and general assistant. Surreptitiously copies out letters written on lumber by carpenters and has white playmates in the neighborhood show him how to form other letters properly. At night practices writing, using a Webster’s speller, old copybooks belonging to Tommy Auld, a Methodist hymnal, and the Bible.


1833 When his disabled cousin Henny Bailey proves unsatisfactory as a household servant, Hugh and Sophia Auld send her back to Thomas Auld, who then demands that Frederick be returned as well. Sent in March to St. Michaels in Talbot County, where Thomas Auld now works as a merchant and serves as postmaster. Joins cousin Henny, aunt Priscilla, and sister Eliza in Auld household, and learns that sister Sarah had been sold to a Mississippi planter in 1832 (during his youth at least fifteen members of his family are sold into the southern cotton states). Suffers from hunger. Helps organize and teaches reading in a Sunday school for Blacks; its second meeting is broken up by Thomas Auld and other local whites. Auld decides to rent him out for a year as a field hand to farmer Edward Covey, who is known for his brutal treatment of enslaved people.

1834 Begins work January 1 on Covey’s 150-acre rented farm seven miles northwest of St. Michaels. Receives repeated severe whippings from Covey, and by midsummer is “broken in body, soul, and spirit.” Runs away to St. Michaels in August after Covey beats him for collapsing from heat exhaustion while threshing wheat. Asks Thomas Auld to hire him out to another master, but Auld orders him to return to Covey. When Covey attacks Frederick three days later, he resists; they struggle until Covey gives up attempt
to punish him, and he is never whipped by Covey again. Term of service on Covey farm ends on December 25.

1835  Hired out on January 1 as field hand to Talbot County farmer William Freeland, whom he later describes as “the best master I ever had, until I became my own master.” Organizes clandestine Sunday school and is soon teaching reading and practicing oratory among twenty to forty other enslaved people.

1836  Resolves on January 1 to gain his freedom within the year. Plans with five other enslaved workers to escape on a night in April and forges six passes. Escape plan is discovered, possibly through betrayal, and he is jailed with four fellow plotters in Easton, the county seat. Fears that they will be “sold south,” but instead they are all released to their owners within a week. Sent back to Baltimore in mid-April by Thomas Auld, who tells him that he will be freed at age twenty-one if he learns a trade and behaves properly. (Auld could have sold him South for $500–$700 or more.) Returns to household of Hugh and Sophia Auld, who are now living on Fells Street in Fells Point. Trains as caulker at William Gardner’s shipyard, where he is badly beaten late in the year by four white apprentices. Begins working at Walter Price’s shipyard, where Hugh Auld is a foreman (Auld’s own shipyard having failed).

1837  Earns $6–$9 a week in shipyard but is forced to turn over almost all of his wages to Hugh Auld. Joins the “East Baltimore Mental Improvement Society,” a debating club whose other members are free young Black men. Resumes teaching reading and writing. Through his membership in the Improvement Society meets Anna Murray, a free Black woman who works as a housekeeper in Baltimore. (Murray was born c. 1813 to enslaved parents near Denton in Caroline County in the Tuckahoe River region of the Eastern Shore, not far from where Frederick was born.)

1838  Becomes engaged to Anna Murray. Enters into agreement with Hugh Auld to hire out his own labor, paying Auld three dollars a week from his wages while being responsible for his own room, board, and tools. Moves into his own lodgings. Encouraged by Anna Murray, begins to study the violin (instrument becomes lifelong interest). Saves money and begins planning escape. In August, Hugh Auld suspends hiring-out arrangement and orders him to move
back into Auld house after he attends a camp meeting without Auld’s permission. Fearing that he may soon be sold, resolves to escape by September. Anna Murray sells one of her two featherbeds to help pay for escape. Borrows seaman’s protection papers (used by American merchantmen abroad) from a retired free Black sailor. On September 3 takes train from Baltimore to Wilmington, Delaware, where he boards steamer for Philadelphia, reaching free territory by evening. Travels by train to New York and arrives in city early on September 4, where he begins using Johnson as his last name instead of Bailey. Warned that boardinghouses for Blacks are watched by slave-catchers, sleeps on wharves. Introduced by a friendly sailor to David Ruggles, secretary of the New York Vigilance Committee, which aids fugitives from slavery. Hides in Ruggles’s house and is joined by Anna Murray after he writes to her through an intermediary in Baltimore; they are married on September 15 by Presbyterian minister James W. C. Pennington, another fugitive from slavery in Maryland. Advised by Ruggles to seek work as a caulk in the whaling port of New Bedford, Massachusetts. Arrives with Anna in New Bedford on September 18, where they stay with Mary and Nathan Johnson, a Black couple who run a catering business. Feels secure in New Bedford, a sanctuary for fugitives from slavery. Nathan Johnson tells him that many Blacks in New Bedford are named Johnson and suggests that he take the name Douglas, after the Scottish hero in Sir Walter Scott’s epic poem The Lady of the Lake; he does so, using the spelling “Douglass.” Impressed by the prosperity of free northern society. Takes jobs loading ships, shoveling coal, and sawing wood; attempts to get work as a caulk, but when whites threaten to walk off the job if he is hired, he is forced to return to unskilled labor. Moves with Anna in the winter into a small rented house at 157 Elm Street. They join the New Bedford Zion Methodist Church, after discovering that the other Methodist churches in New Bedford segregate their Black members.

1839 Becomes subscriber to The Liberator, abolitionist weekly edited by William Lloyd Garrison. Works as an occasional laborer during the winter before becoming warehouseman in a whale-oil refinery (later works as shipyard laborer and in a brass foundry). At meeting in New Bedford Douglass denounces proposals to colonize emancipated Blacks
in Africa and demands that they be treated as American citizens; his remarks are reported in *The Liberator* on March 29. Hears William Lloyd Garrison speak in New Bedford in April (will also attend New Bedford speeches by Wendell Phillips, Henry Highland Garnet, and other abolitionists). Licensed to preach by the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church and frequently speaks from the pulpit at the New Bedford Zion Methodist Church. Daughter Rosetta born June 24. Sometime during this year makes short walk from his house to New Bedford City Hall to register to vote.

