

THOMAS J. DORSEY

by J.A. Rogers. 1/25/39

Thomas J. Dorsey was a friend of Frederick Douglass, and was resident in Philadelphia. Douglass says, "Knowing that I was then in Philadelphia, stopping with my friend, Thomas J. Dorsey, Mr. John Hern, the telegraph operator, came to me and with others urged me to leave the city by the first train." This was due to the fact that Douglass was implicated in the John Brown raid on Harper's Ferry. (1)

This is the only reference to Dorsey. However, Mrs. Thomas J. Dorsey is mentioned on page 442 as being with Douglass in Washington, D.C.

Booker T. Washington refers to him as Thomas L. Dorsey and speaks of him as an underground railroad agent at Brockton, NY. (2) Nevertheless in what appears to be a complete list of underground railroad agents, numbering hundreds, for the various states <sup>given</sup> by Wilbur H. Siebert, Dorsey does not appear in the long list of names given for New York and Pennsylvania.

Dorsey, also, is not mentioned in William Still's "The Underground Railroad," an <sup>other</sup> exhaustive work. Several other Dorseys are mentioned, however, as on pages 210, 219, 320, 342, 737, etc.

If he was an underground agent, he must have been a minor <sup>one</sup>. It may be that Booker T. Washington knew him personally,

and therefore, wrote about him. In any case, considerable research in other works, has failed to find other mention of him.

WILLIAM B. MATTHEWS.

Matthews, also, seems to have been a minor figure, and where <sup>he was</sup> resident is not clear. Frederick Douglass names him as one of those who went with him in a delegation to Washington D.C. on February 7, 1866 to see President Andrew Johnson with regard to the enfranchisement of the Negro. That is all the mention there is of him. (3)

Booker T. Washington also mentions him as doing this but gives the date as March, not February 1866. (4)

There seems also to be an absence of the mention of Matthews' name in other works.

1. Douglass, Frederick. Life and Times of Frederick Douglass, page 376, published in Boston 1865 by DeWolfe, Fisher and Co. 42nd St. Library. Class Mark AN(Douglass, F.)
2. Washington, Booker T. Frederick Douglass, page 161. published by George W. Jacobs & Co. Phila. and London, 1906. 42nd St. Library. Class Mark AN (Douglass F.)
3. Douglass, Frederick. Ibid. page 466.
4. Washington, Booker T. Ibid. page 260.