

# *Second Saturday Tours of Florence History*

## **The Northampton Watercure: David Ruggles, Charles Munde, & Early Naturopathy in Florence**

The third tour in the Second Saturday Summer Series to benefit the new **DAVID RUGGLES CENTER FOR EARLY FLORENCE HISTORY**. Join guides Steve Strimer and Linda Ziegenbein to visit sites of the Florence years of David Ruggles, hydropathic doctor, the country's first African American bookseller, journalist and assistant to over 600 fugitive slaves. We will explore the former practices of the Northampton Watercure, one of the first watercure hospitals in the United States.


When Ruggles came to Florence in 1842 he suffered from numerous medical complaints, many of which were the direct result of the allopathic treatments he had received in New York City. Over 18 months, with the help of the noted hydropathic doctor Robert Wesselhoeft a student of the famous Vincent Priessnitz of Germany, Ruggles nursed himself back to a substantially improved state of health. After his recovery he found he had developed an ability to diagnose illness from sensing the state of a person's "cutaneous electricity."

As more people became aware of his skills Ruggles began to treat patients, first his fellow members of the Northampton Association and later people from all over the east coast until by 1846 he needed more space and built the first new structure in the U.S. dedicated to hydropathic treatment. Sojourner Truth, Payson Williston, and William Lloyd Garrison were among his patients. Sadly, Ruggles died on December 16, 1849, at the age of 39, leaving one of the major business concerns of the growing village with an uncertain future.

As one of only two or three developed businesses in the area at the time, Florence's major benefactor, Samuel L. Hill, felt it important to preserve the watercure. Charles Munde, an accomplished hydropathist from Germany, was recruited to take over. It was Munde who suggested the name Florence for the growing village. The facility continued to expand under Munde's leadership until it burned to the ground in on November 7, 1865.

We will walk to what is thought to be the current site of David Ruggles house, the first building in the watercure complex, and to the Ross Farm which supplied milk to the watercure. Email Steve Strimer with questions: [stevestrimer@gmail.com](mailto:stevestrimer@gmail.com)

**Saturday, August 9, 10 am, Elks Lodge Parking Lot  
17 Spring Street, Florence, MA**



*The David Ruggles  
Center for Early  
Florence History  
& Underground  
Railroad Studies*

[www.davidrugglescenter.org](http://www.davidrugglescenter.org)