The Vermont Department of Tourism & Marketing extends special thanks to the participating museums and organizations and to Curtiss Reed, Jr. and the Vermont Partnership for Fairness and Diversity for assistance in developing the trail.

Thanks also to the project advisory committee: Denise Bailey, Nicole Curvin, Elise A. Guyette, Sadie Holliday, Bradley Mariner, Shambulia G. Sams and Jane Williamson.

For more information, visit WWW.VERMONTVACATION.COM/AFRICANAMERICANHERITAGETRAIL

EXPLORE MUSEUMS, CULTURAL SITES, EXHIBITS, FILMS AND TOURS THAT ILLUMINATE AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY IN VERMONT.
Vermont African American Heritage Trail

Vermont’s history is defined by its people. Among the early settlers, African Americans tilled the land, built homes and fought in the Revolutionary War. African Americans helped to establish communities in the new state of Vermont, and they fought to support the Union cause in the Civil War. They studied in Vermont schools and went on to become leaders in government, religion and education.

This guide explores the lives and stories of African Americans in Vermont and those dedicated to issues of equality and freedom.

The Vermont African American Heritage Trail brings you to museums and cultural sites where exhibits, films, tours and personal stories illuminate the lives of African Americans for whom the Green Mountain State was part of their identity. Additional locations along the route chronicle eras, people and events significant in Vermont’s African American history. You’ll meet teachers, storytellers, activists, ministers and legislators who made their homes in Vermont and made the state—and the nation—a better home for all.
Rokeby Museum presents a nationally significant Underground Railroad story tucked inside a quintessential Vermont experience. Its award-winning exhibit – "Free and Safe: The Underground Railroad in Vermont" – introduces visitors to Simon and Jesse, two fugitives from slavery who were sheltered at Rokeby in the 1830s. "Free & Safe" traces their stories from slavery to freedom, introduces the abolitionist Robinson family who called Rokeby home, and explores the turbulent decades leading up to the Civil War.

Visitors catch an intimate glimpse into 200 years of family and domestic life on tours of the fully furnished Federal style house.

Once a thriving Merino sheep farm, Rokeby retains eight historic farm buildings filled with agricultural artifacts along with old wells, stone walls, and fields. Acres of pastoral landscape invite a leisurely stroll or a hike up the trail. Picnic tables are available.
Daisy Turner, born in June 1883 to ex-slaves Alexander and Sally Turner in Grafton, Vermont, embodied living history during her 104 years as a Vermonter. Her riveting style of storytelling, reminiscent of West African griots, chronicled her family’s story beginning with her parents’ slavery right up to the time before her death in 1988, when she was Vermont’s oldest citizen. Learn more about the Turner family at sites #9 and #10 in this guide.

The Vermont Folklife Center recorded over 60 hours of interviews with Daisy. A selection of these audio recordings, plus photographs and videos relating to Daisy and the Turner family, are part of an interactive exhibit for visitors. The full collection of Turner materials in the Folklife Center Archive is available to qualified researchers by appointment. More about the Turner family is available in *Daisy Turner’s Kin: An African American Family Saga* by Jane Beck, University of Illinois Press, 2015.
Brandon Museum, Village Walking Tour & Stephen A. Douglas Birthplace

The entire village of Brandon is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. History and heritage are preserved in the homes, churches and meeting-places of this 19th century village and at the Stephen A. Douglas Birthplace, which is now the Brandon Museum.

History unfolds along a self-guided walking tour of the village. The Vermont Anti-Slavery Society held its 1837 convention at the Baptist Church, the center of Brandon’s abolitionist movement. Many residents of Brandon were active early in the abolitionist movement and their residences are included on the tour.

The Stephen A. Douglas Birthplace is one of the oldest standing buildings in the village and is now home to the Brandon Museum and Visitor Center. Here, exhibits chronicle the town’s anti-slavery movement and its connections to the national abolitionist movement. Visitors learn how Brandon native Douglas—Abraham Lincoln’s presidential opponent in 1860—rose to national prominence and how his hometown resoundingly rejected his politics due to his stance on slavery.

