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January 27, 1989

### Memorandum

To: Chief Historian, National Capital Region

From: Superintendent, National Capital Parks-East

Subject: Study of the Preservation of the Frederick Douglass Home

We are pleased to share with you the enclosed historical study, recently completed by Dr. Sharon Harley of the University of Maryland, under contract with National Capital Parks-East. Dr. Harley undertook a year long investigation of the preservation of the Frederick Douglass Home, 1895 - 1962. During the course of her research, she examined numerous documentary collections and interviewed current members of the Frederick Douglass Memorial and Historical Association who were involved in that preservation effort. In addition to her report, Dr. Harley recorded her interviews, all of which have been transcribed, and copied important documents discovered during the course of the project, all of which have been added to our library collection.

We are planning an exhibit to be mounted in the Visitor Center at Cedar Hill in March 1989 (during Women's History Month) which will tell this story in graphic form. Please feel free to call our park historian, Dr. Marilyn Nickels (433-1157), for more information on this study or the upcoming exhibit.

Enclosure

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A STUDY OF THE PRESERVATION AND ADMINISTRATION OF  
"CEDAR HILL": THE HOME OF FREDERICK DOUGLASS

WRITTEN BY

SHARON HARLEY, PH.D.

FOR THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

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## THE FREDERICK DOUGLASS HOME: "CEDAR HILL"

### FOREWORD:

In June of 1986, the National Park Service of the United States Department of the Interior commissioned a year-long study of the preservation and maintenance of the home of Frederick Douglass, located in the Anacostia section of Washington, D.C. The purpose of the proposed study was to document the history of the preservation of the home, its contents, and the surrounding property from 1895, the year of Frederick Douglass' death, to 1962, when the home was acknowledged as historically significant and placed under the management of the National Park Service. This story is largely an account of the diligent efforts to maintain the home by the membership of the Frederick Douglass Memorial and Historical Association, incorporated in 1900 by an act of Congress to preserve the home, in collaboration since 1916 with members of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs. The women (and the few men) associated with these two organizations envisioned the Douglass Home as a "national shrine" to be maintained in honor of the great nineteenth century black leader, Frederick Douglass. The National Park Service continues in the tradition of these exceptional women and men in its preservation of the home for today's and future generations.

This research project exists today because of the foresight

of key National Park Service officials, Mr. Robert Stanton, Associate Director of Operations of the National Park Service, Mr. Burnice Kearney, Superintendent of National Capital Parks-East, Mrs. Dorothy Benton, Chief of Interpretation, and Dr. Marilyn Nickels, historian of the park. I have been ably assisted in this study by Mr. Derrick Cook, site manager, and Ms. Tyra Walker, curator, at the Frederick Douglass Home.

This work probably would have been impossible to complete without the willing support of the current members of the Frederick Douglass Memorial and Historical Association, individuals associated with the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs, and other women and men who graciously consented to be interviewed for this project. The insight and research of historians, Dr. Marcia McAdoo Greenlee and Dr. Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, have contributed significantly to this study as has the work of my two research assistants, Ms. Kimberly L. Kershaw of Hampton University and Mr. Wayne Shorter of Howard University.

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

An outspoken advocate of justice and racial equality, Frederick Douglass, the leading nineteenth century black abolitionist, became editor in 1870 of a Washington newspaper, the National Era (which he renamed the New National Era), dedicated to promoting the interests and causes of newly-freed blacks. Two years later, Douglass, his wife Anna Murray Douglass, and their daughter, Rosetta Douglass Sprague, and her children, moved to Washington, D.C., occupying a house at 316 A Street, N.E. In May of 1871, President Ulysses S. Grant appointed Frederick Douglass to a seat in the Legislative Council of the District of Columbia. During his short tenure as a member of the Council, Douglass ably represented the interest of District residents at large, including a number of the pressing needs of persons residing in Anacostia. The District of Columbia at the time was comprised of the city of Georgetown, Washington, and the county of Washington; Anacostia was located in Washington county.

In June of 1871, Douglass resigned his position on the Legislative Council after he was appointed assistant secretary of the Commission to Santo Domingo; President Grant appointed Douglass's son, Lewis, to complete his term. Six years later, the same year that he purchased his home in Anacostia known as "Cedar Hill," Douglass was appointed United States Marshall for the District of Columbia by President Rutherford B. Hayes. In

1881, he received still another federal appointment - Recorder of Deeds for the District of Columbia.

When Douglass moved to the community of Anacostia, whose earlier inhabitants had been Nacotchtank Indians, it was largely a suburb of the city of Washington. The money he used to purchase the nine and a quarter acre estate of land developer John Van Hook in Anacostia in 1877 was borrowed from Charles Purvis, a Philadelphia abolitionist and friend. Prior to purchasing Van Hook's property, which included a home, barn and a number of gardens, Douglass had invested \$10,000 of his personal funds in the failed Freedmen's Savings and Trust Company (more popularly known as the Freedmen's Bank). The loss of such a large amount of money probably explains why he needed to borrow money from Purvis in order to purchase the Anacostia property. Over the years, Douglass purchased various building supplies to improve the condition and add to the estate that he purchased. 2

## CHAPTER TWO: THE DOUGLASSES AT "CEDAR HILL"

### Cedar Hill

- C - is for cedar that stood on the hill  
by the home of our Douglass, who to us is so dear.
- E - is for Eloquence, which so magically held  
the audience of Douglass, with a boundless spell.
- D - is for Douglass who labored so bravely  
to abolish the terrible wrongs of slavery.
- A - is for argument good and strong  
which Douglass used against the nation's wrong.
- R - is for Rochester, from which many a slave  
was helped on to Canada, by Douglass, the brave.
- H - is for hill, upon which stands the home  
of Frederick Douglass, our friend so well known.
- I - is for industry, without which our race  
cannot with the world expect to keep pace.
- L - is for liberty for which we are still striving  
the hope to realize we are ever abiding.
- L - is for love, the greatest thing on earth  
we give to our Douglass, this day of his birth.

Rosabelle M. and Rosetta D. Sprague, n.d.  
Frederick Douglass Collection, Howard University

The Douglass' two-story Victorian home, "Cedar Hill" was a popular gathering place for the Douglass clan. Douglass' children and their families resided in the nearby Hillsdale section of Anacostia and were frequent visitors at the

Douglass estate.

Prior to Frederick and Anna Douglass becoming residents of Anacostia, the three sons of Frederick and Anna Douglass-- Lewis, Charles, and Frederick Douglass, Jr.--had played prominent roles in the emerging Anacostia community. Active in the county public schools, Charles R. Douglass had served as secretary and treasurer of the county board of trustees and, from 1871 to 1874, as a school board trustee. The property that Charles purchased in Anacostia in 1872 was used to operate a public school for neighboring children.

From accounts provided by Douglass's grandchildren, the time spent at the home of their grandparents was filled with gayety, excitement, and with learning about their ancestry. Frederick Douglass and other family members intensely enjoyed playing croquet on the croquet court at Cedar Hill- the "scene of many family battles." 3

In 1880, three of the Douglass grandchildren, Annie and Hattie Sprague, and Julie Douglass resided with their grandparents. Besides entertaining his children and grandchildren, the "Cedar Hill" home of Frederick and Anna Douglass and, later, the home of Douglass and his second wife, Helen Pitts Douglass, was the place where Douglass wrote his many speeches and essays during the last eighteen years of his life. In the solitude of his study, Douglass penned his third autobiography, The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass, wrote speeches and articles on a variety of topics, ranging from

women's suffrage to Jim Crow, and received numerous local and out-of-town guests. It is said that at Cedar Hill, Douglass "lived the life of a gentleman surrounded by his family and friends and waited upon by three servants." (Footnote: Travels in Europe from 1886 to 1887, and an assignment as Minister of Haiti from 1889 to 1891 kept Douglass from his beloved home during those years. 4

The tastefully decorated home of Anna and Frederick Douglass and, later on, of Helen and Frederick Douglass reflects the personal touch of his wives as much as it reflects the myriad interests and travels of Frederick Douglass. His love of reading is evident in the extensive collection of books on a wide variety of subjects found in the home. Some of the books were purchased by Frederick Douglass, others, including many autographed books, were given to the Douglasses by prominent individuals and friends. Frederick Douglass's fine collection of walking canes (including one that belonged to President Abraham Lincoln and given to Douglass by Lincoln's widow) and art objects and artifacts, many of which he received as gifts, no doubt brightened the home and certainly served as important conversation pieces. On a mantle in Douglass's library, there were busts of L. Feuerbach and D. E. Strauss and a picture of the 17th Provisional Officers' Reserve Training Regiment. Throughout the library were various pictures of Douglass, his family members as well as pictures of such leading abolitionists as William Lloyd Garrison, Wendell Philips, and John Brown. 5

Equally enamored with music as he was with reading and the visual arts, Douglass had several violins and a piano at his Cedar Hill residence. On various occasions, family and friends were treated to the sweet sounds of the violin as played by Frederick Douglass and his grandson, Joseph H. Douglass. Joseph, who received his first violin lesson from his grandfather at age 12 and for whom Frederick Douglass purchased a \$1,000 violin while traveling in Germany, became an internationally known concert violinist. Not only was Joseph Henry Douglass the first black concert violinist to tour the United States, he also was the first to record his music. 6

From its location on the top of the hill, surrounded by various trees, especially cedars, the fourteen-room mansion with its fine appointments was indeed an impressive structure to its many visitors, made even more impressive by the national reputation and stature of the man who resided there.

Douglass' blissful life at Cedar Hill ended abruptly with the passing of his wife, Anna Murray Douglass, in 1882. With the encouragement of his children and grandchildren, the following year Douglass relocated temporarily to New England in an effort to overcome the tremendous grief associated with his wife's death as well as to escape the Washington heat. Excited by Douglass' return in January 1884 to Washington, D.C. and his Cedar Hill home, many Washington residents were far less excited about his marriage, a short time later, to Helen Pitts, a white woman who worked as a secretary in the District Recorder of Deeds office.

So incensed by the criticisms leveled at Douglass and his new bride, the Reverend Francis J. Grimke, who married the couple in a private ceremony at the Grimke home, felt compelled on at least two occasions to defend Douglass's choice of Helen Pitts Douglass as his second wife. Grimke remained a close friend of both Helen and Frederick Douglass and a frequent visitor at their Anacostia home. In a manuscript entitled "Frederick Douglass," Grimke describes having spent "many pleasant days with Mr. and Mrs. Douglass in their beautiful home at Cedar Hill." 7

Shortly after Helen's marriage to Douglass, her mother came to live with them at Cedar Hill. She remained there until her death.<sup>8</sup>

The criticisms of Douglass for his choice of a white woman as his second wife soon subsided and he became as much in demand as a lecturer as he had been prior to his second marriage. A popular speaker at religious as well as political rallies, the wise and articulate "Sage of Anacostia," was in constant demand throughout the Washington community in the closing years of his life.

Neither his national popularity nor his involvement in the affairs of the District at large prevented him from taking an active interest in events and individuals in his own Uniontown neighborhood. Douglass was a member of the Uniontown Literary Society and a regular visitor and speaker at Sunday schools and at other religious gatherings at neighboring churches, especially Solomon Brown's Pioneer Sabbath School. These activities and his

involvement with other groups based elsewhere in the nation's capital, such as The Monday Night Literary Club and the Alpha Life Insurance Company and Alpha Bank, did not prevent him from devoting time to his children and grandchildren to whom he was especially dedicated.<sup>9</sup>

The loss of three of Frederick Douglass' grandchildren and son Frederick reportedly drew him closer to his remaining grandchildren, especially to his grandson Joseph. Frederick and Joseph shared a love of music, especially the violin. In the closing years of his life, Joseph was a regular visitor as were Douglass' granddaughters, Estelle and Hattie Sprague, and his three children, Lewis H., Charles, and Rosetta Douglass Sprague who lived not too far from Cedar Hill. The relatives of Helen Pitts Douglass were also frequent guests in the Douglass Home, which was described by Helen Pitts Douglass in 1895 as a "substantial brick house of twenty years." At the time of Douglass's death in 1895, however, the only other person actually residing at Cedar Hill, besides Helen and Frederick Douglass, was a servant. The Douglasses did have a mastiff dog that was said to have been Frederick Douglass' "constant companion."<sup>10</sup>

Cedar Hill was visited by leading black and white abolitionists, literary figures and a number of prominent Washington residents. Helen and Frederick Douglass also entertained members of various literary societies and other organizations to which they belonged. Among the frequent guests at the Douglass Home were John F. Cook, District tax collector

and one of the city's wealthiest black men; Blanche K. Bruce, former Mississippi Senator and Register of the Treasury of the District of Columbia; and the Reverend Francis J. Grimke, pastor the Fifteenth Street Presbyterian Church. 11

### **CHAPTER III: THE PIONEER EFFORTS OF THE FREDERICK DOUGLASS MEMORIAL AND HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION**

The esteem among people of all races and walks of life in which Frederick Douglass was held is evident by the large numbers who stood on the streets of Washington and Anacostia to view the funeral cortege carrying his body as it passed through Anacostia on its way to Metropolitan A.M.E. Church in downtown Washington, D.C. After hearing that Frederick Douglass had suffered a heart attack and died on the evening of February 20, 1895, thousands came to Anacostia to pay their respects to this leading nineteenth century black figure, who contributed nearly as much to the Washington local community and Anacostia as he did to the nation at large. Among the large outpouring were a group of school girls who made their way into the Douglass home while the mortician prepared Douglass's death mask. Prior to the public funeral at Metropolitan Church on February 25, 1895 attended by members of Congress, former abolitionists, jurists as well as ordinary folk, a private funeral service had been held at Cedar Hill for the family. 12

It was clear from the sheer numbers and the diverse backgrounds of those who came to pay homage to Douglass that this was no ordinary black man. Indeed, he was someone who had made innumerable contributions to his race and his country as an

abolitionist, essayist, publisher, and lecturer and someone whose legacy would surely outlive him. One way that his widow, Helen Pitts Douglass, envisioned that the memory of this outstanding leader could be maintained was through the preservation of Cedar Hill in much the same way as President George Washington's memory and legacy were kept alive through the preservation of his home, Mt. Vernon. This vision of the Douglass Home as "the Mt. Vernon of the colored race" may have come to Helen Pitts Douglass while touring Mt. Vernon with her husband. The sacred esteem in which she and others came to hold Frederick Douglass may have also prompted her to memorialize him and his home and its contents the way that she did. 13

At the memorial services for Helen Pitts Douglass, held in the North Room of the Douglass Home next to the library, Grimke remarked that: "Everything connected with Mr. Douglass was precious in her (Helen's ) sight. The fact that he was in any way associated with anything put the stamp of sacredness upon it. The chair in which he used to sit had a ribbon tied over it; after he passed away so as to prevent any one from occupying it; the place at the head of the table where he used to sit, no one was ever permitted afterwards to occupy it; the little bouquet of nasturtiums, the he was so fond of, was kept always at his plate as long as they lasted; the croquet ground upon which he spent so many pleasant afternoons, was never used afterwards." 14

In 1895, Helen Pitts Douglass borrowed \$15,000 in order to keep the Douglass estate (namely the home, its contents, and the

surrounding property) intact in order to "make it a national monument and memorial to the memory of her illustrious husband, Frederick Douglass." 15 Douglass's children from his marriage to Anna Murray Douglass contested the provision in Frederick Douglass's will which awarded the Cedar Hill property to his second wife Helen. Frederick Douglass's failure to have his will witnessed by three people, as required by law in the District of Columbia, gave them the legal right to do so, forcing his widow to take out a mortgage on the home in order to pay off the claims of Douglass's other descendants. 16

