

Frederick Douglass (1818-1895), brilliant abolitionist orator and writer.
PHOTOGRAPH, BY SAMUEL J. MILLER, 1847-1857. ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO,
WIKIMEDIA COMMONS PUBLIC DOMAIN.

Frederick Douglass and His Abolitionist Friends in Newport and New Bedford

John M. Rice

On December 22, 1860, Frederick Douglass sat down at his home in Rochester, New York to write to an old friend, Mary Ann C. Rice Remington, whose husband, Henry O. Remington, had just died the previous month. Douglass wanted to console her and to renew contact with the Rice and Remington families who lived in Newport and New Bedford. As he thought about what to write, Frederick Douglass may have drifted into memories of a rewarding but demanding life and of kind friends who had hosted him during the past twenty years as he traveled the country giving antislavery lectures. He wrote:

My Dear Friend:

I am as you will see from my date, at home. The life of a lecturer is in these times stormy as well as wearing, and well as I am cared for when I fall into kind hands like yours, I am still glad to reach my own home and fireside and hide away from the public platform. My old friends did not manage matters well for me when in New Bedford. Had your lamented husband been alive, I could not have been placed under a bushel. The intention was good but the management bad. Tell Mr. Rice that I have been amusing my boys with his riddle – none of them guessed it. Thanks for your kindness.

Your Friend

Fredk Douglass¹

This letter is one of several hundred letters dated between 1802 and 1931 that were stored over the years by five generations of Rice family members. Kimberly Dumpson, a descendant of Isaac Rice, took on the task of archiving the letters and in the process discovered this letter to Mrs. Remington. When Frederick Douglass wrote the letter at the age of forty-two, he was famous in America and Europe as a gifted orator, editor,

Rochester. December 22. 1866

My dear Friend:

I am, as you will see from my date, at home. The life of a lecturer is in these times ^{striving} for as well as weaving - and well as I am cared ^{for} when I feel into kind hands like yours - I am still glad to reach my own home and fire side and hide away from the public platform. My old friends did not manage matters well for me when in New Bedford - Had your lamented husband been alive, I could not have been placed under a bushel - The situation was good the management bad. Tell Mr Rice that I have been amusing my boys with his riddle - none of them guessed it. Thanks for your kindness -

Your Friend

Frederick Douglass

Mrs. Remington

1860 letter from Frederick Douglass to Mary Ann C. Rice Remington after her husband's death. RICE FAMILY COLLECTION.

and activist. He was living in Rochester, New York at this time where he edited two newspapers, *Frederick Douglass' Paper* (1851-1860) and *Douglass' Monthly* (1859-1863), while traveling extensively in his advocacy for the antislavery cause.

The letter writer, the recipient, and the two other people mentioned in this letter all have Newport in common. The writer, Frederick Douglass, who passed through Newport as he fled enslavement, later visited and spoke in Newport on several occasions. The recipient, Mary Ann C. Rice Remington, was born in Newport, the daughter of Isaac and Sarah Ann Conner Rice. Mary Ann's "lamented husband," Henry O. Remington, had been born just across the bay from Newport in Jamestown. Mary Ann's father, the riddle-writer, was Isaac Rice, who lived most of his life in Newport. Other noted antislavery leaders, like Charles Lenox Remond and his family, and George Downing, both of whom lived in Newport at various times, had contacts with the Rice family.

Douglass and these Newport-related abolitionists were part of a large successful movement in which folks all over the country were connected and driven by their common cause for freedom. They attended conventions where slavery issues were discussed and actions taken, provided shelter to formerly enslaved people seeking freedom, read each other's newspapers, circulated and signed petitions, and stayed at each other's homes. Some lectured while others listened and were inspired. While Frederick Douglass was their most notable contact, in the 1840s and 1850s, the Rice family were at the hub of antislavery activity involving several prominent abolitionists in Newport and New Bedford. This article explores the antislavery work and connections of Isaac Rice, his family and his notable contacts.

Frederick Douglass has been an international inspiration for nearly two centuries. Robert Hayden wrote about him and freedom in his 1985 poem "Frederick Douglass,"

"... this man, superb in love and logic, this man
shall be remembered. Oh, not with statues' rhetoric,
not with legends and poems and wreaths of bronze alone,
but with the lives grown out of his life, the lives
fleshing his dream of the beautiful, needful thing."²

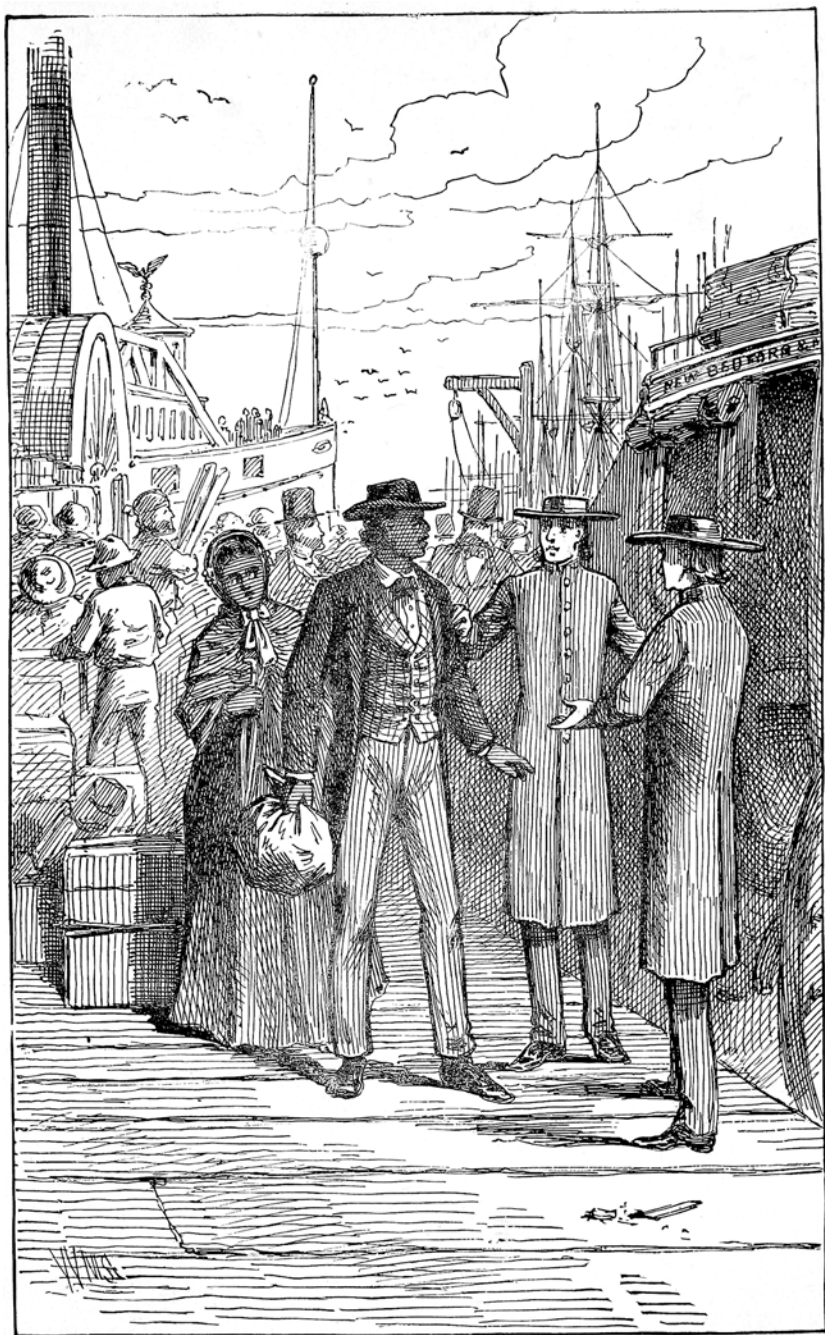
Frederick Douglass was born enslaved in Talbot County, Maryland, in 1818. His first encounter with Newport occurred during his escape on the Underground Railroad. He left the plantation in Maryland, where he was enslaved, in 1838 with the indispensable help of his wife-to-be, Anna Murray, who made the sailor uniform he used as a disguise and who helped finance Douglass's journey north. After leaving Maryland, Douglass stopped in New York City and met David Ruggles, a leader in the Vigilance Committee, a part of the Underground Railroad. Ruggles gave refuge to Douglass in his boarding house and provided him with contacts in Newport and New Bedford.

