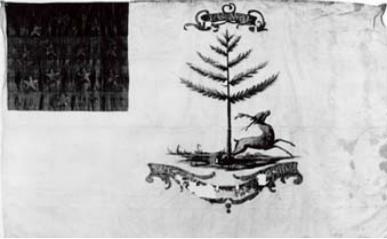


# Abolitionist Leaders and Heroes of Boston

The free African American community of Boston led the struggle against slavery and for equal rights in this city. Together with their white allies, these men and women, adults and children, were outspoken abolitionists and freedom fighters. Many were involved on the Underground Railroad, the secret system that helped enslaved people get from slavery to freedom.



**George Middleton** lived at 5 Pinckney Street on Beacon Hill. During the Revolutionary War, Middleton led an African American militia known as the Bucks of America who helped in the fight against the British. After the war, he helped lead his community in the struggle for freedom and equal rights as a member of the Prince Hall Masons. This organization was started in Boston by Prince Hall, an early leader in the fight against slavery and injustice.

**Sarah Roberts** was a young African American girl who was forced to walk past five white schools on her way to the Abiel Smith School at 46 Joy Street, Boston's school for black children. Knowing this was unfair, Sarah and her father, Benjamin, took the City of Boston to court to sue for their rights and freedom in 1848. Though they lost their case, Boston schools were integrated in 1855 when Massachusetts passed a law ending public school segregation in the state.

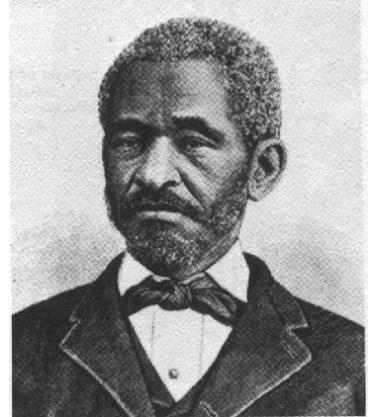


**William Cooper Nell** lived at 3 Smith Court. As a young student, he was denied a scholarship medal he had earned simply because he was African American. Because of this experience, he vowed to fight against the unfair education he and other young African American students received. His childhood vow became his life's work. As an adult, he led a long and successful struggle to integrate Boston's schools which happened in 1855. He also helped people escape on the Underground Railroad, was a well known abolitionist, and was the nation's first published African American historian.



**John J. Smith** lived at 86 Pinckney Street on Beacon Hill. He was a barber and leader in his community. Abolitionists gathered at his barbershop to hold meetings. One of the most famous people who met at his barbershop was Charles Sumner, the outspoken abolitionist Senator from Massachusetts. John Smith's barbershop was also considered a rendezvous spot for people escaping on the Underground Railroad. After the Civil War, Bostonians rewarded Smith's courage and leadership by electing him to the Massachusetts House of Representatives.

**Lewis Hayden** escaped from slavery in Kentucky and moved with his family to 66 Phillips Street on Beacon Hill. Hayden turned his home into an important safe house on the Underground Railroad, where he and his wife Harriet sheltered many people hiding from the slave catchers. He reportedly kept kegs of gunpowder in his home that he threatened to ignite if slave catchers dared to enter his property in search of fugitives.



**Ellen and William Craft** escaped from slavery in Georgia in a courageous and unique way. Ellen, who was light skinned, disguised herself as a white male slave owner. Her husband, William, pretended he was her attentive slave. Together in this disguise, they traveled by train and made their way north to freedom. In Boston, they were sheltered and protected by the Haydens at their Phillips Street home.

**John S. Rock** lived at 83 Phillips Street. He was a dentist, a doctor, a teacher, and a lawyer. He was the first African American to be admitted to argue before the United States Supreme Court and to address the United States Congress. In addition, John Rock was a major leader and orator in the Abolition Movement and one of the most forceful spokespersons for permitting African Americans to serve as soldiers in the Civil War.





**Maria Stewart** lived at what is now 81 Joy Street. Stewart was a famous African American who spoke out against slavery, injustice, and for equal rights for women. She spoke at the African Meeting House, which was an important religious and political center on Beacon Hill. She is considered to be the first American born woman of any race to speak in public on political issues.

**Robert Gould Shaw's** family owned a home at 44 Beacon Street. As the son of prominent abolitionists, Robert Gould Shaw was chosen by Governor John Andrew to lead the

54th Regiment. The 54th Regiment was the first African American regiment recruited in the North to fight in the Civil War.



**William Lloyd Garrison** was one of the most famous abolitionists. He is best known for being the outspoken editor of *The Liberator*, a weekly abolitionist newspaper that ran for 35 years. In 1832, Garrison and others founded the New England Antislavery Society at the African Meeting House at 8 Smith Court on Beacon Hill.

**Frederick Douglass** was born into slavery in Maryland. After escaping North to freedom, Douglass lived in Massachusetts for a few years and became one of the most famous orators who spoke out against slavery and for equal rights for all. Douglass gave numerous speeches at the African Meeting House. During the Civil War, he recruited African Americans to serve in the 54th Regiment. Two of Douglass's sons served in this regiment.

***Make sure to visit the Robert Gould Shaw Memorial on Beacon Street, across from the Massachusetts State House, which honors Colonel Shaw and the brave men of the 54th.***