When hundreds of black club women from throughout the United States descended upon Washington, D.C. in July of 1896 to attend the national meetings of first the National Colored Women's League and then the national convention of the National Federation of Afro-American Women (which resulted in the formation of the National Association of Colored Women), Helen Pitts Douglass decided to approach the women in the newly-formed association about helping to pay off the debt on the Douglass Home and to preserve Cedar Hill as a national shrine to the leading nineteenth century black abolitionist and a longtime advocate of women's rights. In July 1896, Rosetta Douglass Sprague, the daughter of Frederick Douglass, attended the national meeting of the National Federation of Afro-American Women and spoke about her father's accomplishments. Many of the delegates to the national black club women's meetings made what they referred to as "pilgrimages" to "Cedar Hill." Afterwards,

whenever the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs (NACWC) held its biennial meetings in Washington, D.C., a pilgrimage was made to the Douglass Home. However, it would take more than an occasional visit to the Douglass Home, even by leading black club women, to preserve "Cedar Hill." 17

Helen spearheaded the formation of the Frederick Douglass Memorial and Historical Association (FDMHA) for the sole purpose of preserving the Douglass home and its contents. Chartered by an act of the United States Congress on June 6, 1900, the association's original board of trustees was comprised of men, including some of Douglass's closest friends, Francis J. Grimke, pastor of the Fifteenth Street Presbyterian Church and attorney Archibald H. Grimke. 18

Helen Pitts Douglass made a tremendous contribution to the work of the Frederick Douglass Memorial and Historical Association (FDMHA) by helping to repay part of the loan she had secured in 1895 to pay off claimants to the Douglass estate. Attempts by Francis Grimke to point out to Helen Douglass the slow pace at which people responded to appeals for funds to build monuments, including such great structures as the Washington and the Grant monuments, fell on deaf ears. She believed that once the efforts of the FDMHA came to the full attention of black and other people who appreciated the greatness Douglass, they would wholeheartedly support the movement to preserve the home. Her failed efforts and those of the FDMHA to retire the debt on the Douglass home led Grimke to propose selling the property and

using the proceeds to establish scholarships in Frederick and Helen Douglass's name. Temporarily, she agreed to such a proposal but only if the scholarship bore her husband's name and not her own. A short time later, however, she changed her mind and rejected the scholarship plan. 19

Unfortunately, despite her own personal sacrifices and the efforts of the original members of the board of trustees of the Association, the mortgage on the Douglass estate in Anacostia was not retired during Helen's lifetime. When she died at Cedar Hill in 1903, her handwritten will, dated three months after the formation of FDMHA provided that the Frederick Douglass Estate of 14.45 acres, the home, and all of the contents except her personal clothing and jewelry were bequeathed to the Frederick Douglass Memorial and Historical Association. 20

#### CHAPTER IV: THE DOUGLASS SHRINE, 1903-1932



##### FRED DOUGLASS SHRINE

In the District of Columbia  
There lived a great, great man;  
Who spent his life in pleading,  
For what was noble and grand;  
He was our own, Fred Douglass  
That traversed land and sea,  
To present to the old world,  
The beauty of human liberty.

He knew, ah well, caste system  
Being the Sage of Cedar Hill:  
He knew the suffering of his people,  
His thinking heart could not be still,  
In Spirit silence he is asking,  
That colored humanity unite;  
Demanding law and justice,  
To come through love, not might.

Women unite yourselves together,  
May love and reverence fill  
Our hearts, for him who gave  
Forth eloquence that is now still;  
Build a shrine to Fred Douglass  
His life was spent for you and me  
Pleading for what was right,  
Fighting for human liberty.

Attempts by the Frederick Douglass Memorial and Historical Association trustees to interest the general public in raising enough funds to preserve the home adequately and pay off all debts proved unsuccessful. One of the early supporters of the trustees' efforts was a William Henry Huff, who delivered an address in 1912 entitled "The Preservation of the Douglass Home" before the Men's Civic Club of the Negro Fellowship League in Chicago. A week later an essay entitled "The Preservation of the

Douglass Home for the Benefit of the Negro" appeared in the February 22, 1912 issue of The Fellowship Herald. While not a member of the board, Huff was prompted by a letter he received from a board member, the Honorable Whitfield McKinlay, to write this essay informing blacks about the home and urging them to support it. 21

At the time the article appeared the property which was being preserved consisted of "a mansion house, a stable and outbuildings and between fourteen and fifteen acres." Huff declared:

I simply believe that we, like all should preserve as best we can, whatever is handed down to us by those of our race who have achieved greatness and distinction. By doing this we show our real appreciation of the services rendered us by the hero in question, we show our real patriotism. 22

Quoting from McKinlay, Huff related that it was Helen Pitts Douglass idea:

'to make of Cedar Hill, a sort of a Mt. Vernon for the colored race. Here could be gathered anti-slavery records and all matters connected with the life of Douglass, so that it might be made sort of [an] anti-slavery and Douglass Museum of history relative to the freedom and citizenship of the Negro..., Cedar Hill would become the depository of the history and achievement of the colored American.' 23

Before the home could become a repository for materials relating to the black experience in the United States, especially as it related to Douglass's life, Huff pointed out to both his listeners and his reading public that funds were needed to make repairs on the property and to pay off its debts. 24

In an editorial in the same issue of The Fellowship Herald, Ida B. Wells-Barnett accused the trustee board of not properly

informing people, including "colored people," about the home. She wrote: "what the race does not know, it cannot do." She was even more critical of the leading early twentieth century black leader, Booker T. Washington, for the plight of the home. While acknowledging that Washington had sent out an appeal on behalf of the home a few years ago, there had not been much public discussion about the home from either Washington or the trustees since and therefore "the Negro public outside of Washington was justified in believing that Mr. Washington's influence and ability as a money getter had succeeded in wiping out the debt." Besides, Wells-Barnett argued, Washington had the resources to pay off the needed \$4,300 without soliciting the help of others. A consistent foe of Washington, Ida Wells-Barnett attributed Washington's failure to pay off "to secure this historic home from debt either thro (sic) inability or disinclination." In either case, ultimately it was the responsibility of the trustee board, which consisted of "prominent and influential men" to retire the debt and what better place to raise the needy funds but in Washington where there were so many high-salaried government workers and teachers and where all but one of the members of the trustee board resided. Wells-Barnett concluded her editorial with the following advice:

If after a through [sic] trial it be found that the Herald is mistaken as to the race pride and patriotism of Washington Negroes, then let the trustees and public spirited men of that city make the right kind of appeal and the race will gladly respond. 25

Prompted by their failure to collect the money to maintain

the home despite their individual prominence and their residence in the city of Washington (in which, Wells- Barnett comments to the contrary, high-salaried black government and non-government employees were clearly in the minority), the trustee board appealed as Helen Pitts Douglass and Rosetta Douglass had, directly to the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs. The appeal came in the form of a letter written by Mortimer M. Harris, Financial Secretary of the FDMHA, on behalf of Hons. Whitfield McKinlay and Archibald H. Grimke, to Mary Talbert, NACW president, in which Harris requested that FDMHA trustees be allowed a place on the program at the biennial meeting of NACW scheduled to be held in Baltimore, Maryland.

Attorney Robert H. Terrell wrote Talbert in November 1916, a few months following Harris's letter, informing her that it would be perfectly legal for the NACW to take over the work of preserving the home and to occupy the majority of the seats on the trustee board. 26

By the close of the year, the Douglass Home Committee of the NACW had been formed and an appeal was made to every club woman and young girl and boy to raise the necessary funds for the home. The initial members of the Douglass Home Committee were Florence Randolph (Jersey City, N.J.); Maggie L. Walker (Richmond, Va.); Elizabeth C. Carter (New Bedford, Mass.); Victoria Clay Haley (St. Louis; Mo.); Hallie Q. Brown (Wilbeorce, Oh.), chairman of the executive board; Nattie L. Napier (Nashville, Tenn.), treasurer; Nannie H. Burroughs (Washington, D.C.), chairman; and

Mary B. Talbert, president. Since the articles of incorporation of the FDMHA limited the number of trustee board members to nine, an advisory board, comprised of NACW members, was formed. The next few years were spent by these and other club women in most states throughout the United States, under the leadership of President Mary B. Talbert, raising money to save and restore the home and grounds of the Douglass property. 27

By its biennial meeting in Denver, Colorado, in 1918, Mary Burnett Talbert, president of the Douglass Home Committee as well as of the entire NACW organization from 1916 to 1921, succeeded in collecting enough money to pay off the balance of the loan secured by Helen Pitts Douglass and thus burn the mortgage on the home. The focus of NACW's early preservation efforts was not the restoration of the furniture and other property found within the home but improving the structural condition of the house. As Talbert indicated in a fundraising letter dated April 29, 1921, the money that was being requested "does not include the restoration of furniture; that will be looked after as soon as the general repairs are made....To restore grounds and furniture will cost us at least \$2,000 additional." Emmett J. Scott, secretary-treasurer and business manager of Howard University and formerly Booker T. Washington's private secretary, and a Mr. Hazel estimated the cost of structural repairs and home improvements, minus ground and interior work, at \$10,000. 28

Nannie H. Burroughs, who was one of the original trustees of

the FDMHA after it became affiliated with NACWC in 1916, solicited monies for the home in February of 1922 along with her numerous responsibilities as president of the National Training School for Women and Girls. One of the largest recorded benefactors of the movement to answer the appeal was the wife of Senator McCormick, Ruth Hanna McCormick, who donated five hundred dollars. 29

At the close of its national biennial meeting in Richmond, Virginia in the summer of 1922, members of the National Association of Colored Women (NACW), the Frederick Douglass Memorial and Historical Association (FDMHA), and the public at large met in Washington, D.C. where they held a Dedication Ceremony at the Douglass Memorial Home. Earlier, Talbert had described the planned trip to Washington after the July 1922 NACW biennial meeting as:

our pilgrimage right up to the beautiful heights of Anacostia where we will dedicate the home and rededicate ourselves to the principles that Douglass lived and fought for. AND THEN we can always look up and point with pride to this the first great race Shrine - redeemed by our people, for our people. 30

One of the purposes of the dedicatory exercises, held on Saturday, August 12, 1922, was to bring public attention to the success of NACWC's fundraising and restoration efforts and the continued need for support.

The souvenir program printed for the occasion featured pictures of the Douglass Home and the "Contributors' Tablets;" the latter contained the names the individuals and organizations that "by their generous contributions made it possible to redeem

and restore this home," and an account of the history of NACWC's involvement in the movement to preserve the Douglass Memorial Home. Members of the trustee board at the time who had worked so diligently in the restoration effort were: Mary B. Talbert, president; Nettie L. Napier, custodian of funds; Hallie Q. Brown, Elizabeth C. Carter, Meta Pelham, Sallie W. Stewart, Maggie L. Walker, and Margaret Murray (Mrs. Booker T.) Washington. 31

On August 2, 1924 at the meeting of FDMHA in Chicago, Mrs. Nettie L. Napier was elected president of the organization and members of the Advisory Board were re-appointed, with the exception of Mrs. S. Joe Brown who became a member of the "executive board" of the National Association of Colored Women. The sole new member of the Advisory Board was Frances Riley Bolling of Pittsburgh who took the place of the late Mrs. Laura Brown, also of Pittsburgh. Mary Church Terrell, the first NACW president and a friend of Frederick Douglass, and Mr. W. H. Talbert were named Honorary Advisory Board members at the meeting. The members of the 1924-1926 trustee board of the FDMHA were Nannie Helen Burroughs, Margaret Murray Washington, Elizabeth Carter Brooks, Nettie L. Napier (president and former custodian of funds), Mary B. Talbert, Hallie Q. Brown, Sallie W. Stewart, Roberta Dunbar, Mary F. Waring, Mary Josenberger, Addie Dickerson, Lelia Pendleton, and Mary McLeod Bethune. Meta Pelham was elected to replace Napier as Custodian of Funds. 32

By this time, the work of the Frederick Douglass Memorial and Historical Association had been divided into eight standing

committees, comprised of members of both the advisory board and the trustee board of the FDMHA. The eight committees in August of 1924 were: Grounds, House, Douglass Souvenir, Memorial Fund, Race Souvenirs, Finance, Souvenirs for Disposal, and Improvements. According to the minutes of the Chicago meeting, the Memorial Fund committee, for instance, had as its purpose the raising of funds for the care and maintenance of the Douglass Home. At this same meeting, a major decision was made to convert an old barn on the property into a caretaker's cottage. Rather than renovating the barn, a new caretaker's cottage was built in 1928. 33

The public ceremonies surrounding the completion of the restoration of the home drew attention to the home and the support of Representative Emanuel Celler, Representative of the 10th New York District, who urged Americans in 1932 to support the home as a "shrine to Frederick Douglass." (The Washington Star, 2 July 1932). In his resolution to the United States Congress, Celler specifically states:

"A monument to the memory of Douglass has been erected at Rochester, New York, where he is buried, but he should be enshrined at the national capital, where he lived for so many years as the 'Sage of Anacostia'. Such a memorial should lead the youth of the land, both near and far, to study the character of this great man and draw from it lessons urging them on to higher and more noble effort." 34

## **CHAPTER 5: PRESERVATION EFFORTS: THE MIDDLE YEARS, 1932-1962**

**The Race is duly proud of Frederick Douglass and the rich heritage he has left us...We want our children to feel and know that, above greater obstacles than they have ever known, men and women have risen to heights once thought impossible. No investment or sacrifice is too great for such a purpose and no one realizes it more so than do the women of the National Association of Colored Women. 35**

The success of the collaborative efforts of NACWC and FDMHA to maintain the Frederick Douglass home and property, beginning in 1916, was often dependent upon the influence of FDMHA members within the NACWC and the financial condition of NACWC. Certainly, when NACWC was not absorbed in debts, primarily related to its acquisition of various headquarters buildings, and when FDMHA presidents and board members also occupied important and powerful positions within NACWC, the Douglass Home cause benefitted.

The efforts by dedicated members of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs (NACWC) and the Frederick Douglass Memorial and Historical Association (FDMHA) to promote the Douglass Home cause within the NACWC did not always prove successful, despite the public commitment NACW had made to preserving the home. Consequently, throughout the period in which NACWC and FDMHA both managed the home, it was necessary for FDMHA trustees to concern themselves constantly with financial matters. The major fundraising effort before 1922, for example, was not sustained beyond that date.