According to Frederick Douglass's autobiography the name of the person in Newport provided by Ruggles was "Mr. Shaw." This contact was undoubtedly one of two Anti Slavery Society of Newport members, Richard Shaw or George C. Shaw. Richard Shaw, Vice President of the Anti Slavery Society of Newport, lived on Marlborough Street. The likelier contact was George C. Shaw, who was Corresponding Secretary of the Anti Slavery Society of Newport. Shaw lived on Broadway near Farewell Street. As editor of the first Black-owned magazine in the U.S., the "Mirror of Liberty," and proprietor of a public reading room at his home containing antislavery literature, Ruggles may have known, or known of George C. Shaw who also served as Librarian for the Anti Slavery Society of Newport. It is not known if Douglass encountered "Mr. Shaw," when he arrived in Newport en route to New Bedford in September 1838. According to his autobiography, Douglass arrived by ship at the Newport wharf area where he waited for a stagecoach to take him to New Bedford.³

In the December 1860 letter to Mary Ann C. Rice Remington, Frederick Douglass described his life as "stormy" and "wearing." About a year before the letter was written, the U.S. government had pursued Douglass for conspiracy with John Brown who had led a failed effort to initiate an uprising of enslaved people by taking control of the United States arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia. Douglass supported Brown and raised funds for his efforts but declined to participate in Brown's suicide mission. Martyr John Brown was tried and hanged on December 2, 1859, about a year before Douglass wrote Mrs. Remington. The U.S. government sought to arrest Douglass, and just as he had run away from a Maryland plantation at the age of twenty, he was once again a fugitive in late October 1859, fleeing to Canada and then to Liverpool, England by late November to escape the U.S. marshals. While he was in exile in England, Douglass's ten-year-old daughter Annie died in March 1860, a grief-filled loss he felt deeply. Fortunately for him the government did not want to create another martyr and the coming presidential



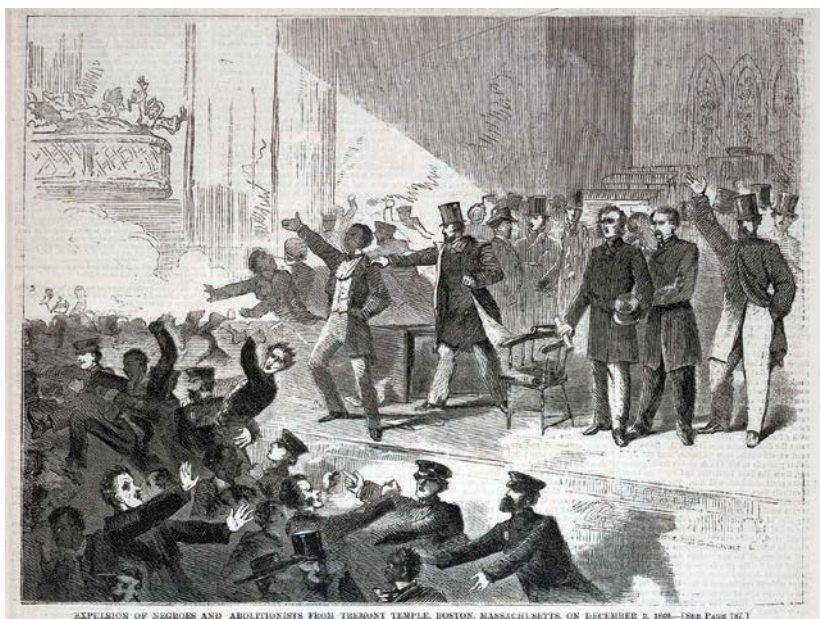
Frederick Douglass's wife Anna Murray Douglass. PHOTOGRAPH BY AN UNKNOWN PHOTOGRAPHER, UNDATED. LIBRARY OF CONGRESS. <https://www.loc.gov/item/2002711165/>.



Frederick Douglass is depicted arriving at the wharf in Newport in 1838. He was en route to New Bedford, Mass. From *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*. (2ND EDITION BOSTON: DE WOLFE & FISKE CO, 1892), 16. WIKIMEDIA COMMONS PUBLIC DOMAIN.

election politics of 1860 took over the country's attention, so Douglass safely returned to the United States in April 1860. Douglass experienced persecution, exile, and the death of his child all during the year before he wrote about his “stormy” and “wearing” life in the letter.⁴

On December 3, 1860, less than a month before he wrote the letter to Mary Ann C. Rice Remington, Douglass attempted to give a speech at the Tremont Temple in Boston, organized to address the question of how to abolish slavery and as a tribute to John Brown. The event blew up into a violent verbal and physical brawl. The melee was provoked by what Douglass called a “gentlemen’s mob” of northern men, who were worried about a financial crisis if there were a civil war and an end to slavery. For example, bankers and textile manufacturers of “Negro cloth” worn by enslaved folks, along with others whose businesses depended on the existence of slavery in the South, encouraged the disruption. Journalist and author James Redpath, who tried initially to control the event as a co-chairman, described the leaders of the mob as “merchants, traders with the South... nearly all of whom have uncollected debts there, and many of them mortgages on slaves.” It was reported that the featured speaker, Douglass, had to fight his way to the podium like a trained boxer as his path was blocked. Once on the stage Douglass responded to hecklers verbally. For example, he called out to one heckler, “If I were a slave driver, and had hold of that man for five minutes, I would let more daylight through his skin than ever got there before.” That spark turned the event into a physical brawl that included Douglass.⁵



Police trying to regain order during Frederick Douglass's address at the Tremont Temple in Boston. HARPER'S WEEKLY, DECEMBER 15, 1860. WIKIMEDIA COMMONS PUBLIC DOMAIN.

During this time the ultimate storm was brewing—the Civil War. Two days before Douglass wrote to Mary Ann C. Rice Remington, on December 20, 1860, a secession convention met in South Carolina regarding the November election of President Abraham Lincoln who ran on a platform of opposition to the expansion of slavery. That same day the South Carolina convention issued an Ordinance of Secession which stated that, “the union now subsisting between South Carolina and other States, under the name of The United States of America, is hereby dissolved.”⁶ The Civil War would start in four months with the attack on Fort Sumter in South Carolina. Clearly the accumulation of national and personal troubles accounted for Douglass feeling that, “The life of a lecturer is in these times stormy as well as wearing,” as he wrote in his December 1860 letter to Mrs. Remington.

As seen in Frederick Douglass’s missive, the renowned orator and abolitionist leader had more than a passing acquaintance with members of the Rice family who lived in Newport and in New Bedford. Mary Ann Remington’s father, Isaac Rice (1794-1869) is said to have been “the most outstanding man of color in Newport” in the 1830s and 1840s.⁷ For over half a century he was a member and officer in many of Newport’s Black organizations, which were founded in an effort to obtain dignity and respect while facing racist barriers. They include the African Benevolent Society that was formed to promote the education of folks of African heritage. The African Benevolent Society members founded the African Free School which was located at the southwest corner of Division and Mary Streets. Established in 1808, it was the first school for students of African heritage in the country administered and funded by a predominately Black organization. The Society was disbanded in 1844 after Newport took over the task of Black-segregated education. According to the minutes of African Benevolent Society meetings, Isaac Rice was listed as a member in 1810 and later served as Secretary and on the Board of Directors.⁸ He was also a founding member of the Colored Union Church and Society (1824-1858), a community church with no particular denomination, which became the Union Congregational Church in 1859. Rice was one of a committee of three to purchase land for the Union Church on a lot at the southwest corner of Church and Division streets in 1824.⁹

Isaac Rice was born in Rhode Island on July 6, 1794, and lived most of his life at 23 Thomas Street in the Historic Hill section of Newport overlooking the bustling wharves of Newport. This William, Thomas, and Levin Street area was one of several Black enclaves in Newport (Levin Street is now Memorial Boulevard West). Some of Isaac’s neighbors of African heritage were Abraham Casey, a co-founder of the Free African Union Society, which held its first meeting at his house on Levin Street across from what is now Saint Mary’s Church on November 10, 1780; Esther Brinley, a co-founder of Shiloh Baptist Church, which was organized at her home, 73 Levin Street, on

May 10, 1864; and Alexander Jack Jr., a shoemaker who lived at 31 Thomas Street.¹⁰ The original house at 23 Thomas Street was small when constructed around 1810, about half its current size, starting from the left end in the image below, to about four feet past the door. It is made of a post-and-beam construction. An addition, built in the mid-1800s, is a flounder house shape with a balloon frame construction. This house where Isaac Rice lived in Newport has now been in the Rice family for six generations.¹¹



The Union Congregational Church, 49 Division Street, was founded in 1824. The rebuilt church, depicted here, was constructed in 1871. P1829, COLLECTION OF THE NEWPORT HISTORICAL SOCIETY.



Isaac Rice House, 23 Thomas Street, a station on the Underground Railroad, where the Rice family hosted prominent antislavery lecturers and activists. RICE FAMILY COLLECTION.

