The Library’s 19th-century locations.
From south to north:
Nassau Street (1795-1840)
Broadway (1840-1856)
University Place (1856-1937)

Manhattan map courtesy of
The New York Public Library
Left: Library share of Jeremiah Hamilton, purchased from Andrew Gray on May 22, 1856
Right: The Library’s building at the time, on University Place

The New York Society Library
The United States at the start of the 1800s: 17 states hugging the East Coast, including the new District of Columbia. The census for 1800—the nation’s second—showed 5,308,483 people living in the U.S., of whom 893,602 were enslaved Blacks and 143,937 were free Blacks. (Census figures for Georgia, Kentucky, New Jersey, Tennessee, and Virginia were lost.)

*Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection, University of Texas at Austin*
Academic class, Roger Williams University, Nashville, 1899

Library of Congress
Enslaved Americans Revolt

- 1663 Major conspiracy by black and white indentured servants in Virginia is betrayed by servant
- 1712 New York City slave revolt is quelled by militia
- 1739 South Carolina slaves launch Stono Rebellion, killing 30 whites
- 1740 In response to Stono Rebellion, South Carolina outlaws teaching slaves to read and write
- 1800 Gabriel Prosser and Jack Bowler organize 1,000 fellow slaves to seize Richmond, but plan is quelled by militia and leaders are executed along with many others
- 1811 Slave revolt in Louisiana led by Charles Deslondes ends with over 100 slaves killed or executed by U.S. troops
- 1816-18 First Seminole War, involving runaway slaves and Native Americans fighting U.S. federal government in Florida
- 1822 Denmark Vesey organizes slave revolt to take over Charleston SC but is betrayed by a servant
- 1831 Nat Turner leads slave uprising in Southampton County VA; at least 57 whites are killed; 3,000 soldiers and Virginia militiamen react by killing blacks indiscriminately; Turner is captured and hanged
- 1839 Joseph Cinqué leads successful slave revolt on Spanish ship Amistad
- 1859 John Brown leads abolitionist raid in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia
David Walker (1785-1830) was a free Black man who grew up in Charleston, South Carolina. At 40, he moved to Boston and joined a Black Methodist congregation, supporting his family well as a secondhand clothes dealer. He became a leader in Boston’s Black community, gaining local recognition for his antislavery speeches, a self-avowed “restless disturber of the peace.” In 1829, he published the powerful anti-slavery *Appeal.*
Boston in the 1830s, where Maria W. Stewart addressed the New England Anti-Slavery Society

blackpast.org
Frederick Douglass (1818-1895) was born in slavery but acquired literacy and eventually “seized” his freedom. In oratory, letters, newspaper articles, poetry, short story, and three autobiographies, Douglass addressed the greatest issues of his time—his peoples’ enslavement and emancipation.

*Documenting the American South, docsouth.unc.edu*
Young Frederick’s white mistress, Sophia Auld, began teaching him his letters but was abruptly stopped by her husband. As Douglass later wrote: “The first, and never to be retraced, step had been taken. In teaching me the alphabet, in the days of her simplicity and kindness, my mistress had given me the “inch,” and now, no ordinary precaution could prevent me from taking the “ell.”
A Sketch of Solomon Northup (1807-?)
*Frederick M. Coffin (engraved by Nathaniel Orr)*
*Solomon Northup, Twelve Years a Slave (1853)*

Patsey’s whipping from *Twelve Years a Slave*
Harriet Jacobs (1813-1879) published, in 1861, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*—a first narrative to be recorded by an enslaved African American woman. As a fugitive slave, her struggle for freedom, not only for herself but for her two children, was harrowing and sensational.

The Library of Congress, African and Middle East Division, Omar Ibn Said Collection
“Uncle Marian, (Omar Ibn Said), a slave of great notoriety, of North Carolina,” ambrotype daguerreotype, by unknown photographer. Half-length formal portrait. Identification from manuscript note found underneath the plate.

*Courtesy of the Randolph Linsly Simpson African-American Collection, Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Yale University*
William Wells Brown (1816-1884) was born into slavery in Kentucky. In 1834, at 19, he escaped to Ohio and then settled in Boston, where he worked for abolitionist, temperance, and women’s suffrage causes—at the same time becoming a prolific writer. His first book, *Narrative of William W. Brown, a Fugitive Slave. Written by Himself*, was published in 1847. Plain in style yet striking in its realism, the book explores the contradictions between a slave’s survival ethic and the dominant morality of his time. His novel *Clotel* (1853), considered the first novel written by an African American, was originally published in London.

Documenting the American South, docsouth.unc.edu"
In the 1980s, Henry Louis Gates Jr. discovered the 1859 novel *Our Nig; or, Sketches from the Life of a Free Black* by Harriet E. Wilson (1825-1900). 

