

African American Heritage Trail

1840 - 1860, Florence, Massachusetts



13 191 Nonotuck Street, was built by fugitive slave Basil Dorsey in 1849. He sold the house in 1852, moving to 4 Florence Road (#4 on this map). The fugitive slave Thomas H. Jones, who had written a popular slave narrative in 1850, bought the house in 1854, lived here until 1859, moved to Worcester, and then settled in New Bedford. The house was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2006.



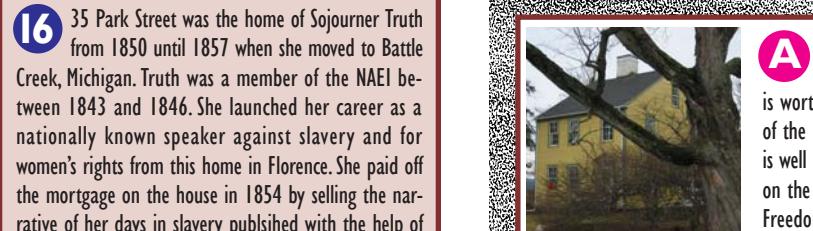
15 The south wing of the house at 29-33 Maple Street was built by Samuel L. Hill in 1845. Hill was Treasurer of the Northampton Association of Education and Industry and founder of the Nonotuck Silk Company. His son, Arthur G. Hill, born at the Ross Homestead, remembered fugitives staying here for the night and riding with his father to Cummington or Whately, nearby stops on the Underground Railroad.



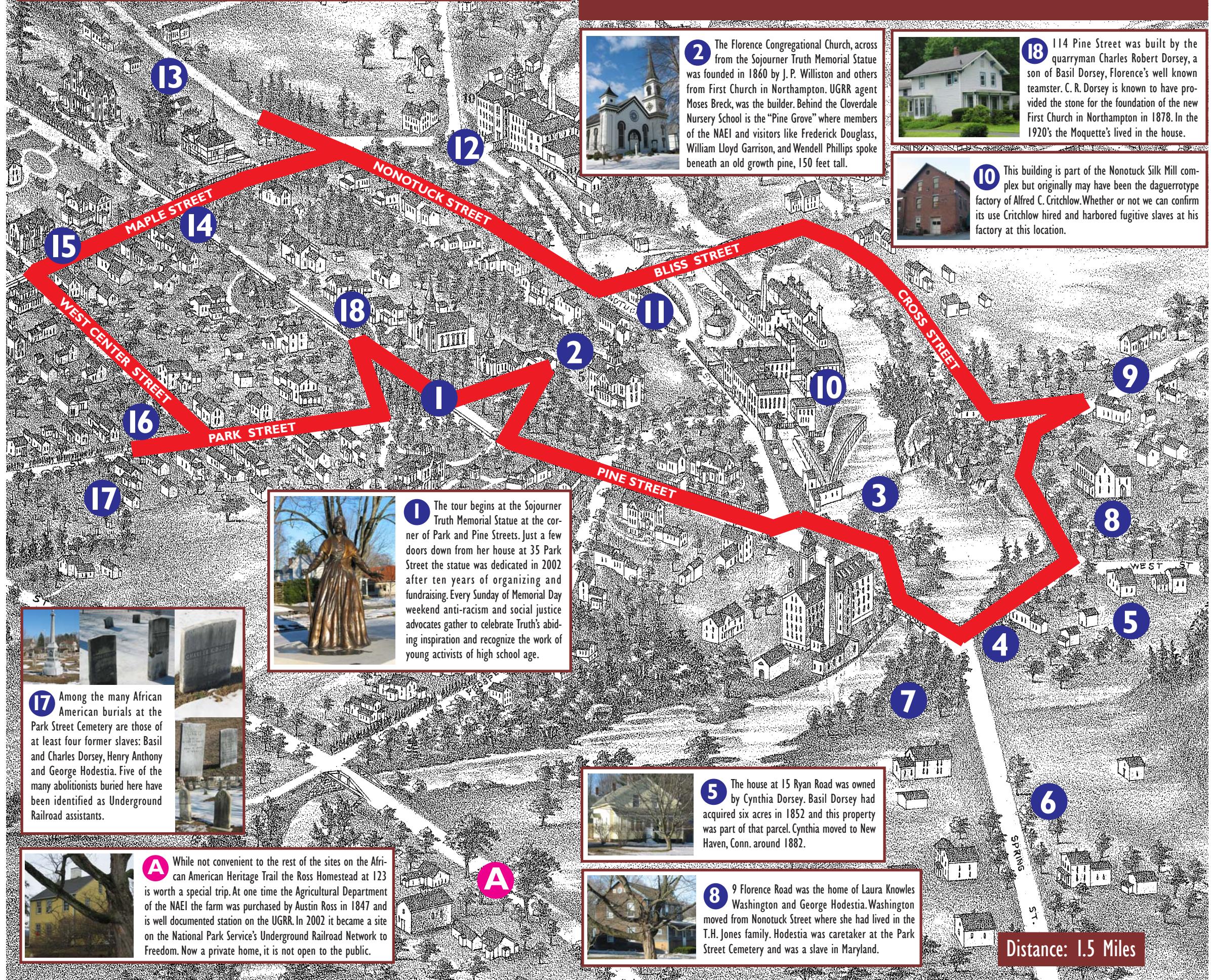
14 The cottage at 26 Maple Street was built in 1845 by Elisha Hammond, an artist and craftsman, who joined the NAEI in 1844. His obituary states that "fugitives were never turned from his door." His portrait of Frederick Douglass was painted in 1844 not long before publication of his famous *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave*.