Alexander Twilight Hall at Middlebury College

Many academic firsts were achieved by African Americans at Middlebury College. Just four years after it was founded in 1800, Middlebury College awarded an honorary master’s degree to Reverend Lemuel Haynes, an African American who would later serve as a minister in Rutland for 30 years. In 1823, Reverend Alexander Twilight, who later became the first African American elected as a state legislator, was the first person of color to earn a degree from an American college or university. Mary Annette Anderson graduated from Middlebury College in 1899 as the class valedictorian and was the first African American woman inducted into Phi Beta Kappa.

In 1986, Middlebury College renamed one of its buildings Alexander Twilight Hall in honor of the educator, minister and politician. Visit the Old Stone House Museum (site #16 in this guide) where Twilight taught.
Jeffrey Brace Historic Marker

Jeffrey Brace was born in West Africa with the name Boyrereau Brinch. At 16 years of age, he was captured by European slave traders, shipped to Barbados, sold to a ship’s captain and later arrived in New England. Years later, while still enslaved, Brace enlisted in the Continental Army and won his freedom fighting in the American Revolution. At the war’s end, he settled in Poultney in the newly formed state of Vermont—the first state to prohibit slavery. He met and married an ex-slave and raised a family in Poultney. In 1810, he published *The Blind African Slave, Or Memoirs of Boyrereau Brinch, Nicknamed Jeffery Brace*, one of the most unique and important anti-slavery memoirs written in America.

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Martin Henry Freeman Historic Marker

Martin Freeman, born in Rutland, was a member of the second East Parish Congregational Church, which stood at the site of this marker. He graduated from Middlebury College in 1849 as salutatorian. In 1856, Freeman was named president of Allegheny College and became America’s first black college president. Convinced that little promise existed for the future of African Americans in the U.S., Freeman became active in the emigration movement of both enslaved and free black Americans to Africa and moved his family to Liberia in 1864. He was a professor at Liberia College for many years and became its president shortly before his death in 1889.
With a timeline overview that spans 100 years from the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863 to the Civil Rights Movement and March on Washington in 1963, the exhibit “Many Voices” brings to the conversation the voices of the Pullman Company. Represented are both the high society passengers who traveled in its comfort and the porters who provided the impeccable service that made travel by Pullman second to none. The fully restored executive railroad car came into service during Robert Lincoln’s tenure as Pullman Company president. Guided by its mission, “Values into Action,” Hildene uses Sunbeam to present a history that is illuminating and challenging in its content, raising questions intended to stimulate and encourage civil discourse.

8 Hildene, The Lincoln Family Home

Robert Lincoln, son of the Great Emancipator Abraham Lincoln, built his home in Manchester, Vermont in 1905 during his tenure as president of the Pullman Company. At the turn of the 20th century, the company was the largest employer of African Americans in the country. The 412-acre estate was home to three generations of the president’s descendants.

The thought-provoking exhibit “Many Voices” at Hildene’s 1903 Pullman Palace Car, Sunbeam, links the presidential son with his famous father. It highlights the paradoxical story that, in spite of the Pullman Company’s exploitative treatment of its porters, the position provided opportunities for black Pullman porters to improve their lives and the lives of their families, giving rise to the black middle class.
Many of Vermont’s early African American citizens left behind little documentation of their lives but that is not the case of former slaves Alec and Sally Turner. Alec, a descendant of an African chief and an English merchant’s daughter, was born into slavery in Port Royal, Virginia. He escaped to join the 1st New Jersey Cavalry as an assistant cook and, while in service, he allegedly killed his former overseer. After the war ended, Turner and his family lived in Maine and Boston, Massachusetts before settling in Grafton, Vermont in 1872. Alec worked in Grafton as a logger and sawmill worker to save money to purchase three lots totaling 150 acres. He built Journey’s End Farm on this land where he and his wife raised 13 children.

Today, visitors can learn about Turner family history at the Grafton History Museum and the Turner Hill Interpretive Center, walk through the village, visit the church where the Turner family worshipped, and visit the now 595-acre Turner Hill Wildlife Management Area where the family once lived.