1840 Son Lewis Henry born October 9.

1841 Family moves into larger house on Ray Street in New Bedford. Speaks at meeting of the Bristol County Anti-Slavery Society, held in New Bedford on August 9, and is invited by abolitionist William C. Coffin to attend Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society convention held on Nantucket, August 10–12. At Coffin's urging, describes his experiences in slavery to the convention; his remarks are well received and inspire a passionate speech by Garrison. Accepts offer from John A. Collins, general agent of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, to become a paid general agent for the Society for a three-month trial period. (Massachusetts Society is part of the American Anti-Slavery Society, founded in 1833 and dedicated to using moral suasion to bring about the immediate abolition of slavery. The American Anti-Slavery Society opposes colonization of emancipated Blacks, favors the civil equality of Blacks, and is committed to nonviolence. In 1840 Garrison and his followers gained undisputed control of the organization.) Travels with Collins, securing subscriptions to the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* and *The Liberator* and speaking at county Anti-Slavery Society meetings with Garrison, Phillips, Parker Pillsbury, Stephen S. Foster, and Abby Kelley. Refuses to be segregated while riding on New England railroads and attacks northern racial discrimination in his speeches (will encounter and resist segregation in public transportation and accommodations throughout his life). Moves family to Lynn, Massachusetts, where he buys a house; Anna takes in piecework sewing and remains home while Douglass travels. During fall and winter, tours eastern Massachusetts, southern New Hampshire, and Rhode
Island, describing his life under slavery while withholding details that would reveal his identity.

1842 Meets Black orator and abolitionist Charles Lenox Remond. Hired as regular agent by the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society (will later also work for the national society). Makes dozens of appearances a year in New England and New York State, sometimes before hostile audiences, and becomes known for his skill at extemporaneous speaking, mimicry, and willingness to engage hecklers. His most popular speech is “The Slaveholder’s Sermon,” an ironic, sharply satirical chastisement of pro-slavery preachers. Son Frederick born March 3. Addresses annual meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society, held in New York City in May (becomes regular speaker at its meetings). Stays with Isaac and Amy Post, white Quaker abolitionists, during appearance in Rochester, New York, beginning a lifelong friendship.

1843 Leaves Massachusetts in July with Remond, Collins, and others on tour designed to build support for abolition in western New York, Ohio, Indiana, and Pennsylvania. At the National Convention of Colored Citizens, held in Buffalo, Douglass, Remond, and William Wells Brown successfully oppose resolution by Henry Highland Garnet urging enslaved people to rebel, but fail to defeat resolution supporting the anti-slavery Liberty Party, which advocates political action rather than moral suasion. Beaten by mob during outdoor meeting in Pendleton, Indiana, on September 16, and has his right hand broken.

1844 Joins majority at annual meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society in endorsing Garrison’s condemnation of the federal union under the Constitution and his calls for peaceful disunion and for abolitionists to refrain from voting (Garrison believes that voting under a pro-slavery Constitution perpetuates slavery and hopes that southerners will embrace abolition rather than see the Union dissolved). Addresses antislavery fair commemorating West Indian emancipation, held in Concord, Massachusetts, on August 1 and attended by Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau. Son Charles Remond born October 21.

1845 Works on autobiography in his small house in Lynn. Reveals full details about his background for the first time at American Anti-Slavery Society meeting in New York.
Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written By Himself is published by the Anti-Slavery Office in Boston in mid-May and sells 4,500 copies by September. Worries that the disclosure of his identity has endangered his freedom. Meets Susan B. Anthony, a schoolteacher in Rochester, while on speaking tour of New York. Embarks on tour of Ireland, Scotland, and England, sailing from Boston on August 16 on the Cunard steamer Cambria, while Anna remains in Lynn with the children (she will support the family with sewing and with money from sales of the Narrative). Travels in steerage after being refused cabin passage. Lands in Liverpool and travels to Ireland, where he addresses antislavery and temperance societies. Takes temperance pledge from Father Theobald Mathew and meets Irish leader Daniel O’Connell. Arranges for Irish publication of the Narrative in Dublin, which helps finance travels with proceeds from its sales.

1846

Begins lecture tour of Scotland in January. Attacks Free Church of Scotland for accepting contributions from Presbyterian slaveholders in the American South. Visits Ayr, the birthplace of Robert Burns, one of his favorite poets, and meets Burns’s sister. (Douglass’s reading will also include Shakespeare, Coleridge, Tennyson, Robert Browning, Longfellow, Whittier, Bryant, Edmund Burke, Thackeray, Dickens, Hugo, and the elder Alexandre Dumas.) Learns in March that Thomas Auld has sold rights to him to Hugh Auld and that Hugh Auld has reportedly vowed to seize him if he returns to the United States. Begins lecturing in England in May. Considers moving family to England, where he feels relatively free from color prejudice. Joined in London in early August by Garrison; together they help organize the Anti-Slavery League, a British abolitionist society whose members include many Chartists, supporters of the expansion of the right to vote to the English working classes. Tours England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland with Garrison; many of their speeches criticize recently formed alliance of British and American evangelical denominations for failing to take an unequivocal antislavery position. Hugh Auld agrees to free Douglass in return for £150 raised by English friends Anna and Ellen Richardson (reformer John Bright contributes £50). Douglass continues lecturing after Garrison leaves.
for the United States in November. Becomes legally free on December 12 when manumission papers are filed in Baltimore; Hugh Auld receives $766. Transaction is criticized by some abolitionists, who argue that it recognizes the right of slaveowners to buy and sell persons. Douglass defends the purchase in a letter to *The Liberator* and is supported by Garrison. Spends Christmas in Newcastle upon Tyne with Anna and Ellen Richardson. Is introduced to Julia Griffiths, a British woman active in the antislavery cause (corresponds with Griffiths after his return to America and she becomes his close friend and confidante).

