

THE GILDER LEHRMAN INSTITUTE *of* AMERICAN HISTORY

*Inside the Vault:
David Blight discusses Frederick Douglass documents*

February 3, 2022

The session will start shortly. Please note:

- Your video and audio will automatically turn off.
- You can participate through the Q&A function.
- If you have technical difficulties, please email collectionprograms@gilderlehrman.org so we can assist you.

During the Session



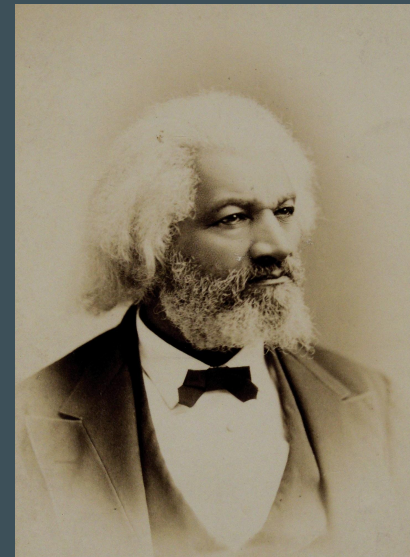
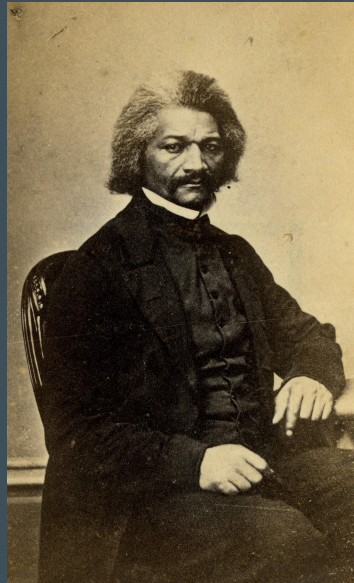
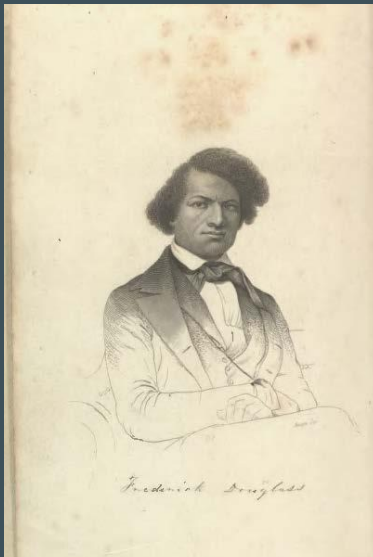
- If you would like to ask a question, you can **use the Q&A feature.**
- We will be answering audience questions throughout the session.