As a result, by the spring of 1934, the Frederick Douglass Memorial Home and grounds were in such a state of disrepair that

the District of Columbia school board allowed the local black schools to collect a penny from each child on April 10, 1934 to improve the appearance of the grounds. 36 At the trustee meeting in Cleveland in 1937, the financial report of the Douglass Memorial and Historical Association for 1935 to 1937, recorded Mr. M. G. Lucas of Washington as having made the largest donation -- \$400.00 from the penny collection. President Charles H. Wesley of the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity is noted as having contributed \$25.00 on behalf of that organization in July 1935. Money was also collected from donations made at the home by visitors (\$17.58) and from books sold. In addition, there were recorded payments from various clubs and club women throughout the United States, such as the Peace Circle of Washington, D.C. (\$60.00); In-As-Much Circle-King's Daughters of Detroit, Michigan (\$11.00); and the Study Club of Detroit (\$25.00). During the two year period, disbursements were made by the Memorial and Historical Association for Napier's travel and other official expenses, printing costs, and for repairs, labor and materials for the home. For instance, in May 1936, \$495.00 was paid to Ellsworth Taylor for "Repairs on Home" and in December 1936, \$400.00 was spent on road repairs. In addition, FDMHA paid \$66.87 for fire insurance in January 1937 and \$5.00 to Adah Johnson for clerical work. At the close of this accounting period, the Memorial and Historical Association had a balance of \$1010.96 Listed among the recorded receipts for the period from 1935 to 1937 was a payment of \$698.20 made in August 1935,

representing 15% from NACW. 36

On February 5, 1938, The Chicago Defender devoted its front page article to events surrounding the celebration of Douglass' birthday. A letter by Napier appeared requesting that funds be sent to Miss Meta Pelham of Detroit, Michigan, who succeeded Napier as custodian of the funds. Napier also expressed her gratitude to the women who have made tremendous sacrifices on behalf of the home and the "youth movement" that "has given excellent service at the Douglass Home." Perhaps in an effort to gain the attention of black clubwomen throughout the country, the Chicago Defender article highlighted the life and the contributions of Anna Murray Douglass to her husband and to the home.

About Anna Murray Douglass, it was stated:

although Frederick Douglass was the head of his house, those who were close to his family knew that Anna Murray Douglass was the neck on which his head turned. Too few of us know this; too few of us know of Anna Murray Douglass....In 1882, this remarkable woman was stricken with paralysis and lasted only four weeks. Thus came to a close the life of a great noble woman, the wife of Frederick Douglass and the mother of his six (sic) children. Today she stretches out her motherly arms and gathers to her grateful bosom the daughters of her race - the women of the National Association of Colored Women, joyous over their wonderful accomplishments in the redemption and resotation of the home of Anna Murray Douglass, the First Mother of Cedar Hill.<sup>37</sup>

The pictures of Fredericka Douglass Sprague-Perry and Rosabella Douglass Sprague-Jones, the daughters of Douglass's oldest daugther Rosetta Douglass-Sprague, appeared along with that of Nettie L. Napier in this article.

Controversy arose over the release of funds for the Douglass

Home occupied board members in 1938 [after Napier's death]. FDMHA trustee Hallie Q. Brown expressed her pleasure with hearing that Mrs. Davis, the caretaker at the Home, is "rendering such valuable service." 38 Despite the generally favorable impression held of Mrs. Davis, funds had not been approved either to heat the home or to maintain the grounds. Fredericka D. Perry, a member of the Advisory Board, remarked in a letter to FDMHA trustee, Nannie H. Burroughs that:

If it were within the province of members of the Advisory Board to cast a vote, mine certainly would be in favor of supplying heat in the home....I hope that there will be no veto to supplying of coal nor to employing the man to take [care] of the grounds. These are questions that have arisen before but the decision has always been not to risk spending money for fear of more urgent needs arising. Like you, I favor spending--wisely--to protect what has been done. 39

Eight days after this letter was written, Meta Pelham, custodian of funds for the FDMHA, sent Burroughs a check to be used to purchase coal for the home and stated "I hope no pipe burst because of my delay." 40

Hallie Q. Brown informed Burroughs that Meta Pelham would probably "consent to allow claims," but questioned whether the number of visitors "warrant the outlay." After receiving Burroughs' reply to her query, Brown responded: Your explanations ...., are both clear and satisfactory. If Miss M. Pelham can supply needed funds I am willing to accede." 41 Using a variety of fundraising techniques, NACW had collected money from NACW members and non-members on behalf of the Douglass Home. Persons who contributed at least five dollars were to have their names inscribed on a scroll to be placed at the Douglass Home. By, 29

April 1938, although people had contributed five dollars, their names were yet to be placed on any scroll. As custodian of funds, Miss Meta Pelham carefully guarded the association's money. In a letter to Burroughs dated 9 December of 1938, she explained her refusal to accept the papers on the rental situation at the home submitted by the caretaker, Mrs. Davis, because they offered nothing more than an "ambiguous explanation of the rental situation." 42 The problem with the rental money must have been cleared up, for less than a year later, Stewart informed Nannie Helen Burroughs that she had received \$36.00 from Mrs. Davis and had forwarded it to Mrs. Dickerson. 43

Mrs. Davis informed Stewart in the fall of 1939 that she was planning to leave her position by the spring of the next year. 44

The campaign of influential NACW member Sallie W. Stewart of Evansville, Ohio, who served as chair of the FDMHA from 1943 until her death in 1953, spent an inordinate amount of time trying to wrestle needed funds from the Douglass Home account of the NACWC. Although other issues were discussed, maintenance issues and financial matters occupied much of the meeting time of the trustee board of the FDMHA. 45

The indomitable Sallie W. Stewart even urged members of the board and non-members alike to speak of the Douglass cause whenever they attended public gatherings and, on one occasion, suggested what one speaker should say. In January 1946, she wrote Nannie H. Burroughs:

I am wondering if you might not weave something of Douglass's life into your talk at the National Freedom Day

Program....and incidentally uou could say that Negroes should perpetuate his memory by establishing a perpetual fund for the upkeep of his home. 46

Earlier Stewart had written a Madam Bilbrew inquiring as to whether it was possible "for her to go about conducting some "Songs" in the interest of the Douglass Fund." 47

When Stewart received a check for one hundred dollars in October 1939, she did not spend it immediately for fear of spending it unwisely. It was her opinion that "We [the FDMHA] can waste one hundred dollars doing little dabs." 48 In the spring and summer of 1939, a drive was underway to raise additional funds. At irregular intervals, Stewart forwarded funds from NACWC to Burroughs, ranging from forty to two hundred dollars, to pay for work done at the home, usually long after the due date. In one letter enclosing a check for \$200 for work done, Stewart informed Burroughs that she should seek to pay the final payment on time because "We shall surely have the funds by the time." 49 Despite the tardiness of most of the payments, receiving monies in bits and pieces was far better than receiving none at all, as Stewart and other board members of FDMHA discovered in subsequent years.

Monies were also raised from renting the lower house (carriage house) on the Douglass estate. A Mr. Davis stayed at the house for a period. When the property was being renovated, Stewart informed Burroughs that a separate meter should be placed in the caretaker's cottage. She also made inquiries concerning the work on the lower house. At another point, she asked

Burroughs why the Paynes would not be taking the place. 50

Often, the Memorial Association trustees would hold their annual meetings in conjunction with the national meeting of the Colored Women's Clubs. For instance, when the Colored Women's Clubs held their biennial meeting in Oklahoma City, the Douglass Home Trustee Board also met there. Initially, their joint meetings were for the convenience of members, who held joint appointments in both organizations. In the spring of 1941, the Memorial Association agreed to elect future board members from those who comprised the Frederick Douglass Advisory Board of the NACWC. 51

Meeting in the same city and at the same time also provided the FDMHA trustees with an opportunity to appeal personally for funds as well as to present progress reports on the condition of the home and the grounds. Sallie W. Stewart asked Mrs. S. Joe Brown and Nannie H. Burroughs to give reports at the Oklahoma City meeting. It was Stewarts' hope that by informing the female delegates of NACWC of the true condition of the home they would be encouraged rather discouraged from giving more money to the home. Since NACWC had paid off the mortgage on its headquarters building, Stewart believed that "there can be a little more to spare to the Douglass Home." 52

In addition to the financial costs of any improvements on the home, the property taxes on the home increased as a result further adding to the financial woes of the trustees. Local government officials informed the trustees, in response to their

query, that improvements on the property were not tax exempt.53

In April 14, 1943, Stewart expressed her disappointment with NACW's failure to turn over money that rightfully belonged to the Douglass Home fund. In a letter to Burroughs, she wrote:

I do not wish to publish the story as to why we have not funds and that the funds promised by the N.A.C.W. has been diverted to paying for hewdquartrs (sic) and shall not do this if I can help it but according to the Tribune all the blame is being thrown on the Douglass Memorial and Histricla (sic) Association and of course they know nothing of the tie-up between the Douglass Trustees and the NACW. 54

Five days later, Stewart wrote Burroughs:

I will inform you that there is not as much as twenty dollars in the treasurer's hands of the Douglass Association. The \$1800 that was allocated to the Douglass Home by the N.A.C. W. at Oklahoma City is in the treasury of the National Association of Colored Womwn (sic) and from this last little transaction you get some idea of how long it takes to get a bill paid." 55

Months after the FDMHA had been billed for needy repairs on the home and surrounding property payments to contractors remained outstanding because the NACWC, for one reason or another, did not forward the money to the FDMHA. The inability of NACW and FDMHA to pay its repair and regular maintenance bills in a timely manner made the work of overseeing the home and property an especially difficult one. Generally, contractors were not paid on time and resorted to writing a series of letters to Stewart and Burroughs requesting payment. Typical of the correspondence from contractors was a letter to Stewart with a copy to Burroughs from J. Alston Fisher of the William P. Lipscomb Company, Inc. In his letter, dated 2 March 1949, Fisher wrote:

On February 7, 1949, we forwarded to you our bill in full

amounting to \$7,354 for the work which we had performed to completion, all of which had been verbally approved by your local designated representative, Miss Nannie Burroughs, in accordance with the terms of our contract dated September 30, 1948, for the clearing of the 9.25 acres at the above site (1441 W Street, S.E.). 56

On more than one occasion, the memorial and historical association received notices regarding their failure to pay the light and water bills. Once Stewart received monies, she would forward it to Burroughs to pay for the services rendered.

NACWC's failure to provide funds to FDMHA in a timely manner may be attributed, in part, to the rivalry between members of the two organizations and, in part, to NACWC's desire to spend NACWC funds on its headquarters building rather than the Douglass Home, which it did not own. In a letter to Nannie H. Burroughs who had returned one hundred dollars sent to her by NACW for "cleaning up Cedar Hill," FDMHA trustee Fredericka Sprague expressed her support for Burroughs' actions and suggested somewhat the nature of the conflicts between FDMHA and NACW. She wrote:

Thank you for returning that tid bit [\$100.00] and any and all other doled out monies for the "Shrine!" Mockery!!! The women care nothing for Frederick Douglass or for what he stood - why deceive ourselves! If they did there would be no cavelling- no Bills dragging his name in Congress, no silly demands for deed and title with which they can do nothing. ...The question I can't get answered is, what right has the Pres. of the N.A.C.W. Inc. to dictate to the Pres. of the F.D.M. and H. Assoc. Inc? As a Trustee I resent it-....57

The conflict over the distribution of funds by NACW to FDMHA appears to mask a more deep-seated struggle for control over, or, at least, possession of the deed to the Douglass property by the

NACWC. The important fiscal role of NACW in the management of Cedar Hill encouraged various leaders and members of NACW, at various times, to want to assume full control of the property and to greatly limit FDMHA input in its preservation and management. "A shortage of labor" was the explanation offered by Burroughs for refusing to accept the money, according to a letter written by Sallie W. Stewart to Fredericka Sprague.<sup>58</sup>

In a letter from NHB to Frederica Sprague, dated 29 November 1941, Burroughs indicated that Stewart was partly to blame for the tension between the two organizations because "her long letters are simply adding fuel to the fire. She writes entirely too much!" Of course, Burroughs had firsthand knowledge of this, since she was a frequent recipient of such diatribes.<sup>59</sup>

After soliciting a legal opinion from her attorney regarding the contractual relationship between FDMHA and NACW, Stewart wrote Burroughs in September 1941 that it was her attorney's opinion that "since the NACW has violated its part of our contract of giving the association 15 percent of its dues for the last thirteen years we are in no way bound by any agreement that was ever made between the two associations."<sup>60</sup> Her public enunciation of this opinion in a letter to FDMHA two months later was bound to widen the rift between the two competing organizations. More specifically in her correspondence to the trustees, Stewart suggested that one of the ways of resolving the never settled question about the ownership of the Douglass Home was possibly to turn the Douglass Home over to NACW. She

immediately added, however, that "there is nothing that the NACW has done the past thirteen years to justify the trustees making this transfer at this time." 61

Despite NACW's failure to pay the fifteen per cent of its per capita tax as promised, FDMHA continued to choose its trustees from the NACW Advisory Board, which was comprised solely of NACW members, thereby ostensibly limited the FDMHA trustee board to NACW members. The FDMHA trustees accepted NACW's failure to transfer the money to them to a large extent, Stewart opined, because "we are all members of the N.A.C.W. we have permitted a gross violation of this pact by the N.A.C.W. in order to help the NACW's main program and to save the NACW's headquarters building from foreclosure." In closing, Stewart asked the trustees to consider whether transferring the property to "some other organization with a program of its own, other than the organization conceived in the minds of his widow would be violating any sacred trust?" 62 A similar letter was sent to state presidents of the National Association of Colored Women and members of a NACW committee set up investigate matters related to the Douglass Home.

Proposals to transfer the property to NACWC prompted swift negative response by some members of the Memorial and Historical Association, despite the close working relationship of the two organizations. Fredericka D. Perry, a FDMHA trustee and former NACW Advisory Member, wrote fellow board member Nannie H. Burroughs:

First, last and always I positively refuse to vote "yes" to transfer of title to NACW. As I told you...the trustees should perfect the F.D.M.H. Assoc. and raise funds with which to fulfill their obligations as trustees. "War times" seems to be no deterrent(sic) to furthering other non-war defense activities and...should be used as an excuse for holding back activities on this over due project. To have Cedar Hill taken from the trustees after all of these years, will certainly cast great reflection upon the Negro women's business ability.

I have never favored-even as member of the Advisory Board-an incorporated body [NACW] swallowing another incorporated body [FDMHA]. The Trustees of D. Home should remain steadfast in their determination to complete creditably this job-or else relinquish it to the Government....After the Home & grounds are restored & the Trustees want to then relinquish all responsibility of upkeep to NACW on its 15% per cap-the picture will look different. 63

The matter of transferring the deed and property rights to NACW was dropped when a bill to achieve this goal received an unfavorable reading in the corporation council. The Douglass Board then recommended that the existing agreement between NACW and FDMHA remain in effect. During all this discussion, there were at least some hints about transferring the property to another agency entirely, perhaps the government. 64

Unpaid bills was only one source of frustration for Sallie Stewart, who attempted to oversee operations at the Douglass home from her home in Evansville, Indiana which was hundreds of miles away. From her correspondence with Nannie Helen Burroughs, it appears that Stewart was disturbed by what she perceived as Burroughs' failure to respond with any degree of urgency to her requests regarding Cedar Hill. In one letter, dated 19 April 1943, Stewart wrote: "I know you are a busy person, but so also is everybody else. Take some time out now for the thought on the Douglass Home Association matter and write me again." 65

While mindful of Burroughs' active involvement in the Women's Auxiliary of the National Baptist Church, Stewart nonetheless continued to seek Burroughs's assistance in running the home. Stewart's eyes and ears in Washington, D.C., Burroughs was asked to find and interview caretakers for the home, to evict at least one caretaker, to oversee work being done by contractors, and to pay them once the funds had been secured. Each of these responsibilities required a full-time person and certainly not someone who was as much in demand as the president of a training school, who was also served as a public speaker, organizer and leader in the black Baptist women's movement. While keenly aware of Burroughs's various other commitments, Stewart continued with her demands for Burroughs' time. 66

From 1946 to 1950, questions about the nature of the relationship between the two organizations were constantly raised, always centering on the issue of ownership. In the minutes of the August 31, 1949 meeting of the Douglas (sic) Committee of NACWC, it was recorded that:

Mrs. Ella Stewart [NACWC president at the time] stated that she had on all occasions endeavored to interpret to the women of the N.A.C.W. THAT WE HAD SIGNED an agreement in 1949 to sponsor and support the Douglass Home project as we have done since 1916 in the restoration and rehabilitation of same....