It is not known whether Isaac Rice had much formal education. There were no known schools for Blacks in Newport from the time he was born in 1794 until 1808, and Isaac does not appear in the list of students from the 1808 African Free School described earlier in this article.¹² Isaac Rice was a mariner early in his life, sending letters to his fiancée, later wife, Sarah Ann Conner (1798-1855) in Newport while working on ships sailing to Cuba and Russia when he was between the ages of twenty-two and twenty-four.¹³ Isaac married Sarah Ann Conner on August 6, 1817. She was the granddaughter of Abraham Casey, a co-founder of the Free African Union Society established in 1780 as the first African benevolent society in the country. Isaac and Sarah Ann Rice had eight children, five daughters and three sons: Mary Ann (1818-1888); Ruth (1820-1904); Abraham (1822-1882); Sarah Ann (1826-1874); Susan (1828-1872); Isaac (1830-1902); Hannah (1833-1910); and George (1841-1923).¹⁴

As an entrepreneur Isaac Rice operated a landscaping business. Among his Newport clients was Rhode Island Governor William C. Gibbs. Rice planted trees on Gibbs's Mill Street estate that now adorn Touro Park. Later in life Isaac Rice owned a catering business on Cotton Court and a restaurant called the Alhambra near the Ocean House.¹⁵

Isaac Rice was a fervent abolitionist. During his lifetime, Newport was on a front line of the antislavery movement. On the proslavery side was a coalition of wealthy slave plantation owners who stayed in Newport in the summer to escape the hot and humid South, along with wealthy Rhode Island merchants, and politicians. On the antislavery side was a coalition of White and Black folks including Quakers, Congregationalists, and many Black organizations in which Isaac Rice was an active member and leader. (After 1776, Quakers in Newport were not permitted to own enslaved people and in Dr. Samuel Hopkins's First Congregational Church, members were not allowed to own enslaved people after 1770.)¹⁶ Isaac Rice was a founding member of the Anti Slavery Society of Newport whose mission was: to promote civil and religious freedom; elect delegates to Rhode Island and national antislavery conventions; and maintain a library to disseminate information about



George E. Rice (1841-1923), with his wife Mary E. Stevens (1839-1908). George Rice was the youngest son of Isaac Rice, and the author's great-grandfather. Tintype photograph ca. 1890. RICE FAMILY COLLECTION.

NOTICE.

THE subscribers inform the public that they have this day entered into a copartnership under the firm of **RICE & PELL.** and that they will hereafter continue business at the old stand on Thames street, next north of Rider's, and heretofore occupied by George Pell.

There may at all times be found there Oysters, game of all kinds, steaks, ham and eggs, puddings, pies and pastry of all kinds. Dinner will be served regularly to those who wish. In short, they intend to keep a first-class Refectory, and will guarantee to give satisfaction to all.

Dinner and evening parties waited upon, and all delicacies and refreshments furnished, if desired:

A share of patronage is solicited.

**ISAAC RICE,
GEORGE PELL.**

jyl.

Advertisement for Isaac Rice's and George Pell's catering and restaurant business.
NEWPORT DAILY NEWS, JULY 1, 1851, 2.

NOTICE.

THE subscriber respectfully informs the public that he is prepared to serve dinners and meals at his well-known establishment on the hill, the Alhambra, near the Ocean House: his rooms are in excellent order, and he will spare no pains to give general satisfaction.

He will continue to furnish parties and picnics, and attend the same at all times on the shortest notice, as heretofore.

j20

ISAAC RICE

Advertisement for Isaac Rice's Alhambra restaurant and catering establishment.
NEWPORT DAILY NEWS, AUGUST 11, 1855, 4.

American slavery. This local society appointed Isaac Rice as a delegate to Rhode Island and national antislavery society conventions. He was appointed as a delegate to the November 14, 1838 Rhode Island Anti-Slavery Society Convention in Providence; a delegate to the May 12, 1840 American Anti-Slavery Society Convention in New York; and a delegate to the November 11, 1841 Rhode Island Anti-Slavery Society Convention in Providence. Rice was also a distributor for William Lloyd Garrison's radical abolitionist newspaper, *The Liberator*.¹⁷

A key aspect of Isaac Rice's antislavery activism was his work on the Underground Railroad. His home on Thomas Street became a haven for people fleeing enslavement. In 1932, Charles Battle wrote about Rice's involvement in this clandestine effort to aid freedom seekers:

Though born free he grew to manhood with an undying hatred of slavery. He learned much of the horrors of the institution from the testimony of servants who accompanied their masters to Newport to spend the summer months. His work in the anti-slavery cause was his most conspicuous service to his people...The Rice homestead at the corner of William and Thomas Streets, (still in possession of the Rice family), was [a] station of the Underground Railroad in Newport. Many an escaping slave found food and shelter under its hospitable roof...¹⁸

Isaac Rice's work on the Underground Railroad would have been shrouded in secrecy to protect the people he sought to aid, and he left little evidence of his involvement in this dangerous form of antislavery activism. Yet, knowing of Isaac Rice's commitment to the cause, his hospitality to antislavery activists, the oral tradition that he aided freedom-seekers, and the opportunities he would have had in Newport to help those fleeing enslavement, it is widely accepted nationally and in Rhode Island that Isaac Rice sheltered freedom-seekers in his home on Thomas Street.¹⁹

An example of Isaac Rice's deep connection to abolitionist activism was his choice of a boarding school for his youngest son, George, when the young man was seventeen years old. The Hopedale Home Boarding School was an integrated-alternative coeducational school in Milford, Massachusetts, based on the transcendental philosophy of the inherent goodness of people. The school fostered a radical abolitionist milieu by having the students debate political and moral questions of the day; they also attended lectures by abolitionist speakers like William Lloyd Garrison. In addition to teaching academics, the school endeavored to build character in its students. Like George, several students there were sons and daughters of prominent abolitionists; children of George Downing, Henry Highland Garnet, Elizabeth Buffum Chace, and Sarah Forten Purvis were classmates of George Rice during the 1858-1859 school year.²⁰

It is not known exactly when Isaac Rice met and formed a friendship with Frederick Douglass, however there are several scenarios that may have occurred. Charles Battle asserts that Isaac Rice met Douglass shortly after Douglass arrived in New Bedford in 1838.²¹ They may have initially encountered one another through Henry O. Remington who would become Isaac Rice's son-in-law, and who was living in New Bedford when Douglass arrived there in 1838. There is evidence that Henry Remington knew both Isaac Rice and Mary Ann Rice by 1838: an initial courtship letter between Henry Remington and Mary Ann Rice, written on July 5, 1837, is reproduced in this article; and about a year after he wrote to Mary Ann, Henry Remington sent Isaac Rice a letter dated August 10, 1838.²² Isaac may have been introduced to Douglass by Charles Remond who was known to both Rice and Douglass by 1841. Isaac Rice probably encountered Douglass at antislavery conventions outside of Newport, as well.

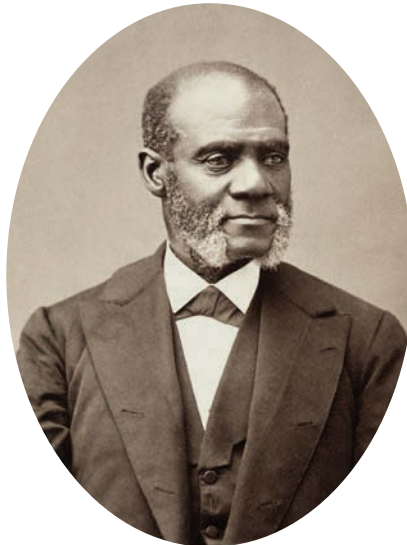
Douglass gave antislavery lectures all over the country starting in the 1840s including speeches in Rhode Island. He often spoke at churches and stayed in the homes of antislavery sympathizers. Newport was no exception. It is known that Frederick Douglass visited Newport on several occasions including: in 1842 during the Dorr Rebellion crisis when he attempted to speak in Newport but was turned away by anti-abolitionist rioters;²³ in 1843 when he spoke for the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society;²⁴ and sometime between 1858 and 1863 when Douglass spoke at the Union Congregational Church at 49 Division Street in Newport.²⁵ It is very probable that Douglass enjoyed the Rices' hospitality at 23 Thomas Street when he was in Newport.

Other abolitionist speakers like Henry Highland Garnet and Charles Lenox Remond, who lectured at the Union Congregational Church in Newport at this time, also stayed at the Rice home.²⁶ Abolitionist Henry Highland Garnet escaped enslavement, became a minister, and advocated for slave rebellion, emigration, and colonization. When he was not traveling on behalf of the antislavery cause, Garnet lived in New York City.²⁷

Isaac and Sarah Ann Conner Rice's eight children undoubtedly heard stories about the horrors of slavery and the work of the antislavery movement growing up in Newport in an environment of activism with guests in their home including formerly enslaved freedom-seekers and abolitionist leaders. One can only imagine evening dinner conversations at the Rice homestead with these icons of the abolition movement, Douglass, Remond, Garnet, and perhaps others. Isaac, Sarah, and their children must have witnessed and been influenced by the spectrum of ideas on how to abolish slavery. On one end of the spectrum were arguments on winning the hearts and minds of folks within the political system and on the other end, arguments for slave rebellion. It is clear from the letter that Douglass sent to Rice's daughter in December 1860 that the great abolitionist leader felt warmly towards the Rice family who had offered him hospitality and friendship during his years spent on the road lecturing for the antislavery cause.



Abolitionist orators Charles Lenox Remond (1810-1873) and his sister Sarah Parker Remond (1826-1894) who lived in Newport in the 1830s. BROADBENT, S. (SAMUEL). "CHARLES LENOX REMOND." PHOTOGRAPH. PHILADELPHIA: BROADBENT STUDIO, [CA. 1851-1856]. *DIGITAL COMMONWEALTH*, <https://ark.digitalcommonwealth.org/ark:/50959/2n49tn23d> (ACCESSED SEPTEMBER 21, 2022). Photograph of Sarah Remond, c. 1865, photographer unknown, WIKIMEDIA COMMONS PUBLIC DOMAIN.



