

Further Reading

The research for this publication is based primarily on Dr. Terry Alford's book, *Prince Among Slaves: The True Story of an African Prince Sold into Slavery in the American South* (Oxford University Press, 1977). Other sources of research included:

Beverly B. Adams, *Chronicles of the Life of Prince Abdul-Rahman Ibrahima: A Journey through Slavery From Timbo to Natchez* (The Gazell Studios LLC, 2018)

Dr. Artemus W. Gaye, Ph.D. *Dr. Isabella Rahman and the African Prince of Fouta Djallon* (Forte Publishing International, 2023)

Exhibition: Visit the Natchez Museum of African American History and Culture (NAPAC Museum), 301 Main St., Natchez, to see its exhibition on the prince.

This brochure is published by Visit Natchez with research and editorial assistance by the Historic Natchez Foundation, David Dreyer, and Dr. Artemus Gaye. Its publication was made possible by a grant from the Mississippi Humanities Council through funding by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

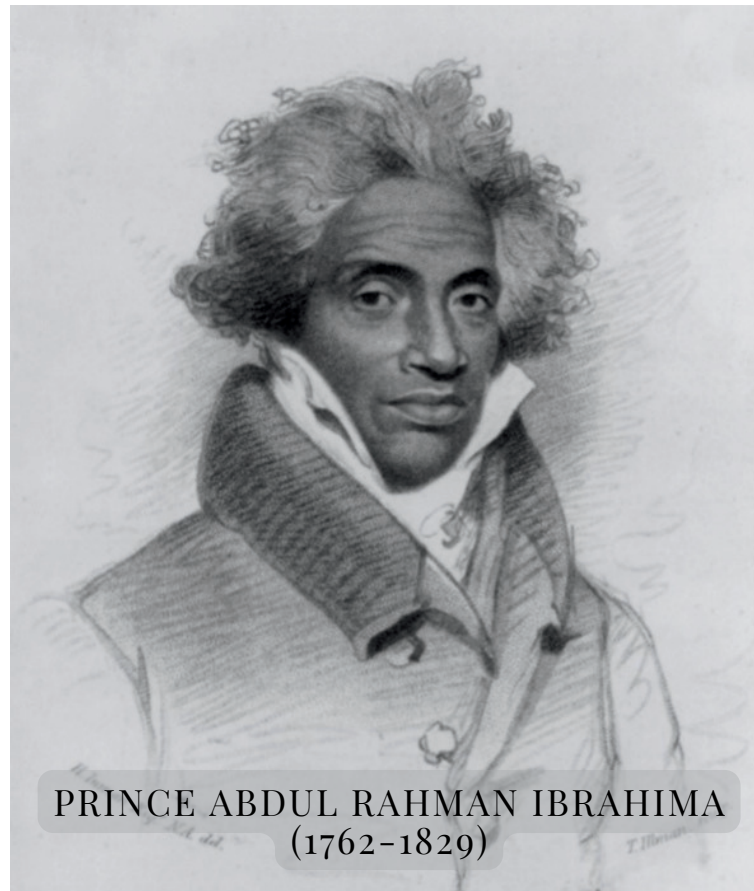
Graphic Design: OpenMarketDesign.com
Printer: Catherine Murray, Murray Printing

Grateful acknowledgments are made to the following individuals and organizations for their support, research, and conversations:

Dr. Terry Alford, Historic Natchez Foundation, David Dyer, Dr. Artemus Gaye, Michael Morris, Beverly Adams, Brother Rogers, Lance Harris, Bobby Dennis, Ser Seshsh Ab Heter-Clifford M. Boxley, the Mississippi Humanities Council, the City of Natchez, and the Mississippi Department of Archives and History.



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PRINCE ABDUL RAHMAN IBRAHIMA
(1762-1829)

PRINCE IBRAHIMA: A PROFILE AND SELF-GUIDED TOUR

Discover the extraordinary story of Prince Abdul Rahman Ibrahima (1762-1829), an African prince who spent 40 years enslaved on a plantation near Natchez, Mississippi, before gaining his freedom in 1828.

See the place of his enslavement near Washington in Adams County and the places he visited in Natchez.

Use this tour guide to visit the sites that played a pivotal role in his life!



THE REMARKABLE STORY OF PRINCE IBRAHIMA

Abdul Rahman Ibrahima was a Muslim prince born in 1762 in Timbuktu, a city in the current West African country of Mali. Ibrahima spent most of his childhood in Timbo, Guinea, located in the region of Futa Jallon where his father, Ibrahima Sori ruled as king.

