
CONNECTICUT FREEDOM TRAIL

The Freedom Trail is a wonderful treasure listing historic individuals and places associated with the Underground Railroad and the abolition of slavery in the United States of America. As new individuals and sites become recognized, they are researched and added to the Freedom Trail.

David Ruggles was one of our country's greatest abolitionists, but little was known about him until recently. Norwich, Connecticut is being added to the Freedom Trail, due largely to David Ruggles. What a proud honor it is for Norwich to call David Ruggles one of her sons!

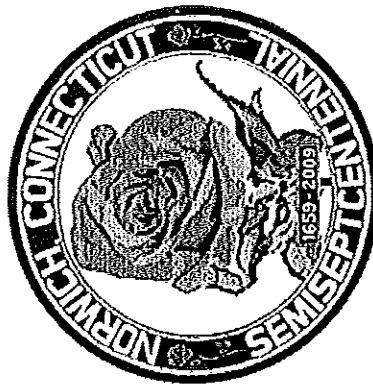
September is Freedom Trail month. David Ruggles will be honored in a ceremony at the Ruggles family plot in the Yantic Cemetery, Norwich, Connecticut on September 29, 2007 at 1:00 PM.

Sources:

- "David Ruggles Sketch." [Online image] Available http://www.nydivided.org/images/popup/People/People_Feo_ple_Detail/Ruggles.jpg.
- Hodges, Graham Russell. "David Ruggles, The hazards of anti-slavery journalism." [Online] Available <http://www.freedomforum.org/publications/mss/courage.summer2000/y02.htm>, August 29, 2007.
- Plummer, Dale. Lecture, Norwich History Part II, April 2007. Spartacus Educational. "David Ruggles." [Online] Available <http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/USARuggles.htm>, August 29, 2007.

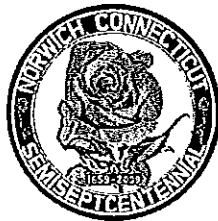
DAVID RUGGLES

*Outspoken Civil Rights Activist &
Underground Railroad Conductor*



DAVID RUGGLES

Connecticut Freedom Trail
Recognition Ceremony
Yantic Cemetery, Norwich, CT
September 29, 2007



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DAVID RUGGLES

David Ruggles was an African American gentleman, born in 1810 to hardworking parents Nancy and David Ruggles, Sr. David was born on the family homestead on Bean Hill in Norwich, Connecticut.

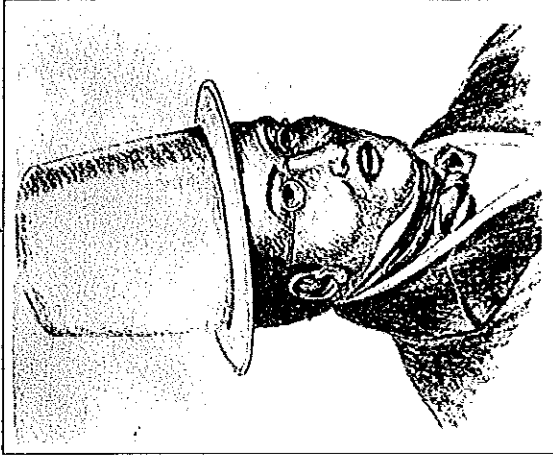
Smart and ambitious, David Ruggles moved to New York City when he was only seventeen years old. David went right to work as a sailor. Shortly afterward, David started his own grocery and bookstore. Imagine, while African American slaves in the South were forbidden to read, David Ruggles was writing and publishing articles whilst operating the first African American owned bookstore in New York City.

David Ruggles was lucky to have been born a free man, but many other African Americans were not so lucky. In David Ruggles' lifetime, the United States of America was in great turmoil. David was understandably quite angry that so many fellow African American people were being mistreated and kept as slaves. David Ruggles was particularly focused on the illegal slave trade in New York City. Free black men and

women were being kidnapped on the streets and taken into slavery after an unfair trial. David Ruggles would represent kidnapped African American individuals in court and fight to keep them free.

Other actions David Ruggles took against slavery include but are not limited to boarding ships in New York harbor to search the cargo holds for illegal slave cargo, and knocking on the front doors of summer vacation homes owned by Southern plantation owners to free slaves who had traveled North with their "owners." Secretary of the New York Vigilance Society, David Ruggles helped over six hundred escaped slaves (including Frederick Douglass) to freedom by means of the Underground Railroad. David Ruggles may well be America's first African American journalist — writing against slavery in pamphlets and anti-slavery magazines and newspapers.

Being such a high profile, outspoken antislavery activist came with its costs. David Ruggles was under constant threat. His bookstore was destroyed by an angry mob. David Ruggles narrowly dodged attempts to kidnap him and sell him into slavery. David Ruggles was beat up countless times and was literally "thrown



out" of places he entered to free harbored slaves. Mostly blind and physically ill, David Ruggles left New York City and moved to Massachusetts where he underwent hydrophobia (the water cure). After a partial recovery, David became a doctor of hydrophobia. While in Massachusetts, David Ruggles fought for the desegregation of train transportation. His health getting the better of him, David Ruggles' tired body gave out; David Ruggles passed away in Florence, Massachusetts in 1849 at the young age of thirty-eight. The Ruggles family buried David in an unmarked grave in their family plot at the Yantic Cemetery in Norwich, Connecticut.