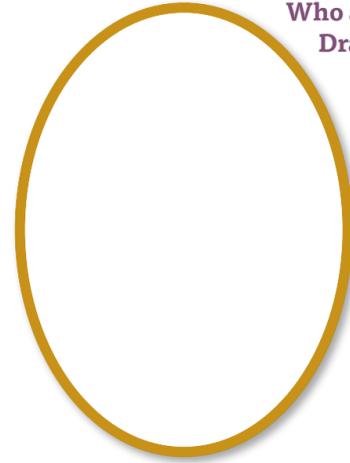


Meet the Forten Family



The Fortens lived primarily in Philadelphia from the 18th century until the beginning of the 20th century. Here are some family members you will meet as you explore their contributions to this revolutionary city.

Can you find them in the Forten family tree?



Who are you?
Draw a self-portrait.

How would you want to be described in your family tree?

1. James Forten
Collection of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania
Born free in Philadelphia in 1766, James served as a sailor during the Revolutionary War and later became a sailmaker. He was one of the wealthiest men in Philadelphia and a leader in the African American community.

2. Charlotte Vandine Forten
Howard University Moorland-Spingarn Research Center
Born free in Philadelphia, she married James Forten and, with him, raised nine children. Charlotte lived until she was 99 and spent her long life supporting anti-slavery and equal education causes across Philadelphia.

3. Harriet Davy Forten
Library of Congress
One of James and Charlotte's five daughters, she was an active member of the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society and other groups that fought for racial and gender equality.

4. Robert Purvis Boston Public Library
The husband of Harriet Davy Forten, he was a multi-racial man who used his wealth and influence to become a leader in the fight for abolition and civil rights in the United States.

5. Charlotte L. Forten
The New York Public Library
A granddaughter of James Forten, she helped educate men and women recently freed from slavery in South Carolina during the Civil War.

6. Charles Burleigh Purvis
Courtesy of the U.S. National Library of Medicine
A grandson of James Forten, he served as a nurse in the Civil War. He later became a leader of Howard University's medical school.

The Fortens and the Sea



In 1781, at age 14, James Forten joined the Revolutionary War by serving on the *Royal Louis*, a privateer ship, bringing gunpowder to the ship's cannons. It was a job that carried a lot of risks, like death or capture, but also many rewards, like money from the cargo they might capture from enemy ships.

WHAT IS A PRIVATEER?

A privateer is a privately owned ship with a permission slip from the government to attack enemy ships, take their cargo, and sell it for a profit. The sailors on these ships were also called privateers. Think of them as legal pirates! Would you take the risk?

James experienced both. On their first voyage, he and the crew captured six British ships and were rewarded with a share of the money. The next time out to sea, they were captured by a British warship and taken prisoner.

When he was 15, James was released from the prison ship he was held captive on. He returned to Philadelphia. This was his last time as a sailor in the Revolutionary War, but the experience stayed with him forever. He and his family remained linked to sailing and the sea for the rest of his life.

ROYAL LOUIS

Find the model of the *Royal Louis*. Can you find James Forten on deck? Choose a name for your ship and write it below.

TOUCH A SAIL!

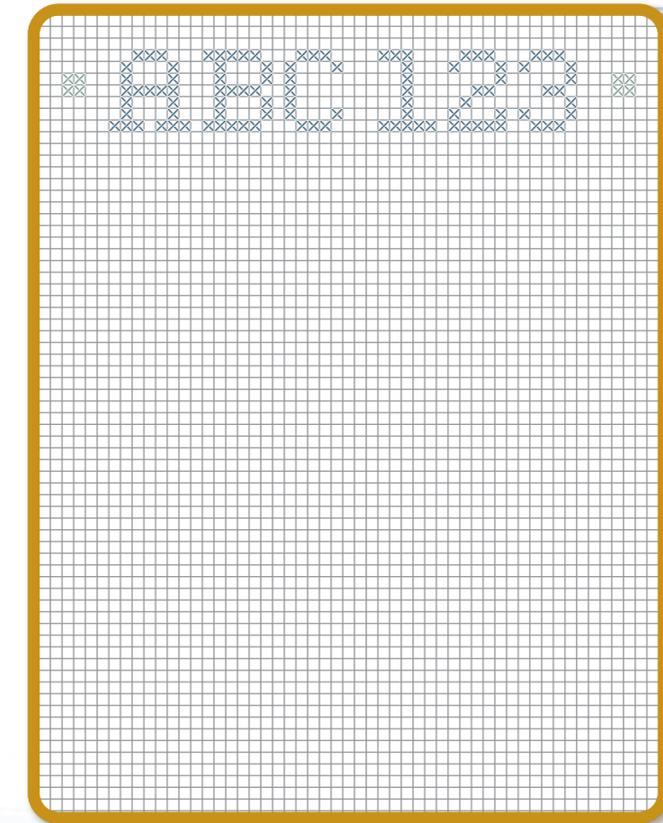
Find the different kinds of cloth used to create a ship's sails. What do you notice about them? Do they all feel the same or do they feel different? Would it be easy or hard to hoist them with ropes?

The Fortens and Philadelphia



After the Revolutionary War, both James Forten and Philadelphia began to reach new levels of wealth and success. In 1790, Philadelphia was the second largest city in the nation and the capital of the new nation's government. It welcomed hundreds of ships into its port on the Delaware River. James Forten was the leading sailmaker in Philadelphia, providing sails and ropes for most of the ships arriving in the city, making him one of the wealthiest people of African descent in the United States.

Philadelphia was also home to the largest population of free Black people in the United States. For some, life was very challenging. They were free from slavery, but many struggled to have what they needed to survive. Other members of the community were able to live more stable lives. And a small group of families did very well. Many of these families used their wealth, connections, and talents to support churches, education, and social causes to aid Philadelphia's Black community.



FIND THE FORTEN SAMPLERS

Samplers were used to teach girls math, the alphabet, and needlework skills. Often they included Bible verses as part of their "moral lessons." Today, anyone can learn to stitch! Use the grid to create your sampler. What lesson would you want to stitch?

FAITH AND THE FORTENS

The African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas shaped the Fortens' view of the world and their role in it. Like some families today, the Fortens viewed their church not just as a place to worship but also as a place of community and belonging. What does community mean to you?



Collection of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania

FIND THE FORTEN PARLOR

This space was created to show what the Forten family's living room might have looked like in 1830. This room might have been where the family gathered together to read or discuss their day. They would have welcomed friends and loved ones in their parlor and held meetings with other community members.

The room features a wooden table that belonged to James Forten and has been passed down through seven generations! Is there a room in your house like the Forten parlor where your family spends time? Does it hold any special memories for you?