16 35 Park Street was the home of Sojourner Truth from 1850 until 1857 when she moved to Battle Creek, Michigan. Truth was a member of the NAEI between 1843 and 1846. She launched her career as a nationally known speaker against slavery and for women's rights from this home in Florence. She paid off the mortgage on the house in 1854 by selling the narrative of her days in slavery published with the help of William Lloyd Garrison in 1850.



B C 129 and 133 Nonotuck Street were the homes of the families of Joseph Willson, and Ezekiel Cooper of Maryland. These were two of seven households of African Americans, 35 men, women and children in all. Willson was one of ten fugitive slaves who signed a call to meeting to resist the Fugitive Slave Act. The Florence area was nearly 10% African-American in 1850. By 1855 most African American families had left Nonotuck Street where they had been working at the factories of the Willstons and Alfred Critchlow.



9 47 Florence Road was the first building of the Northampton Water Cure. Here David Ruggles lived and worked from 1845 until his death in 1849. One of the great unsung heroes of the UGRR, Ruggles, while in NYC, helped over 600 fugitive slaves to freedom including Frederick Douglass. Originally situated on Spring Street (#7 on the map) the house was moved to this location around 1851. William Wright, a fugitive slave lived here. Hannah Randall, an African American operative at the water cure, bought the house in 1856. She lived here until her death in 1882.



3 The Nonotuck Silk Mill Dam was part of the property of the NAEI in 1842. In 1840 David Lee Child and Lydia Maria Child, abolitionists from Boston, experimented with growing sugar beets as an alternative to slave grown sugar cane. They processed the beets at the old mill near the dam. Lydia Maria Child arranged for David Ruggles to join the NAEI as a respite from the stress of life in NYC. Her *Appeal for Than Class of Americans Called Africans* moved William Lloyd Garrison to name her the "first woman of the republic."



4 4 Florence Road was built around 1840 by William Warner. Basil Dorsey purchased the property in 1852. Dorsey was teamster for the Greenville Manufacturing Company. Money to buy his freedom was raised in the village to ensure his safety in his travels outside the Valley. His second wife, Cynthia, was the daughter of the Almond Joneses of Pittsfield who are also buried in the Park Street Cemetery. Dorsey died on February 15, 1872.



6 40 Spring Street was the home of Henry Anthony, one of the first African American Americans to live in Florence. We believe he is the fiddle-playing "fugitive from injustice" that was living in the Swamp House when Lydia Maria Child purchased 100 acres of land on Florence Road in 1840. When the Childs moved in it is likely Anthony moved out and built this house. He was one of five Florence fugitives to sign a call to meeting to resist the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850.