Henry Highland Garnet (1815-1882), who fled enslavement in the South and became a noted radical abolitionist minister, stayed with the Rice family in Newport. Albumen silver print, c. 1881. James U. Stead, photographer. NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY, SMITHSONIAN WIKIMEDIA COMMONS PUBLIC DOMAIN.

From his home in Newport, Isaac Rice developed close relationships with other famed abolitionist activists, especially Charles Lenox Remond (1810-1873). Remond's father and mother, John and Nancy Remond, were entrepreneurs who ran a very successful catering business in Salem, Massachusetts. Isaac met the Remond family in 1835. After Salem mandated school segregation in 1834, John and Nancy Remond were so upset they moved their family to Newport, so that their children could attend a private Black school. The 1840 federal census lists ten members of the Remond family in Newport, including eight children.²⁸ The Remonds bought a house and lived at the corner of Thames and Champlin's Wharf on the west side of Thames Street across from Mary Street from 1835 until 1841. The house was said to have been used in earlier times to shelter enslaved Africans waiting to be sold.²⁹ While in Newport John Remond Sr. had a business, the "Perfumery and Dressing Room" at 137 Thames Street (across from Cotton Court); it must have been a hairdressing business (see the tiny barber poles in "Newport R.I." in the image below). He also owned a confectionary store in Newport.³⁰

Two of the Remond children became accomplished abolitionist orators, Charles Lenox Remond (who was twenty-five in 1835) and Sarah (eleven years old in 1835). Both toured with other abolitionists, including Frederick Douglass, for the Massachusetts



John Remond Sr.'s Newport Perfumery and Dressing Room advertisement.

REMOND FAMILY PAPERS, MSS 271, BOX 1, FOLDER 5. COURTESY OF PHILLIPS LIBRARY, PEABODY ESSEX MUSEUM, ROWLEY, MASSACHUSETTS.

Anti-Slavery Society. Sarah Remond wrote favorably about Black folks in Newport in an autobiographical sketch: "We left Newport with some regret. [The Remond family moved back to Salem in 1841.] The colored population was of an elevated character, and for industry, morality, and native intellect, would compare favorably with any class in the community." Regarding her education in Newport, Sarah wrote, "A private school was established by a few of the more influential of the coloured citizens, and for a time I was a pupil." The private school she attended was undoubtedly the African Free School run by the African Benevolent Society described earlier in this article. It would have been a short walk to school up the hill on Mary Street.³¹

Sarah Parker Remond later earned distinction as an outspoken activist against racial segregation in the north when she refused to give up her seat at the opera *Don Pasquale*. In 1853, Sarah Remond purchased box tickets for the opera at the Howard Athenaeum in Boston, intending to sit with her sister Caroline E. Putnam and Black journalist William Cooper Nell. Two officials, an agent for the opera and a Boston policeman, upon seeing the group were not White did not allow them to sit in the box seats and tried to usher them to a segregated area for Blacks. When Sarah refused to accept the seating switch, a scuffle occurred with her clothes torn and arm injured by the officials. Sarah took the case to court and won an award for the assault. One report indicated that the judge awarded a five-hundred-dollar fine and another report was a one-dollar award from each official and court costs for the opera agent.³²

Charles Lenox Remond and Frederick Douglass were so close that Douglass named one of his children "Charles Remond Douglass." While based in Newport, Charles was an agent for *The Liberator* newspaper and in 1838 he joined the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society as their first Black agent. This is the same society that gave Douglass his start as an agent in 1841. While living in Newport Charles Lenox Remond was selected by the American Anti-Slavery Society to be a delegate to the World's Anti-Slavery Convention in London held on June 12, 1840, and some travel funds were raised for him by the Newport Young Ladies' Juvenile Anti-Slavery Society.³³

Isaac and Sarah Ann Rice, and John and Nancy Remond as well as many Rice and Remond children were members of the Anti Slavery Society of Newport. According to the Society minutes, while Charles Remond was in Newport, he and Isaac Rice among others, were appointed to represent the Society at the American Anti-Slavery Society convention held in New York on May 12, 1840.³⁴ Bonds between the Remond and Rice families were further cemented when Isaac Rice's second daughter, Ruth B. Rice, married businessman John Remond, Jr., brother of Charles Lenox Remond, on January 15, 1843, in Salem Massachusetts. The couple settled in Salem, while maintaining close ties with Ruth's parents in Newport.³⁵

Through the Remonds, Isaac Rice and his family made connections with members of other noted abolitionist families. For example, Charlotte Forten (1837-1914), a friend of the Remond family in Salem, was a young abolitionist who visited the Rice family in Newport in the late 1850s. Throughout her life Charlotte was surrounded by antislavery activism, starting in childhood as the daughter of Robert B. Forten, and the niece of Harriet Forten Purvis and Sarah Forten Purvis, all committed leaders in the antislavery movement in Philadelphia.³⁶ In 1853 she moved to Salem, Massachusetts to attend school, boarding with Amy Matilda Cassey Remond and her husband Charles Lenox Remond.³⁷ Charlotte met Isaac Rice's daughter, Ruth Rice Remond, the wife of John Remond, Jr. while in Salem. She wrote about Ruth in her journal, "she is a gentle, agreeable person and I like her very much."³⁸ In the Spring of 1857, Charlotte also connected with Ruth Rice Remond's sister, Susan Rice, whom she describes as "a gentle, pleasant young lady from Newport."³⁹

In early August 1857 Charlotte Forten was warmly welcomed to Newport by Isaac Rice and two of his daughters, one of whom was Ruth Rice Remond. Forten arrived in Newport by boat from New York, describing her journey as "a good rocking in the cradle of the deep." She apparently stayed for three days at a boarding house and not at the Rices' home. On the first day she visited Saint Mary's Church at 12 William Street, in the same block and just down the hill from Isaac Rice's home at 23 Thomas Street. She wrote in her journal that while at the church she "stood overwhelmed by the beauty, the splendor which burst upon us. The painted glass windows were the most splendid I ever saw; the stone arches, the organ so grand and imposing."⁴⁰

Charlotte Forten Grimké (1837-1914), abolitionist, educator, and poet, visited the Rice family in Newport in 1857. CARTE-DE-VISITE, C. 1870-1879. SCHOMBURG CENTER FOR RESEARCH IN BLACK CULTURE, PHOTOGRAPHS AND PRINTS DIVISION, THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY. "LOTTIE GRIMKE." *THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY DIGITAL COLLECTIONS*. 1870 - 1879. <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e1-cd9a-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>.



On the second day of her visit to Newport, Forten recorded walking with members of the Rice family: “Mrs. R[uth] R.[emond] whom I was delighted to meet again, her father [Isaac Rice] and sister accompanied us. Our walk was perfectly delightful. We passed the famous ‘Ocean House,’ brilliantly lighted up, and looking very bright and cheerful. The sea air is delightful. It greatly strengthens me.” The Ocean House was at the northeast corner of Bellevue Avenue and Bowery Street. That evening Forten visited the Downing family, writing, “This evening visited the Downings in their beautiful ‘Sea Girt House.’” She wrote about the final day of her visit, “Another walk this morning, to the ‘Forty Steps,’ a beautiful place... Old Mr. R.[ice] was our escort, and a very pleasant one, too.” After an afternoon sail to Fort Adams, Forten noted in her journal, she “spent the evening—our last in this lovely place”—at the Rice home, “listening to some fine singing.”⁴¹ After leaving Newport Charlotte Forten took a teaching position at the Eppes Grammar School in Salem Massachusetts from 1857 to 1858, becoming the first African American educator to teach White students in the Salem public school system. Later, after her marriage to Francis Grimké, a noted Black clergyman, Charlotte gained national prominence as a leader in the struggle to achieve equality for people of African heritage.⁴²

Isaac’s oldest child, Mary Ann C. Rice, recipient of the December 1860 letter from Frederick Douglass, married a committed abolitionist. Mary Ann was born in Newport on Friday, April 25, 1818, at 4:30 p.m. Her father kept accurate birth records of all his children and some relatives to the minute, probably because he was sensitive to the fact that most enslaved people were never given the courtesy of knowing the day they were born.⁴³ In 1842 Mary Ann C. Rice married Henry O. Remington of New Bedford, in Newport. Remington was born in Jamestown, Rhode Island in 1817; Mary Ann was one year younger than Henry.⁴⁴

It is not clear how Mary Ann C. Rice and Henry O. Remington became acquainted. Remington, may have known the Rice family through Newport or antislavery connections. He had moved to New Bedford, Massachusetts a decade or so before his marriage. He first appeared in New Bedford records in 1832 when he signed on to the whaling ship the *Huntress* for a voyage that went as far as Hawaii for more than three-and-a-half years, from August 16, 1832 to March 12, 1836.⁴⁵ Henry O. Remington is listed in the *1838 New Bedford City Directory* at 7 First Street working as a “colored laborer” for Zenas Whittemore, who owned a soap and candle factory.⁴⁶ An enterprising young man, he worked his way up to owning a prosperous business and was listed in the 1860 United States Federal Census as a “soap merchant” in New Bedford with a net worth of \$10,000 (equivalent to over \$300,000 today). It appears that Remington was courting Mary Ann C. Rice as early as 1837. As seen in his letter reproduced on page 18, by July of that year, he had taken a “pertickelar fancy” to Mary Ann whom he addressed as “Honoured madam.”⁴⁷ After their marriage in 1842, Mary Ann C. Rice and Henry

New Bedford Mass July 5th 1837.

