

Douglass Place
Baltimore City Historic
Landmark Designation Report
Prepared for the Baltimore City Commission
For Historical and Architectural Preservation
Hearing October 8, 2002



**Douglass Place is located at 516-524 South Dallas Street in
Historic Fells Point Baltimore City Maryland**

Cover image is from [Park Net](http://www.cr.nps.gov/museum/exhibits/douglass/gallery1.htm) a website created by the National Park Service
www.cr.nps.gov/museum/exhibits/douglass/gallery1.htm

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Douglass Place located at 516-524 South Dallas Street is eligible as a Baltimore City Historic Landmark by meeting Baltimore City Commission for Historical and Architectural Preservation *Standards for Designation*:

2. is associated with the life of an outstanding historical person.

Douglass Place is nationally significant for its association with Frederick Douglass, famed abolitionist, editor, and Statesman. Douglass constructed the five buildings in 1892 as rental housing for poor African Americans in the Fells Point area of Baltimore. It is the only known property in the city with this association. The property embodies Douglass' connection with the Fells Point neighborhood, where he had resided from the 1820's to 1838; the site upon which the houses stand was the location of the Dallas Street Station Methodist Episcopal Church, which Douglass had attended while living in the area.

Moreover, Douglass' construction of these rental properties is emblematic of his far-reaching vision of equality and empowerment. They represent his breadth of understanding that equality is sought through economic development, decent housing, and reinvestment of neighborhoods as well as political, legal, and cultural means. Three years before his death in 1895, the development of these houses show that he was still tied to Fells Point and his vision of empowerment and equality.

History:

Copied from the Kerry Stanley and Leroy Graham National Register Nomination Form March 23, 1983.

Once owned by Frederick Douglass (1818-1895), famed abolitionist, newspaper editor and statesman of the 19th Century, these houses, 516 through 524 South Dallas Street are significant for that association. Evidence indicates Douglass purchased the property in January of 1892 for sentimental reasons. Originally the site of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the Dallas Street Station, constructed in 1773, Douglass' attachment to the Dallas Street property is understandable. Douglass attended the meeting house while he lived in Fells Point as a house servant, on and off, from the 1820s to 1838. While quite young, from within the walls of this church, Douglass received encouragement to believe he had a future to be of use in bettering the conditions of African Americans. It was this encouragement, which proved to be the foundation for his later career and crusade.

Subsequent to the civil war, the black congregation abandoned the church for worship at another location. The ancient and deserted church was after its abandonment debased to an assembly hall, in which cakewalks were held and entertainment given. Douglass, now late in his life, continued to show interest in

Fells Point, the place of so many memories during his youth. Douglass purchased the Dallas Street property in 1892 for the amount of 1800 dollars, razed it and "built housing to replace some of the miserable shacks in which Fells Point African Americans had lived on Strawberry Alley, now renamed Dallas Street. The housing project proved not to be a paying proposition. During the economic slump following the panic of 1893, Douglass' Baltimore agent sent him a check for the sum of fifty dollars in rentals but added, because of the stringency of the times, it was hard to collect money here.... Two of the houses were vacant."



Frederick Douglass' Library Photo from Park Net

Douglass Row Architectural Description

Douglass Place is a group of five brick rowhouses located at 516-524 South Dallas Street in the Fell's Point neighborhood of Baltimore. The rowhouses, constructed circa 1892, are Italianate-influenced alley houses typical of this period. Standing directly in-front of the sidewalk they stand two stories tall and are two bays wide with a basement level. The five rowhouses share an identical fenestration pattern, with the right bay and the first story holding a transomed entrance, reached by a flight of several steps. Each has a double-hung window holding an original 1 over 1 sash that occupies the left bay. The second story is comprised of two lower sash windows that are aligned directly above the first floor openings. A basement window appears at the sidewalk level next to the entrance steps. All openings have a segmental arched heads. The buildings share a common cornice, which is embellished with a simple molded sheet metal cornice. The roofs are shed roof types. The buildings all have common-bond brick patterns except where covered by Formstone. Despite a few modern changes to widows and doors the entire block appears to have retained a strong architectural integrity.



