

The New Bedford Historical Society is dedicated to documenting and celebrating the history, legacy and presence of African Americans, Cape Verdeans, Native Americans, West Indians and other people of color in New Bedford, Massachusetts.

Founded in 1996, the Society was awarded 501©(3) status in September 1999 as a not-for-profit organization. Since then, the Society has received funding from numerous sources in support of its educational and informative programs.

Most recently, the Society was honored with a **Preserve America Stewards Award** by First Lady Michelle Obama for its preservation efforts.

## *Awards*

- Preservation Society Award
- Sara Delano Preservation Award from Waterfront Historic Area League (WHALE) 2007
- Drum Major Award 2010

## *Nathan and Mary "Polly" Johnson House*

*a Small House with a Big History*

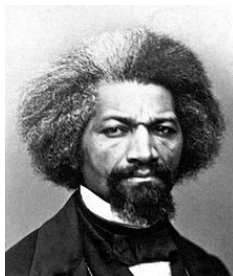


# *Nathan and Mary Johnson House*

*The First Free Home of  
Frederick and Anna Douglas*

The Nathan and Mary Johnson House is the only remaining building in which Frederick Douglass lived during his six years in New Bedford (1838-1844). It was while living in this house that Frederick Augustus Bailey became Frederick Douglass and began his journey to becoming a great orator, abolitionist and activist.

Nathan and Polly Johnson were prosperous African Americans who were well-known for their extensive work in the anti-slavery movement. Their home was the base for the couple's catering and confectionary business.



Frederick Douglass

For the early years of the 19th Century until the onset of the Civil War, the House was an important stop on the Underground Railroad for many who passed through New Bedford on their way to points further north and to freedom.



Anna Douglass

The members of the New Bedford Historical Society acquired the house in 1998 and continue to serve as its steward .

The Society has worked to preserve and protect the House, restoring the exterior of the building and working to renovate the interior to become an educational center focusing on New Bedford's role in the Underground Railroad and the activities of local abolitionists.

The Nathan and Polly Johnson properties were designated a **National Historic Landmark** in 2000.

It is also a designated site on the **National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom**, the **White House Millennial Trail**, and the **New Bedford Black History Trail**.



*Tours of the house are available by appointment only. Reservations must be made 48 hours before requested tour day and time.*

Contact the **New Bedford Historical Society**

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