She asked:

"Are the Douglass Committee and Trustees an integral part of NACW. or are the trustees and Committee a definite, separate unit functioning for the Douglas (sic) Historical Association? If so the N.A.C.W. over a period of years had fully cooperated and supported the Home having in mind that they controlled same and that some day there would be a merger and that at this time a decision should be made of such a merger to be presented to the

membership of N.A.C.W. at convention in 1950.<sup>67</sup>

Dr. Rosa Gragg, NACWC President from 1956 to 1962, indicated that the agreement reached in 1946 was typical of the meeting of the minds that usually took place when the two groups met face to face, but as soon as they returned to their respective homes the tension between the two groups resurfaced. The root of the conflict, according to Gragg, was the desire for power on the part of the FDMHA trustees whose body actually carried the Douglass name and the failure of the two separate corporate bodies ever to merge. Since they never dissolved their separate corporate bodies to form one corporate body, the two groups were constantly caught in a series of power plays and the Douglass Home suffered as a result.<sup>68</sup>

Sallie W. Stewart, as chair of the FDMHA trustee board was caught right in the middle of the controversy. She was quoted as having said at the August 31, 1949 meeting that: "'the Douglass Historical Association [FDMHA] was a distinct and independent organization, therefore was sponsoring its own campaign for a long range program, that N.A.C.W. gave over the period of years its money and support and it was their own fault if it did not have papers to protect their interest.'" <sup>69</sup> It should not be surprising to anyone involved that NACWC voted at its national meeting in 1950 in Atlantic City, New Jersey, to provide no more funds to the Douglass Home. According to the Douglass Home caretaker, Mrs. Gladys Parham, Mrs. Stewart packed her trunk and left the NACWC meeting that night for Washington, arriving at

Parham's home at three o'clock in the morning very upset. It was then that Stewart decided to give architect Hilyard Robinson permission to proceed with building an apartment complex on a section of the Douglass estate, as a permanent revenue-producing mechanism.<sup>70</sup>

For various reasons, some legal, others personal and financial, an increasingly strained relationship appeared between the Frederick Douglass Memorial and Historical Association and the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs. The decision by the delegates assembled at the 1950 NACWC convention to discontinue funding for the preservation and maintenance of the Douglass Home probably reflected the height of the rift between the two separate groups which had been united for the common purpose of saving the Cedar Hill estate since 1916. Yet, despite their troublesome alliance, the two organizations continued to work together on behalf of the preservation of the Douglass property and, at times, on improving their relationship. Just as difficult as it may be for the general public and for a scholar studying the administration of the home to understand the complex nature of the relationship between the two associations, it may be equally difficult for the women in the two organizations--FDMHA and NACWC, compounded by personal feelings and organizational loyalties, to understand their interaction and, equally important, the boundaries of their control over the Douglass estate.

The failure of NACW to provide adequate funding for the

maintenance and restoration of the Douglass property had prompted Stewart to consider selling or leasing part of the property for some time. As early as April 14, 1943, she asked Burroughs' opinion regarding the "selling the back wooded area, the part beyond where the little house was that had to be torn down. We might sell this and get enough to put the place in creditable condition." Possibly in response to some criticism she received, Stewart wrote Burroughs, nine months after her April 1943 letter, that she was not considering the sale of any land but instead leasing five acres on the back side of the property. 71

On 28 July 1951, after many years of dedicated service, the seventy-year old Mrs. Sallie W. Stewart, long-time teacher and president of the FDMHA Trustee Board, died at age 70 in Evansville, Indiana. 72

Mrs. Lucy Robinson, president of the Pennsylvania State Federation of Negro Women's Clubs, Inc., wrote Burroughs on 2 August 1951 expressing her support for Burroughs' call for a meeting of the trustees of the FDMHA. Three days later, the newly-elected FDMHA President Mrs. Emma I. Dickson of St. Louis, Missouri voiced similar support for Burroughs' actions regarding a meeting of the trustee board. Dickson warned Burroughs, however, that at the meeting "there will be some meddlers who will try to get in on the Trustees business. You call in those whom you think need be there." 73

In 1951, the association donated 0.9 acres of the Douglass land to the District of Columbia for a public highway. A

dedication ceremony was held at the Douglass Home to mark the occasion. 74

In 1952, in what ended up becoming a controversial real estate deal, the Frederick Douglass Memorial and Historical Association sold (although they thought initially that they had leased the land) a small portion of the Douglass estate to Douglass Glenn Gardens, Inc., thus reducing the original estate to 8.07 acres. Not only were the terms of the contract controversial, the FDMHA trustee board never received any money, from 1952 to 1975, as a result of this transaction. In 1960, Attorney Ellis filed a lawsuit on behalf of the FDMHA against the Glenn Gardens Corporation for their failure to account fully for the funds due the organization. 75 No results were forthcoming from the lawsuit. This failed financial transaction was a source of much disappointment because it represented a last ditch effort on the part of the FDMHA trustees to secure the necessary funds to restore the house and improve the condition of the grounds, which were deteriorating.

During most of this period, the Home was literally maintained by one person, Mrs. Gladys Parham. Mrs. Parham, affectionately known as "Miss Pam," was hired by the FDMHA trustees in 1949 as caretaker of the Douglass home. During her thirty-four year tenure (she served as caretaker until her death in 1983), Mrs. Parham did all that she could, with the help of her children, to preserve and protect the home. With little or no financial support from either the FDMHA or NACWC, Gladys

Parham and her children cleaned and safeguarded the home and its contents, recruited members of various local Boy Scout troops (Mrs. Parham served as a den mother for a Boy Scout troop) and children from the local Barry Farms area to help cut the grass and cut down bushes and weeds. She also periodically gave tours of the home. 76

Due primarily to the lack of funds to maintain the home properly, the physical condition of the home and the grounds gradually deteriorated. Seeing the Douglass home and surrounding grounds fall into a state of disrepair greatly disturbed Mrs. Parham, who cared so much about the appearance of the Douglass estate.

Despite her many years of devoted service, Mrs. Parham never received a salary from either the trustees of the FDMHA or the NACWC. Consequently, it was necessary for her to maintain a job that paid a salary in addition to serving as caretaker. It was not until after the Douglass Home was transferred to the National Park Service and she was placed on the National Park Service payroll in September 1965 that Mrs. Parham was finally paid for serving as caretaker. Compensating Mrs. Parham for her work at the home, other than allowing her and her children to live rent free in the caretaker's cottage on the grounds of the Douglass estate, appears not to have been a priority of the NACWC or the FDMHA leadership. The absence of funds may have been the major reason why neither organization provided Parham with wages or with the adequate resources to properly care for the home. In

the case of NACWC, however, Mrs. Parham believed that it was not the absence of funds as much as improper accounting that caused problems. Eventually Mrs. Parham terminated her membership in NACWC, which she had joined when she first came to Washington, and became active with the District Baptist Convention because the latter group (in her words) "always knew where the money was going." 77 Gladys Parham's tenure during this difficult period, despite her opinion of the organizations involved, preserved the Home in the last decade before it obtained permanent support.

By early 1956, it was decided by both NACW and FDMHA that a committee be formed to lobby the United State Congress to take over the Douglass property. Ella P. Stewart, past president of NACW, was appointed by NACW president Irene Gaines to head the committee. Ella P. Stewart wrote FDMHA president, Emma I. Dickson that:

I see no alternative at this time since for forty years there has not been a workable solution....I am intensely interested in full coordination of both organizations in this matter. As you know, I try to put organization in the front and forget self. 78

Preliminary work to improve the relationship of the two organizations was begun in 1960. The board of trustees of the FDMHA assembled at a meeting called by Mrs. Mary Gregory, FDMHA chair, on February 8, 1960 in St. Louis, Missouri. Present were two representatives of the NACWC Advisory Board, Mrs. Rosa L. Gragg of Detroit, Michigan and Mrs. Pearl Dabney of Kansas City, Missouri. Also present was Mrs. Lillian Bondurant of Denver, Colorado. Mrs. Luaco Gladden (East St. Louis, Illinois), Mrs. Nannie H. Burroughs (Washington, D.C.), Mrs. M. Josenberger

(Arkansas). and Mrs. Jane Spaulding (West Virginia) sent proxies. Mrs. Lucy Robinson of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, FDMHA treasurer, was not present nor did she send a representative.79

In a move suggestive of an attempt to improve relations between the two associations, Mrs. Gregory requested and the group unanimously approved Mrs. Gragg, president of NACWC, as acting secretary at the call meeting of the FDMHA Board of Trustees. It was also agreed by the trustees at the meeting that "Douglass Materials be turned over to President Gragg and shipped to N.A.C.W.C. HEADQUARTERS, 1601 R Street, Northwest, Washington, D.C." 80

According to the minutes of the February 8, 1960 meeting, FDMHA President Gregory called the meeting in order to respond to inquiries made by NACWC President Gragg regarding the "state of affairs of [the] Frederick Douglass Memorial and Historical Association." Despite efforts at the meeting to improve relations between the two organizations, the treasurer's report about the financial condition of the Memorial Association made reference to the failure of the Colored Women's Clubs to provide financial support for the preservation and maintenance of the home. According to the treasurer, the Memorial Association only had five or six dollars in its bank account at the time of the meeting and had not received any funds from the Colored Women's Clubs since 1957. This was despite the fact that the Colored Womens Clubs were due to turn over to FDMHA five per cent of their annual dues through per capita tax. Furthermore, the

Colored Women's Clubs had not paid Mrs. Gladys Parham, whom they had hired to maintain and safeguard the Douglass property for three years. The light bill which averaged approximately one dollar and twenty-nine cents had been paid by the FDMHA treasurer. 81

Despite NACWC's failure to contribute to FDMHA's financial well-being from 1957 to 1960, three of the four newly-elected trustee came from the NACWC Advisory Board. They replaced Mrs. Emma Dixon, Mrs. Ella P. Stewart, Mrs. Jane Spaulding and Mrs. Mamie Josenberger. The Board of Trustees for the Memorial and Historical Association was composed, then, of NACWC Advisory Board members, Miss Elizabeth Clark, Mrs. Pearl Dabney, and Mrs. Rosa L. Gragg, along with Attorney Cora M. Brown of Washington, D.C., and incumbents Mrs. Mary Gregory, Miss Nannie H. Burroughs, Mrs. Luaco Gladden, Mrs. Lillian Bondurant, and Mrs. Lucy Robinson. Gregory was unanimously elected "President or Chairman;" Miss Elizabeth Clark, secretary; Miss Nannie H. Burroughs, parliamentarian; and Cora M. Brown, financial secretary (a newly-created position). 82

Reflective of the renewed interest and commitment on the part of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs, a check in the amount of hundred and ten dollars and ten cents was presented to the Board of Trustees by the Denver Association of the NACWC. The meeting concluded with a formal vote by the board authorizing FDMHA President Gregory and NACWC President Gragg to "enter into plans and agreements for providing more effective

cooperation between the Frederick Douglass Memorial and Historical Association and the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs." 83 Previous agreements had been reached by the two organizations but usually had little long lasting effect on the women in either organization.

Six months later FDMHA trustees and NACWC advisors met in New York City. At that meeting it was decided that the newly-elected trustee Cora Brown should not be permitted to continue to serve as "Treasurer," since she was "not a member of the advisory board when she was chosen to be a member of the trustee board of the Frederick Douglass Historical Association according to the Constitution of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs." Peachy Jackson was unanimously elected Treasurer. At that same meeting, board members also voted on a motion to remove Lucy Robinson from the Board and as treasurer "on account of non-cooperation and non-attendance." NACWC President Rosa L. Gragg informed those present that she had established a fund for the Douglass Board of Trustees within the National association of Colored Women's Clubs. The \$12,950.00 proposed budget for the 1960-61 was to come from the following sources: NACWC per Capita Tax - \$800.00; Special Gifts from state associations (\$7,000.00); National Fund Raising Campaign (\$5,000.00) and Visitors' Fees (\$150.00). The money was to be used for the following expenses: Caretaker (\$300.00), postage (\$400.00), electricity (\$60.00), heat (\$180.00), campaign fund raising (\$1000.00), travel and miscellaneous (\$450.00), and legal fees (\$1,000.00). At the

conclusion of the meeting, the "Articles of Agreement" between NACWC and FDMHA were presented to the body. 84

On February 26, 1961, both organizations jointly sponsored a Restoration Launching Program at the Sheraton Park Hotel in Washington, D.C., Unfortunately, the fundraising effort was not the success that had been predicted. Instead of raising \$50,000, the effort only brought in \$6,000. It became more and more apparent in the 1960s that the two organizations could not raise enough money to pay for superficial, let alone much needed structural repairs to the Douglass home and property. Thus they embarked upon a campaign to have the home taken over by the United States government, namely, the National Park Service of the United States Department of the Interior. 85

## CHAPTER VII

### FDMHA AND NACWC: PIONEER PRESERVATIONISTS

In the midst of a picturesque 14 acre-estate, on a hill of commanding altitude, surrounded by fragrant cedars and majestic oaks, overlooking the placid waters of the Potomac and the city of Washington stands the stately mansion of the late Frederick Douglass. Beautiful for situation it stands, high and alone, strikingly significant, a symbol fo the spiritual, moral and physical triumphs of its owner over every handicap. and like unto a watch tower with its argus eyes searching, listening waiting for the turn in the tide of affairs that must come with the years. 86

From 1900 to 1962, when the Douglass property in Anacostia was transferred to the National Park Service, members of the Frederick Douglass Memorial and Historical Association trustee board, along with the FDMHA Advisory Boardpreserved Douglass' "Cedar Hill" estate as a memorial to one of the greatest nineteenth century black Americans. As has been mentioned earlier, the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs joined the preservation effort at the request of what was then an all-male Board of Trustees for the Douglass Home. Overtime, the trustee board evolved from all-male to all-female. The involvement of NACWC also meant that the preservation movement had the support and backing of thousands of black women in practically every state of the union. Their joint efforts resulted in the preservation and, to a lesser extent, the restoration of the grounds and home that comprised Cedar Hill, as well as the furnishings and artifacts found in the home prior to

its transfer to the federal government. Before completing the story, therefore, it is worthwhile to analyze in greater detail the preservation effort itself at the Home.

#### Preservation of the grounds and home

During the sixty-two year period in questions, various measures were undertaken to maintain the home and grounds. Yet, failure to secure adequate funding meant that many repairs were never made and others completed long after they should have been. On several occasions, nonetheless, the combined efforts of both organizations resulted in improvements in the condition of the property.

When NACWC first joined the movement in 1916, one of its stated goals was the restoration of the Douglass property. In a letter to Talbert dated April 26, 1921, Emmett J. Scott, admittedly not a builder, and a Mr. Hazel outlined in detail the work needed, distinguishing between what was in need of immediate repair and what was not. The estimated cost of the recommended repairs was \$10,000. Giving great care to preserving the original structure, the two men recommended, in part, the following:

That first attention be given to the thorough repair of the structural parts of the house, such as floor joists, roof rafters, and roof covering, including cornices and gutters. The columns of the front porch appear to be sound. They should be removed and replaced after a new porch is built, preserving the design and details of the present porch.