For Security and Privacy

- Your microphone is automatically muted.
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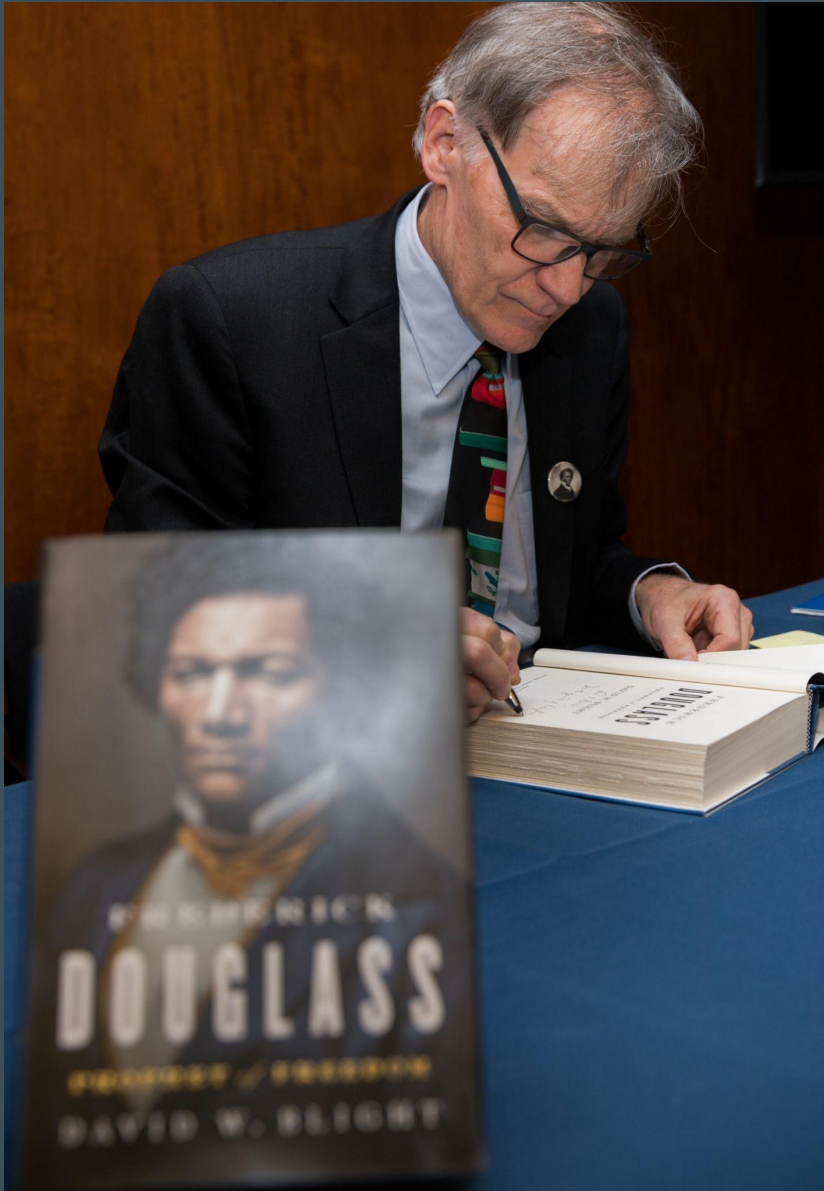
Today's Documents

- Frederick Douglass's correspondence with Hugh and Benjamin Auld
- Douglass's July 5, 1852 Speech "What, to the American Slave, is your fourth of July"
- Douglass's letter to Mary Todd Lincoln



Dr. David Blight

THE GILDER LEHRMAN
INSTITUTE of AMERICAN HISTORY



- Dr. David Blight - The Sterling Professor of History, of African American Studies, and of American Studies and Director of the Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance, and Abolition at Yale University

Frederick Douglass and the Auld Family

Rochester Oct. 4th (1857)

Hugh Auld Esq.
My dear Sir.

My heart tells me that you are too noble to treat with indifference the request I am about to make. It is twenty years since I ran away from you, or rather not from you but from Slavery, and since then I have often felt a strong desire to hold a little correspondence with you and to learn something of the position and prospects of your dear children. They were dear to me and are still—indeed I feel nothing but kindness for you all—I love you, but hate Slavery. Now my dear Sir, will you favor me by dropping me a line, telling me in what year I came to live with you in Aliceanna & the year the Frigate was built by Mr. Beacham—The information is not for publication—and shall not be published. We are all hastening where all distinctions are ended, kindness to the humblest will not be unrewarded.

Perhaps you have heard that I have seen Miss Amanda that was, Mrs. Sears that is, and was treated kindly. Such is the fact, Gladly would I see you and Mrs. Auld—or Miss Sophia as I used to call her. I could have lived with you during life in freedom though I ran away from you so uncerimoniously, I did not know how soon I might be sold. But I hate to talk about that. A line from you will find me Addressed Fred^d Douglass Rochester N. York. I am dear Sir very truly yours, Fred^d Douglass

Frederick Douglass to Hugh Auld, October 4, 1857

Cedar Hill,
Anacostia, D. C.

Mch. 24 1894

Capt. B. F. Auld.

My dear Sir and friend:

By the pains you have taken to obtain for me the date when your father began ship building in company with Mr. Edward Harrison on the City Block you have made me deeply obliged to you. Should, ever be in my power to render you alike service or any other service, I beg you will not hesitate to call upon me. I value your letter highly. I think however, that Mr. Morgan is mistaken. It must have been as early as 5 27. When your father went into business on the City B. and must have been eight years old when I came to Baltimore in 1825 to look after your Brother Thomas. I know the date because Capt. Anthony my master died in

Frederick Douglass to Benjamin Auld, March 24, 1894

Frederick Douglass to Hugh Auld, October 4

Rochester Oct. 4th (1857)

Hugh Auld Esq

My dear Sir.