1847 Delivers “Farewell Address to the British People” in London (later published as pamphlet). Leaves Liverpool on April 4 on board the *Cambria*, dining alone at the insistence of Cunard line officials (Douglass’s letter of protest causes outcry in the English press and results in public apology from Samuel Cunard). Arrives in Boston on April 20 and is reunited with family in Lynn. Considers founding a newspaper with funds raised by friends in Britain and Ireland, but is advised by Garrison, Phillips, and others that it would be difficult for another antislavery newspaper to survive financially, and that he can serve the abolitionist cause better as a lecturer than as an editor. But Douglass strongly desires independence. Resumes lecturing in Massachusetts, and begins western tour in August with Garrison, Stephen S. Foster, and others, speaking in New York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio. Using £445 ($2,174) raised by British and Irish friends, buys printing press and establishes four-page weekly newspaper, *The North Star*, in Rochester, New York, with journalist Martin R. Delany as co-editor. (Chooses to publish in Rochester because he has friends there, and to reduce competition with *The Liberator*, published in Boston, and the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, published in New York City.) Begins friendship with Gerrit Smith, a wealthy Peterboro, New York, landowner who had helped found the Liberty Party in 1840. First number of *The North Star* appears December 3 under the motto “Right is of no Sex—Truth is of no Color—God is the Father of us all, and we are all Brethren.”

1848 Moves family to Rochester in winter and buys nine-room house at 4 Alexander Street in April. Begins sheltering fugitives from slavery escaping to Canada (Douglass and Anna will help scores of fugitives passing through
Rochester in the years before the Civil War). Continues lecturing in New England, New York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio, soliciting subscriptions at his appearances and using meager fees to support the newspaper. Regular correspondents in *The North Star* include Black writers and reformers Dr. James McCune Smith, William J. Wilson, Samuel Ringgold Ward, and William Wells Brown. Becomes sole editor of the paper when Martin Delany, whose primary role has been traveling to Black communities to promote subscriptions, abandons the collaboration. Attends women’s rights convention, held at Seneca Falls, New York, July 19–20, where he is the only man to speak in favor of Elizabeth Cady Stanton’s resolution, which narrowly passed, calling for women’s suffrage. On September 3, the tenth anniversary of his escape, writes public letter to Thomas Auld in which he accuses Auld of abandoning his grandmother Betsey Bailey in her old age. Urges voting abolitionists to support Martin Van Buren and Charles Francis Adams, Free Soil candidates for president and vice president, whose platform opposes the extension of slavery but does not call for its immediate abolition. Sends daughter Rosetta to school in Albany after she is asked to leave her private school in Rochester because of her race and begins campaign to end segregation in Rochester public schools (they are desegregated in 1857). Begins friendship with John Brown after meeting him during visit to Springfield, Massachusetts.

1849

Begins gradually to move to an antislavery interpretation of the Constitution in his search for new political strategies to fight slavery. Daughter Annie born March 22. In May Julia Griffiths comes to Rochester and begins working on *The North Star*, assisting Douglass editorially and becoming the paper’s business manager. (Griffiths will raise money by holding bazaars and soliciting contributions from antislavery leaders; by 1851 the number of subscribers has increased from 2,000 to 4,000.) Douglass hires a tutor to teach Anna to read, but the attempt does not succeed, and she remains virtually illiterate. After learning that Auld has emancipated his enslaved workers and taken Betsey Bailey into his household, Douglass writes another public letter to Auld on September 3, praising his actions and urging him to join the antislavery cause.
1850 | Debates Gerrit Smith and other Liberty Party supporters in Syracuse, January 17, arguing that slaveholders will be unable to maintain control of their enslaved workforce if they are denied northern military power by a dissolution of the Union. Attacks Senator Daniel Webster for supporting a new fugitive slave law and other compromise measures introduced by Henry Clay (the “Compromise of 1850”), and praises Senator William H. Seward for saying that slavery is unjust under “a higher law than the Constitution.” Addresses annual meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society in New York City, May 7, despite disruptions caused by an Irish street gang linked to Tammany Hall. Several days later Douglass is attacked by and fights back against several white men while walking along the Battery with Julia Griffiths and her sister, Eliza. Speaks against new fugitive slave law and raises money to help escapees. Addresses first national women’s rights convention, held in Worcester, Massachusetts, in October. Enjoys social life in Rochester, meeting with friends at the home of Susan B. Anthony and inviting local children to his house to hear him sing and play the violin.

1851 | Writes Gerrit Smith in January that he is “sick and tired of arguing on the slaveholders’ side” on the question of whether the Constitution is proslavery. Smith writes to Douglass in April, proposing to merge the struggling Liberty Party Paper with The North Star and offering financial support for the new paper. Douglass agrees to the merger and writes Smith that he now accepts an antislavery interpretation of the Constitution. Makes change in position public in May at annual meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society and in statement published in The Liberator. Douglass argues that because slavery is incompatible with “the noble purposes avowed” in the preamble to the Constitution, the document should be interpreted as an antislavery instrument and “wielded in behalf of emancipation,” and calls on abolitionists to use political as well as moral power in their efforts to overthrow slavery. Change of position surprises Garrison, who has the American Anti-Slavery Society withdraw its endorsement from The North Star. First number of new merged publication appears in June as Frederick Douglass’ Paper, with the motto “All Rights for All!” In September Douglass and Griffiths help three Black men, wanted for killing a
slaveowner pursuing fugitives at Christiana, Pennsylvania, escape from Rochester to Canada. Griffiths also continues to raise money to support Douglass’s paper and family.

1852 Continues to receive financial support for *Frederick Douglass’s Paper* from Gerrit Smith, who will contribute $1,200 during the year. Douglass is criticized by Phillips, Remond, and other allies of Garrison at American AntiSlavery Society annual meeting for changing his position on the Constitution and involving his newspaper in party politics. Delivers address “What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?” in Rochester July 5 (later published as a pamphlet). Moves with family during summer to new home on edge of Rochester along the St. Paul Road (later renamed South Avenue). Addresses Free Democratic Party convention (successor to the Free Soil Party) in Pittsburgh and endorses John P. Hale, its presidential nominee, in *Frederick Douglass’s Paper*. Campaigns for Gerrit Smith, who is running for Congress as an independent, and is elated when Smith wins.