Second: We would advise among the earlier things to be done, the installation of steam heat, at least the boiler and the piping. The radiators can be taken care of later.

Next, more suitable plumbing, i.e., rough plumbing should be installed. Plumbing fixtures, such as bath tubs, lavatories, water closets, and sinks, can come later.

Next, electric wiring for lighting. Fixtures to come later.

We suggest that this be done in this order, because the plastering both in ceilings and walls is in very bad condition, and as the piping and wiring should be concealed, it would be a great economy to have this work done before any repairs to plastering be done.

Most of the ceilings and many portions of the walls will need to be re-plastered.

The window frames, sash, etc., will need looking after.

All of the floors should be laid new, but this can be done from time to time, as funds are available.

The old paint in the exterior brick work is badly scaled. It should be cleaned off and the brickwork repainted. This also can wait. The blinds need repairing.

Whether the interior walls should be repapered or painted, would be a matter for those in charge to determine.

As to the grounds, we suggest that some slight changes be made in the contours of the terraces, so as to admit of new steps of easier ascent than the present ones. The repair and treatment of the grounds could be well postponed until all else has been attended to. 87

The immediate efforts of the Douglass Home Committee of the NACW focused on eradicating structural problems at the home, as outlined in Scott's letter, rather than interior restoration and preservation. As per the recommendation of Scott and Hazel, the Douglass Home was wired for electricity and light fixtures were added sometime during the 1920s. As Talbert's letter of appeal indicates, not all of the recommended work was completed by the time of the dedication ceremony. 88

In the summer of 1922, NACWC held a restoration dedication

ceremony at Cedar Hill to symbolize the completion of its first major preservation and restoration effort. In an open letter to the NACWC membership, FDMHA and NACW president Mary B. Talbert described the following early restoration efforts at the home: "The furnances are in; the roof and new gutters finished; the new... bathroom - and every room equipped with electricity." But, as Talbert pointed out in her letter urging black club women to contribute more money to the Douglass Home cause, "there is not enough money to complete the job." 89

Over the next forty years, the restoration and maintenance efforts could best be described as piecemeal, with the exception of the brief period in 1938 and 1939 when WPA employees worked to improve the condition of the home and grounds as well as inventoried the contents of the home. Nannie Helen Burroughs, as "official custodian of buildings and grounds" had the unenviable position of seeing to it that Douglass' "Cedar Hill" property was well-maintained. With limited funds, Burroughs, who was president of the National Training School for Women and Girls in Washington, D.C., had the responsibility of hiring contractors, and supervising caretakers and other workers at the home, seeing to it that they were paid for their services in a timely manner. These tasks were made especially difficult by the limited resources of the trustees of FDMHA and its frequent failure to obtain needed funds to pay carpenters, plumbers, landscapers and other individuals and for such basic services as heat and electrickty. 90

In order to cut costs involved in maintaining the grounds at Cedar Hill, a lawn mover was purchased for the home in the spring of 1924 at the cost of \$28.00 and laborers rather than specialized workers, like landscapers, were hired. In the spring and summer of 1924, two male laborers, Frank Duvall and Randolph Jackson, were hired to perform various tasks at the home and two women, Hattie Oddrick and Irene Butler, were hired to clean the interior. 91

The major improvement planned at Cedar Hill in 1924 was the conversion of the barn in the rear of Douglass' home into a cottage for the caretaker's family. The trustees and advisory board members of the FDMHA approved this action at their August 2, 1924 meeting in Chicago, Illinois. The work itself came under the supervision of the "Improvements" Committee of the FDMHA, comprised of Nettie L. Napier, Hallie Q. Brown, Elizabeth C. Carter, Lelia Pendleton and Nannie H. Burroughs; the latter two women actually resided in Washington, D.C. and, thus, more likely directed the work needed to be done to turn the barn into a living quarters. It was important that the caretakers have a separate place to live, according to one of the trustees, "so as not to compromise the integrity of Douglass's home." It was also said that it was important to have a separate cotttage for the caretaker and "his" family, "in order to preserve and maintain the Frederick Douglass home in a condition which its station and purpose warranted." 92 The cottage, with all modern improvements, was built at the cost of \$9,000, with money raised

by club women throughout the United States.

On more than one occasion, caretakers paid the bills to keep the gas and electricity in the home as well as paid people out of their own pocket to cut the grass. Mrs. Gladys Parham is most well known for having contributed her own personal resources to maintain the home during her tenure as caretaker from 1949 to 1983. When, in 1961, she was asked to estimate the amount of out-of-pocket money she spent on maintaining the home, Mrs. Parham's initial reply was that "I did not do it [serve as caretaker] for the money." When pressed to quote a figure, she settled on the amount of \$1,000. 93 Long-time caretaker Gladys Parham was not alone in caring for the home with her own personal funds, so had her predecessors. Mrs. Davis, a caretaker from 1937, paid the gas light bill and the watchman. She had yet to be reimbursed when she vacated her job as caretaker in 1940.

It was not just their own personal comfort which prompted them to make personal financial sacrifices to maintain the home and grounds. Fredericka D. Perry, a granddaughter of Frederick Douglass and member of the FDMHA Advisory Board, wrote Burroughs in November of 1938 that she had "spent many cool eves. [evenings] on the hill [Cedar Hill]" talking with Mrs. Davis during the fall of the year. Perry feared that the books in the home would "suffer from the cold" and that proper care could not be given to the home by a caretaker forced to work in a cold house. 94

Unfortunately, such uncertain funding took a toll on the

Home. The following description of the grounds appeared in an article in The Washington Daily News (March 19, 1934): "Its terraces are washing away, its drive is almost impassable, its flights of cement steps are cracked and broken, its once noted cedar trees have died and never have been replaced." Martha Strayer, author of this Daily News article, entitled "Shrine of Great Negro Statesman Here Disintegrating: Pennies to Restore It," added: "The house itself is unheated, so that occasional visitors to this almost forgotten historical spot shiver thru rooms furnished with long lace curtains, high walnut beds, marble-topped bureaus, Victorian sofas and arm chairs."

Among its relics, according to Strayer is "Abraham Lincoln's favorite cane" donated by Mrs. Lincoln and placed in a glass case at the home. There are also a:

dozen discolored teaspoons which were given to Douglass by Queen Victoria; a desk chair and table given him by Harriet Beecher Stowe; a table and chair which belonged to Charles Sumner; a flag once the property of John Brown; a letter with a notation by Lincoln; files of the papers published by Douglass." The small sum allotted to the home by the National Association of Colored Women, the author concluded, is used primarily for upkeep of the home, which is visited regularly but not exclusively by "colored school children," and not the grounds. 95

Four years later, under the direction of Nettie L. Napier, who succeeded Mary B. Talbert as president of the Frederick Douglass Memorial and Historical Association, many improvements had been made to the exterior and interior of the home, the furnishings, and the walks, steps, and the grounds surrounding the house, according to The Chicago Defender. It was acknowledged that "much more remains to be done to make it the

SHRINE it is intended to be." 96

Largely through the efforts of Mary McLeod Bethune, director of the the Division of Negro Affairs of the National Youth Administration (NYA) as well as a FDMHA trustee and former NACWC president, a major inventory of the contents of the home was conducted by WPA, and major landscaping work was completed at the home by the NYA in the mid-1930s. Burroughs reported in a letter to the members of the board of trustees and the advisory board that the caretaker, Mrs. Davis, was "searching attic, boxes, store-away places and every corner of the mansion to find all valuable manuscripts, books, etc. because she has the services of some white collar workers to assort, assemble, index and file all such materials. 97

Based upon a report written in October 1938 on NYA Project #290, "Landscape Gardening at Douglas (sic) Memorial Home," the following letter was written by the Francoise Bell, Director of the NYA:

On October 8, 1936, 50 out-of-school boys were assigned to work on a project to learn landscape gardening and horticulture under the co-sponsorship of Phelps Vocational School, with the grounds of the Douglas (sic) Memorial Home to be used as a laboratory. The grounds consisted of 10 acres which were covered with a thick undergrowth of small trees and brush, and with no speical (sic) contour of the high hill on which the house sets.

...

Through the work of the NYA youths the grounds surrounding Douglas (sic) Memorial Home have been greatly improved. The large growth of underbrush has been cleared away, slopes have been terraced, graded and planted or sodded with grass; trees have been transplanted, lower beds and shrubs have been planted; a rock garden has been built; Frederick Dougla's little den back of the big house has been re-roofed and put in condition so that it may be kept as he left it; the roadway leading up to the house has been graded and graveled, and tile has been laid so as to

keep it drained; the concrete steps in front of the house have been repaired. In addition to this work ..., rustic picnic tables and benches; a concrete bench and birth bath; a very artistic name plate for the entrance to the grounds, trellises, etc. have been built by NYA boys in the shops of the Phelps Vocational School....These articles have been given to the Douglas (sic) Memorial Home by Phelps Vocational School. 98

During the period from 1936 to 1938, 245 different young men had worked on the grounds at Cedar Hill, under the supervision of a landscape architect Randall R. Evans. NYA Director Bell [last name also appears as Black] was of the opinion, and rightfully so, that "our boys have made a great contribution in preserving and increasing the beauty of the Douglas (sic) Memorial Home." Despite their valuable contribution, Bell indicated to Bethune, that further assistance was dependent upon the Memorial Association's commitment to "the continued maintenace of these beautiful grounds, as without this maintenance the work which we have accomplished soon needs to be done over again." 99

One month later, November 1938, shortly after the passing of FDMHA Trustee and President Nettie L. Napier, Burroughs wrote the both organizations that:

Since all this money has been spent for us on beautification, we should provide for upkeep of the drive way and grounds....Mrs. Davis tells me that a capable man who lives in the little house would take on this additional responsibility for two dollars a day. It would require two days a week, or eight days a month to keep the grounds in perfect condition. I think that is most reasonable and I would follow up and check on the work every ten days. 100

In light of the work of the NYA at the home, Burroughs concluded that "we should be willing to do these necessary things to preserve and make more attractive our glorious shrine."

In addition to recommending the services of a yardman,

Burroughs also urged the women active in the preservation of the Douglass Home to consider the importance of buying coal for use in the "mansion" for the comfort of the visitors during the winter months. 101

Most efforts proved to be too infrequent and underfunded to make a significant impact on the overall condition of the Douglass estate. Most trustees only visited the Douglass Home once a year at most, when and if the FDMHA met in Washington, D.C. Professional and personal commitments as well as distance prevented most FDMHA trustees and Advisory Board members from becoming directly involved in the upkeep of the home. Miss Meta Pelham, an FDMHA trustee from Detroit, Michigan, informed trustee Burroughs from Washington, D.C. that she must take up the banner for the Douglass because she (Pelham) was no longer able. Pelham and Nettie L. Napier had been, what Pelham describes in her December 1938 letter, "the only free lances among the trustees and had time to do what the keeping up of 'The Home' needed. Now she is dead and I am not well." 102

Consequently, due to the absence of most trustees and advisory board members from the city, the natural aging process, and the inability of both organizations to have repairs made on the home (even such minor maintenance efforts, such as grass cutting and tree pruning), the Douglass home and grounds began to deteriorate. In August 1939, Burroughs reported to the new FDMHA president Mrs. Addie W. Dickerson that the road needed fixing and that money must be made available to pay a yardman and a cleaning

woman. Burroughs added: "I need not tell you that it [the home] is filthy because you saw it." 103

Occasionally, especially during times in which there was no caretaker at the home, various acts of vandalism were committed at the home. For instance, on the Halloween night of 1939, shortly after the caretaker Mrs. Davis moved, vandals (identified as "persons in the community") did some damage to one of the Cedar Hill buildings. Mrs. Dixon who had been hired as caretaker refused to move in until repairs at the cottage, estimated at \$80.00, had been made. In October 1940, Mr. J. W. Dixon, at the request of Mrs. E. P. Dixon, submitted to Nannie H. Burroughs a list of repairs considered "absolutely necessary" for the cottage:

- Removing of old flooring in the living room, putting in new joist and laying new floor.
- Putting on new moulding around base board.
- Repairing floors in the bedrooms and putting on new moulding
- New sash cords in 3 windows.
- Repairing plastering in dining room
- Repairs to water spout on west side of house. 104

Burroughs wired Stewart of this situation, adding: "entire place unprotected. Wire money for repairs. Dangerous to leave place." Mrs. Stewart, who was "President-Treasurer" at the time, did not respond to either of the two urgent telegrams sent by Burroughs regarding the situation at the home. The delay may have been due to the difference in opinion between Burroughs and Stewart over the choice of caretakers. Burroughs recommended Dixon, while Stewart wanted someone else whom Burroughs described as "entirely too young." 105

Periodically, throughout the 1940s and 1950s, the local press brought to the public's attention the deteriorating conditions at Douglass' "Cedar Hill" home. It was alleged in the 3 April 1943 issue of the Washington Tribune that: "the house is so run down and weeds so high that the public is not permitted to visit the shrine." Similarly, Fredericka D. Perry wrote Burroughs eight days later about correspondence which she had received from people in Washington complaining about the condition in the home. Perry added: "I understand too that the whites around the Estate are complaining again about its appearance-as you once stated at a biennial and also wrote to last biennial." 106

In response, FDMHA President Sallie W. Stewart is quoted in this Washington Tribune article as having said: "If it had not been for the association [the Frederick Douglass Memorial and Historical Association] there would be no semblance of the Douglass Home as no Washingtonians came forward to redeem it when a \$5,000 mortgage was to be redeemed.'" Washington Tribune columnist wrote that it was not the responsibility of the Washington community to maintain the home but the association's and suggested that if the association could not develop a plan to raise the funds to properly care for the home and if the association is truly interested in "perpetuating a shrine to Douglass" then it should have no "objections to the Government operating and taking over where it has fallen down?" Declaring that the FDMHA and not NACW was the organization legally

responsible for maintaining the home, the Tribune reporter discounted the reputed tension between the two organizations, much as he did the failure of the Washington community to retire the debt on the home, as the cause for the deplorable conditions.107

Two years earlier, Stewart had expressed similar sentiments in a private letter to Burroughs. At Stewart's request, in the Spring of 1941, Burroughs offered the following list of repairs needed at the home: 108

1. Repair the roof.....\$363  
I have arranged with Madden Brothers, Inc. to go ahead with that to avoid further damage. We must raise money for
2. General repairs of porch, floors, windows, etc....500
3. Painting- Exterior.....750
4. Papering (Conditioning walls).....550
5. Shades and Draperies.....250
6. Painting - Interior.....300
7. Cleaning - covering backs of all pictures where necessary, putting entire house in order.....150
8. Incidentals.....50
9. Repairing Road and Retaining Wall.....100

Total cost excluding Roof.....\$2,650

With list in hand, Stewart informed Burroughs that she had "written her [Miss Pelham] that we can do nothing [about the condition of the home] until we get what is coming to us from the National and it does not seem that we shall get it til after the July convention." In her letter to NACW club members, outgoing president Jennie B. Moton of Capahosic, Virginia made the following statements regarding NACW and the Douglass home: 1. You paid the mortgage on Douglass Home but the responsibility of the MAINTENANCE OF THE ESTATE you inherited, and that means the

constant out-put of funds...HEADQUARTERS IS PAID FOR. This means more money available for maintenance (sic) of the Douglass Estate." 109

Burroughs placed the blame on the FDMHA trustees, much as the Washington Tribune had, for not living up to their responsibilities to preserve and maintain "a shrine such as Douglass home." In a lengthy letter to the trustees of FDMHA, dated July 26, 1941, Burroughs offers an excellent summary of the condition of the home and the trustees' role in its preservation as well as offers advice for the trustees to consider on a wide variety of matters related to the home. She wrote:

1. The Douglass Home Trustees are not faithful to their trust. The home is in a terrible condition. In fact, it is a disgrace to Negro women....Who is responsible? You. You ran in two years ago, held a brief meeting and left me in charge of buildings and grounds, and did not leave one cent with which to do anything.