Harriet E. Wilson (1825-1900) was born a free person of color in New Hampshire. Orphaned when young, she was bound until the age of 18 as an indentured servant. Wilson published her novel anonymously, recounting “slavery's shadow” in the North, where free Blacks suffered as indentured servants and from racism.
Harriet E. Wilson, author of *Our Nig*. This statue by Fern Cunningham was commissioned in 2006 and donated to the Town of Milford. It honors Harriet E. Wilson, a pre-Civil War African American author from Milford, New Hampshire, who is believed to be the first Black woman to publish a novel in the English language.

*Courtesy of Grace Peirce, Black Heritage Trail of New Hampshire*
This page from the 1850s novel *The Bondswoman's Narrative* reads “By Hannah Crafts, A Fugitive Slave Recently Escaped from North Carolina.”

*Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library*
Henry Highland Garnet (1815-1882) escaped from bondage to New York, where he was educated at the African Free School and other institutions.

In his 1843 “An Address to the Slaves of America,” he said: “However much you and all of us may desire it, there is not much hope of redemption without the shedding of blood. If you must bleed, let it come at once—rather die freemen than live to be the slaves.”
Samuel Ringgold Ward (1817-1864) also escaped from bondage to New York and graduated from the African Free School to become an outspoken abolitionist.

In 1850, in a speech on the Fugitive Slave Bill, Ward said, “This is the question, Whether a man has a right to himself and his children, his hopes and his happiness, for this world and the world to come….

Oh, this is a monstrous proposition….

“Such crises as these leave us to the right of Revolution, and if need be, that right we will, at whatever cost, most sacredly maintain.”

*Image from his Autobiography of a Fugitive Negro: His Anti-Slavery Labours in the United States, Canada & England (London: John Snow, 1855)*
Martin Robinson Delany (1812-1885) is considered the first proponent of Black nationalism. In an 1854 speech, "Political Destiny of the Colored Race on the American Continent," he said: "No people can be free who themselves do not constitute an essential part of the ruling element of the country in which they live....The liberty of no man is secure, who controls not his own political destiny....A people, to be free, must necessarily be their own rulers...."

*West Virginia University Libraries*
James Monroe Whitfield (1822-1871) was known as the poet-barber in Buffalo. Like his friend Martin Delany, he was a writer and activist for African American emigration. He wrote impassioned antislavery poetry on a regular basis for *The North Star*, the weekly published by Frederick Douglass in Rochester, NY from 1847 to 1851. Whitfield published *America and Other Poems* in 1853; it is still in print today.

blackpast.org
Compared to the 1810 map at left, by 1860 the U.S. included 33 states and 10 territories. Its census showed a population of 31,443,322, of whom 3,953,762 were enslaved and 448,070 were free Black people. Railroads extended from the East to Chicago, Cincinnati, St. Joseph, St. Louis, and Memphis. Some 4,000 miles of canals had been built, with the Erie Canal the most successful. The age of sail had been eclipsed by age of steam, with manufacturing keeping pace with expanding agriculture. Literacy and advances in printing made broadsides, newspapers, pamphlets, and books widely available.

*Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection, University of Texas at Austin*
This broadside, published in Philadelphia after the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, listed Douglass as a speaker and was signed by him along with 54 leaders in Philadelphia’s African American community. He called on men of color to enlist in the U.S. military. “I have implored the imperrilled nation to unchain against her foes her powerful black hand.... Who would be free themselves must strike the blow. Better even to die free, than to live slaves.”

_Cowan's Auctions_
Henry Highland Garnet (1815-1882),
Albumen silver print, c. 1881, by James U. Stead
*National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution*

On February 12, 1865, the Rev. Garnet, now pastor of the 15th Street Presbyterian Church in Washington, D.C., became the first African American to speak in the Capitol Building. His sermon, “Let the Monster Perish,” was delivered within days after Congress had adopted the 13th Amendment banning slavery. “Let freemen and patriots,” he said, “mete out complete and equal justice to all men and thus prove to mankind the superiority of our democratic, republican government...”
Charlotte Forten Grimké (1837-1914), at her death in 1914, left five volumes of diaries, written between 1854 and 1864 and between 1885 and 1892 and published posthumously. They would give a unique and intimate portrait of the life of a free Black female in the antebellum North, during the Civil War, and thereafter. On St. Helena Island, South Carolina, during the war, she recorded her experiences teaching freed slaves, often setting down their hymns and what she called their "shouts."