1853 Writes novella “The Heroic Slave,” fictional account of Madison Washington, the leader of the 1841 Creole slave-ship mutiny, for publication in *Autographs for Freedom*, a collection of antislavery writings edited by Julia Griffiths and sold to raise funds for *Frederick Douglass’s Paper*. Douglass visits Harriet Beecher Stowe at her home in Andover, Massachusetts, and enlists her support for his plan to establish an industrial school to train Black artisans. Proposal for industrial school is criticized by Remond and other Black Garrisonians, who argue that the school will promote segregation. (Douglass will actively promote plans for the industrial school until 1855, when lack of funds forces him to abandon the scheme.) Split between Douglass and leaders of the American Anti-Slavery Society widens when Phillips attacks Douglass for having criticized the unorthodox religious views of some abolitionists. In November Garrison alludes in *The Liberator* to Griffiths having caused “much unhappiness” in the Douglass household. Letter written for Anna denies accusation and in December Douglass attacks Garrison in *Frederick Douglass’s Paper* for involving his family in a public controversy and accuses him of believing that Blacks are inferior to whites. Garrison responds in *The Liberator*, charging Douglass with “apostasy,” “defamation,” and “treachery.”
(In subsequent visit to Stowe’s home the famous author tries without success to broker peace and comity between Douglass and Garrison.)

1854 Bitterly estranged from Garrison, Douglass stops attending meetings of the American Anti-Slavery Society. Defends the killing of a deputy U.S. marshal in Boston during confrontation with abolitionists attempting to prevent fugitive Anthony Burns from being returned to slavery in Virginia. Denounces passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act repealing the antislavery restriction in the Missouri Compromise, thus potentially opening all western territories to slavery based on the will of the settlers (popular sovereignty). Delivers address “The Claims of the Negro Ethnologically Considered” during commencement exercises at Western Reserve College in Hudson, Ohio (speech is later published as a pamphlet). Lectures in Canada, Illinois, and Wisconsin. Encourages free Blacks to settle in Kansas to help prevent the territory from becoming a slave state.

1855 During winter lecture tour Douglass repeatedly delivers address “The Anti-Slavery Movement,” criticizing Garrisonian disunion doctrine and praising contributions of the Liberty Party. Works on second autobiography, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, published in August by Miller, Orton and Mulligan in New York; it sells 15,000 copies in two months. Douglass becomes a leader of effort to repeal $250 property qualification for Black voters in New York State (property qualification for whites had been eliminated in 1826). Julia Griffiths returns to England in the fall. Douglass criticizes the recently formed Republican Party for opposing the extension of slavery while tolerating its continued existence in the South, even as he is gratified by the emergence of a political movement that holds the promise of wresting control of the federal government from pro-slavery forces.

1856 Attends Radical Abolition Party convention, held in Syracuse, New York, in May. Supports Gerrit Smith, its presidential nominee, until August 15, when he endorses Republican nominee John C. Frémont, writing that Frémont is the only antislavery candidate with a chance of being elected and expressing hope that the Republican Party will become truly abolitionist. Visited in Rochester
by John Brown, who is raising money for armed resistance to slavery in Kansas. Begins close friendship with Ottilie Assing, a German journalist living in Hoboken, New Jersey (Assing later translates *My Bondage and My Freedom* into German).

1857

1858
In February Douglass and John Brown discuss Brown’s plan to raise armed bands that will help fugitives from slavery escape north through the Virginia and Maryland mountains. (This part of Brown’s scheme intrigues Doug-lass, though he has reservations about Brown’s increasingly militant ideas.) Begins publishing paper under the name *Douglass’ Monthly* in June. Praises Abraham Lincoln’s “House Divided” speech and follows the Lincoln-Douglas Senate campaign in Illinois. Continues active opposition to northern segregation and support for women’s rights. Denounces capital punishment at Rochester public meeting called by Susan B. Anthony, Amy Post, and other reformers seeking commutation of the death sentence of convicted murderer Ira Stout (Stout is hanged).

1859
 Begins delivering prepared lecture “Self-Made Men” during tour of New York, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin, and will repeat it often on future tours. Meets John Brown in quarry near Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, on August 19 and hears details of Brown’s plan to seize federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia, and arm enslaved people in the surrounding area. Douglass refuses to join the plot and tells Brown that it is doomed to fail. Leaves Chambersburg on August 21 after failing to persuade Brown to abandon his scheme. Brown and his followers occupy the Harpers Ferry arsenal, October 16–18, before being captured by federal troops. After a letter from Douglass is found among Brown’s papers by Virginia authorities, a telegram is sent on October 19 to Philadelphia, where Douglass has been lecturing, asking that he be arrested. Warned by an antislavery telegraph operator, Douglass
flees to New York City, then goes to Hoboken, New Jersey, where he is assisted by Ottilie Assing. Returns by indirect route to Rochester, then flees to Canada after friends warn him that he risks being extradited to Virginia. Sails for England on November 12 to fulfill plans for lecture tour made before the Harpers Ferry raid. Visits Julia Griffiths Crofts and her husband, the Reverend H. O. Crofts, in Halifax, Yorkshire. Brown is hanged in Virginia December 2.

1860 Lectures in England and Scotland, praising Brown as a heroic martyr and criticizing the increase in British color prejudice since 1847. Delivers major address about the antislavery interpretation of the Constitution in Edinburgh in March. Daughter Annie dies in Rochester March 13. Douglass returns to Rochester in April but does not make his presence in the country public for several weeks. Writes favorably about Abraham Lincoln and expresses hope for a Republican victory in June *Douglass’ Monthly* after Lincoln wins the Republican presidential nomination. Attends Radical Abolition Party convention in Syracuse, August 29; meeting nominates Gerrit Smith for president and chooses Douglass as one of its presidential electors in New York State. Campaigns with James McCune Smith for repeal of $250 property qualification for Black voters (repeal measure is defeated, and qualification remains in effect until ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment in 1870). Writes in December *Douglass’ Monthly* that the election of Lincoln does not threaten slavery in the South and predicts that southern states will not secede. Calls for armed action against slavery in the South at memorial meeting for Brown held in Boston on December 3. On December 20 South Carolina secedes from the Union, a step that Douglass welcomes as an opening to the military suppression of slavery.

1861 Criticizes Lincoln for being conciliatory toward the seceding states in his inaugural address and predicts the dissolution of the Union. Confederates open fire on Fort Sumter, South Carolina, April 12. In May *Douglass’ Monthly* Douglass rejoices in the outbreak of war, calls for the arming of enslaved and free Blacks, and writes that the North must destroy slavery if it is to defeat the rebellion. Attacks Lincoln for revoking in September General John C. Frémont’s proclamation emancipating those enslaved by rebels in Missouri, and for generally pursuing a conciliatory policy
toward the slaveholding border states. Appeals to his readers in October to support Douglass’ Monthly, whose circulation has declined since the beginning of the war.