Ibrahima was only 26 when he served as a colonel in his father's army. However, his military service was cut short. In 1788, he and his soldiers were returning home to celebrate a victory after a battle when they were ambushed by the Hebohs, a rival, non-Muslim, ethnic group. Ibrahima was captured and sold to slave traders.

Sold to Thomas Foster

Ibrahima arrived in Natchez in August 1788 by boat at the site that is known as Silver Street, Under-the-Hill. From there, he and his friend, Samba, who served with him in the military, were purchased by a farmer named Thomas Foster for \$930. Ibrahima initially resisted his new life, but over time, he proved to be a good worker and became an overseer at Foster's plantation.

In 1791, Foster purchased a woman in her early 20s named Isabella. She and Ibrahima married on Christmas Day of 1794. The two of them would raise nine children: five sons and four daughters. In 1803, the prince met newspaper editor and printer Andrew Marschalk, who is today known as the "Father of Mississippi Journalism." He would play a significant role in Ibrahima's life.

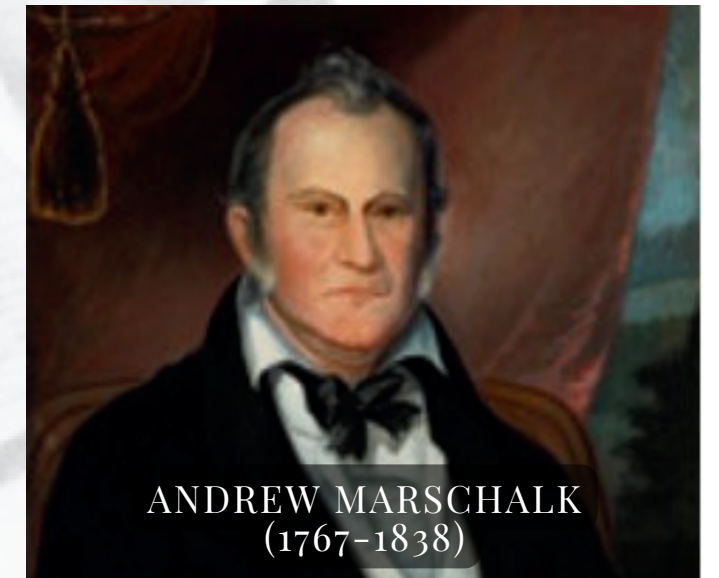
Recognizing Dr. Cox

In 1807, the prince visited the market in Washington to sell sweet potatoes when he saw Dr. John Coates Cox, a friend from his past. Cox, an Irishman, had sailed to West Africa in 1781. After going ashore to hunt, he became lost and later collapsed. He was rescued by the Fulani people of Futa Jallon and taken to Timbo, where Ibrahima's father cared for him.

After Ibrahima and Cox recognized each other in Mississippi, the doctor tried for many years to buy his freedom, but Foster refused to release him. Cox died in December 1816. His chance meeting with Ibrahima generated fame for both of them. The fame eventually led to Ibrahima's freedom with the help of Marschalk.

Letter-writing Campaign

In the early 1820s, Ibrahima began visiting Marschalk's print shop, which was right beside Marschalk's home on the northeast corner of Wall and Franklin streets in downtown Natchez. On one of his visits, Ibrahima picked up a book and read the text that was printed in Arabic, which surprised Marschalk. Later, Ibrahima expressed an interest in writing a letter to his home country, and Marschalk agreed to help him. However, it would be a few years later before Ibrahima would write the letter.



In his letter, written in 1826, Ibrahima wrote a passage from the Qur'an. Marschalk took it and added a cover letter addressed to U.S. Senator Thomas B. Reed of Natchez, who took the letter to Washington, D.C. The letter eventually made its way to Thomas Mulowny, the U.S. consul in Tangier, Morocco, who shared it with an official of Moroccan Sultan Abd al-Rahman II. The sultan said Ibrahima must be freed and he would pay any price to see him returned home. Mulowny shared the sultan's sentiment and expressed it in a letter to Washington, D.C.

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Marschalk had mistakenly written that Ibrahim was a Moor and a member of the royal family of Morocco. Ibrahim did not correct him. The communications eventually involved U.S. Secretary of State Henry Clay in President John Quincy Adams' administration. Clay authorized Marschalk's efforts to obtain Ibrahim's freedom. The U.S. government had agreed to cover the expenses to send the prince to West Africa.

Free at Last!

On Friday, February 22, 1828, Foster delivered Ibrahim to Marschalk's printing office along with a deed in trust for Ibrahim, who was 66. Isabella's freedom would be purchased later for \$200.

