The Vermont African American Heritage Trail explores the lives and stories of African Americans in Vermont, and those dedicated to issues of freedom and equality. It takes you to historic and cultural sites where actions, events, and individuals significant to African American history and civil rights are remembered. These places feature exhibits, roadside markers, films, and tours that illuminate the lives of African Americans in the Green Mountain State and North Country of the neighboring Empire State of New York. You shall meet teachers, storytellers, activists, ministers, and legislators who contributed to the complicated mosaic of race relations to make Vermont a better home for all.


For more information, visit:
www.VermontVacation.com/AfricanAmericanHeritageTrail

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African American history has been a part of Vermont's story since before the founding of the Green Mountain State. Blacks were among the earliest settlers, tilling the land, building homes, and establishing communities. An estimated 25 to 50 Black persons resided within the rolling hills of what would become Vermont when the 1777 Constitution presented one of the earliest abolition clauses banning adult slavery. In 1791, when the 14th state was admitted to the Union, the federal census recorded that Vermont was home to 270 Blacks. Black Vermonters would account for slightly more than 0.5 percent of the overall population until 1860. Although significant challenges existed related to slavery and race relations, Vermont offered opportunities for Black people not readily found everywhere.

African Americans fought for national freedom in the Revolutionary War, defended the Union in the Civil War, and since have proudly served Vermont and our nation in all military conflicts. Vermont's African Americans were among the first to earn advanced and honorary degrees, publish histories and antislavery memoirs, preach to white parishes, and serve as religious and educational leaders. Complex experiences suffered by African Americans cultivated generations of Vermont-born abolitionists and statesmen who reached the national stage to fight for emancipation, desegregation, and civil rights. These struggles and successes are part of Vermont's African American heritage, which continues into the 21st century.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Hildene, The Lincoln Family Home, exhibits a 1903 Pullman car. These cars were serviced by Black porters who, in 1925, formed the first all-Black union in the U.S.
- Solomon Northup's book, Twelve Years a Slave, was adapted into a movie 160 years after it was first published in 1853, receiving an Academy Award for Best Picture.
- Birchdale Camp is the last standing structure at Journey's End, the Turner Family Homestead. It reflects architecture of the Virginia Piedmont, where Alec Turner was enslaved. The camp was restored in 2019.
- The Clemmons Family Farm is among the 0.4 percent of farms in the U.S. owned by African Americans.
- A portrait of AlexanderTwilight, the first African American lawmaker in the U.S., will be displayed in the Vermont State House by 2022.
JOURNEY’S END
Immerse yourself in the remarkable story of famously enslaved Alex Turner, and the family’s powerful connection to the land in the hill farming community with visits to the Turner Hill Interpretive Center, Griffin Heritage House, and Bridghall Camp at Journey’s End.
35 TOWNSHEND ROAD
BRAFORD, VT 05039

OLD CONSTITUTION HOUSE
Vermont State Historic Site
On July 8, 1777, the Constitution of the “Free and Independent State of Vermont” was adopted here. This was the first constitution in America to prohibit slavery, promoting freedom for men over 21 years of age and women older than 18.
16 NORTH MAIN STREET
WINDSOR, VT 05089

RIVER STREET CEMETERY 
& MARTIN BILLING'S 
ROCKFELLER NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK
River Street Cemetery contains the graves of eight African American veterans of the Massachusetts 54th Regiment, which fought during the Civil War. The national park offers ranger- and self-guided tours of Woodstock’s Civil War and abolitionist history.
46 ELM STREET
WOODBURY, VT 05091

SENATOR JUSTIN S. MORRILL 
STATE HISTORIC SITE
Justin Morrill sponsored the Land-Grant College Act, which granted public lands to universities. In 1919, the second Morrill Act forbade states from applying the tax on alcohol to exhibitions for college students, allowing federal funds.
214 JUSTIN MORRILL HIGHWAY
STOWE, VT 05672

ORLEANS COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY/ OLD STONE HOUSE MUSEUM
The Old Stone House Museum interprets the visionary leadership of Alexander Tiddwell, an African American educator, preacher, and Vermont’s first black legislator.
100 OLD STONE HOUSE ROAD
ORLEANS, VT 05661

WINOSKI UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
The UMC was the home church for many Buffalo Soldiers from 1919 to 1933. The church was a center in the area where the soldiers worshiped, played sports, and continued their spiritual development.
24 W. ALLEN STREET
WINOSKI, VT 05480

CLEMMONS FAMILY FARM
The 16-acre Clemmons Farmhouse is one of the largest African American-owned farms in the country. The farm is a historic and cultural center that celebrates the African American and African diaspora arts, culture events, and storytelling.
215 CLEMMONS FARM ROAD
DIAMOND, VT 05447

ROKEY MUSEUM
The exhibit “Here & Safe: The Underground Railroad in Vermont” chronicles the story of Simon and Jesus, two fugitives from slavery who found freedom at Rokey’s in 1852. The story explores the abolitionist Robinson family and explores the turbulent decades leading up to the Civil War.
430 S. MAIN STREET, SUITE 7
FEBRUARY 1, VT 05036

THADDEUS STEVENS HISTORIC SITE MARKER
Vermont-born Thaddeus Stevens was a congressman from Pennsylvania and leader of the Republican Party. A fierce opponent of slavery and discrimination, he authored the 13th Amendment, which helped put an end to slavery, and was architect of Southern Reconstruction.