The original Turner homestead is no longer standing, but the foundation remains in close proximity to the Turner’s Birchdale Camp. Collaborative efforts between the State of Vermont, the Preservation Trust of Vermont, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Windham Foundation are underway to stabilize the Birchdale Camp building and install interpretive signage at the site.
It was with the words, “Therefore, no male person, born in this country, or brought from over sea, ought to be holden by law, to serve any person, as a servant, slave or apprentice,” in a tavern in 1777, Vermont adopted the first constitution in America to prohibit slavery. A new concept at the time, freedom was promised for men older than 20 and women older than 17.

Written for the newly formed Republic of Vermont, the constitution was also the first to allow men to vote without requiring property ownership and the first to authorize a public school system. The document would guide Vermont for 14 years until 1791, when the Republic was admitted to the Union as the 14th state.

Often referred to as the “birthplace of Vermont,” the restored tavern building looks much as it did more than 200 years ago. Exhibits at the Old Constitution House recount the writing of the most progressive constitution of its time and examine its effect on the politics of the young nation.

The River Street Cemetery contains the graves of eight veterans of the Massachusetts 54th Regiment. During the Civil War, 709 African Americans lived in Vermont and 152 of them served in the Union Army. Those working as support staff could join any unit, but there were only a select few all-black units in which African Americans could serve as soldiers. The Massachusetts 54th was among the first such units formed and their success in battle paved the way for other African American units.

African American recruits from Vermont joined the 54th, such as George Hart, a freed Louisiana slave who was brought north by Vermont troops. He settled in Woodstock after the war and is among those buried in the River Street Cemetery.

To learn more about Woodstock’s abolitionist history and African American community, guided and self-guided tours are available through the Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park. Maps and an app called A Walk Through Vermont’s Civil War Home Front are available for download on the park’s website.
Historically black colleges and universities owe their existence to Vermont Senator Justin Smith Morrill. Congress passed his original Land Grant College Act in 1862 and its companion legislation the Land Grant College Act of 1890. The 1862 Morrill Act donated public lands to selected states and territories for the purpose of establishing agricultural and mechanic arts colleges. However, colleges in former Confederate states denied this opportunity to African Americans. The subsequent 1890 Morrill Act forced all states to either establish separate colleges for African Americans or to desegregate the colleges established under the first legislation. The southern states chose to establish 16 black colleges and universities. Ultimately, the 1890 legislation provided federal funding for the founding of 105 black colleges and universities established before 1964. Students and alumni of these institutions played pivotal roles in the passage of civil rights laws in the U.S.

Justin Morrill was born the son of a blacksmith in Stafford, Vermont. At age 15, he had to leave school to work as a merchant’s clerk. In later years, as a legislator, he worked tirelessly to provide others with the opportunities he himself lacked. Morrill’s Gothic Revival-style home, outbuildings, and Victorian-era gardens are open to visitors showcasing his interests in architecture and landscape design. The homestead is Vermont’s first National Historic Landmark.
**15 Thaddeus Stevens Historic Marker**

Born poor in Danville, Vermont in 1792, Stevens was schooled by his mother, Sally Morrill Stevens, and at nearby Caledonia County Grammar School, and then graduating from Dartmouth College in 1814. He became a brilliant lawyer committed to racial equality. As an abolitionist congressman from his adopted state of Pennsylvania and as chair of the House Ways and Means Committee, he worked to help finance the Civil War. He was recognized as the father of the 14th and 15th Amendments to the U.S. Constitution and architect of the Reconstruction of the South. He was both renowned and reviled for his eloquent call for the abolition of slavery.

**16 Old Stone House Museum**

Old Stone House Museum is the site of Alexander Twilight’s home, school, church and the stately granite building he built to house students of the Orleans County Grammar School. With buildings dating from 1823 to 1848, the museum is located in the Brownington Village Historic District where Twilight’s dormitory—Athenian Hall—dominates the landscape just as it did 150 years ago.