1862 Continues to criticize administration policy and advocates waging a holy abolitionist war in articles and lecture appearances. Praises abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia in April. Denounces General George B. McClellan, commander of the Army of the Potomac, as a proslavery military incompetent. Accuses Lincoln of “Negro hatred” after the President advocates colonization of Blacks in public remarks made on August 14. Lincoln issues preliminary Emancipation Proclamation on September 22; Douglass hails the decision and predicts that Lincoln will not retreat from it. Address “The Slave’s Appeal to Great Britain,” urging the British not to recognize the Confederacy, is widely printed in British and Irish newspapers.

1863 Attends meeting held at Tremont Temple in Boston on January 1 to celebrate the final Emancipation Proclamation, speaking twice and leading the audience in singing “Blow Ye, the Trumpet Blow!” Becomes recruiting agent in February for the 54th Massachusetts Infantry, the first regiment of Black soldiers raised by a northern state. Takes a new speech, “The Proclamation and the Negro Army,” on long lecture tour of Midwest to promote the recruitment of Black soldiers. Writes widely printed address “Men of Color, To Arms!” as a broadside, urging Blacks to enlist. Sons Charles and Lewis join the 54th Massachusetts, and by mid-April Douglass has recruited a hundred men from New York State for the regiment. On July 18 the 54th Massachusetts suffers severe losses during unsuccessful attack on Fort Wagner, South Carolina; Lewis fights in the battle and in letters home offers a vivid account of the bravery of the Black soldiers. Douglass criticizes Lincoln for failing to retaliate after the Confederates repeatedly murder Black prisoners of war. Meets with Lincoln in Washington, D.C., on August 10 and discusses with him the unequal pay Black soldiers receive, their difficulty in becoming officers, and the need to protect those who are captured. Douglass is pleased by the meeting, and also sees Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton, who offers him a commission and position as recruiting officer in the lower Mississippi Valley. Stops publishing Douglass’ Monthly in August, intending to go south, but then declines to serve with army
as a civilian when commission is not delivered. Attends thirtieth anniversary meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society in Philadelphia, December 4, along with Garrison, Phillips, and Stephen S. and Abby Kelley Foster. Disputes Garrison’s position that the work of the Society is complete, arguing that it should continue to fight for Black equality after emancipation. Visits freedmen’s refugee camps in Virginia.

1864 Lectures on “The Mission of the War” during winter, declaring the conflict’s “sacred significance” as “national regeneration.” Criticizes the Lincoln administration for its treatment of Black soldiers and for failing to press for Black suffrage in the South, but does not endorse presidential candidacy of Frémont, whom a group of radicals urged to challenge Lincoln for the nomination. At Lincoln’s request, meets with the president in Washington on August 19; they discuss the possibility that the war may end in a negotiated peace, and Lincoln asks Douglass to form organization to help enslaved people escape north (plan is abandoned after series of Union military victories). Endorses Lincoln’s reelection in letter to Garrison, published in The Liberator on September 23. Discouraged by Republican Party from actively campaigning during fall elections. Slavery is abolished in Maryland November 1, and on November 17 Douglass returns to Baltimore. Speaks at Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Fells Point and sees sister Eliza for the first time since 1836.

1865 Advocates for Black suffrage as an essential part of Reconstruction. Attends Lincoln’s second inauguration on March 4 and is admitted to the inaugural reception by the president after being denied entry by the White House police. Lincoln is assassinated on April 14; Douglass delivers eulogy at Rochester memorial service on April 15. Attends annual meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society and helps defeat motion by Garrison calling for its disbanding. Receives Lincoln’s walking stick as a memorial gift from Mary Todd Lincoln in August. Speaks in September at opening of the Douglass Institute, educational facility founded by a group of Baltimore African Americans, praising achievements of American Blacks and of African civilizations.
1866 Attacks Reconstruction policies of President Andrew Johnson during winter lecture tour. Joins delegation of Black leaders in meeting with Johnson on February 7 and drafts letter, signed by the delegation, that appears in Washington *Chronicle* criticizing the President’s statements at the meeting. Attends Southern Loyalists convention, anti-Johnson meeting held in Philadelphia in September, where he advocates Black suffrage despite opposition from northern and border state delegates. Sees Amanda Auld Sears, daughter of Lucretia Anthony Auld, while in Philadelphia. Attends American Equal Rights Association convention and urges it to work for both Black and women’s suffrage. Writes two-part article on Reconstruction for *Atlantic Monthly* (appears December 1866–January 1867).

1867 Criticizes Johnson during winter lecture tour through Missouri, Michigan, Iowa, Minnesota, and Illinois. Reunited with brother Perry in July for the first time in forty years. Builds cottage on grounds of Rochester home for Perry, his wife, Maria, and their four children. Declines informal offer from Johnson administration in August to replace General Oliver Otis Howard as commissioner of the Freedmen’s Bureau.

1868 Continues extensive lecturing. At meeting of American Equal Rights Association in May Douglass advocates giving a higher priority to winning Black manhood suffrage than to women’s suffrage and defends the Republican Party against criticism by women’s rights advocates. Ottie Assing stays with Douglass family in Rochester during summer; Douglass and Assing read Dickens’s *Hard Times* together. During summer and fall Douglass campaigns for Republican presidential nominee Ulysses S. Grant. Engages agent James Redpath to arrange lyceum tours, and begins delivering prepared lecture “William the Silent,” describing life of William of Orange, leader of the sixteenth-century Dutch revolt against Spain. A departure for Douglass, the speech is not well received.

1869 In January Douglass is elected president of the National Convention of Colored Citizens and helps secure passage of resolutions supporting Republican Reconstruction policies. Attends meeting in May of American Equal Rights Association and urges the Association to support ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment, forbidding denial of
suffrage on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude. His position is opposed by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, who insist that women and Black men should be enfranchised simultaneously. (Split over Fifteenth Amendment causes breakup of Equal Rights Association and formation of two rival women's suffrage associations.) Criticizes racial discrimination in trade unions during speech to Black workers in Baltimore. In the fall Douglass' brother Perry and his family leave Rochester and move back to Maryland’s Eastern Shore. Criticizes discrimination against Chinese immigrants in lecture “Our Composite Nationality,” making a forceful case for a multiethnic, multireligious, multiracial nation under the rule of law.