ANDREW HARRIS HISTORIC SITE MARKER
Andrew Harris, a member of Vermont’s last Black college, graduated from Middlebury College in 1851 and became the first to commit himself to immediate abolitionism. He was a featured speaker at the American Anti-Slavery Society Convention in New York City in 1858.

WILLIAM SLADE / DAQ RULE HISTORIC SITE MARKER
In 1858, the Daq Rule was put in place by Southern legislators to prevent talk of slavery in Congress. Vermont Congressman William Slade asserted the proposed impetus of this rule and helped pass a Fillmore speech that delayed passage of the bill.

CLARINDA HOWARD NICHOLS HISTORIC SITE MARKER
Clarinda Nichols advocated for women’s rights and fought for abolitionist views in her native Vermont and Kansas. After the Civil War, she managed a home for orphan Black children in Washington, D.C.

JONATHAN PECKHAM MILLER HISTORIC SITE MARKER
Anson Peckham Miller was a champion of the abolitionist movement. Married to his wife, Sarah Ann, supported the Underground Railroad financially and sheltered fugitive slaves in their Kendon Road home.

REV. LEMUEL HAYES HISTORIC SITE MARKER, PLEASANT STREET CEMETERY
Lemuel Hayes was the first ordained African American minister in the U.S. “An ardent ardent abolitionist, he penned “Liberty! Freedom! Extended.” In 1849, he received an honorary master’s degree from Middlebury College, the first in the U.S. granted to an African American.

MARTIN HENRY FREEMAN HISTORIC SITE MARKER
Born in 1808, Martin Freeman gained renown for his role as the first African American to become a college president, working at Allegheny College. In Africa, he served as president of a university in Liberia.

JEFFREY BRACE HISTORIC SITE MARKERS
Born in West Africa, Jeffrey Brace was free by the Underground Railroad to fight for the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War. He settled in Portsmouth and then moved to Georgia, where he recorded his life story. It was one of the most important antislavery memoirs written.

REVIVER GEORGE S. BROWN HISTORIC SITE MARKER, UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
Reverend George Brown, the first Methodist African American preacher in Vermont, organized his white parish in 1828 to build their new church, boldly defying the community.

CENTENNIAL FIELD HISTORIC SITE MARKER
Established in 1906 as the home of the University of Vermont’s athletics, the Centennial Field included three baseball fields that hosted exhibition games for the Negro League baseball.

EARLY BLACK SETTLE HISTORIC SITE MARKER
In 1790, three black settlers, expanding to six families, established an African American community in Hinsdale that flourished for seventy years. Lincoln Hill was home to soldiers of the American Revolution, War of 1812, and Civil War.

GEORGE WASHINGTON HENDERSON HISTORIC SITE MARKER, BELVIDERE CEMETERY
George Washington Henderson studied at Yale and was ordained in 1876 with the support of the University of Vermont Class of 1877. Later in life, he ministered in the South, and wrote statements to protest lynching.

SHERIFF WILLIAM UPHAM HISTORIC SITE MARKER
William Upham, U.S. senator and abolitionist, wrote the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act. On the Senate floor, Upham stated: “slavery is a crime against humanity, not so evil in the body politic.”

BUFFALO SOLDIERS AT FORT ETHAN ALLEN HISTORIC SITE MARKERS
The Buffalo Soldiers, black army regiments formed after the Civil War, served a four-year tour of duty at Fort Ethan Allen beginning in 1895.

THE GREAT CONVENTION HISTORIC SITE MARKER
As part of the African American Slavery Society’s 100 Conventions Program, John B. Douglass delivered a fierce abolitionist speech, his second in Vermont, in 1843.

COURT SQUARE HISTORIC SITE MARKER
At the first courthouse in 1804, the Vermont Supreme Court denounced a bill as “null and void to prevent slavery of an enslaved man, who was then granted freedom.”

NORTH COUNTRY OF NEW YORK

NORTH COUNTRY RAILROAD HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION, NORTH STAR RAILROAD MUSEUM
The Museum revives the historic legacy of the Champlain Line of the Underground Railroad. Stories include the fugitive slaves, the Railroad Underground, and immigrants today who no longer feel safe.
335 MAIN STREET
AOHALA, NY 12910

THE OLD FORT HOUSE MUSEUM
Exhibit celebrates the life and experiences of Solomon Northup, a free black man who was sold into slavery in 1841. Experience the original copy of Solomon’s book, Twelve Years a Slave.
29 BRIDGEWAY
FORT COWARD, NY 12933

JOHN BROWN FARM
NY STATE HISTORIC SITE
Home and grave site of abolitionist John Brown, who led the raid at Harper’s Ferry in 1859 to ignite the slave liberation movement. His trial escalated tensions that led to the South’s secession in 1860-1861.
2 JOHN BROWN ROAD
LAKE PLACID, NY 12946