

Meet the Hudlins Biography



Anna Elizabeth and Joseph Hudlin were an African American couple.

They lived in Chicago's South Division with their five children.

Joseph Hudlin was born into **slavery** in Culpepper Court House,

Virginia. Eventually, he and his brothers escaped. He came to the

Midwest while working on a Mississippi River steamboat. As a

steward, it was his job to take care of the passengers on the boat.

Anna Elizabeth Hudlin was born free in Uniontown, Pennsylvania. Her

mother had been born into slavery. A religious group called the

Quakers freed her. Anna Elizabeth moved westward in search of a

better life. Joseph and Anna Elizabeth each spent time in St. Louis, Missouri, before making their way to Chicago.

The Hudlins, who married in 1855, were part of the first generation of Black families in Chicago.

They were the first African Americans in Chicago to build their own home. Their address was 239 Third Avenue (now Plymouth Court). They finished building the simple five-room wooden cottage in 1857. Their home would become very important one day when it served as a shelter for people during the Great Chicago Fire.

In Chicago, Joseph worked at the Board of Trade as a porter. It was his job to carry and move things. The Board of Trade was a place where farmers, loggers, and miners could trade and sell their raw products. Anna Elizabeth was very active in the community. She volunteered for many different organizations and causes. The Hudlins were abolitionists, people who thought slavery

was wrong and worked to end it. They were members of Chicago's first African American church, Quinn Chapel. The Hudlins and their friends shared a sense of **responsibility** for their neighbors. They worked to help others and build a strong community in Chicago.

On the night of October 8, 1871, the first night of the fire, the Hudlins awoke due to a loud noise. They realized the noise they heard was people fleeing the fire! Luckily their home was far enough away from the blaze that it did not burn. Anna Elizabeth decided to open their home to people escaping the fire. Anna tended to the scared families, both Black and white. Joseph decided he could help at his place of work. He ran into the Board of Trade building and saved important papers from burning. Those papers allowed the Board of Trade to reopen soon after the fire.

After the fire, people spoke of the bravery and **generosity** of the Hudlins. Joseph was called a hero. The *Chicago Tribune* newspaper wrote that Anna Elizabeth was the "Angel of the Fire" because she helped so many people.

Vocabulary:

Slavery: when one human being is owned by another and considered property. In what is now the United States, Black people were enslaved by white people from even before the founding of the country. Slavery was finally outlawed in 1865 by the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution.

Responsibility (acting responsibly): When a person is dependable and makes good choices. A responsible citizen looks out for the well-being of others and understands that they can make their community a better place.

Generosity: When a person is willing to give or share their resources with others. This includes things like belongings, time, or talents.