Honoured Madam, I hope you will not
Be Surprised in Seeing a letter with my name
At the bottom. I arrived Saturday at 5 o'clock.
And now my dear Madam I must tell you
That I have taking a particular fancy to you
And hope you have no objections towards me.
Let me beg you would answer this letter
as soon as you can make it convenient and if
you have no objections let me know your
mind & I will write you again
Let me beg your answer by the mail.
I am Madam &c.

Let me beg you to receive this
as really.

Henry O. Remington.

July 5, 1837 courting letter from Henry O. Remington to Mary Ann Conner Rice,
RICE FAMILY COLLECTION.

Remington lived at 131 South Water Street, New Bedford, in a house described as “a neat, tasteful, and singular looking cottage.”⁴⁸

It is not known when Henry O. Remington and Frederick Douglass first met, however there would have been many opportunities since they moved in the same abolitionist circles in New Bedford, and Remington and Douglass lived only a short walk away from one another while Douglass was a resident there between 1838 and 1841.

The Douglass family lived at three addresses while in New Bedford: 21 Seventh Street (1838); 157 Elm Street (1839); and at 111 Ray Street now 111 Acushnet Avenue (1840-1841).⁴⁹ According to the *New Bedford, Massachusetts City Directories* for each year, Henry lived at 7 First Street in 1838, at 17 South Second Street in 1839, and at 27 School Street in 1841. Mary Ann C. Rice Remington may have first met Frederick Douglass, at her father’s home in Newport, or she might have initially known the great orator through Henry Remington. In any event, it is clear from the December 1860 letter Douglass sent to Mary Ann C. Rice Remington, that he considered the Remingtons and Rices to be old friends and supporters.

Frederick Douglass left Maryland and arrived in New Bedford in 1838, Henry Remington left Jamestown and was living in New Bedford as early as 1832, and Mary Ann C. Rice Remington married Henry in Newport and moved to New Bedford in 1842. They were all young adults, born about the same time, looking for a more tolerant community and opportunities to better their lives, so they migrated to a more progressive environment in New Bedford, escaping their respective slave-holding or anti-abolitionist communities. During this period Maryland had large slave plantations, Jamestown—with a history of slavery—was “warning out” or purging itself of Black folks with the population of people of color decreasing from twelve percent in 1820 to six percent in 1840, and most leaders of Newport were anti-abolitionist. Slavery did not officially end in Rhode Island until 1843.⁵⁰ In New Bedford the Douglass and Remington families found a prosperous and growing town: between 1836-1840 it produced 42.5 % of all United



Mary Ann C. Rice Remington (1818-1888) and her “lamented husband,” Henry O. Remington (1817-1860). The identity of the child is not known. n. d., Photograph by Noah Gifford at 54 Purchase Street, New Bedford, Massachusetts. RICE FAMILY COLLECTION.

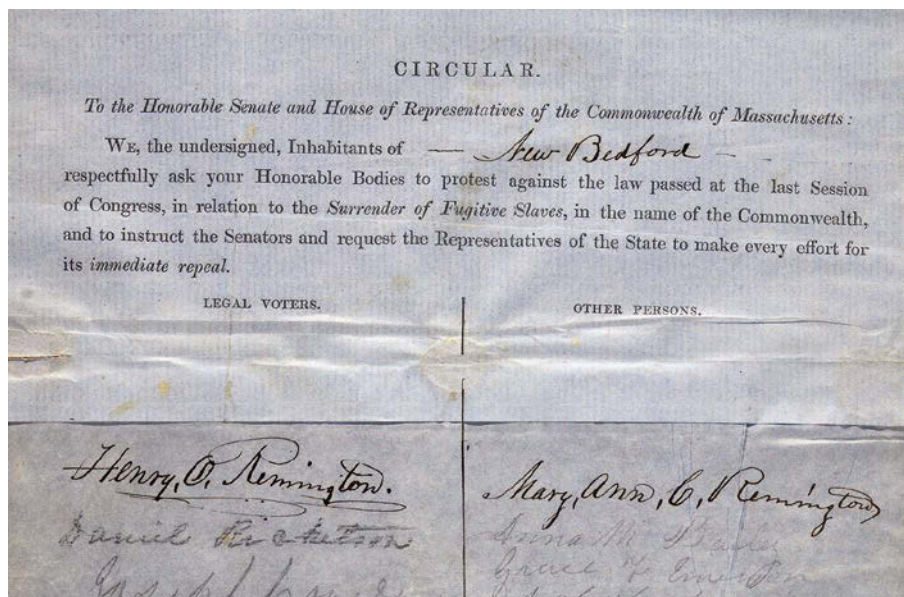
States whale oil; the population of about 7,600 in 1830 grew to a population of about 12,000 in 1840, mainly due to whaling and related industries; and it was dominated by White town leaders who were mostly abolitionists.⁵¹

The 1850s was a very tumultuous decade in the fight over slavery. This is the period when Henry's and Mary Ann Remington's abolitionist and antiracist activism flourished. An example of their advocacy is their test of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 in which Federal law punished anyone aiding runaway enslaved people and denied the fugitives the right to a jury trial or to testify. The penalty for assisting an escaped enslaved person by providing food or shelter was \$1,000, a present-day value of about \$30,000, and six months in jail. The trials were conducted by special commissioners who were given a ten-dollar incentive to convict.⁵²

The Fugitive Slave Act sparked fierce opposition from the abolitionist community in New Bedford. In 1851 several women in the town circulated petitions addressed to the state legislature demanding repeal of the Fugitive Slave Act, gathering a total of 1,729 signatures. These petitions were submitted by Rodney French, an abolitionist from New Bedford, to Horace Mann, a member of the Massachusetts House of Representatives.⁵³ One of the petitions with 188 signatures, as seen on page 21, was probably circulated by Mary Ann C. Rice Remington. Her signature appears at the top of the petition in bold letters along with that of her husband, Henry O. Remington.⁵⁴ The Massachusetts legislature did pass a law in 1855 calling for the removal of any state official who aided in the return of runaway enslaved people. The United States Congress did not repeal the Fugitive Slave Act until 1864.



Portraits of Mary Ann C. Rice Remington and Henry O. Remington, n.d. The artist is unknown. RICE FAMILY COLLECTION.



Fugitive Slave Act petition submitted to the Massachusetts legislature, signed by Mary Ann C. Rice Remington and her husband Henry O. Remington. Senate Unpassed Legislation, 1851, Docket 13162. SC1/series 231. MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES. BOSTON, MASS.

Henry O. Remington was a promoter for Douglass's lectures when the great orator returned to the city of New Bedford on the antislavery lecture circuit. For example, Remington served as Chief Marshal or organizer for some of the annual "First of August" celebrations in New Bedford, which honored the emancipation of enslaved people in the British West Indies. For one particular First of August event in 1853, Remington arranged for Douglass to speak. At that gathering, Douglass argued that the United States Constitution was an antislavery document.⁵⁵

Henry Remington was a leader in Black activism in the Northeast. He was elected President of the State Council of Colored People of Massachusetts at its two-day convention starting on January 2, 1854, in Boston. He served again as President of the Council at a two-day convention starting on July 10, 1854, in New Bedford. The Council was the state arm of the National Council of Colored People, a "think-tank" that stimulated the participants, helped create public opinion, and debated several issues, including: the abolition of slavery; education for people of color; the Fugitive Slave Act; the Dred Scott decision; and colonization. Abolitionist orator Charles Lenox Remond, journalist William Nells Cooper and lawyer Robert Morris were active members of the State Council.⁵⁶

Most of this same group of antislavery activists met again at the Convention of the Colored Citizens of Massachusetts starting on August 1, 1858, in New Bedford where Henry Remington was elected a Co-Vice President. The convention celebrated the twenty-fourth anniversary of the abolition of slavery in the British West Indies. As described in *The Liberator*, the opening session of the convention was an integrated gala affair with many “white brethren” attending. There were parades of marching bands and military with muskets, and a clambake in the afternoon serenaded by the Rhode Island Brass Band of Providence. The business of the convention started that afternoon and continued to the next day with debates on several issues including, the Fugitive Slave Act, the Dred Scott decision, emigration, colonization, and slave rebellion.⁵⁷

