



The curtain ties in the west parlor are modeled after **ball and chains**, representing Douglass's former enslavement. They served as "a constant reminder of how far he traveled in life," McClarin says.



In the corner of the study are Douglass's **walking sticks**. He was an avid cane collector, McClarin says.



Douglass's **pens** tell a lot about the man who wielded them. "His pens really reflect Mr. Douglass's tremendous deep thought," McClarin says. "You can see where he actually chewed on the pen."



McClarin says Douglass wrote portions of his last autobiography, "The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass," in his study, where his roll-top desk sits. On the desk are his seal-fur **top hat**, purchased in England, and his wire-rim **sunglasses**.



In Douglass's bedroom, **barbells** point to his interest in staying healthy. "According to an 1894 photograph, there were gymnast rings out ... on the porch, so we think Mr. Douglass was doing pull-ups," McClarin says.



The man behind the icon

Items offer a glimpse into Douglass's home life

BY KRIS CORONADO

It's easy to be in awe of Frederick Douglass: He escaped slavery at age 20 and quickly became a leader of the abolitionist movement. His speeches were passionate and eloquent. He made presidents listen. Yet a visit to the Frederick Douglass National Historic Site (1411 W St. SE, 202-426-5961, www.nps.gov/frdo) makes the historic figure a little more approachable.

Douglass's former residence, which he bought in 1877 for \$6,700, contains countless items that belonged to the social reformer while he lived there from 1878 to his death in 1895. Household objects such as his checkerboard and nightclothes "make Mr. Douglass come alive as a human being," says National



Sarah J. Eddy painted this **portrait** of Douglass in his 60s in 1883. It stands in the east parlor and, McClarin says, is the only oil painting for which he stood.

Park Service interpretive ranger Ka'mal McClarin, "as opposed to this stoic, stiff character we see through the history books."

After the orator died, his second wife, Helen Pitts Douglass, established the Frederick Douglass Memorial Historical Association and collaborated with the National Association of Colored Women Clubs to preserve the 21-room house and objects until they came under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service in 1962. McClarin says the site, visited over the years by such notable names as suffragist Susan B. Anthony and poet Paul Laurence Dunbar, "has really become a pilgrimage for people from all walks of life, from scholars to everyday, average Americans."

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