1870 Becomes corresponding editor of The New Era, new weekly newspaper published in Washington “in the interest of the colored people of America.” Attends meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society on April 9 at which the Society votes to dissolve itself in response to the recent ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment. Douglass calls in The New Era for a campaign to secure a constitutional amendment enfranchising women. Addresses crowd of thousands at Baltimore celebration of Fifteenth Amendment. Buys half-interest in The New Era for $8,000 in August, becomes its editor-in-chief, and changes its name to The New National Era (buys remaining half-interest in December for $8,000). Moves to Washington, D.C.

1871 Appointed by Grant to be assistant secretary to commission investigating possible annexation of the Dominican Republic. Tours the Dominican Republic with the commission in February and March. Contains anger when Grant fails to invite him to White House dinner for members of the commission on March 30, and continues to support the administration publicly, praising Grant’s efforts to suppress Ku Klux Klan violence in the South and endorsing Dominican annexation in his lectures and articles for The New National Era. Opposes Liberal Republican movement, which advocates universal political amnesty for former Confederates and an end to federal intervention in the South.

1872 Addresses National Convention of the Colored People in New Orleans on April 13, urging Blacks to support the
Republican Party; convention endorses Grant’s reelection. Calls for integration of Washington public schools. Rochester home is destroyed by fire on June 2; Douglass incurs financial loss of over $4,000 and loses many important papers, including the only complete archive of *The North Star*, Frederick Douglass’ Paper, and Douglass’ Monthly. Awarded honorary LL.D. degree from Howard University at its first commencement in June. Believing the Rochester fire to have been caused by arson, Douglass brings family to Washington, and they move into house on A Street in July. Writes pamphlet *U.S. Grant and the Colored People* and campaigns extensively for Grant, making appearances in Virginia, North Carolina, Maine, New York, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania. Appeals to Black voters to support the Republicans despite endorsement of Horace Greeley, the Liberal Republican candidate, by Massachusetts senator Charles Sumner, who is widely respected for his commitment to civil rights. Grant is reelected and carries New York State, where Douglass serves as a Republican presidential elector. Despite increasing reluctance to travel extensively during winter, Douglass continues lecturing to earn money (now receives $100 as his standard fee).

1873

Reveals details of his escape from slavery for the first time during lecture in Philadelphia on March 10. Invests additional money in *The New National Era*, resigns as editor-in-chief, and turns ownership over to sons Lewis and Frederick, Jr., in April. Financial panic cripples the nation’s economy, causing within a year a widespread depression, loss of jobs, and collapsed wealth.

1874

Sees Charles Sumner on his deathbed and is waiting in Sumner’s study when the Massachusetts senator dies in March. Named president of troubled Freedman’s Savings and Trust Company on March 14 in attempt to restore confidence of its depositors. After discovering that the institution is insolvent, Douglass tries to reorganize it with the help of John Sherman, chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, but on June 28 the trustees vote to close the bank (bank’s failure causes thousands of freed people to lose their savings and Douglass will later acknowledge that accepting the bank presidency had been ill-advised). Douglass deplores prevalent dishonesty and corruption in American life in letter to Gerrit Smith. Unable to collect from its subscribers, *The New National Era* ceases
publication in September; Douglass loses $10,000 from his association with the newspaper.

1875 Campaigns for Republican candidates in New Hampshire gubernatorial and congressional elections. Gives speech in April calling for renewed effort to protect Black suffrage and education from white violence in the South. Warns Black audience in Washington on July 5 that Republican commitment to Reconstruction is weakening and calls for Blacks to develop their own leaders and newspapers. Chosen by Senate to help escort body of Vice President Henry Wilson from Washington to Natick, Massachusetts, in late November.

1876 Accuses Senate of acting from racial prejudice when it votes not to seat Pinckney B. S. Pinchback, a Black Republican from Louisiana whose election had been challenged as part of struggle over validity of Louisiana election returns. Delivers main address at dedication of the Freedmen’s Monument to Lincoln in Washington on April 14 (Douglass later expresses regret that statue depicts freed slave in kneeling position). Urges delegates at Republican National Convention in Cincinnati not to abandon Black voters in the South. Campaigns for Republican presidential nominee Rutherford B. Hayes in Maine and Indiana; speaks in Pendleton, Indiana, where he was beaten by a mob in 1843. Presidential election between Hayes and Democrat Samuel J. Tilden results in disputed electoral count.

1877 Hayes tells Douglass during meeting in February in Ohio that he intends to pursue conciliatory policy toward the South but will continue to protect the constitutional rights of southern Blacks. Disputed electoral votes are awarded to Hayes, who is inaugurated on March 5. Hayes appoints Douglass U.S. marshal for the District of Columbia, and he is confirmed by the Senate on March 17 despite opposition from many Washington attorneys. Douglass does not protest decision by Hayes to withdraw federal troops supporting Republican state governments in South Carolina and Louisiana. Retains position as marshal despite calls for his removal after he criticizes racial prejudice in Washington during lecture in Baltimore. Returns to St. Michaels, Talbot County, Maryland, on June 17, where he sees relatives and has conciliatory meeting with
eighty-two-year-old Thomas Auld (meeting is criticized by some). Government salary allows Douglass to cut back on making regular lecture tours, and he uses his position as marshal to find government jobs for Black office seekers, including his three sons and one daughter.