1859 was a stormy year for the abolition movement and it is when Newporters stepped up to make significant contributions at the New England Colored Citizens’ Convention. The convention met on August 1, 1859, at Meionson Hall in Boston, marking the twenty-fifth anniversary of the emancipation of enslaved people in the British West Indies. The gathering was well attended, with most participants from New England and others from as far as Canada and Illinois. The convention was a reunion for the Newport abolitionists who took leadership roles in this energizing event attended by prominent antislavery activists. Important issues were debated: the abolition of slavery, colonization, emigration, the Dred Scott decision, and the Fugitive Slave Act. Newport’s George Downing was elected President of the convention, Isaac Rice was elected a Co-Vice President, Henry Remington served on the Permanent Organization and Business Committees, and Ruth Rice Remond was selected for the Business Committee. It is likely Henry had a chance to meet up with old colleagues for the last time before he died the next year, including: novelist and playwright William Wells Brown; orator Charles Lenox Remond; journalist William Cooper Nell; and Boston lawyer Robert Morris.⁵⁸

Several agents of the Underground Railroad attended the convention beside Isaac Rice including: celebrated agents Harriet Tubman (traveling as “Harriet Garrison” to conceal her identity) and William Still; Boston’s Lewis Hayden; Virginia’s Mark R. DeMortie; Providence’s James Jefferson; Connecticut’s William J. Anderson; and New York’s John Sella Martin. Perhaps Isaac Rice and his family attended the open lecture William Still organized at the Twelfth Baptist Church in Boston on the third day of August, just one day after the convention closed, regarding the history and operations of the Underground Railroad with reported “thrilling and romantic cases.”⁵⁹

Henry O. Remington died of tetanus at his home in New Bedford on November 22, 1860, at the young age of forty-three.⁶⁰ Remington’s untimely death seems to have been the impetus for Douglass’s letter to Mary Ann C. Rice Remington. Douglass referred to his friend as Mrs. Remington’s “late lamented husband,” and asserted that, had Remington been alive, Douglass would not have recently encountered certain difficulties in

New Bedford. “My old friends did not manage matters well for me when in New Bedford.” Douglass wrote. “Had your lamented husband been alive, I could not have been placed under a bushel.” The situation in New Bedford to which Douglass referred is not known, however we know from the letter Douglass wrote to Mary Ann C. Remington that he was in New Bedford either in late November or in December, just after Henry’s death and before the letter was written. During that period of time the political tension regarding slavery in the country was extremely high and Douglass gave two speeches in Boston, which is a short distance from New Bedford. On the evening of December 3, just after the violent Tremont Temple episode described earlier in this article, he gave a militant speech at a small church on Joy Street in Boston favoring violence and war to end slavery, calling it the “John Brown Way.”

Douglass gave another speech on December 10 at the Music Hall in Boston about the importance of free speech, which was timely given the suppression of his attempted speech at the Tremont Temple a week earlier. There were two factions among abolitionists at this time; one indignant, condemning the Tremont Temple mob for the suppression of free speech, and a pacifist faction who thought the militant speech by Douglass at the Joy Street church was inappropriate given the political tension in a country that was on the brink of civil war.⁶¹ Perhaps when Douglass visited New Bedford about this time there were local pacifist supporters who did not want a repeat of the recent violent Tremont Temple episode and talk of violence and war, so they discouraged him from speaking and as a result he wrote in his letter, “My old friends did not manage matters well for me when in New Bedford. Had your lamented husband been alive, I could not have been placed under a bushel.”

Frederick Douglass’s friendship with Henry O. Remington, who was almost exactly the same age as Douglass, undoubtedly went back for more than twenty years. Douglass paid his respects to Remington by writing the December 1860 letter to his wife, Mary Ann C. Rice Remington, and by printing Henry’s obituary in his *Douglass’ Monthly* newspaper. The obituary, reprinted from the *New Bedford Standard Times* newspaper, reported on the funeral proceedings that took place at Liberty Hall in New Bedford, where the Rev. Mark Trafton described Henry as, “the faithful husband – the unselfish philanthropist – the incorruptible citizen – the constant Christian – the honest man.” He also hailed Henry’s life: “His life is ended, his struggles are over, his battle is fought, his victory is secured. His life was a great success. Not in vain has he lived. He lays down the burden and throws aside his armor like a warrior who is conscious of having done his duty, his whole duty, and nothing but his duty.”⁶²

George T. Downing was another Newport abolitionist friend of Frederick Douglass, Isaac Rice, and the Remingtons. He was born in 1819 in New York and was a successful businessman with hotels and restaurants in New York City, Newport, and later in

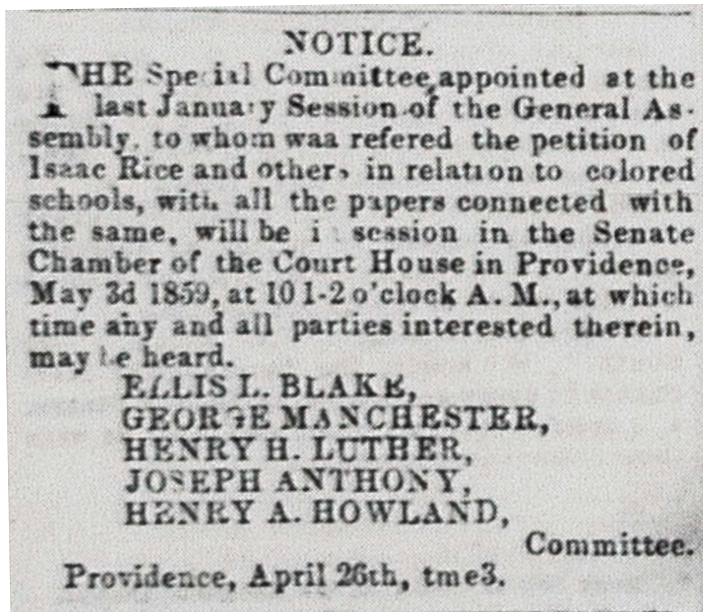
Washington, D. C. Downing, Isaac Rice, and other Newporters worked together to protest racial segregation in Rhode Island schools as early as 1859 when a petition to desegregate Rhode Island schools (led by Isaac Rice's signature) was addressed to the General Assembly (see image on page 25). Newport integrated its schools in 1865, and the state of Rhode Island followed in 1866.⁶³

Downing built a summer season business in Newport and made it his home, however he also got caught up in the troubled times of 1860. In 1854 he built the luxurious Sea Girt House on Bellevue Avenue across from Touro Park. It burned to the ground on December 15, 1860, a week before Douglass wrote about his "stormy" and "wearing" life, and amid rumblings of civil war. *The Chicago Tribune* reported on the fire as possibly the work of an arsonist and Downing's daughter Serena Washington wrote in a memoir of her father that, "an incendiary's torch was placed to the structure." The origins of the fire were never discovered, although some thought that the fire was in retaliation for Downing's advocacy for civil rights.⁶⁴

Douglass and Downing were longtime friends and political collaborators. In 1866 they led a delegation of thirteen men to a meeting with President Andrew Johnson at the White House. Downing led off by stating they were there to demand that Blacks gain the right to vote. President Johnson opposed this idea and in fact wanted to send



Abolitionist and entrepreneur, George Downing (1819-1903) and family. P5172, COLLECTION OF THE NEWPORT HISTORICAL SOCIETY, COURTESY OF THE RHODE ISLAND BLACK HERITAGE SOCIETY.

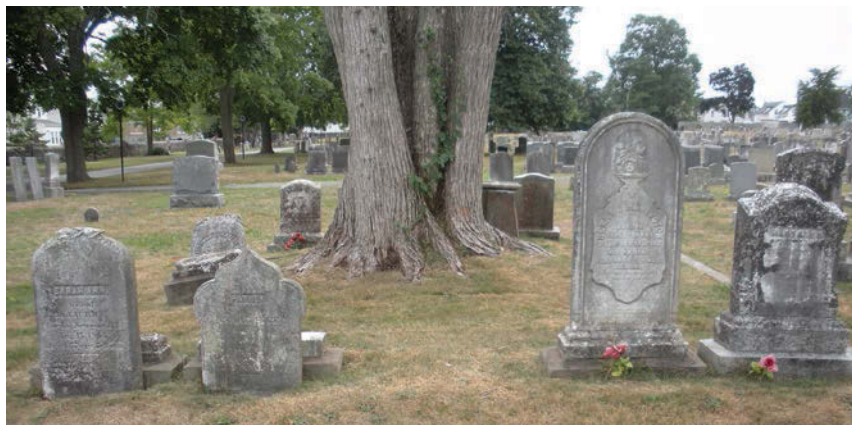


Notice of school desegregation petition, addressed to a Special Committee of the Rhode Island General Assembly, signed by Isaac Rice. *NEWPORT DAILY NEWS*, MAY 9, 1859.