The funds that have been given for the upkeep of the home have been "loaned" out.

2. The roof was in such terrible condition, I begged the Chairman to let me have money to have the work done. Mrs. Bethune advanced \$120.00 from rent of National Headquarters to help pay on repair of roof.

3. The problem of a caretaker.

This is a real problem. I advise the trustees to include money in the 1941-1943 budget, to employ an intelligent full time caretaker, who will give eight hours a day working in the Douglass Home and on the grounds.

The caretaker must be a man who can do housecleaning, general repair work, and landscape gardening. His wife should be a highly intelligent, settled woman who is interested in Negro life and achievements, and will assist with the work and serve as hostess.

4. I am inclosing copy of a letter I wrote Mrs. Bryant. She represents the public school group that gave us the drinking fountain, and might take another project if we ever put the home in condition to assure the public that we know our business and

are not neglecting it.

5. I am inclosing a bid from Allen Jackson - Painter and Interior Decorator.

I advise that all walls be painted cream. Someone might say that Mr. Douglass did not have painted walls. True. Neither did he have dirty walls with paper hanging off.

6. I do not advise renting the carriage house that Mrs. Davis converted into an apartment.

The property is exempt from taxes.

8. Madden Brothers gave us a good repair job on the roof.

9. The old shack on the lower level had to be torn down. It was unfit for habitation.

12. Finally, I think if we are honest with ourselves, we will confess that we have done a mighty poor job of making Douglass Home a shrine that will compare with those dedicated to expressing appreciation for the achievements of the Honoree, and to inspiring and challenging all who look upon it to go and dedicate themselves to like ideals and achievements. 110

While never elected president, the tone and content of this letter reveals Burrough's intense, personal involvement in the management of the Douglass property as "Custodian of the Home and Grounds," and that, quite possibly, she saw herself as the guardian of the sacred trust that befell the trustees to protect Douglass' legacy, as embodied in "Cedar Hill." Still yet, the pessimistic and somewhat critical tone of Burroughs' letter was designed to elicit more support for the home within the National Association of Colored Women. Stewart read Burroughs' letter at the biennial meeting of NACW in July 1941; the assembled delegates decided to allocate \$1800 to FDMHA (not including the \$1400 due FDMHA from the Hot Springs, Arkansas meeting). 111

At the meeting, Stewart informed Burroughs that the FDMHA trustee board agreed to looking into fixing the road first and

then into fixing the inside of the Douglass Home. Yet, Stewart indicated that the FDMHA were almost depleted after she repaid Bethune for the \$120 that Bethune had lent Burroughs to fix the roof. [Letter, Stewart to Burroughs, 4 August 1951, FDMHA, Box 4]. Some work had been done on the interior of the house as Mr. Dixon had submitted a bill to FDMHA for "papering the house."112

A key ingredient in the trustees effort to maintain and preserve the home, in spite of the limited funds made available to them, was a committed, hard working caretaker. Throughout the summer of 1941, Stewart regularly urged Burroughs to fire the Dixons and to hire new caretakers and maybe even a hostess for the house. 113

In the meantime, clearing the grounds remained a major goal of the FDMHA trustees. In early 1946, FDMHA President Sallie W. Stewart let a contract to Edgar C. Fisher for work on the grounds on the Douglass home. Shortly thereafter, Mr. Fisher informed Stewart that he was having trouble clearing the growth because the man who was to assist him had a death in the family and had to return south. Between September 1948 and February 1949, the William P. Lipscomb Company, Inc. cleared 9.25 acres at the Douglass Home, for which they billed FDMHA \$7,354. 114

Among the changes that Sallie W. Stewart approved was the filling of well excavations at the home, at the insistence of the District government. She urged Burroughs to solicit free cinders from some companies and dirt from neighbors. Other improvements were planned in 1949: Oscar Madden was secured to repair the

gutters; Robert Watson, a carpenter, to rehang all shutters, repair window panes, make a batton door for the entrance to the basement, get the pigeons out of the attic, and to replace ropes in windows if needed. Many of these scheduled changes were being planned with the support and personal assistance of NACW president Ella P. Stewart. 115

Clearing the growth on the grounds of the Douglass estate was welcomed by nearby neighbors of the Douglass home but it posed additional problems for the trustees --what to do with the unsightly, run down buildings on the property, especially the growlery and the carriage house. 116

Issues regarding the condition of the home continued to occupy the FDMHA trustee board throughout the 1950s. Plans were outlined to improve the condition of the property, especially in light of continued negative publicity. The major stumbling block was receiving funds from the Cedar Hill Company for the property which FDMHA had leased it. The plan of action as proposed by Mary E.C. Gregory, a member of the Douglass Home and Grounds Committee, to FDMHA president Emma Dickson in December 1954 focused on "preserving the Home itself. Ground Beautification and Restoration of other buildings would have to come in 1956." Employing her characteristic slogan, "Let's Move Forward," Gregory urged Dickson to refute negative criticism of the condition of the Douglass property with "Constructive Action." 117

The failure of the Glen-Gardens Company to turn over any money to FDMHA added to its woes as unpaid bills mounted at the

same pace as the negative public criticism. Burroughs was no less unrelenting in her continued criticism of the board trustees. In 1955, she wrote a letter to the trustees, declaring that:

the continuous and gross neglect of Douglas (sic) Home and grounds by the Board is not only an open violation of the trust, but embarrassing to people of standrads and sense of responsibilities, and a disgrace to the Negro race.<sup>118</sup>

In the meantime, a severe wind storm caused considerable damage at the home in early 1956 and no money was forthcoming from the Glen-Garden Apartments which necessitated a lawsuit on the part of the FDMHA trustee board.<sup>119</sup> It was at this time, as has been noted previously, that the two organizations began working on a plan to transfer the Home to the federal government.

On the eve of the transfer, the FDMHA trustees had received condemnation notices from District of Columbia officials regarding the Douglass property. The general consensus among both the women involved in preserving Douglass' property and National Park Service officials was that the home needed major structural work and that it would take the resources of an agency like the National Park Service to beautify the grounds surrounding the Douglass home.

While this movement was underway, members of these early pioneer preservation groups did not idly wait for government support. In February 1961, they made plans for a major restoration drive under the direction of NACW, with sufficient funds going to FDMHA, a NACW "affiliate". By this time, Mary E.C. Gregory was serving as President or Chairman of the Trustee

Board. A strong believer in the mandate as outlined in the articles of incorporation of the FDMHA, much in the vein of Sallie W. Stewart, Gregory faced an equally strong leader in the presence of NACWC president, Rosa Gragg. While committed to the same cause- the restoration and preservation of the Douglass Home, there remain an underlying tension between the two women and the two organizations throughout the campaign to transfer the home and afterwards.<sup>120</sup>

#### Preservation of the furnishings and artifacts

There have been occasional references to missing items, such as silver pieces, taken from the Douglass Home but most deny knowing that the contents of the home were ever disturbed and appear to be generally reluctant to openly discuss the possibility that items were ever removed from the home. In any case, the record indicates no evidence of major theft or loss over nearly seven decades, which is impressive given the limited resources available. The inventory taken by WPA was the first real accounting of the contents of the home since Douglass's death in 1895.

What is equally remarkable about the preservation efforts of the FDMHA and the NACWC is that there appears to have been no serious discussion among the women trustees and advisory board members of ever selling any of the items in the home, especially in light of the poor financial condition of the FDMHA. After expressing her delight that a survey of the contents of the

Douglass Home was finally being conducted, Fredericka D. Perry wrote in a letter dated 22 November 1938: "there is material of value stored in dust that would net a neat sum." However, it is doubtful that she was ever suggesting that the materials be sold to raise money. For as she continued in this same letter:

"I have some [materials] here [presumably at her home in Missouri] that was our mothers. Some I will use and some I would like used at Cedar Hill. TIME is taking its toll--I would like to do my bit to help the women of the National in the restoration of this home--...."121

Although Mrs. Parham's daughter, Martha Alston, who currently serves as an interpreter at the Douglass Home, indicated that neither her mother nor any of her family ever moved around any artifacts in the home, there are certain objects currently in the home that Mrs. Alston does not remember as having been in the place where they currently are located. Some of this results from the effort of the National Park Service to place objects in the location shown in historic photographs. The rest is symbolic of the difficulty inherent in restoring the historical record after so many years. Ultimately, the major contribution of these two preservation organizations was to preserve the Home from sale, "save" the structure periodically from total deterioration and guard the enormous, significant Douglass collection of furnishings and objects intact for future generations.

In February 1961, the FDMHA conducted a week-long inventory of the contents of the Douglass Home in preparation for the transfer of the property to the federal government. The

committee of trustees appointed by Mary Gregory consisted of Mary Gregory's husband, Jesse Gregory, (Mary Gregory could not come because of her professional obligations as Executive Director of the Cincinnati YWCA), Gladys Parham, Eudora Gilmore, and Mrs. Hagley. The committee inventoried the contents of the home from the first floor to the attic, including bedding, clothing, and Douglass memorabilia in preparation for transfer of the Douglass home to the National Park Service.<sup>122</sup>

## CHAPTER VIII

### CEDAR HILL: A NATIONAL MONUMENT AND HISTORIC SITE

In 1962, the Douglass Home became the property of the National Park Service by an act of the United States Congress, culminating many years of hard work on the part of FDMHA and NACW. Dr. Rosa Gragg, president of the NACWC, had Philip Hart, the United States Senator from Detroit, Michigan, and Congressman Charles Diggs, Jr., also from Detroit, sponsor the legislation to make the home a part of the National Park Service. The former Gragg declares "was like a son and the other (Hart) was like a brother." Depending upon the source, both Rosa Gragg and Mary Gregory are seen as prime movers behind the successful transfer of the home. 123 Those without decided loyalties in either camp acknowledge the roles of both women and organizations in this drive. Whatever the level of involvement, the successful transfer of the home to the National Park Service meant to all those concerned that the Douglass Home would finally receive sustained financial support and be assured national exposure.

Mary Gregory was quoted in a Cincinnati newspaper as having said: "We want the house to be a symbol of the Negro's contribution to American history. We want the people to come to Washington to visit the Douglass home the way they visit Mt. Vernon or the Custis-Lee Mansion..." 124

In the campaign to lobby both houses of Congress on behalf

of the bill, Rosa Gragg, who had temporarily relocated to Washington during this period, worked with local members of both organizations. Close proximity to the Douglass Home and, more importantly to the halls of Congress, made them key lobbyists on behalf of the proposed bill. Mary Gregory, who resided in Cincinnati, Ohio, notified Gragg that Miss Elizabeth Clark, the secretary of the FDMHA trustee board and a Washington resident, would represent her at Congressional hearings. Gregory implored Gragg to notify Clark (in writing at least five days in advance) about any scheduled congressional hearings. 125

Although Gragg came to play a major role in the campaign, Gregory played an active role as well. For example, in early May of 1962, Senator Alan Bible, chair of the Senate subcommittee on public lands, scheduled Miss Elizabeth Clark and Dr. Rosa L. Gragg as witnesses at a May 24, 1962 Senate hearing on S. 2399 (the Douglass Home bill) at Mary Gregory's request. 126

The services of many other individuals were also solicited. Attorney Herbert O. Reid of the Howard University School of Law provided legal advice in connection with House and Senate hearings. 127

The legislation (Public Law 87-633) was approved September 5, 1962. On June 25, 1964, a dedication ceremony was held at Cedar Hill and, later on, a signing ceremony at the White House. Rosa Gragg indicated that at both ceremonies, she was responsible for invitations and graciously included participation by the Frederick Douglass Memorial and Historical Association.

Years later Rosa Gragg believes that such participation unfortunately contributed to a reemphasis on the Frederick Douglass Memorial and Historical Association, since it bears the Douglass Home name and held title to the property. Gragg feels that the role of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs has been deemphasized and even lost as a result. She does not believe that the FDMHA has worked to correct this omission. On the other hand, Mary Gregory points out that the Memorial and Historical Association did own the Home and that emphasis on the funds provided by the NACWC, and their role in the legislative process, can lead to a neglect of the role which countless FDMHA board members, including herself, played in the preservation and transfer of the Home. (Gregory also provided insight by noting that the "claims" were and still are most likely to prove strong where the leaders of each organization, especially the FDMHA, read and interpret the letter of their organization's constitutions literally. She admits that she always tended to be such a leader). 128

The National Park Service determined immediately that the home would have to undergo a major restoration to keep it from collapsing and to make it safe for the public. Over the next ten years, the Frederick Douglass Home was fully restored and preserved. As part of the restoration effort undertaken by the National Park Service, the roof of the Douglass home was repaired, the walls and floors were bolstered, outbuildings were restored, and the interior of the home was preserved and

refurnished. In restoring the Douglass home and surrounding property as well as the contents of the home, careful attention was paid to restoring the Douglass estate to condition it was in at the time of Douglass' death. National Park Service restoration experts were aided by an inventory of the Douglass estate taken in July of 1895, by a description of the home reported by journalist Robert Woods in the Washington Post as well as by the recollections of Mrs. Gladys Parham, long-time caretaker and member of the Frederick Douglass Memorial and Historical Association. 129

Once completed, the home was reopened to the public and its history and the history of the great man who occupied it--Frederick Douglass--was interpreted to the public by the National Park Service interpreters. 130

## CHAPTER VII: CONCLUSION

Depending upon the source and the time, a number of individuals have been mentioned as the real reason why the Douglass Home exists today as a national shrine. Francis J. Grimke, probably Helen Pitts Douglass' greatest defender among the black race wrote in the early nineteenth century that:

"had it not been for Helen Pitts, the white woman who has been spurned by so many colored people, Cedar Hill, now the pride of the Negro race and preserved as a perpetual memorial to Frederick Douglass because of what he was as a man, and the great services which he rendered to the race, would have been lost to the race." 131

It is not possible to attribute the success of Helen Pitts Douglass' original vision of the Douglass Home to any one individual or organization because there were countless, often unnamed women and men who gave of themselves and their often limited resources to help to preserve Cedar Hill. Certainly the preservation of the Douglass Home was aided immensely immensely by the dedicated work and devotion of the home's long-time caretaker Mrs. Gladys Parham. Less well-known and preserved for posterity are the contributions and names of the Boy Scout troops and neighbors who helped Parham. Little do we know about a Mrs. Georgia Carter whom Parham named as the "only person who ever gave me anything," which was a little money to get the grass cut. 132

A reading of the Congressional records, NACWC and FDMHA records, personal papers and oral interviews provided voluminous information about the important role of certain members of the

Douglass Committee of NACWC, the FDMHA Trustee Board, the Advisory Board of the FDMHA, and the Douglass Home committees. The leadership roles of both Dr. Rosa Gragg and Mrs. Mary Gregory and the women who preceded them, namely Mary B. Talbert, Sallie W. Stewart, and Nannie H. Burroughs were important in the preservation movement. Early efforts of Francis J. Grimke, William McKinlay, and Blanche K. Bruce were significant. The success of these men and women depended upon the many sacrifices they made as well as the countless men and women who contributed money to various fundraising efforts, lobbied their congressmen on behalf of the Douglass legislation, and volunteered their time in so many ways.