My heart tells me that you are too noble to treat with indifference the request I am about to make. It is twenty years since I ran away from you, or rather not from you but from Slavery, and since then I have often felt a strong desire to hold a little correspondence with you and to learn something of the position and prospects of your dear children. They were dear to me - and are still - indeed I feel nothing but kindness for you all - I love you, but hate Slavery. Now my dear Sir, will you favor me by dropping me a line, telling me in what year I came to live with you in Aliceanna - the year the Frigate was built by Mr. Beacham - The information is not for publication - and shall not be published. We are all hastening where all distinctions are ended, kindness to the humblest will not be unrewarded.

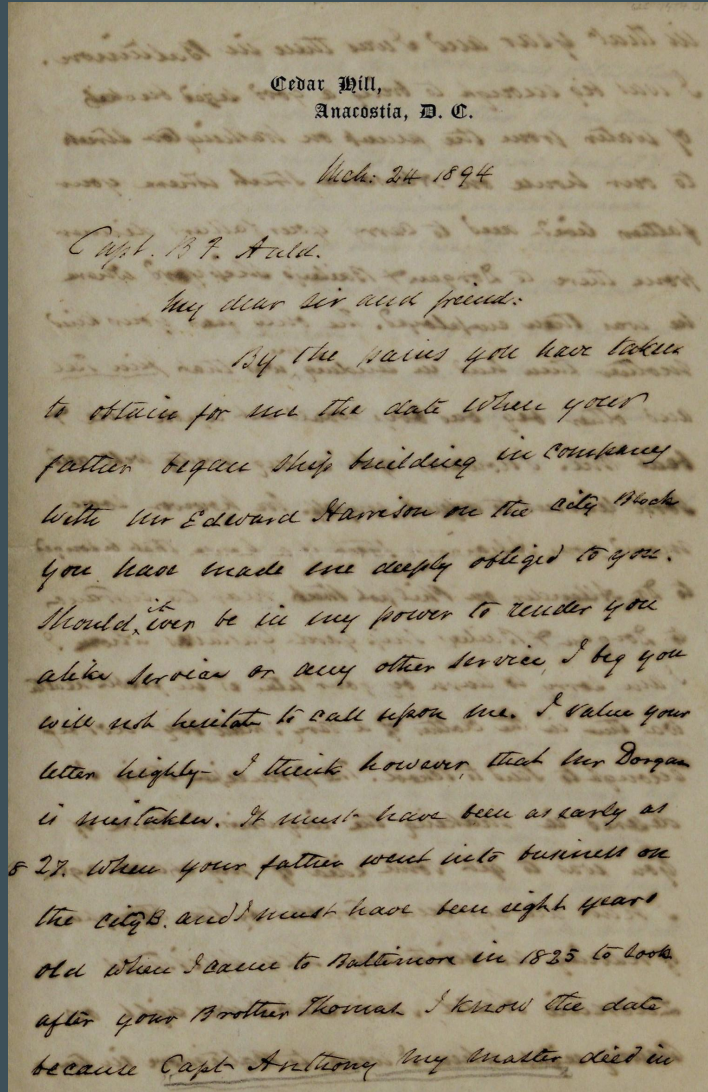
Perhaps you have heard that I have seen Miss Amanda that was, Mrs. Sears that is, and was treated kindly. Such is the fact, Gladly would I see you and Mrs. Auld - or Miss Sophia as I used to call her.

I could have lived with you during life in freedom though I ran away from you so unceremoniously, I did not know how soon I might be sold. But I hate to talk about that. A line from you will find me Addressed Fred^d Douglass Rochester N. York. I am dear Sir very truly yours, Fred^d Douglass

It is twenty years since I ran away from you, or rather not from you but from Slavery, and since then I have often felt a strong desire to hold a little correspondence with you and to learn something of the position and prospects of your dear children. They were dear to me – and are still – indeed I feel nothing but kindness for you all – I love you, but hate Slavery. Now my dear Sir, will you favor me by dropping me a line, telling me in what year I came to live with you in Aliceanna St. the year the Frigate was built by Mr. Beacham. The information is not for publication – and shall not be published. We are all hastening where all distinctions are ended, kindness to the humblest will not be unrewarded

I could have lived with you during life in freedom though I ran away from you so unceremoniously, I did not know how soon I might be sold. But I hate to talk about that.

