



Town of Lexington, Massachusetts

SELECT BOARD OFFICE

PROCLAMATION

- Whereas:** this year marks the 241th Anniversary of the third of the Quock Walker Cases that constitutionally ended slavery in Massachusetts; and
- Whereas:** Quock Walker entered the historical record on May 4, 1754, when Zedekiah Stone sold Mingo, Dinah, and 9-month-old Quock to James Caldwell of the Rutland District for 180 pounds; and
- Whereas:** Quock Walker's parents were likely imported into Massachusetts by ship like the first enslaved Africans were imported into the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1638; and
- Whereas:** in 1641 the Massachusetts Bay Colony became the first of Britain's mainland colonies to make slavery legal; and
- Whereas:** in 1780, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts adopted a Constitution which included Article 1, which reads,
- "All men are born free and equal, and have certain natural, essential, and unalienable rights; among which may be reckoned the right of enjoying and defending their lives and liberties; that of acquiring, possessing, and protecting property; in fine, that of seeking and obtaining their safety and happiness."*; and
- Whereas:** Reverend Jonas Clarke of Lexington served as a delegate to the Constitutional Convention; and
- Whereas:** in 1781, Quock Walker self-emancipated and went to work on a nearby farm in Barre, Massachusetts; and
- Whereas:** on June 12, 1781, a jury of the Worcester County Court of Common Pleas determined that Quock Walker was a free man and assessed Nathaniel Jennison 50 pounds for assault and battery; and
- Whereas:** in September 1781, Nathaniel Jennison lost his appeal to the Worcester Circuit of the Supreme Judicial Court; and
- Whereas:** in 1783, Justice William Cushing, Chief Justice of the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court, noted in his instructions to the jury, "the idea of slavery is inconsistent with our own conduct and Constitution"; and
- Whereas:** the Quock Walker cases resulted in the abolition of slavery in Lexington and across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts over 70 years before President Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation; and
- Whereas:** Quock Walker and his siblings acquired property in Barre, Massachusetts and enjoyed other liberties; and
- Whereas:** Quock Walker's peers and their children became entrepreneurs and active abolitionists who established the Massachusetts General Colored Association, the first all-Black abolitionist organization in the United States, "to promote the welfare of the race by working for the destruction of slavery"; and

Whereas: Abel and Kate Barbadoes were enslaved and emancipated by John Simonds of Lexington prior to 1775; and

Whereas: James George Barbadoes, grandson of Abel and Kate Barbadoes, was a founding member of the Massachusetts General Colored Association; and

Whereas: in 2022, the Massachusetts legislature passed a bill, signed into law by Governor Charles D. Baker, Jr. making July 8 Massachusetts Emancipation Day also known as Quock Walker Day in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

NOW, THEREFORE, WE THE SELECT BOARD of the Town of Lexington, Massachusetts, do hereby proclaim July 8, 2024 as

Massachusetts Emancipation Day aka Quock Walker Day

and urge all of the citizens of the Town of Lexington to celebrate the tenacity and audacity of Quock Walker, while building upon his legacy to make Lexington, and the Commonwealth, a more just place to exercise our natural, essential, and unalienable rights.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, we have set our hands and caused the seal of Lexington to be affixed herewith on the 8th of July, 2024.

DOUGLAS M. LUCENTE, CHAIR

SUZANNE E. BARRY

JOSEPH N. PATO

JILL I. HAI

MARK D. SANDEEN