All of the contributions of these individuals, great and small, were matched by the unswerving devotion to the Douglass memory by Congressman Charles H. Diggs, Jr. and Senator Phillip Hart of Michigan. According to Gragg, Senator Hart was so impressed with the greatness of Douglass that he provided office space and a staff person to help in the lobbying efforts. Hart, Diggs, fellow Congressmen and Senators who voted for the legislation and President John F. Kennedy who signed it all played a part. Equally committed to the preservation of the Douglass estate has been Robert Stanton, an official of the National Park Service who has been described on more than one occasion as a person filled with the spirit of Frederick Douglass. This description aptly depicts all of the above mentioned individuals and many more unnamed persons who worked to

keep alive the Douglass legacy.

## CHAPTER VIII:

### EPILOGUE: FDMHA AND NACWC SINCE THE TRANSFER

Having dedicated themselves and their organizations' resources to preserving and maintaining the Cedar Hill home of Frederick Douglass, what were the trustees of the Frederick Douglass Memorial and Historical Association and the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs to do now that the home has been officially transferred to the National Park Service? Correspondence between Elizabeth Clark and Mary Gregory reveals that at least two FDMHA trustees recognized, prior to the transfer, that their organization would probably play a different, indeed lesser, role in the operation of the Douglass home. In response to Gregory's suggestion that FDMHA board of trustees members be given a commemorative plaque, Clark wrote Gregory on May 2, 1962 that: "I think your idea of the plaque is a good one. It will give the trustees something to look back on because if the government takes Douglass Home then this type of function speaking 'maintenance wise' will be over so far as Trustees and Club women are concerned." 133 Although not everyone was enthusiastic about the transfer, it does not appear from the tone of the correspondence between FDMHA trustees or from personal interviews with them that the FDMHA trustees regretted it. Even those trustees who were somewhat reluctant

recognized that the preservation and maintenance of the home by the National Park Service "would be better." 134

One of the major activities of FDMHA, NACWC, and the various Douglass Home committees which continued after the transfer of the property was the celebration of Douglass's birthday. Whenever there is a public ceremony related to Frederick Douglass, at least one FDMHA member is usually present. At the dedication ceremony in 1964, FDMHA Trustee Board members, members of the local Douglass Home Committee and of the NACWC participated. 135

The major focus of the trustees of FDMHA after the transfer of the Douglass property to the National Park Service appears to have been recouping their financial losses associated with the Glen Garden apartments. This was a result of investigation into the lack of revenue from the builder/architect to whom they had leased the land to build apartments.

As far as the NACWC is concerned, Rosa Gragg indicated that their role in the home is almost non-existent. While there are still members of NACWC on the FDMHA board, there is no longer a Douglass committee in NACWC and members of NACWC only attend certain public events at the Douglass Home. She rightfully concluded that because the Frederick Douglass Memorial and Historical Association trustee board carries the name of "Frederick Douglass," it is generally considered the representative of the Douglass Home preservation movement in the public's mind. Consequently, she and, it appears, the NACWC

membership and leadership in general, unlike the FDMHA, has relinquished any official or unofficial relationship with the home. One of the goals of the current FDMHA president, Maxine Boyd, is to have increased involvement in the affairs of the Douglass Home and the FDMHA on the part of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs. 136

Following the White House signing ceremony transferring the property to the National Park Service of the United States Department of Interior, the following editorial appeared in the 20 September 1962 issue of the St. Louis American:

It is very fitting that the women should complete their pledge of making the Frederick Douglass home into a shrine for all people. While Douglass is known for his herculean work of rising from a slave boy to the militant abolitionist who counceled with John Brown, lectured in England and Ireland, interviewed President Lincoln on using Negro troops and raised the first regiments, and after the war served as Minister to Haiti - he also was staunch leader in the fight for "the full rights of women." 137

## **APPENDIX A**

### **FDMHA PRESIDENTS**

Mrs. Mary B. Talbert  
Mrs. Nettie L. Napier  
Mrs. Sallie W. Stewart  
Mrs. Emma I. Dickson  
Mrs. Mary E.C. Gregory  
Mrs. Mary Maxine Boyd

## **APPENDIX B**

### **MEMBERSHIP LIST OF THE FREDERICK DOUGLASS MEMORIAL AND HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION FOR SELECTED YEARS:**

1921:

#### **TRUSTEES**

Mrs. Mary B. Talbert, Buffalo, N.Y. (President)  
Mrs. Nettie L. Napier, Nashville, TN (Custodian of Funds)  
Miss Hallie Qu. Brown, Ohio  
Miss Nannie H. Burroughs, Washington, D.C.  
Miss Elizabeth C. Carter, Massachusetts  
Miss Meta Pelham, Michigan  
Mrs. Sallie W. Stewart, Indiana  
Mrs. Maggie L. Walker, Virginia  
Mrs. Booker T. Washington, Alabama

#### **ADVISORY BOARD**

Mrs. Mary McLeod Bethune, Florida  
Mrs. Laura A. Brown, Pennsylvania  
Mrs. S. Joe Brown, Iowa  
Miss Roberta Dunbar, Rhode Island  
Mrs. M.E. Josenburger, Arkansas  
Mrs. Alice Dunbar Nelson, Delaware  
Miss Georgia Nugent, Kentucky  
Mrs. Lelia Pendleton, Washington, D.C.  
Mrs. Gertie Ross, Colorado  
Mrs. Mary F. Waring, Illinois

### HONORARY

Dr. Francis J. Grimke  
Hon. Archibald Grimke  
Mr. Whitfield MckKinlay  
Hon. J.C. Napier

1936:

### TRUSTEES

Mrs. Nettie L. Napier, Nashville, TN (President) d. -36  
Mrs. Sallie W. Stewart, Evansville, IN (Secretary)  
Miss Meta Pelham, Detroit, MI (Custodian of Funds)  
Mrs. Mary McLeod Bethune, FL  
Miss Hallie Q. Brown, OH  
Mrs. S. Joe Brown, IA  
Miss Nannie H. Burroughs, D.C.  
Miss Elizabeth C. Carter, MA  
Mrs. Maggie L. Walker, VA

### ADVISORY BOARD

Mrs. Addie W. Dickerson, PA  
Miss Roberta J. Dunbar, RI  
Mrs M.E. Josenburger, AK  
Miss Georgia Nugent, KY  
Mrs. Lelia A. Pendleton, D.C.  
Mrs. Fredericka D. Perry, MO  
Mrs. Charlotte H. Brown, NC  
Mrs. M. Nellie Brown, AL  
Mrs. M. E. Burrell, NJ  
Mrs. Nellie W. Greene, OK  
Dr. Mary F. Waring, IL

### HONORARY

Dr. Francis J. Grimke  
Hon. Archibald Grimke  
Mr. Whitefield (sic) McKinley  
Hon. J. C. Napier  
Mrs. Mary Church Terrell

1943

**TRUSTEES**

Mrs. Sallie W. Stewart, President  
? , Secretary  
Mrs. Mary McLeod Bethune, FL  
Mrs. Elizabeth Carter Brooks, MA  
Miss Hallie Q. Brown, OH  
Miss Nannie H. Burroughs, D.C.  
Mrs. Fredericka D. Perry, MO

**ADVISORY BOARD**

Mrs. Jane Spaulding, W. VA  
Mrs. W. E. Brackeen, TX  
Miss Roberta Dunbar, RI  
Mrs. H. M. Gibbs, AL  
Mrs. Nellie Weater Greene, OK  
Mrs. M. M. Hubert, MS  
Mrs. Ada Jackson, CA  
Mrs. Mamie Josenberger, AK  
Mrs. Frances J. Pierce, TN  
Dr. Mary F. Waring, IL  
Mrs. Georgia P. Williams, IL

**HONORARY**

Mr. Whitfield McKinley, D.C.

## **APPENDIX C**

**Geneology of the Frederick Douglass Family (based upon published obituaries). See attachment.**

GENEOLOGY OF THE FREDERICK DOUGLASS FAMILY (based on published obituaries)

Frederick Douglass (m. Anna Murray)

1. Rosetta (m. Nathan Sprague)

a. Annie

b. Hattie

c. Estelle (m. \_\_\_\_\_ Weaver)

(1) William L. (lived in NYC in 1969)

(2) Frederick S. (lived in NYC in 1969)

(3) Anne (m. \_\_\_\_\_ Teabeau)

(4) Rosetta (m. Roland B. Scott; d. 1969)

(a) Venice (student at U. of Madrid in 1969)

(b) Roland, Jr. (lived in NYC in 1969)

(c) Estelle (student at Kent State in 1969)

(5) Lolita (m. \_\_\_\_\_ Atkinson; lived in Clarksville, Tex.  
in 1969)

(6) Joseph M. (lived in NYC in 1969)

(7) D. Douglass (lived in NYC in 1969)

d. Frederica (m. \_\_\_\_\_ Perry)

e. Three other children?

2. Lewis H. (m. Amelia Loguen)

No children

3. Frederick, Jr. (m. Virginia Hewlett)

No children

4. Charles Remond (m. Mary E.?)

a. Charles

b. Julia

c. Joseph H. (m. Fannie Howard; Joseph d. 7 Dec. 1935;  
Fannie d. 14 March 1985)

(1) Frederick III (m. Nettie Washington; Joseph d. 1914;  
Nettie d. 7 August 1982)

(a) Nettie (m. K. Morris)

[1] Nettie

[2] Kenneth, Jr.

[3] Douglass

All are residents of  
Walnut, California as of  
March 1985

(2) Blanche E.

d. Three other children?

\*Charles Remond (m. Laura Haley)

a. Haley G. (m. Evelyn Dulaney; d. 21 January 1954)

(1) Joseph H. (Dean at Fayetteville St. Teachers College  
in 1954; lived in D.C. in 1964 at 3314 16th  
St. N.E.)

(2) Jean (student at Morgan State in 1954)

\*Frederick Douglass (m. Helen Pitts)

No children

\*Denotes second marriage

## END NOTES

1

"Cedar Hill" in Anacostia was Frederick Douglass' second home in the District of Columbia. His first Washington residence was located on A Street, N.E., on Capitol Hill. For information about the history of Anacostia, consult Louise Hutchinson, The Anacostia Story: 1908-1930 (Washington, D.C.: The Anacostia Museum of the Smithsonian Institution, 1977). For general histories of Washington, D.C., see W. Bogart Bryan, A History of the National Capital: From Its Foundation Through the Period of the Organic Act (New York, 1916) and Constance Green, Washington: Capital City, 1879-1950 (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1962). For general historical and architectural data about Douglass' "Cedar Hill" home, published by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of Interior, see James R. Hinds, Frederick Douglass Home: Cedar Hill, Historic Structures Report, Part II (1968); Anna Cox Toogood, Frederick Douglass Home: Cedar Hill, Historic Grounds Report, Historical Data Section (1968); and Sally Johnson Ketcham, Cedar Hill: The Frederick Douglass Home, Furnishing Plan- Section D/Supplement (1971). The story of Frederick Douglass' life as a leading nineteenth century political statesman has been covered by a number of scholars. See, for instance, Philip S. Foner, The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass, 5 vols. (New York: International Publishing Co., 1975); \_\_\_\_\_, Frederick Douglass on Women's Rights (Westport, Ct: Greenwood Press, 1976); and Benjamin Quarles, Frederick Douglass (Washington, D.C.: The Associated Publishers, 1948);

2

See, for instance, Hutchinson, Anacostia Story; Hinds, Douglass Home, Part II (Historical Data); and Bryan, National Capital.

3

Quote taken from Stephen Birmingham, Certain People: America's Black Elite (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, p. 128).

4

Hinds, Douglass Home, Part II (Historical Data), p. 1. Travels in Europe from 1886 to 1887 and an assignment as Minister of Haiti from 1889 to 1891 kept Douglass from "Cedar Hill" during those years.

5

See, for example, Transcription of Handwritten Will of Mrs. Helen Douglass, September 28, 1900, Office Files, Frederick Douglass Home, Washington, D.C. - Also see Hinds, Douglass Home, Part II (Historical Data); and Ketcham, Furnishings Report.

6

Hinds, Douglass Home, Part II (Historical Data), p. 2. Also see obituaries of Joseph H. Douglass and his wife Fannie, who was Booker T. Washington's granddaughter, Vertical Files, Washingtoniana Division, Martin Luther King Branch, District of Columbia Public Libraries.

7

See Hutchinson, The Anacostia Story, and Ms., "Frederick Douglass," n.d., Francis J. Grimke Papers (hereafter cited Grimke Papers), Box 40-7, Moorland Spingarn Research Center, Founders Library, Howard University, Washington, D.C. (hereafter cited as MSRC).

8

Ms., "Mrs. Helen Pitts Douglass," 15 December 1903, Grimke Papers, Box 40-7, MSRC.

9

Hutchinson, Anacostia Story. For a discussion of the Literary Club and other organizational activities of the more socially prominent and educated members of the black community, see Constance M. Green, The Secret City: A History of Race Relations in the Nation's Capital (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1967).

10

News clipping, n.p., n.d., Frederick Douglass Collection, Box 28-1, MSRC; Hinds, Douglass Home, Part II (Historical Data).

11

See Hutchinson, Anacostia Story; Green, The Secret City; and Hinds, The Douglass Home, Part II (Historical Data).

12

The private ceremony consisted of the viewing of the body, which lay in state in one of the parlors. See Ketchem, Sally Furnishing Plan, Section D, Supplement (December 1971).

13

References to Douglass' Anacostia home as the "Mt. Vernon of the colored race," which have been attributed to Helen Pitts Douglass appear in The Fellowship Herald, 22 February 1922, Archibald Grimke Papers, Box 39-37, MSRC. Ms., "Mrs. Helen Pitts Douglass," 15 December 1903, Grimke Papers, Box 40-7, MSRC.

14

Ibid.

15

"Clubwomen Preserve the Frederick Douglass Home," The Chicago Defender, 5 February 1938, Douglass Collection, Box 28-1, MSRC.

16

Ms., "Frederick Douglass," Grimke Papers, Box 40-7, MSRC.

17

See Souvenir Program, Dedicatory Exercises of the Frederick Douglass Memorial Home, Cedar Hill, Anacostia, D.C., Saturday, August 12, 1922, Frederick Douglass Collection, Box 28-2, MSRC.

18

Ibid

19

Ms., "Frederick Douglass," Grimke Papers, Box 40-7, MSRC.

20

See Will of Helen Pitts Douglass (transcribed copy) and Souvenir Program, Dedicatory Exercises...(1922).

21

See The Fellowship Herald, 22 February 1912, Archibald Grimke Papers, Box 39-37, MSRC.

22

Ibid.

23

Ibid.

24

Ibid.

25

See Wells-Barnett's quote in The Fellowship Herald, 22 February 1912, Grimke Papers, MSRC.

26

Letters, Mortimer M. Harris to Mary Talbert and Robert H. Terrell to Mary Talbert, November 1916 in Souvenir Program, Dedicatory Exercises... (1922).

27

See The Chicago Defender, 5 February 1938, Douglass Collection, Box 28-1, MSRC.