Blacks back to Africa under his colonization policy. Douglass and Johnson had a heated exchange. President Johnson argued that there would be a race war if African Americans got the right to vote, while Douglass stood his ground on the franchise question. Although Johnson never changed his mind, the meeting did expose his intentions and policy to the American public. Douglass and Downing went on to meet with members of Congress to lobby for the vote, which was finally granted by the Fifteenth Amendment in 1870.⁶⁵

Isaac Rice's roots in Newport were very deep. He had lived in the city since he was a young child. He was an entrepreneur who had built up businesses in Newport and he owned a family homestead there. Isaac Rice and his wife also had eight children, most of whom stayed in the Newport County area after reaching adulthood. Isaac aligned himself with other like-minded Black and White abolitionists trying to make a difference in Newport, in Rhode Island, and in their country. He died in Newport on July 24, 1869. Mary Ann Remington died two decades later on August 5, 1888. Isaac, his wife Sarah, Mary Ann, and Henry are all buried together in the Remington family plot in the Rural Cemetery in New Bedford, Massachusetts.⁶⁶

Newport members of the Rice family and their relatives and associates, who were committed to the struggle for the abolition of slavery and the rights of people of African heritage, made connections with national figures in the antislavery movement during the 1840s and the 1850s. Of these figures, none were so esteemed as the great leader



Remington family burial plot in the Rural Cemetery, New Bedford, Mass. From left to right the headstones are for Sarah Ann Rice, Isaac Rice, Henry O. Remington, and Mary Ann C. Remington. RICE FAMILY COLLECTION.

Frederick Douglass, and his large body of work to end slavery. The letter that Douglass wrote to Mary Ann C. Rice Remington in December 1860, which is still in possession of the Rice family, is an affirmation of the appreciation, friendship, and bond in the cause that Douglass shared with the Rice and Remington families of Newport and New Bedford. A consideration of Douglass's letter to Mary Ann C. Rice Remington reveals a network of antislavery activists, like members of the Remond family and their friends, which included Isaac Rice and his family as key actors. The life work of many families like them all over the country contributed to the foundation for our ethical evolution and for future activists to follow as expressed by the words of Hayden's poem about Douglass and freedom as seen on page 3, "this man shall be remembered...with the lives grown out of his life, the lives fleshing his dream of the beautiful, needful thing."



Isaac Rice's riddle to which Frederick Douglass refers in his letter to Mary Ann C. Rice Remington was written in 1838 according to an article in the *Newport Mercury*.⁶⁷ It also appeared on the first page of a private journal written by third mate, Joseph Ammons, a Narragansett Indian, and friend of Isaac Rice, while Ammons was aboard the whaling ship *Roman*.⁶⁸ Isaac Rice's son, Abraham C. Rice, was a cooper's mate on the *Roman*, and probably brought his father's riddle with him to amuse the crew on its long voyage which lasted from July 19, 1843 until January 23, 1845. The answer to Isaac Rice's riddle has been passed down in the Rice family but has been kept a closely guarded secret. I am reluctant to disclose the solution to the riddle without a guess, after all that is the point. I will give you a hint though: consider Isaac's life, when it was written, and my favorite lines are "I've carried man and man carries me — In various forms my visage see." — *John Rice*

Isaac Rice's Riddle

Before Adam, Eve or Cain had birth
My dwelling place was in the earth
Soon as my use was known to man
Yet without my help the search was vain
When I am new then I am old
My value often paid in gold
Sometime I've feet. Sometimes I've legs
Sometimes a body and no head
I never walk although I run
For man will use me old or young
He scruples not my skin to bark
And from the body takes my heart
He will use me first with cautious care
Until a conqueror he is sure
Like human statues I am seen
Sometimes I'm smiling on the green
Although my presence he disdains
His very life on me depends
I've carried man and man carries me
In various forms my visage see
He tried my nature to destroy
Before my use he did employ
In mechanic art I have excelled
And many other have expelled
Although I cannot see or hear
Speak so loud that you may fear
Though deaf and dumb I first was made
I speak by art and human aid
Kings and Priests are my nearest Friends
And I can serve a vagrant's end
For either I had no choice
When first I came by nature's voice
Now if my name you wish to speak
I am in every house in every street.

— *From Rice Family Collection*

Endnotes

- 1 The original letter is in the Rice Family Collection.
- 2 Frederick Glaysher, ed., *Collected Poems* by Robert Hayden (New York: Liveright, 1985), 62.
The poem was recommended to the author by the former poet laureate of New Bedford, Massachusetts, Everett Hoagland.
- 3 For a detailed description of Douglass's escape see William S. McFeely, *Frederick Douglass* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1991), 70-75; for the identification of the Shaw contact, see Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, First Edition (Boston: Anti-Slavery Office, 1845), 109-111, and McFeely, *Frederick Douglass*, 74; for the addresses of the Shaws see 1840 *Census and House Survey*, Newport Historical Society Manuscript Collection, Newport, R.I.; for the Shaws' offices in the Anti Slavery Society of Newport, see *Minutes of the Anti Slavery Society of Newport, 1836-1841*, Book 97B, Newport Historical Society Manuscript Collection, December 10, 1837, and November 8, 1838.
According to Richard Shaw's headstone in the Common Burial Ground in Newport, he was born in 1779; George C. Shaw's headstone in the Island Cemetery in Newport reveals that he was born in 1791.
For a description of David Ruggles, see David W. Blight, *Frederick Douglass: Prophet of Freedom* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2018), 83-84.
- 4 Blight, *Frederick Douglass: Prophet of Freedom*, 305-319.
- 5 *Harper's Weekly*, December 15, 1860, 787-788; Philip S. Foner, *The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass* (New York: International Publishers, 1950), 2:555-556; Blight, *Frederick Douglass: Prophet of Freedom*, 328-330.
- 6 "Ordinance of Secession, Constitutional Convention," South Carolina Department of Archives and History manuscript collection, S 131053, Columbia, South Carolina.
- 7 Charles A. Battle, *Negroes on the Island of Rhode Island* (Newport, n.p., 1932), 29.
- 8 Free African Union Society & African Benevolent Society Records Collection, Newport Historical Society, ms.095; William H. Robinson, ed., *The Proceedings of the Free African Union Society and the African Benevolent Society Newport, Rhode Island 1780-1824* (Providence: Urban League of Rhode Island, 1976), 157, 190, 191, 193-195; Battle, *Negroes on the Island of Rhode Island*, 18.
- 9 Joey LaNeve DeFrancesco, "Abolition and Anti-Abolition in Newport," *Newport History* 92 (Winter/Spring 2020): 14; "African Church at Newport, 1824," 12-13, vol. 1674, Newport Historical Society Manuscript Collection; Meeting Minutes of the Colored Union Church & Society, 1823-1847, vol. 1674 (F), Newport Historical Society Manuscript Collection (Isaac Rice is listed as a founding member at a January 24, 1824 meeting.); Battle, *Negroes on the Island of Rhode Island*, 22; Robert Glenn Sherer Jr., "Negro Churches in Rhode Island," *Rhode Island History* 25 (Jan. 1966): 9-25.
- 10 For neighbor Abraham Casey, see Battle, *Negroes on the Island of Rhode Island*, 16; for Esther Brinley, see Henry N. Jeter, *Twenty-five Years Experience with the Shiloh Baptist Church and Her History* (Newport: Remington Printing Co., 1901), 7; for Alexander Jack Jr., see <https://buildingsofnewengland.com/2021/12/22/alexander-jack-jr-house-1811/> (accessed 6/12/22).
- 11 For the history of the building at 23 Thomas Street, see Antoinette F. Downing and Vincent J. Scully, Jr., *The Architectural Heritage of Newport Rhode Island*, 2nd edition, (New York: Bramhall House, 1967), 510; and invoice to Caesar Bonner for 23 Thomas Street building materials, October 1809, Rice Family Collection.
- 12 Robinson, ed., *The Proceedings of the Free African Union Society and the African Benevolent Society*, 162-164.
- 13 Letters written by Isaac Rice when working aboard ships: Isaac Rice in Havana, Cuba to fiancée Sarah Ann Casey Conner, March 22, 1816; Isaac Rice in Kronstadt, Russia to fiancée Sarah Ann Casey Conner, July 17, 1816; Isaac Rice in Havana, Cuba to wife Sarah Ann Casey Conner, January 24, 1819, all in Rice Family Collection.