Reverend Alexander Twilight was an educator, minister, politician and the first African American to earn a bachelor’s degree from an American college or university (see Middlebury College, site #4 in this guide). Except for a four-year absence when the school floundered, Twilight served as the Brownington headmaster from 1829 until his death in 1857. In 1836, Twilight became the first African American elected to public office as a state legislator and served in the Vermont General Assembly. He was known as an innovative and beloved educator, a preacher, a builder and a man of great vision.
Reverend George S. Brown
Historic Marker

Reverend Brown was Vermont’s first African American Methodist minister. He was born in Newport, Rhode Island, and became a Methodist minister in Kingsbury, New York in 1833. He made a living by building stone walls, many of which are still standing. Brown served as a missionary to Liberia from 1837 to 1843. In 1855, he organized Methodist classes in Wolcott and supervised the building of the church in 1856. As far as can be determined, this is the only church in the U.S. where he served as the head preacher.

George Washington Henderson
Historic Marker

Born in Virginia circa 1850, Henderson was a servant to the adjutant in the 8th Vermont Regiment during the Civil War. He had come to Vermont as an illiterate teen and after receiving an education and graduating at the top of his class from the University of Vermont in 1877, he taught and held positions in Jericho, Craftsbury Common and Newport, Vermont. He went on to earn additional degrees and lived in Louisiana, Tennessee and Ohio, working as a teacher, author and minister. Today, the University of Vermont provides fellowships in his honor for pre-doctoral and post-doctoral students of diversity.
From 1795 to 1865, an African American farming community thrived on Lincoln Hill in Hinesburg, Vermont. In 1798, the first settlers at the bottom of the road from Massachusetts were Samuel Peters, Hannah Lensemen and husband Prince Peters. Prince served in Captain Silas Pierce’s MA Line (8th Co, 3rd MA Regiment) for three years during the American Revolution. Samuel Peters II volunteered at the Battle of Plattsburgh during the War of 1812.

This pioneering community cleared the land, joined the local Baptist church, established home factories, and exercised their voting rights at Freeman Meetings. Their descendants owned land and contributed to the local economy of Lincoln Hill until the late 20th century. The original Clark settlers expanded to five related families just before the Civil War, many of whom are buried in an abandoned cemetery at the top of the hill.

More about the early settlers of Lincoln Hill is described in Discovering Black Vermont: African American Farmers in Hinesburgh, 1790–1890 by Elise A. Guyette, University of Vermont Press, 2010.

In July 1909, the 10th U.S. Cavalry arrived at Fort Ethan Allen for a four-year assignment. Nicknamed the “Buffalo Soldiers” during the American Indian Wars, the 10th Cavalry was one of the first peacetime all-black regiments established in the regular U.S. Army after the Civil War. Highly decorated and famous for their professionalism and contributions during the Spanish-American War in Cuba, the 10th Cavalry became popular with the local community, hosting performances, parades and sporting events. After the 10th Cavalry suffered heavy losses in Arizona during a skirmish with Mexican troops in 1916, residents of Winooski, Vermont expressed their grief in a condolence letter to the regiment’s leader. They joined in military funerals and monument dedications. The Music Center, built in 1895 as Riding Hall, was used by the 10th Cavalry for drills, riding practice and as a performance venue in winters.
Clemmons Family Farm

With its breathtaking views of the Adirondacks to the west and the Green Mountains to the east, the 148-acre Clemmons Family Farm in Charlotte, Vermont includes six historic buildings (circa late 1700s-1800s), open meadows with prime farmland, and forests abundant with wildlife. A rare gem in New England, the farm is one of the largest African American-owned historic farms in Vermont. Per a 2012 U.S. agriculture census, less than half of 1% (0.4%) of farms in the United States are owned by African Americans and among the nearly 7,000 farms in Vermont, only 19 are African American-owned; that is 740 acres of the 1.2 million acres of farmland in Vermont.

Dr. Jackson and Lydia Clemmons came from humble beginnings. Their families were among the millions of African Americans who moved from the rural South to the urban mid-west and western states during the two Great Migrations in U.S. history. In the early 1900s, Lydia Clemmons’ grandmother escaped from slavery in Louisiana, some forty years after the Emancipation Proclamation. The story of how the Clemmons family moved from Ohio to Vermont in 1962, ran their farm, and opened the first mail-order African art business in the U.S.—all while pursuing careers in medicine and nursing—is a fascinating chapter in Vermont’s African American history.