28

Letter, Mary B. Talbert to "Co-Workers," 29 April 1921 in Souvenir Program, Dedicatory Exercises... (1922).

29

See "Contributions (typescript)," Frederick Douglass

Memorial and Historical Association Papers (hereafter FDMHA Papers), Box 4, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (hereafter L.C.).

30

Letter, Mary B. Talbert to "Co-Workers," 1 December 1921, FDMHA, Box 1, L.C.

31

The Chicago Defender, 5 February 1938, Douglass Collection, Box 28-1, MSRC.

32

Ibid. See also, "Minutes of the FDMHA meeting," 2 August 1924, Nannie Helen Burroughs Papers (hereafter Burroughs Papers), Ctr. 305, L.C.

33

"Minutes of the FDMHA meeting, 2 August 1924, Burroughs Papers, Ctr. 305, L.C.

34

"Resolution to the U.S. Congress," 2 July 1932, Douglass Collection, Box 28-2, MSRC.

35

The Chicago Defender, 5 February 1938, Douglass Collection, Box 28-1, MSRC.

36

See Washington Tribune, 10 April 1934, Frederick Douglass Papers, Reel 11, L.C. Also see the "Financial Report of the Douglass Memorial and Historical Association, July 1, 1935 to June 30, 1937," FDMHA, Box 4, L.C.

37

The Chicago Defender, 5 February 1938, Douglass Collection, Box 28-1, MSRC.

38

Letter, Hallie Q. Brown to Nannie H. Burroughs, 21 November 1938, FDMHA Papers, L.C.

39

Letter, Fredericka D. Perry to Nannie H. Burroughs, 22 November 1938, FDMHA, Box 4, L.C.

40

Letter, Meta Pelham to Nannie H. Burroughs, 30 November 1938, FDMHA, Box 4, L.C.

41

Letter, Hallie Q. Brown to Nannie H. Burroughs, 7 December 1938, FDMHA, Box 4, L.C.

42

Letters, Addie W. Dickerson to Nannie H. Burroughs, 29 April 1938, and Meta E. Pelham to Nannie H. Burroughs, 9 December 1938, FDMHA, Box 4, L.C.

43

Letter, Sallie W. Stewart to Nannie H. Burroughs, 19 October 1938, FDMHA, Box 4, L.C.

44

Ibid.

45

Letter, Sallie W. Stewart to Nannie H. Burroughs, 3 June 1944, FDMHA, Box 4, L.C.

46

Letter, Sallie W. Stewart to Nannie H. Burroughs, 19 January 1946, FDMHA, Box 4, L.C.

47

Ibid. In her letter to Burroughs, Stewart mentioned that she asked Bilbrew for her assistance on behalf of the Douglass Fund. Since Bilbrew had not replied, Stewart asked Burroughs to contact her on her behalf.

48

Letter, Sallie W. Stewart to Nannie H. Burroughs, 19 October 1939, FDMHA, Box 4, L.C.

49

Letter, Sallie W. Stewart to Nannie H. Burroughs, 13 May 1941, FDMHA, Box 4, L.C.

50

Letter, Sallie W. Stewart to Nannie H. Burroughs, n.d., FDMHA, Box 4, L.C.

51

Postal card, Sallie W. Stewart to Nannie H. Burroughs, 20 July 1941, FDMHA, Box 4, L.C. Also see Sallie W. Stewart to Nannie H. Burroughs, 9 June 1941, FDMHA, Box 4, L.C.

52

Letter, Sallie W. Stewart to Nannie H. Burroughs, 17 July 1941, FDMHA, Box 4.

53

Letter, Chief Clerk, Special Assessment Division, D.C. Government, to Sallie W. Stewart, 15 November 1941, FDMHA, Box 4, L.C.

54

Letter, Sallie W. Stewart to Nannie H. Burroughs, 14 April 1943, FDMHA, Box 4, L.C.

55

Letter, Sallie W. Stewart to Nannie H. Burroughs, 19 April 1943, FDMHA, Box 4, L.C.

56

Letter, J. Alston Fisher to Sallie W. Stewart, 2 March 1949, FDMHA Papers, Box 4, L.C.

57

Letter, Fredericka D. Sprague to Nannie H. Burroughs, 9 June 1943, FDMHA, Box 4, L.C. Also see Letter, Sallie W. Stewart to Nannie H. Burroughs, n.d., FDMHA, Box 4, L.C.

58

Sprague advised Burroughs that Stewart had informed her about her refusal to accept \$100.00 to be used to clean up the Cedar Hill house. Voicing her support of Burroughs' position, Sprague wrote "Thank you for returning that tid bit and any and all other doled out monies for the "Shrine!" Mockery!!! See Letter, Fredericka D. Sprague to Nannie H. Burroughs, 9 June 1943, FDMHA, Box 4, L.C.

59

Letter, Nannie H. Burroughs to Fredericka D. Sprague, 29 November 1941, FDMHA, Box 4, L.C.

60

Letter, Sallie W. Stewart to Nannie H. Burroughs, 20 September 1941, FDMHA, Box 4, L.C.

61

Letter, Sallie W. Stewart to "FDMHA Trustees," 10 November 1941, FDMHA, Box 4, L.C.

62

Ibid. A number of the issues raised in Stewart's letter appeared in a similar letter Stewart sent to state presidents of the NACWC and members of a large NACW committee established to investigate matters related to the Douglass committee.

63

Letter, Fredericka D. Perry to Nannie H. Burroughs, 11 April 1943, FDMHA, Box 4, L.C.

64

Letter, Sallie W. Stewart to Nannie H. Burroughs, 10 April 1943, FDMHA, Box 4, L.C.

65  
Letter, Sallie W. Stewart to Nannie H. Burroughs, 10 April 1943, FDMHA, Box 4, L.C.

66  
Ibid.

67  
"Minutes of the Douglas (sic) Committee of the NACWC, 31 August 1949, FDMHA, Box 6, L.C.

68  
Personal Taped Interview, Dr. Rosa L. Gragg, Detroit, Michigan, 28 April 1987.

69  
"Minutes and Agenda, 1946-1949," FDMHA, Box 6, L.C.

70  
Video (taped), Mrs. Gladys Parham, Washington, D.C.

71  
Letters, Sallie W. Stewart to Nannie H. Burroughs, 14 April 1943 and 25 November 1943, FDMHA, Box 4, L.C.

72  
Letter, Emma I. Dickson to Nannie H. Burroughs, 5 August 1951, FDMHA, Box 4, L.C.

73  
Ibid., Also see, Letter, Lucy Robinson to Nannie H. Burroughs, 2 August 1951, FDMHA, Box 4, L.C.

74  
Ibid.

75  
See the Minutes of the FDMHA meeting, 8 February, 1960, FDMHA, Box 6, L.C.

76  
Personal Interview (taped), Mrs. Martha Alston, Washington, D.C.; Video, "The Douglass Home Story," as told by Mrs. Gladys Parham; and Obituaries, Mrs. Gladys Parham, Vertical File, Washingtoniana Division, King Branch, D.C. Public Library.

77  
Ibid.

78  
Letter, Ella P. Stewart to Emma I. Dickson, 30 January 1956, FDMHA, Box 4, L.C.

79  
Minutes, FDMHA meeting, 8 February 1960, FDMHA, Box 6,  
L.C.

80-  
Ibid.

81  
Ibid.

82  
Ibid.

83  
Ibid. A discussion of the relationship between these two groups appears in the "FDMHA Resolutions," Douglass Papers, Box 28-2, MSRC. Former NACWC president, Dr. Rosa L. Gragg, contends that the cooperative spirit expressed at these meetings usually ceased when the women returned home. Personal Interview, Gragg, 28 April 1987.

84  
Minutes, 30 July 1960, FDMHA, Box 6, L.C.

85  
See Program, "Restoration Launching," 26 February 1961, Sheraton Park Hotel, Washington, D.C. (Copy of the program given to author by Dr. Rosa L. Gragg).

86  
The Chicago Defender, 5 February 1938, Douglass Collection, Box 28-1, MSRC.

87  
See reprinted letter, Emmett J. Scott to Mary Talbert, 26 April 1921, in the "Souvenir Program," Dedicatory Exercises of the Frederick Douglass Home...1922, pp. 12-13.

88  
See reprinted letter, Mary B. Talbert to "Trustees and Members of Advisory Board of the Frederick Douglass Memorial and Historical Association," 29 April 1921, in the "Souvenir Program," Dedicatory Exercises of the Frederick Douglass Home...1922, p. 12.

89  
Letter, Mary B. Talbert to "Co-Workers," 1 December 1921, FDMHA, Box 4, MSRC.

90  
Letter, Mary McLeod Bethune to Nannie H. Burroughs, 6 November 1940, FDMHA, Box 4, L.C.

91  
See "Douglass Home Grounds Expense Statement," 30 July 1924, Burroughs Papers, Ctr. 305, L.C.

92  
See "Minutes of the FDMHA," 2 August 1924, Burroughs Papers, Ctr. 305, L.C.; Personal Interview,

93  
When asked by the FDMHA board president, Mary Gregory, to state what back salary was due her, Parham responded that \$1000.00 would "settle the books. See "Minutes of the Trustees 1962 Annual Meeting, Friday, July 27, 1962," FDMHA, Box 6, L.C.

94  
Letter, Fredericka D. Perry to Nannie H. Burroughs, 22 November 1938, FDMHA, Box 4, L.C.

95  
See news clipping, "Shrine of Great Negro Statesmen....," The Washington Daily News, Douglass Papers, Reel 11, L.C.

96  
The Chicago Defender, 5 February 1938, Douglass Collection, Box 2801, MSRC.

97  
Letter, Mary McLeod Bethune to Nannie Helen Burroughs, 27 October 1938, and Form Letter, Nannie Helen Burroughs to Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_, FDMHA, Box 4, L.C.

98  
Letter, Francoise Bell, Director, to Orren H. Lull, Deputy Executive Director, NYA, 13 October 1938, FDMHA, Box 4, L.C.

99  
Ibid. Also see letterhead of the National Youth Administration of the District of Columbia. Mrs. S. G. Mays to Mary McLeod Bethune, 19 July 1939, FDMHA, Box 4, L.C.

100  
Form Letter, Nannie Helen Burroughs to Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_, 11 November 1938, FDMHA, Box 4, L.C.

101  
Ibid.

102  
Letter, Meta E. Pelham to Nannie H. Burroughs, 9 December 1938, FDMHA, Box 4, L.C.

103  
Letter, Nannie H. Burroughs to Addie W. Dickerson, 12

August 1939, FDMHA, Box 4, L.C.

104

See Letters, Nannie H. Burroughs to Stewart, 30 October 1940; Night letter to Sallie W. Stewart, n.d. (c. 1940); and J.W. Dixon to Nannie Helen Burroughs, 28 October 1940, FDMHA, Box 4, L.C.

105

Letters, Nannie H. Burroughs to Sallie W. Stewart, 28 October ? (probably 1940), and Burroughs to Jennie Moton, 29 October 1940, FDMHA, Box 4, L.C.

106

See Washington Tribune, 3 April 1943, Vertical File-"NACW," Washingtoniana Division, DCPL; Letter, SWS to Burroughs, 14 April 1943, FDMHA, Box 4, L.C.

107

Washington Tribune, 3 April 1943.

108

Letter, Burroughs to Thelma J. Bryant, 14 May 1941, FDMHA, Box 4, L.C.

109

Letters, Sallie W. Stewart to Burroughs, 31 March 1941; and Jennie B. Moton to "Club Member," July 1941, FDMHA, Box 4, L.C.

110

Letter, Burroughs to "FDMHA Trustees," 26 July 1941, FDMHA, Box 4, L.C.

111

Letter, Sallie W. Stewart to Burroughs, 4 August 1941, FDMHA, Box 4, L.C.

112

Ibid. Also see, Letter Sallie W. Stewart to Burroughs, 9 August 1941, FDMHA, Box 4, L.C.

113

Letter, Sallie W. Stewart to Burroughs, 9 August 1941, FDMHA, Box 4, L.C.

114

Letters, Sallie W. Stewart to Burroughs, 19 January 1946; Stewart to Burroughs, 6 March 1946; and J. Alston Fisher to Stewart, 2 March 1949, FDMHA, Box 4, L.C.

115

Telegram, Stewart to Burroughs, 13 March 1949; and

Letters, Stewart to Burroughs, 1 January 1949, and Stewart to FDMHA "Trustees and the NACW Doughlass Committee," 5 January 1949, FDMHA, Box 4, L.C.

116

Letter, Stewart to Burroughs, 2 February 1949, FDMHA, Box 4, L.C.

117

Letter, Mary Gregory to Emma I. Dickson, 6 December 1954, FDMHA, Box 4 (?1), L.C.

118

Letter, Burroughs to "FDMHA Trustees," 23 September 1955, FDMHA, Box 4, L.C.

119

For a description of the damages caused by the storm, consult Letter, Gladys Parham to Emma I. Dickson, 10 March 1956, FDMHA, Box 1, L.C.

120

See Minutes of the Meeting of the FDMHA Trustees and the NACWC Advisory Board, 25 February 1961, FDMHA, Box 6, L.C.

121

Letter Fredericka D. Perry to Burroughs, 22 November 1938, FDMHA, Box 4, L.C.

122

Personal Interview (typed), Mary S. Gregory, 10 October 1986, Washington, D.C.

123

Personal Interviews (taped), Rosa L. Gragg, Mary S. Gregory, Martha Alston, 19 January 1987; Elizabeth Clark, Eudora Gilmore, Minnie Nelson, Washington, D.C; Eudora Gilmore, Silver Spring, Maryland; Long Beach, California.

124

See Cincinnatti Call and Post, 25 July 1964; and The Washington Post, 6 September 1962, FDMHA, Box 18, L.C.

125

Letter, Gregory to Gragg, 9 April 1962, FDMHA, Box 1, L.C.

126

Telegram, Alan Bible to Mary S. Gregory, 15 May 1962, FDMHA, Box 1, L.C.

127

Letter, Herbert O. Reid to Elizabeth Clark, 25 May 1962, FDMHA, Box 1, L.C.

128  
Personal Interviews (taped), Rosa L. Gragg and Mary S. Gregory (especially the second Gregory interview, ).

129  
The Washington Post, July 1895, and Video (taped), Mrs. Gladys Parham. Also see Hinds, Douglass Home, Part II (Historical Data), p. iv.

130  
Hinds, Douglass Home, Part II (Historical data), p. iii.

131  
Ms., "Frederick Douglass," Grimke Papers, Box 40-7, MSRC.

132  
Video (taped), Mrs. Gladys Parham.

133  
Letter, Elizabeth Clark to Mary Gregory, 2 May 1962; FDMHA, Box 1, L.C.

134  
Personal Interview (taped), Martha Alston, 19 January 1987.

135  
This study, especially recent FDMHA history, has been enhanced by the (taped) personal interviews conducted with FDMHA trustees: Miss Elizabeth E. Clark; Mrs. Elizabeth Foote, July 1986; Dr. Rosa Gragg, 28 April 1987; Mrs. Mary Gregory, 23 June 1987; 8 October 1986; Miss Minnie Nelson, 28 May 1987; Dr. G. Juanita Pitts, 21 September 1986; Mrs. Vivian Smith.

136  
Personal Interview, Gragg; Telephone Interview (taped), Mrs. Mary Maxine Boyd, 28 May 1987.

137  
Quote taken from the St. Louis American article, 20 September 1962, reprinted in the National Notes (the official organ of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs), 1964.