

# Nantucket Black Heritage Trail®

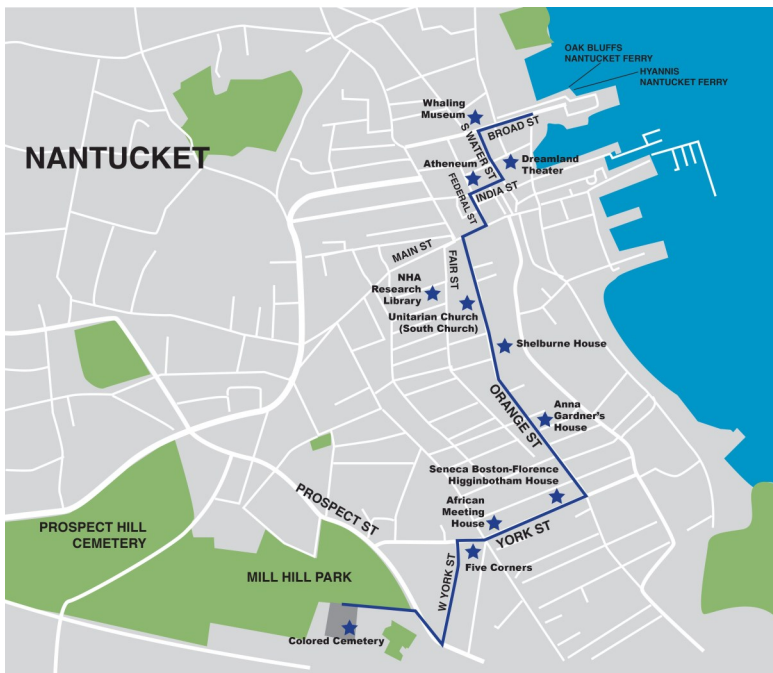
**MISSION:** The Museum's mission is to inspire all generations to embrace and interpret the authentic stories of New Englanders of African descent, and those who found common cause with them, in their quest for freedom and justice.

**On Nantucket**, the Museum's campus consists of the African Meeting House (circa. 1825) and the Seneca Boston – Florence Higginbotham House (circa. 1774). These historic sites alongside other sites on this Trail® provides snapshots of Nantucket Island's rich black history.

## [1] The Historic Coloured Cemetery

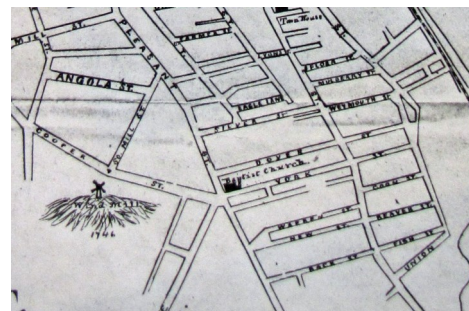
7 Vesper Lane | Access at North Mill Street  
See "Historic Cemetery" sign

**Start the Trail®** at Nantucket's Historic Coloured Cemetery. At this historic cemetery you will find headstones of individuals from prominent black families with last names such as: Boston, Crawford, Cooper, Grant, Pompey, Porte, and Ross. A plaque at this site states, "The earliest known burial was in 1798." Island-born Eunice Ross is also buried in this historic cemetery. Ross was instrumental in the integration of the Nantucket school system. The town's refusal to admit her to the high school in 1840 led to the first law in the United States to guarantee equal access to education.



## Black Heritage Trail®

This self-guided Black Heritage Trail® interprets several sites that reveal the less known heritage and roots of African Americans living on Nantucket, primarily during the nineteenth century.



Old Map of Five Corners

## [2] Five Corners | formerly Pompey's Corner

Atlantic, Pleasant, West York, & York Streets

The area around Five Corners became known by 1820 as New Guinea, indicating the African roots of the property owners. Within steps of Five Corners, there were two churches, inns, a dancehall, a school, shops, and most importantly, black homeownership.



Image by: Joseph Ferraro, National Trust for Historic Preservation

## [3] African Meeting House | 29 York Street

Erected circa. 1825 by the African Baptist Society, this historic site is the only public building still in existence that was constructed and occupied by the people of New Guinea. It is also one of the oldest African American church buildings still standing and in use in the nation.

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## [4] Seneca Boston - Florence Higginbotham House 27 York Street | Black owned for over two centuries

Seneca Boston, bought the land in 1774 after being freed. He and his wife, Thankful Micah, raised six children in the house. The house was inherited by descendants of the Boston family uninterrupted until 1919. In 1920, Florence Clay Higginbotham, a black woman, bought the house. Florence came to the island in 1911, she shared her home with boarders, took in laundry, worked as a domestic, and as a sous chef to make ends meet; she was a true entrepreneur.



Image: Boston - Higginbotham House; built circa. 1774

## [5] Anna Gardner House | 40 Orange Street **Private Residence | Please Do Not Disturb**

Anna Gardner bought this house in 1890. Anna taught at the African School, inside the African Meeting House, from 1836 until 1840 and was the teacher of Eunice Ross and who prepared her to take the entrance examination to enter Nantucket High School. When Eunice was denied admission, Anna resigned.

## [6] Sherburne House | 30 Orange Street **Private Residence | Please Do Not Disturb**

Sherburne House was originally a captain's house but it was later converted into a hotel. On August 15, 1885, Frederick Douglass and his second wife, Helen Pitts Douglass, checked into the hotel during his final trip to Nantucket.

## [7] Unitarian Church | 11 Orange Street

The Unitarian Church was built in 1809. Captain Absalom Boston was married here in 1814 and church documents reveal that other black marriages took place in the church as well. Frederick Douglass spoke here on August 16, 1885 with and Booker T. Washington also spoke here in 1904.

## [8] Nantucket Atheneum | 1 India Street

The Atheneum was the site of lectures by prominent cultural and political leaders of the day and the site of abolitionist meetings and conventions. On August 11, 1841, Frederick Douglass came by steamer (the *Telegraph*) to Nantucket for an anti-slavery convention, it was his first public speech to a mixed-race audience.

## [9] Nantucket Dreamland | 17 Water Street

Originally built as the Hicksite Quaker Meeting House on Main Street in 1832, the building hosted abolitionist Lucretia Coffin Mott (born on Nantucket) and black abolitionists including Charles Lenox Remond as speakers between 1835 and 1845.

## [10] Whaling Museum | 13 Broad Street

Step into Gosnell Hall of the Whaling Museum to find out about Nantucket's whaling history and the roles people of color played. The NHA has a small formal portrait of Captain Absalom Boston in this flagship location. Captain Boston and Captain Edward Pompey are Nantucket's only known black whaling captains.



Courtesy of Nantucket Historical Association  
Captain Absalom F. Boston

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