1878 Visits Amanda Auld Sears shortly before her death in January. Addresses Grand Army of the Republic meeting in New York City on Memorial Day, urging audience to remember the justice of the Union cause and denouncing violations of the Constitution in the South. Moves with family in September to Anacostia in southeast Washington, where he has purchased, with a loan from Robert Purvis, a wealthy Black friend, a twenty-room house with nine acres of land, gardens, and a barn; names the house, which overlooks the city, “Cedar Hill” (later buys fifteen acres of adjoining land). Hangs portraits of Benjamin Lundy, Gerrit Smith, Garrison, Phillips, Lincoln, John Brown, Toussaint L’Ouverture, Susan B. Anthony, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton on the walls, and places in his study a table and desk once owned by Charles Sumner. Walks five miles to work at City Hall many days, attends theater regularly, reads with the Uniontown Shakespeare Club in Anacostia, and becomes increasingly involved with his many grandchildren. Gives interview to the Washington Star expressing hope that Hayes administration will begin protecting Black suffrage in the South following widespread Republican losses in the 1878 elections. Visits Easton, Maryland, in late November and speaks with the sheriff who had jailed him in 1836. Locates the site of the cabin (no longer standing) where he was born along Tuckahoe Creek and takes a handful of soil with him to keep at Cedar Hill.

1879 Continues to help support daughter Rosetta and her children, son Charles (now a widower) and his children, and dying brother Perry and his daughter. Gives speech in Baltimore on May 4 opposing recent emigration of Blacks (known as “Exodusters”) from the South to Kansas. His remarks are criticized by Richard T. Greener, dean of law at Howard University, and other Blacks who believe increasingly harsh conditions in the South make emigration necessary. Writes a forthright eulogy for Garrison, who dies in May. Seeking to avoid public confrontation with Greener, Douglass declines invitation to deliver paper “The Negro Exodus from the Gulf States” at annual meeting of the
American Social Science Association in September (paper is read aloud at meeting and published in *Journal of Social Science*, May 1880).

1880

Attends Republican National Convention in Chicago and supports Grant’s unsuccessful bid for a third term. Campaigns in New York, Indiana, and North Carolina for Republican nominee James A. Garfield. Writes to Garfield in December that efforts to prevent his reappointment as U.S. marshal are grounded in racial prejudice.

1881

Samuel Clemens writes Garfield on Douglass’s behalf in January, urging his reappointment as U.S. marshal (Jervis and Olivia Langdon, parents of Clemens’s wife, Livy, were abolitionists who became friends of Douglass in 1842). Douglass escorts Garfield through the Capitol during inaugural ceremony on March 4. Garfield gives post of marshal to personal friend and appoints Douglass to the lesser position of recorder of deeds for the District of Columbia. Meets with Garfield in March to discuss civil rights issues and the possibility of sending Black envoys to white governments abroad. Works on new autobiography. Gives speech on John Brown at Storer College, Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, on May 30. Donates the manuscript to Storer College for publication and requests that the proceeds go toward endowing a John Brown professorship. Article “The Color Line” appears in June *North American Review*. Visits Lloyd plantation in Talbot County, where he had lived in 1824–26, and is taken on tour of the grounds by Howard Lloyd, great-grandson of Edward Lloyd. Discovers that Aaron Anthony’s house is still standing and visits the kitchen where he had last seen his mother. Ottilie Assing returns to Germany in summer. Garfield dies from assassin’s wound on September 19 and is succeeded by Chester Arthur; Douglass finds his influence in securing government jobs diminished during Arthur’s administration. Protests publisher’s decision to include illustrations in new autobiography and threatens to take legal action to prevent its publication before reaching agreement under which some copies are bound without illustrations. *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*, published in November by Park Publishing Company in Hartford, Connecticut, sells few copies and is a financial failure. Continues lecturing, speaking in Knoxville, Chattanooga, and Memphis, Tennessee, and in eastern Maryland.
1882  *Life and Times* is published in a new edition in July in unsuccessful effort to increase sales. Anna Murray Douglass suffers stroke in early July that leaves her partially paralyzed; she dies on August 4. Following funeral services in Washington, Douglass travels to Rochester for the burial, accompanied by Rosetta and her eighteen-year-old daughter, Annie. Suffers from grief and depression, and travels to Poland Springs, Maine, to spend time alone.

1883  Delivers speech in Washington on April 16 commemorating the anniversary of emancipation in the District of Columbia in which he reviews the progress of Blacks in America, denounces prevalence of racial prejudice, and predicts the eventual “unification” of Blacks with the majority of the American people. Addresses Convention of Colored Men in Louisville, Kentucky, on September 24; calls on the federal government to establish a national system of aid for education and condemns the failure to protect rights of Blacks in the South. Disturbed by growing antagonism toward the Republican Party among younger Blacks. Denounces decision by the Supreme Court in *U.S. v. Stanley*, joined by the Court with other cases, that the Civil Rights Act of 1875, which forbids racial discrimination in public accommodations and travel, is unconstitutional. Article “The Condition of the Freed-men,” examining the persisting effects of slavery on freedmen and their former masters, appears in *Harper’s Weekly* in December.

1884  Marries Helen Pitts on January 24 in private wedding service performed by friend Francis Grimke. (Pitts, b. 1838, is a women’s rights activist who works as a clerk in the recorder’s office and lives with her uncle in Washington, D.C.) After the ceremony Douglass and Helen have dinner at Cedar Hill, where Douglass’s children uncomfortably receive them. Travels with Helen to Honeoye, New York, to visit the Pitts family; father-in-law Gideon Pitts, though a former abolitionist and acquaintance of Douglass, refuses to admit him into his house. Interracial marriage is widely criticized by both Blacks and whites in the press and among Douglass’s personal friends, although Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Julia Griffiths Crofts write letters of support. Douglass keeps a scrapbook of hostile letters written to him by whites outraged by his marriage as well as negative press clippings. Attends funeral services for Wendell Phillips in Boston on February 6; Louisa May Alcott sits with Helen.
and Douglass. Publishes article “The Future of the Negro” in July *North American Review*. Travels on honeymoon trip through Canada and New England. Learns that Ottilie Assing committed suicide in Paris on August 21 and bequeathed him her library and interest from trust fund of $13,000. Campaigns for Republican presidential nominee James G. Blaine in Ohio and Indiana but is troubled by Republican platform that focuses on the tariff instead of civil rights. Democrat Grover Cleveland wins election.

1885 Praises Cleveland for affirming rights of freedmen in his inaugural address but expresses doubts that the Democratic Party shares his commitment. Makes public speeches in Ohio, New York, Massachusetts, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Washington, D.C.