- 14 Dates of family marriages, births, and deaths were carefully recorded by Isaac Rice, Rice Family Collection. Other birth and death records for Isaac's descendants can be found at ancestry.com.
- 15 DeFrancesco, "Abolition and Anti-Abolition in Newport," 12-14; Battle, *Negroes on the Island of Rhode Island*, 29-30.
- 16 David S. Lovejoy, "Samuel Hopkins: Religion, Slavery, and the Revolution," *The New England Quarterly* (June 1967): 227-243; Battle, *Negroes on the Island of Rhode Island*, 7-8.
- 17 For Isaac Rice as a founding member, see *Minutes of the Anti Slavery Society of Newport*, first meeting, November 1836; as convention delegates see *Minutes of the Anti Slavery Society of Newport*, November 8, 1838, January 27, 1840, and November 8, 1841; for Rice as a distributor of *The Liberator*, see Deborah Bingham Van Broekhoven, *The Devotion of These Women: Rhode Island in the Antislavery Network* (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002), 17.
- 18 Battle, *Negroes on the Island of Rhode Island*, 29,30.
- 19 *Underground Railroad - Special Resource Study*, September 1995. United States Department of Interior, National Park Service, 30-44; *Underground Railroad in New England*, 1976. American Revolution Bicentennial Administration, Region I, 6; Mary Ellen Snodgrass, *The Underground Railroad: An Encyclopedia of People, Places, and Operations* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 2:446; Richard C. Youngken, *African Americans in Newport* (Providence: Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission, Rhode Island Black Heritage Society, 1992), 24,75.
- 20 Elizabeth C. Stevens, "A symmetrical, harmonious, substantial character: Schools for Abolitionist Children in Mid-Nineteenth-Century New England," *The Dublin Seminar for New England Folklife Annual Proceedings 2015*. (Deerfield, Massachusetts: Trustees of Historic Deerfield, 2018).
- 21 Battle, *Negroes on the Island of Rhode Island*, 30.
- 22 Courting letter from Henry O. Remington to Mary Ann Conner Rice, July 5, 1837; Letter from Henry O. Remington to Isaac Rice, August 10, 1838. Both letters are in the Rice Family Collection.
- 23 DeFrancesco, *Abolition and Anti-Abolition in Newport*, 18.
- 24 Youngken, *African Americans in Newport*, 25.
- 25 Battle, *Negroes on the Island of Rhode Island*, 24.
- 26 Ibid., 30.
- 27 Joel Schor, "The Rivalry between Frederick Douglass and Henry Highland Garnet," *Journal of Negro History* 64 (Winter 1979): 30-38.
- 28 Dorothy Burnett Porter, "The Remonds of Salem, Massachusetts: A Nineteenth-Century Family Revisited," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* (October 16, 1985):281; "Sarah P. Remond," in Matthew Davenport Hill, ed., *Our Exemplars Poor and Rich or, Biographical Sketches of Men and Women Who Have By an Extraordinary Use of Their Opportunities, Benefited Their Fellow-Creatures* (London: Cassell, Petter, and Galpin, 1861), 280.
- 29 *Land Evidence Records*, 20:258, Newport Historical Society, Newport R.I.; Maritcha Remond Lyons, "Memories of Yesterdays," unpublished autobiography, 64, in Harry A. Williamson Papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.
- 30 Sirpa Salenius, *An Abolitionist Abroad: Sarah Parker Remond in Cosmopolitan Europe* (Amherst Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press, 2016), 36; Maritcha Remond Lyons, "Memories of Yesterdays," 59.
- 31 "Sarah P. Remond," in *Our Exemplars Poor and Rich*, 282.
- 32 Salenius, *An Abolitionist Abroad*, 44-45.
- 33 Porter, "The Remonds of Salem, Massachusetts," 274-275.
- 34 DeFrancesco, "Abolition and Anti-Abolition in Newport," 12-14; Isaac Rice was elected as a state convention delegate and on April 30, 1840, Isaac Rice and Charles Remond were elected New York convention delegates. *Minutes of the Anti Slavery Society of Newport*, 1836-1841, November 8, 1838; Deborah Bingham Van Broekhoven, *The Devotion of These Women: Rhode Island in the Antislavery Network*, 17.

- 35 *Vital Records of Salem Massachusetts to the end of the year 1849* (Salem, Massachusetts: Newcomb & Gauss Co.) 3: 1828; Porter, "The Remonds of Salem, Massachusetts," 289.
- 36 Stevenson, ed., Introduction, *The Journals of Charlotte Forten Grimké* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 3-8.
- 37 Ibid., xxxiii.
- 38 Ibid., 131.
- 39 Ibid., 202, 204.
- 40 Ibid., 241-242
- 41 Ibid., 242-244.
- 42 Charlotte Forten Grimké continued teaching into the 1860s and 1870s. In 1862 and 1863, she taught newly emancipated Blacks in South Carolina. She was also an antislavery poet and activist. She published her first poem at the age of seventeen in *The Liberator*, "To W. L. G. on Reading his Chosen Queen," March 16, 1855, 4; at the age of eighteen she joined the Salem Female Anti-Slavery Society; her poems were published in the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, *Anglo-African Magazine*, the *Atlantic Monthly*, and *The Evangelist*. As an activist, Charlotte co-founded the National Association of Colored Women, in 1896. Brenda Stevenson, ed., Introduction, *The Journals of Charlotte Forten Grimké*, 3-53.
- 43 Isaac Rice's list of birthdates of the Rice family, Rice Family Collection.
- 44 According to Henry Remington's headstone in the Rural Cemetery in New Bedford, he was born in Jamestown. At the time of his death, Massachusetts records listed his birthplace as "Kananicut," (Conanicut, another name for Jamestown) and noted that, at his death, he was forty-three years and three months old, see *Massachusetts Vital Records, 1840-1911*, vol. 138: 105.
- 45 Whaling Crew List and Logbook Database New Bedford Whaling Museum, https://www.whalingmuseum.org/online_exhibits/crewlist/ and <https://view.officeapps.live.com/> (accessed February 17, 2022).
- 46 Kathryn Grover, *Behind the Mansions: The Political, Economic, and Social Life of a New Bedford Neighborhood*, County-Sixth Neighborhood Study, National Park Service, May 2006, 91.
- 47 Henry O. Remington to Mary Ann Conner Rice, July 5, 1837. Rice Family Private Collection.
- 48 Kathryn Grover, *The Fugitive's Gibraltar* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001), 273.
- 49 Blight, *Frederick Douglass: Prophet of Freedom*, 87, 92, 111.
- 50 For Newport's anti-abolitionism, see DeFrancesco, "Abolition and Anti-Abolition in Newport," 1, 5-8; Newport Town Meeting Minutes, 1831-1843, vol. 2010, September 4, 1835, 130-136, Newport Historical Society Manuscript Collection; for New Bedford's abolitionism, see Grover, *The Fugitive's Gibraltar*, 10, 16; for Jamestown's purge see East Ferry Wharf, Jamestown, R.I. | Rhode Island Slave History Medallions (rishm.org/jamestown/east-ferry-wharf-jamestown-ri/) (accessed February 17, 2022).
- 51 Earl F. Mulderink, *New Bedford's Civil War* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012), 14, 23, 24; Grover, *The Fugitive's Gibraltar*, 135; Frederick Douglass, *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*, (2nd edition Boston: De Wolfe & Fiske Co, 1892), 165-167.
- 52 Irene E. Williams, "The Operation of the Fugitive Slave Law in Western Pennsylvania from 1850 to 1860," *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine* 4 (June 1, 1920): 150-160; C. A. Paul (2016). "Fugitive Slave Act of 1850: *Social Welfare History Project*," <https://socialwelfare.library.vcu.edu/federal/fugitive-slave-act-of-1850/>. Accessed, Feb. 19, 2022.
- 53 Earl F. Mulderink, *New Bedford's Civil War*, 47.
- 54 Fugitive Slave Act petition submitted to the Massachusetts legislature. Senate Unpassed Legislation, 1851, Docket 13162. SC1/series 231. Massachusetts Archives. Boston, Massachusetts. I am grateful to Kimberly Dumpson for sharing information about the petition with me.
- 55 *The Liberator*, August 19, 1853, 2.

- ⁵⁶ *The Liberator*, February 24, 1854, 2; *The Liberator*, July 28, 1854, 3.
- ⁵⁷ *The Liberator*, August 13, 1858, 4.
- ⁵⁸ *The Liberator*, August 19, 1859, 4, and continued on August 26, 1859, 4.
- ⁵⁹ *The Liberator*, August 26, 1859, 3.
- ⁶⁰ According to Henry Remington's headstone in the Rural Cemetery in New Bedford, he died on November 22, 1860; he died of tetanus according to *Massachusetts Vital Records, 1840-1911*, vol 138: 105.
- ⁶¹ Foner, *The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass*, 2:533-540; Blight, *Frederick Douglass: Prophet of Freedom*, 328-330.
- ⁶² *Douglass' Monthly* newspaper, Frederick Douglass ed., January 1861, 399.
- ⁶³ *Newport Daily News*, May 9, 1859; Lawrence Grossman, "George T. Downing and Desegregation of Rhode Island Public Schools 1855-1866," *Rhode Island History* 36 (Nov. 1977): 99-105.
- ⁶⁴ *Chicago Tribune*, December 21, 1860, 2; S. A. M. Washington, *George Thomas Downing, Sketch of His Life and Times* (Newport: The Milne Printery, 1910), 4.
- ⁶⁵ Blight, *Frederick Douglass: Prophet of Freedom*, 440, 474-476.
- ⁶⁶ Cemetery Office Records, City of New Bedford, Department of Public Infrastructure, 1105 Shawmut Avenue, New Bedford Massachusetts.
- ⁶⁷ Someone guessed the answer to the 1838 riddle as reported in the *Newport Mercury*, December 22, 1944, 4.
- ⁶⁸ Archive Log 792, Mystic Seaport Museum. I am grateful to Kimberly Dumpson for sharing her discovery of the riddle in Ammons's journal.