The largest African American community in Boston during the Civil War was on the north slopes of Beacon Hill, in the shadow of the Massachusetts State House. Although some black real estate was in the North End and on the West End north of Cambridge Street, one half the city’s 2,000 blacks lived in Beacon Hill just below the homes of white wealth. The historic churches along Boston’s “Black Heritage Trail” were the forums, businesses, schools, and churches of a thriving black community that organized from the nation’s earliest years, to sustain those who faced local discrimination and national slavery, struggling toward the equality and freedom promised in America’s documents of national liberty.

Grateful Acknowledgments
The editors acknowledge the research, out of which this narrative in the story of liberty. Major contributors who helped bring this project to fruition are listed below.

Black Bostonians’ organizations, like the African Society and African Meeting House, sprung up against the disfranchisement and disfranchisement of freedmen and freedwomen.

Establishment of the African Baptist Church and countless black African Americans who left the South in 1864—many blacks (far right) were driven by their desperate hunger for freedom and by the vision of a new life, which some later termed the black experience. They moved their businesses and homes to Boston, bringing an active community, the meeting house, and antislavery agitation. From the nation’s earliest years, to sustain those who faced local discrimination and national slavery, struggling toward the equality and freedom promised in America’s documents of national liberty.

In the Civil War black Bostonians formed the core of the 54th Massachusetts Regiment, fighting to preserve the Union’s North and South and the protection of fugitive slaves. The Appeal to Fugitive Slaves, a document urging Lincoln to free slaves, was written by Frederick Douglass and distributed by the black community, searching for ways to protect their freedom. They moved their businesses and homes to Boston, bringing an active community, the meeting house, and antislavery agitation. From the nation’s earliest years, to sustain those who faced local discrimination and national slavery, struggling toward the equality and freedom promised in America’s documents of national liberty.

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Boston Highlights: 1638–1909

1638

1849–50

1870

1897

1909

The Boston press and newspapers played a significant role in the abolitionist movement. The Liberator, a weekly abolitionist newspaper founded in 1831 by William Lloyd Garrison, was a major voice in the fight against slavery. The Liberator was a key publication in the abolitionist movement and helped to mobilize support for the abolition of slavery.

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