*Presbyterian Historical Society*
Booker T. Washington (1856-1915) was raised in Virginia by his enslaved mother “in “the most miserable, desolate, and discouraging surroundings.” Determined to get educated after Emancipation, Washington eventually gained admission to the Hampton Institute, an industrial school for Blacks and American Indians in Virginia. In 1881, at the recommendation of Hampton Institute’s president, Washington became president of Alabama’s Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute, a position he held until his death in 1915. Tuskegee promoted industrial education, fostering in its student body racial pride, solidarity, and self-help.
By 1880, the United States included 37 states and 10 territories. The country’s population was 50,189,209, of which 6,580,793 were Black—all of whom were nominally free. After the election of 1876, federal troops were withdrawn from the former Confederate states, officially ending Reconstruction. In 1883, the Supreme Court overturned the Civil Rights Act of 1875, and widespread lynching, Ku Klux Klan activity, and racism marked the next twenty years throughout the country, especially in the South. With the Transcontinental Railroad's completion, ever greater numbers of Americans headed west for new opportunities and a fresh start. Meanwhile, the devastating effects of the Panic of 1873 showed just how interconnected the country had become.

Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection, University of Texas at Austin
Frances E. W. Harper (1825-1911) was an abolitionist, suffragist, poet, teacher, public speaker, and writer. Born free in Baltimore, Harper had a long and prolific career, publishing her first book of poetry at the age of 20. At 67, she published her widely praised novel *Iola Leroy*, placing her among the first Black women to publish a novel.
Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins (1859-1930) was born in Maine, a fifth-generation African American New Englander. She became a prominent novelist, journalist, playwright, historian, and editor of Boston’s *Colored American Magazine*. She was considered a pioneer in her use of the romantic novel to explore social and racial themes. “Fiction is of great value to any people,” she wrote in her novel *Contending Forces* (1890), “as a preserver of manners and customs—religious, political and social. It is a record of growth and development from generation to generation.”

*The Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins Society*
Charles Waddell Chesnutt (1858-1932) was the son of free-Black émigrés from the South. He grew up in Fayetteville, North Carolina, and eventually settled in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1884, passing the Ohio State bar and launching a business career as a legal stenographer. At the same time, he began writing stories documenting the corrosive effects of being stigmatized on the otherwise healthy mind and body of a Black man. His two collections of short stories and three novels explored the complex issues of racial and social identity in the post-Civil War South. They appeared serially in the *Atlantic Monthly* and other mainstream publications.
Alice Dunbar Nelson (1875-1935) was raised in New Orleans and among the first generation born free in the South after the Civil War. She achieved prominence as a poet, author of short stories and dramas, newspaper columnist, activist for women's rights, and editor of two anthologies. She was married to Paul Laurence Dunbar until his untimely death from tuberculosis in 1906. Sometimes criticized because her work was so “nonracial,” she summarized her attitude in a letter to her husband in May 1895: “If one should be like me—absolutely devoid of the ability to manage dialect, I don’t see the necessity of cramming and forcing oneself into that plane because one is a Negro or a Southerner.”
Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872-1906) was born in Dayton, Ohio, to parents who were enslaved in Kentucky before the Civil War. Dunbar began writing stories and verse when he was a child and published his first poems at the age of 16 in a Dayton newspaper. Much of his more popular work was written in the “Negro dialect” associated with the antebellum South, praised and published by William Dean Howells in *Harper’s Weekly* and establishing his international reputation. During his short life—he died in 1906 at 33 of tuberculosis—Dunbar forged a close relationship with Frederick Douglass, who once declared him “the most promising young colored man in America.”

*Courtesy of the National Park Service*
Ida B. Wells-Barnett (1862-1931), born to enslaved parents six months before Emancipation, became a tenacious and courageous investigative journalist of lynching—a practice as widespread in the South as in the North in the last two decades of the 19th century. But she also wrote stirring essays on education and equal rights, in 1884 becoming editor of *The Living Way*, a weekly black Baptist newspaper. “I had an instinctive feeling that the people who had little or no school training should have something coming into their homes weekly which dealt with their problems in a simple, helpful way.”

In 2020, Wells was posthumously honored with a Pulitzer Prize special citation for “her outstanding and courageous reporting on the horrific and vicious violence against African Americans during the era of lynching.”
In 1892, when lynching reached [its] high-water mark, there were 241 persons lynched.