As an African American heritage and multicultural center, the farm blends agriculture with storytelling and art and culture events.
The Changing Face of Vermont

Vermont’s population is more diverse than often perceived. Roughly six percent of Vermont’s population is comprised of people of color who represent many regions of America and the world. While some African Americans settled in Vermont generations ago, relatively new to the scene are more than 1,000 Vermonters who recently arrived through the Vermont chapter of the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants. This new population of Africans who have made Vermont home bring with them dynamic traditions and culture from 17 countries including Somalia, Congo, Sudan and Burundi.

Andrew Harris Historic Marker

“We consider it criminal in the sight of God and man, longer silently to submit to our indignities, or suffer them to be transmitted to posterity.” – Andrew Harris

In 1838, Andrew Harris became the first African American graduate of the University of Vermont. Harris went on to be known as an abolitionist and advocate of black equality. The anti-slavery journal, Liberator, stated he was “probably the most educated colored man in our country.” He was a featured speaker at the 1839 meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society. Harris was one of the founders of the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, a delegate to the first convention of the Liberty Party, and pastor of the 2nd African Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

An academic chair dedicated to Andrew Harris resides in the University of Vermont’s Waterman Building honoring his steadfast commitment to—and advocacy of—educational opportunities for African Americans in the face of adversity. He died at age 27.
Culinary Traditions

New Vermonters of African heritage are enriching the state in numerous ways. One very tangible influence—traditional cuisine and foods of home—has enhanced the state’s culinary cornucopia. African heritage foods and culinary traditions are celebrated in the confluence of ethnic eateries and markets that embrace Vermont’s increasingly diverse communities.

Clemmons Family Farm
Organic farm offers African diaspora events, cooking lessons, pop-up meals, and cultural performances
2213-2158 Greenbush Road
Charlotte, VT 05445
(802) 310-0097
www.clemmonsfamilyfarm.org

Mawuhi African Market
African and Caribbean grocer
160 North Winooski Avenue,
Burlington, VT 05401
(802) 862-1100

Community Halal Store
East African grocer
128 North Street
Burlington, VT 05401
(802) 865-1165

Curtis’ BBQ
Southern style BBQ and sides
7 Putney Landing Road,
Putney, VT 05346
(802) 387-5474
www.curtisbbqvt.com

Samosas made with natural and locally sourced ingredients available in natural foods stores and at the Burlington Farmers Market
(802) 233-7783
www.samosaman.com

Winnie’s International Market
Seasonings and spices sourced from Guyana available at the Essex Junction Farmers Market or online
(802) 310-9716
www.wisands.com
of equality and freedom. Americans in Vermont and those dedicated to issues and education. African Americans helped to establish communities in the new state of Vermont, and they fought to support the Union cause in the Civil War. They studied in Vermont schools and went on to become leaders in government, religion and education.

Vermont's history is defined by its people. Among the

Rokeby Museum
Open daily 10am-5pm, mid-May to late October
4334 U.S. Route 7, Ferrisburgh, VT 05456
(802) 877-3406 | www.rokeby.org

Great Convention Historic Marker
U.S. Route 7, near the Wesleyan Chapel
Ferrisburgh, VT 05456
www.accd.vermont.gov/historic-preservation/roadside-markers

Vermont Folklife Center
Open Tuesday-Saturday 10am-5pm
88 Main Street, Middlebury, VT 05753
(802) 388-4964 | www.vermontfolklifecenter.org

Alexander Twilight Hall at Middlebury College
50 Franklin Street, Middlebury, VT 05753
(802) 443-5000 | www.middlebury.edu

Brandon Museum at the Stephen A. Douglas Birthplace
Open daily 11am-4pm, mid-May to mid-October
4 Grove Street (Vermont Route 7), Brandon, VT 05733
(802) 247-6401 | www.brandon.org