Frederick Douglass to Benjamin Auld, March 24, 1894



Cedar Hill,
Anacostia, D. C.

March 24, 1894

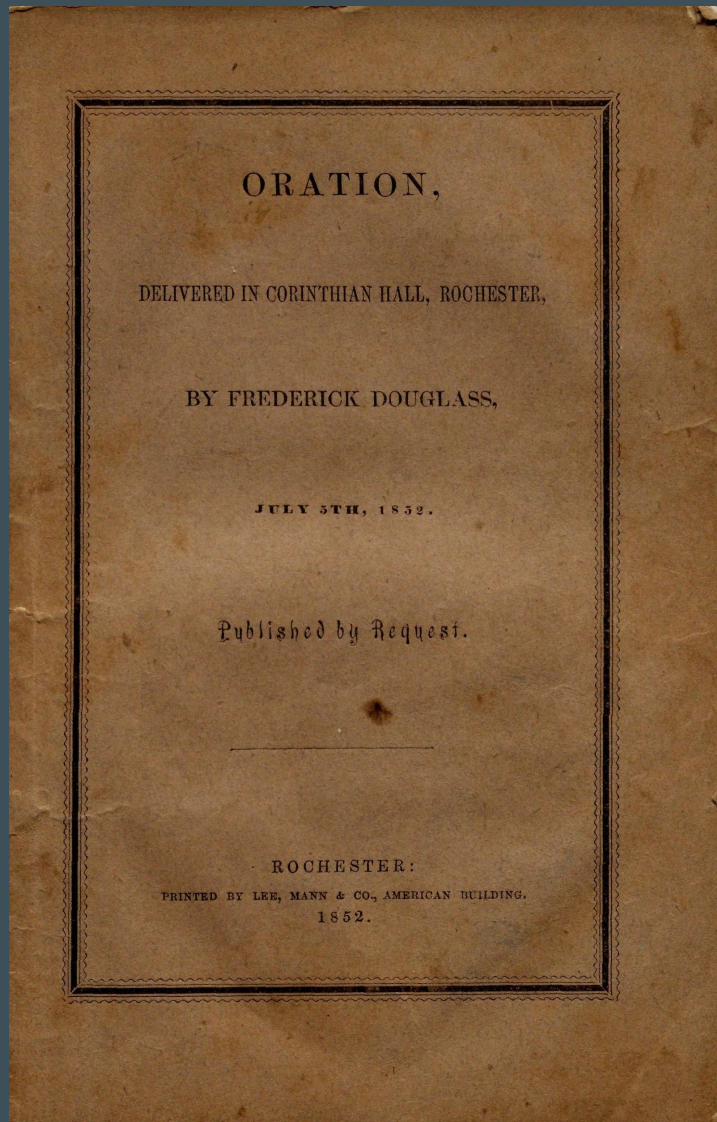
Capt. B. Auld.

My dear Sir and friend.

By the pains you have taken to obtain for me the date when your father began ship building in company with Mr Edward Harrison on the City Block you have made me deeply obliged to you. Should it be in my power to render you any service or any other service, I beg you will not hesitate to call upon me. I value your letter highly. I think however, that Mr Doran is mistaken. It must have been as early as 1827 when your father went into business on the City Block and must have been eight years old when I came to Baltimore in 1825 to look after your Brother Thomas. I know the date because Capt Anthony my master died in

It must have been as early as 1827 when your father went into business in the City B. and I must have been eight years old when I came to Baltimore in 1825 to look after your Brother Thomas. I know the date because Capt Anthony my master died in that year and I was then in Baltimore. I was big enough to bring a good sized bucket of water from the pump on Washington Street to our house on Allisana Street where your father lived. . . . The principle thing I desired in making the inquiries I have of you was to get some idea of my exact age. I have always been troubled by the thought of having no birth day. My Mistress Lucretia Auld, said that I was eight or nearly eight when I went to Baltimore in the Summer of 1825 – and this corresponds with what you have heard your kind mother say on the subject – so I now judge that I am now about 77 – years old.