The entire number is divided among the following States:

- 22 Alabama
- 4 Montana
- 25 Arkansas
- 1 New York
- 3 California
- 5 North Carolina
- 11 Florida
- 1 North Dakota
- 17 Georgia
- 3 Ohio
- 8 Idaho
- 5 South Carolina
- 1 Illinois
- 28 Tennessee
- 3 Kansas
- 15 Texas
- 9 Kentucky
- 7 Virginia
- 29 Louisiana
- 5 West Virginia
- 1 Maryland
- 9 Wyoming
- 16 Mississippi
- 3 Arizona Ter
- 6 Missouri
- 2 Oklahoma
Of this number, 160 were of negro descent. Four of them were lynched in New York, Ohio, and Kansas; the remainder were murdered in the South. Five of this number were females. The charges for which they were lynched cover a wide range. They are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crime</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rape</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempted rape</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murder</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspected robbery</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rioting</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larceny</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race Prejudice</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-defense</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No cause given</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insulting women</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incendiaryism</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desperadoes</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robber</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assault and battery</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempted murder</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assault and battery</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempted murder</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No offense stated, boy and girl</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the case of the boy and girl above referred to, their father, named Hastings, was accused of the murder of a white man. His fourteen-year-old daughter and sixteen-year-old son were hanged and their bodies filled with bullets; then the father was also lynched. This occurred in November, 1892, at Jonesville, La.
W.E.B. Du Bois (1868-1963) belongs to the twentieth century, but we meet him now, at the end of the 1800s, as he was emerging as a leading African American voice. Du Bois became a prolific and influential scholar-activist and has been called the founder of Black studies in American academic life. On his 25th birthday, while studying for his Ph.D. at the University of Berlin, Du Bois confided to his journal the following goals: “to make a name in science, to make a name in art and thus to raise my race.”
Paul Laurence Dunbar’s “Frederick Douglass” (1897) laments the great man’s passing and the evils and treachery that surround African Americans.

A hush is over all the teeming lists,  
And there is pause, a breath-space in the strife;  
A spirit brave has passed beyond the mists  
And vapors that obscure the sun of life.  
And Ethiopia, with bosom torn,  
Laments the passing of her noblest born.

She weeps for him a mother's burning tears—  
She loved him with a mother's deepest love.  
He was her champion thro' direful years,  
And held her weal all other ends above.  
When Bondage held her bleeding in the dust,  
He raised her up and whispered, 'Hope and Trust.'

For her his voice, a fearless clarion, rung  
That broke in warning on the ears of men;  
For her the strong bow of his power he strung,  
And sent his arrows to the very den  
Where grim Oppression held his bloody place  
And gloated o'er the mis'ries of a race.

And he was no soft-tongued apologist;  
He spoke straightforward, fearlessly uncowed;  
The sunlight of his truth dispelled the mist,  
And set in bold relief each dark hue cloud;  
To sin and crime he gave their proper hue,  
And hurled at evil what was evil's due.

Through good and ill report he cleaved his way,  
Right onward, with his face set toward the heights,  
Nor feared to face the foeman's dread array,—  
The lash of scorn, the sting of petty spites.  
He dared the lightning in the lightning's track,  
And answered thunder with his thunder back.

When men maligned him, and their torrent wrath  
In furious imprecations o'er him broke,  
He kept his counsel as he kept his path;  
'Twas for his race, not for himself he spoke.  
He knew the import of his Master's call,  
And felt himself too mighty to be small.

No miser in the good he held was he,—  
His kindness followed his horizon's rim.  
His heart, his talents, and his hands were free  
To all who truly needed aught of him.  
Where poverty and ignorance were rife,  
He gave his bounty as he gave his life.

The place and cause that first aroused his might  
Still proved its power until his latest day,  
In Freedom's lists and for the aid of Right  
Still in the foremost rank he waged the fray;  
Wrong lived; his occupation was not gone.  
He died in action with his armor on!

We weep for him, but we have touched his hand,  
And felt the magic of his presence nigh,  
The current that he sent throughout the land,  
The kindling spirit of his battle-cry.  
O'er all that holds us we shall triumph yet,  
And place our banner where his hopes were set!

Oh, Douglass, thou hast passed beyond the shore,  
But still thy voice is ringing o'er the gale!  
Thou'st taught thy race how high her hopes may soar,  
And bade her seek the heights, nor faint, nor fail.  
She will not fail, she heeds thy stirring cry,  
She knows thy guardian spirit will be nigh,  
And, rising from beneath the chast'ning rod,  
She stretches out her bleeding hands to God!
In 1900, the population of the U.S. was 76,212,168, including 8.8 million Black people. Utah became the 45th US State in 1896, with Alaska, Arizona, Hawaii, New Mexico, and Oklahoma enumerated as territories and still to join the union in statehood. Industrialization had transformed the economy. The telegraph and, eventually, the telephone brought far-flung states, territories, and diverse communities into contact despite deep sectional divisions. Literacy was increasingly widespread so that newspapers and books had the potential to reach huge audiences. Men and women availed themselves of new forms of community and communication.

Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection, University of Texas at Austin