Martin Henry Freeman Historic Marker
46 North Main Street, Rutland, VT 05701
www.accd.vermont.gov/historic-preservation/roadside-markers

Jeffrey Brace Historic Marker
Vermont Route 140, Town Green, East Poultney, VT 05741
www.accd.vermont.gov/historic-preservation/roadside-markers

Hildene, The Lincoln Family Home
Open daily 9:30am-4:30pm
1005 Hildene Road, Manchester, VT 05254
(802) 362-1788 | www.hildene.org

Grafton History Museum and Turner Hill Interpretive Center
Open Thursday-Monday 10am-4pm,
Memorial Day to Columbus Day
147 Main Street, Grafton, VT 05146
(802) 843-2584 | www.grafonhistoricalsociety.com

Turner Hill Wildlife Management Area
Access from Turner Hill Road and Townsend/Grafton Road, Grafton, VT 05146
www.vtfishandwildlifecom

Old Constitution House State Historic Site
Open weekends and Monday holidays 11am-5pm, late May to mid-October
16 North Main Street, Windsor, VT 05089
(802) 672-3773 or 828-3051 | www.historicsites.vermont.gov

River Street Cemetery
River Street, Woodstock, VT 05091
www.woodstockhistorical.org

Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park
Open late May through October
54 Elm Street, Woodstock, VT 05091
(802) 457-3368 | www.nps.gov/mabi

Senator Justin S. Morrill State Historic Site
Open weekends and Monday holidays 11am-5pm,
late May to mid-October
214 Justin Morrill Highway, Strafford, VT 05072
(802) 765-4484 or 828-3051 | www.historicsites.vermont.gov

Thaddeus Stevens Historic Marker
U.S. Route 2, The Common, Danville, VT 05828
www.accd.vermont.gov/historic-preservation/roadside-markers

Old Stone House Museum
Open Wednesday-Sunday 11am-5pm,
mid-May to mid-October
109 Old Stone House Road, Orleans, VT 05860
(802) 754-2022 | www.oldstonehousemuseum.org

Reverend George S. Brown Historic Marker
United Methodist Church, 4023 VT Route 15
Wolcott, VT 05680
www.accd.vermont.gov/historic-preservation/roadside-markers

George Washington Henderson Historic Marker
VT Route 109, at Belvidere Cemetery, Belvidere, VT 05442
www.accd.vermont.gov/historic-preservation/roadside-markers

Early Black Settlers Historic Marker
Lincoln Hill Road, Hinesburg, VT 05461
www.accd.vermont.gov/historic-preservation/roadside-markers

Buffalo Soldiers at Fort Ethan Allen Historic Markers
Ely Long Music Center, 223 Ethan Allen Avenue
Colchester, VT 05446 and
Intersection of Vermont Route 15 and Ethan Allen Avenue
Essex Junction, VT 05452
www.accd.vermont.gov/historic-preservation/roadside-markers

Clemmons Family Farm
2213-2158 Greenbush Road, Charlotte, VT 05445
(802) 310-0097 | www.clemmonsfamilyfarm.org

Andrew Harris Historic Marker
University of Vermont Admissions
184 South Prospect Street, Burlington, VT 05401
www.accd.vermont.gov/historic-preservation/roadside-markers
The Vermont Department of Tourism & Marketing extends special thanks to the participating museums and organizations and to Curtiss Reed, Jr. and the Vermont Partnership for Fairness and Diversity for assistance in developing the trail. Thanks also to the project advisory committee: Denise Bailey, Laura Clemmons, Nicole Curvin, Elise A. Guyette, Sadie Holliday, Bradley Mariner, Shambulia G. Sams and Jane Williamson.

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For Families & Educators

Do you want to dig a little deeper into Vermont’s African American history?

Incorporate related lesson plans and field trips into your classroom teaching?

Take your kids on a African American Heritage GeoTour in search of hidden caches?

Educational and family learning resources and activities are recommended by the Vermont Partnership for Fairness & Diversity at WWW.VTAFRICANAMERICANHERITAGE.NET

PERSONAL STORIES

EDUCATIONAL TOURS

CULTURAL SITES