1886 Resigns office of recorder at Cleveland’s request on January 5, effective March 1. When Senate Republicans object, Douglass defends Cleveland, who, unlike Arthur, had invited Helen and him to dine at the White House. Draws up will that values his estate, exclusive of Cedar Hill, at $85,000. Sails for England with Helen on September 15, beginning extensive, eleven-month European tour. Visits Julia Griffiths Crofts in St. Neots, Cambridgeshire, and Anna and Ellen Richardson in Newcastle upon Tyne, then goes to Paris in late October.

1887 Travels to Rome in January, via southern France. Decides in February to tour Egypt and sails to Port Said. Visits Ismailia, Cairo, and Alexandria, and climbs Pyramid of Khufu (Cheops) at Giza. Douglass is impressed by lack of color prejudice in Islamic society, but is dismayed by veiling and subjugation of Egyptian women. Goes in March to Athens and returns to Rome at Easter. Travels to Florence, Venice, Milan, and Lucerne before arriving in Paris in late May. Returns to England and stays there after Helen leaves for America in June to be with her ailing mother. Hears William Gladstone speak in Parliament on Irish Home Rule. Visits friends in Scotland and Ireland before returning to the United States on August 11. Speaks in favor of Irish Home Rule at meeting in Washington and lectures about his travels.

1888 Visits Charleston, South Carolina, Augusta, Georgia, and Jacksonville, Florida, in March. Delivers speech in Washington on April 16 in which he describes southern Blacks as
virtually enslaved by payment in scrip, harsh tenant laws, and the failure of the federal government to enforce the Constitution. Addresses Republican National Convention in Chicago, calling for strong party commitment to civil rights. Supports unsuccessful candidacy of John Sherman but is pleased when nominee Benjamin Harrison endorses platform calling for federal protection of Black suffrage. Campaigns for Harrison in Indiana, Michigan, New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut. Publicly criticizes Black attorney and educator John Mercer Langston, who is running for Congress in Virginia against white candidate supported by the state’s Republican Party organization; Douglass is accused by some in the Black press of letting his long-standing feud with Langston overcome his principles. Helen’s mother and sister spend the winter at Cedar Hill.

1889 Visits Arkansas in February at the invitation of local Black leaders and gives several lectures. Hopes to be reappointed as recorder of deeds by Harrison. Warns against Black separatism in speech in Washington on April 16. Appointed minister resident and consul general to Haiti in July. Arrives with Helen in Port-au-Prince in early October and presents credentials to President Louis Mondestin Florvil Hyppolite, who had seized power in a civil war in August with American assistance, on November 14. Reports to Secretary of State Blaine on the political situation as Hyppolite regime consolidates power.

1890 Enjoys good relations with Hyppolite and foreign minister Antenor Firmin. Returns to United States in late July for leave of absence. Receives instructions from Blaine to discuss with Firmin the possibility of Haiti allowing the U.S. Navy to use port of Mole St. Nicolas as a coaling station. Returns with Helen to Haiti in December.

1891 Meets with Firmin on January 1. Reports to Blaine that Haitians are reluctant to grant foreigners rights on their territory. Learns on January 26 that Blaine has appointed Rear Admiral Bancroft Gherardi to be special commissioner in charge of negotiating lease for Mole St. Nicolas. Drafts letter of resignation, but then accepts subordinate role and joins Gherardi, Firmin, and Hyppolite in negotiations over lease. Talks end on April 22 when Firmin rejects American proposal as an unacceptable infringement of Haitian sovereignty. Douglass witnesses attempted coup
against Hyppolite and its violent suppression in late May. Joins other envoys in protesting intrusion into foreign legations by government troops searching for insurgents and secures safe passage for twenty-one refugees. Takes summer leave of absence and returns to the United States with Helen in early July; both are in ill health. Newspapers criticize Douglass for failure of Mole St. Nicolas negotiations and accuse him of being too sympathetic with the Haitians. Resigns as minister to Haiti on July 30 and writes account of his role in the negotiations for the *North American Review* (appears September–October).


1893 Serves as Haitian commissioner at the World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Delivers address at dedication of Haitian pavilion on January 2 and later lectures on Haitian struggle for independence. Writes public letter with Ida Wells criticizing exclusion of Blacks from planning for the Exposition and contributes introduction to Wells’s pamphlet *The Reason Why the Colored American Is Not in the World’s Columbian Exposition*. Hires young poet Paul Laurence Dunbar to help run Haitian pavilion. Awarded honorary LL.D. degree by Wilberforce College in Ohio on June 15. Disgusted to see vendors selling watermelon at the Exposition on Colored People’s Day, August 25, but proceeds with program he has arranged at Festival Hall. Begins delivering written address, “The Race Problem in America,” but discards it and speaks extemporaneously for an hour after he is interrupted by white hecklers. Program also includes violin performance by grandson Joseph Douglass and poetry by Dunbar. Delivers address “Lessons of the Hour,” attacking use of accusations of rape as
justification for lynching, on several occasions during fall
(publishes speech in 1894 as a pamphlet).

1894

Eulogizes Lucy Stone at meeting of Woman Suffrage Association in February. Helps raise money for Ida Wells, who is on six-month anti-lynching lecture tour in England. Begins building house overlooking Chesapeake Bay in Highland Beach, Maryland, resort community for Blacks developed by son Charles. Continues giving speeches, including “Lessons of the Hour,” and commemorative and commencement addresses, traveling as far as New Bedford, Massachusetts.

1895

Addresses meeting of National Council of Women in Washington, D.C., on February 20 after being escorted to the speaker’s platform by Susan B. Anthony. Returns to Cedar Hill in late afternoon. While describing the meeting to Helen, Douglass collapses and dies of heart failure shortly before 7 p.m., as a carriage arrives to take him to that night’s speaking engagement at a local church. Thousands of mourners view the body at the Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Church in Washington on February 25. Memorial service at the church is attended by Supreme Court justice John Marshall Harlan, Senator John Sherman, and the faculty of Howard University; Susan B. Anthony is among the speakers. After services in Rochester on February 26, Douglass is buried with his first wife, Anna, and daughter Annie in Mount Hope Cemetery. Twenty-seven-year-old W.E.B. Du Bois writes a private poem, “The Passing of Douglass,” a verse of which reads: “Then Douglass passed—his massive form / Still quivering at unrightful wrong; / His soul aflame, and on his lips / A tale of prophecy of waiting work.”