“What, to the American Slave, is your Fourth of July”



What, to the American slave, is your 4th of July? I answer; a day that reveals to him, more than all other days in the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim. To him, your celebration is a sham; your boasted liberty, an unholy license; your national greatness, swelling vanity; your sounds of rejoicing are empty and heartless; your denunciations of tyrants, brass fronted impudence; your shouts of liberty and equality, hollow mockery; your prayers and hymns, your sermons and thanksgivings, with all your religious parade, and solemnity, are, to him, mere bombast, fraud, deception, impiety, and hypocrisy—a thin veil to cover up crimes which would disgrace a nation of savages. There is not a nation on the earth guilty of practices, more shocking and bloody, than are the people of these United States, at this very hour.

Frederick Douglass to Mary Todd Lincoln, August 7, 1865

Rochester, N.Y. August 7. 1865.

Mrs Abraham Lincoln:

Dear Madam: Allow me to thank you, as I certainly do thank you most sincerely for your thoughtful kindness in making me the owner of a cane which was formerly the property and the favorite walking staff of your late lamented husband the honored and venerated President of the United States.

I assure you, that this inestimable memento of his Excellency will be retained in my possession while I live - an object of sacred interest - a token not merely of the kind consideration in which I have reason to know that ^{the} President was pleased to hold me personally, but as an indication of ~~his~~ ^{his} humane ~~interest~~ interest in the welfare of my whole race.

With every proper sentiment of respect and esteem

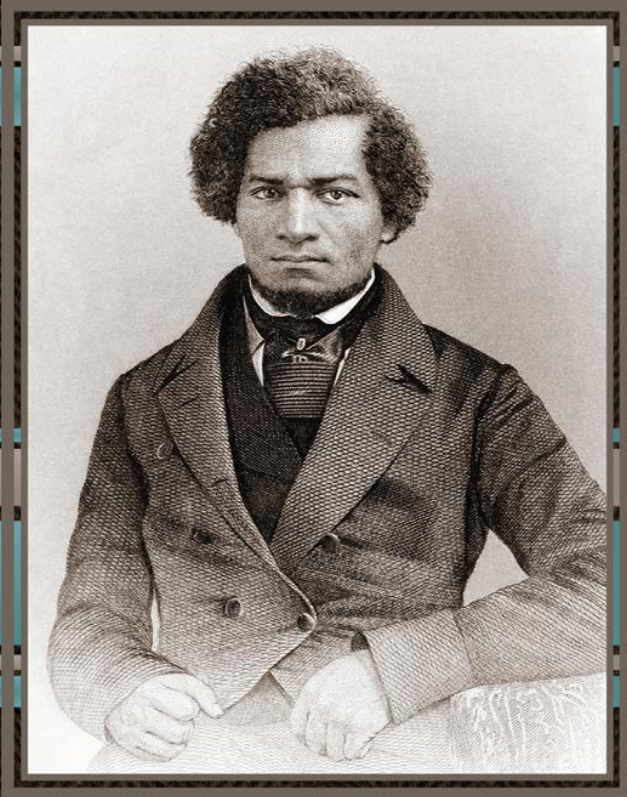
I am, Dear Madam, your Obedt^h Servt

Frederick Douglass.

Allow me to thank you, as I certainly do thank you most sincerely for your thoughtful kindness in making me the owner of a cane which was formerly the property and the favorite walking staff of your late lamented husband the honored and venerated President of the United States.

I assure you, that this inestimable memento of his Excellency will be retained in my possession while I live - an object of sacred interest - a token not merely of the kind consideration in which I have reason to know that the President was pleased to hold me personally, but as an indication of his humane interest in the welfare of my whole race.

Frederick Douglass Book Prize



JOIN US FOR A SPECIAL VIRTUAL EVENT

The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History
&
The Gilder Lehrman Center
for the Study of Slavery, Resistance, and Abolition
MacMillan Center at Yale

23RD ANNUAL

Frederick Douglass Book Prize

Thursday, February 17, 2022 · 7:00-8:00 p.m. ET

Next Inside the Vault

THE GILDER LEHRMAN
INSTITUTE *of* AMERICAN HISTORY

- Join us on March 3, 2022, from 7:00 to 8:00 p.m. ET (4:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. PT) when our curators and Dr. Martha J. King discuss Mary Katharine Goddard, printer of the Declaration of Independence and postmaster of Baltimore from 1775 to 1789.