On April 8, 1828, Ibrahim and Isabella traveled with their family to the dock under the hill. They boarded the *Neptune* steamship and waved goodbye to their children, who remained enslaved. For several months after leaving Natchez, Ibrahim travelled to Washington, D.C., and Connecticut, among other places, on a fundraising campaign to help free his children. However, he came up short.

Sailing to West Africa

In February 1829, he and Isabella sailed to Monrovia, Liberia, which the American Colonization Society had created as a home for formerly enslaved Africans. During their stay in Liberia, Ibrahim contracted a disease and died on July 6, 1829, at the age of 67. He never reached his homeland in Futa Jalon. Isabella remained in Liberia. Two of her sons, one with a wife and five children, later joined her.

TAKE THE SELF-GUIDED TOUR!

1 SILVER STREET, UNDER-THE-HILL

The area known as Under-the-Hill, where the loading dock leads up to Silver Street, is where Ibrahim arrived in Natchez as an enslaved man in August 1788. This is also the place where he and his wife, Isabella, departed Natchez in 1828 with their freedom. It was from this location that they boarded the *Neptune* steamboat and waved goodbye to their children, who remained enslaved.



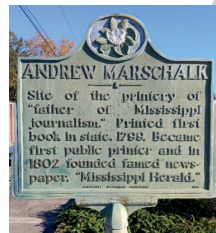
2 FORT ROSALIE

Ibrahim was purchased by Thomas Foster in an agreement signed at the fort in the presence of Don Carlos de Grand-Pre, civil and military commandant of the Natchez District. The site where this transaction took place is Fort Rosalie (called Fort Panmure by the British), pictured here between Green and Canal streets. Historical panels in this area provide information about the fort and its history.



3 ANDREW MARSCHALK'S HOME AND PRINTING OFFICE

Andrew Marschalk was a newspaper publisher. This building, which no longer exists, was located at the northeast corner of North Wall and Franklin streets. It is where Ibrahim met with Marschalk and read from a book with text in Arabic. Marschalk initiated efforts that resulted in Ibrahim's freedom.



4 GRAVE OF ANDREW MARSCHALK

Andrew Marschalk helped to secure the freedom of Prince Ibrahim, and his wife, Isabella, in 1828. Marschalk's grave is located at Natchez City Cemetery at 2 Cemetery Road near the far southeastern corner of the old part of the cemetery. (Plot 1, #260) Call the cemetery for details: 601-445-5051.



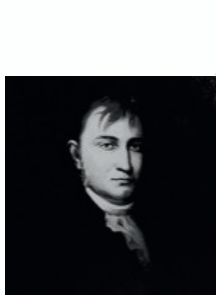
5 GRAVE OF DR. JOHN COATES COX

Dr. John Coates Cox tried for years to purchase Prince Ibrahim's freedom but without success. His grave is located at Natchez Cemetery at 2 Cemetery Road near the far southeastern corner of the old part of the cemetery. (Plot 1 #218) Call the cemetery for details: 601-445-5051.



6 HOME OF THOMAS BUCK REED

U.S. Senator Thomas B. Reed (1787-1829) was the person who received Prince Ibrahim's letter with the cover letter by Andrew Marschalk and delivered it to the U.S. State Department in Washington, D.C. Reed owned this home from 1818 to 1829. Today, the house is known as Linden Historic Bed-and-Breakfast. It is located at 1 Conner Circle.



7 SALEM CHURCH MARKER

Pine Ridge Presbyterian Church organized in 1807 as Salem Church. It is located at DR. M.L. K. Jr. Road and Airport Road. The original building no longer exists. Ibrahim reportedly visited the church with the Foster family.



8 GRAVES OF THOMAS FOSTER SR. AND HIS DAUGHTER, CASSANDRA FOSTER SPEED

Thomas Foster Sr. purchased Prince Ibrahim in 1788 and released him as a freedman in 1828 by the authorization of President John Quincy Adams' administration. Foster and his daughter, Cassandra Foster Speed, are buried at 21 Greenwood Plantation Road – on the east side of the road – south of Steam Plant Road in Adams County on the land that was formerly known as Foster Fields. It was the place of Ibrahim's enslavement. Today this property is privately owned. The graves are located on the side of the road.



9 HISTORIC JEFFERSON COLLEGE (SITE NEAR WASHINGTON MARKET IN 1807)

It was in this area between 16 Old North St. and Highway 61 North in Washington that Prince Ibrahim recognized Dr. John Coates Cox in 1807 at the market place. The land for the college was donated by John Foster and James Foster, brothers of Thomas Foster Sr. Photo courtesy of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History.

