

# NOMINATION OF HISTORIC BUILDING, STRUCTURE, SITE, OR OBJECT

## PHILADELPHIA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

### PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

SUBMIT ALL ATTACHED MATERIALS ON PAPER AND IN ELECTRONIC FORM ON CD (MS WORD FORMAT)

#### 1. ADDRESS OF HISTORIC RESOURCE (must comply with an Office of Property Assessment address)

Street address: **625 S. Delhi Street**

Postal code: **19147**

Councilmanic District: **1**

#### 2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

Historic Name: **William & Letitia Still House**

Common Name:

#### 3. TYPE OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

☒ Building

☐ Structure

☐ Site

☐ Object

#### 4. PROPERTY INFORMATION

Condition: ☐ excellent ☒ good ☐ fair ☐ poor ☐ ruins

Occupancy: ☒ occupied ☐ vacant ☐ under construction ☐ unknown

Current use: **Residence**

#### 5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Please attach a plot plan and written description of the boundary. **SEE ATTACHED SHEET.**

#### 6. DESCRIPTION

**SEE ATTACHED SHEET.**

Please attach a description of the historic resource and supplement with current photographs.

#### 7. SIGNIFICANCE

Please attach the Statement of Significance.

[See Attached Sheet]

Period of Significance (from year to year): from

**1850 to 1855**

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration:

**1847/48 and 1920s (façade)**

Architect, engineer, and/or designer:

Builder, contractor, and/or artisan:

**Peter Glasgow**

Original owner:

**Frank Williams**

Other significant persons:

**William & Letitia Still**

**CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION:**

The historic resource satisfies the following criteria for designation (check all that apply):

- X **(a) Has significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth or Nation or is associated with the life of a person significant in the past; or,**  
(b) Is associated with an event of importance to the history of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or  
(c) Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style; or,  
(d) Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen; or,  
(e) Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,  
(f) Contains elements of design, detail, materials or craftsmanship which represent a significant innovation; or,  
(g) Is part of or related to a square, park or other distinctive area which should be preserved according to an historic, cultural or architectural motif; or,  
(h) Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or City; or,  
(i) Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in pre-history or history; or  
X **(j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.**

**8. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Please attach a bibliography.

**SEE ATTACHED SHEET.**

**9. NOMINATOR: THE KEEPING SOCIETY OF PHILADELPHIA**

Authors: **Oscar Beisert, Architectural Historian, J.M. Duffin, Historian, Rachel Hildebrandt, Historic Preservationist, Donna J. Rilling, Historian**

Email: [Oscar.Beisert@gmail.com](mailto:Oscar.Beisert@gmail.com)

Date: **11 December 2017.**

Street Address: **1315 Walnut Street, Suite 732**

Telephone: **(717) 602-5002**

City, State, and Postal Code: **Philadelphia, PA 19107**

Nominators are not the property owners.

**PHC USE ONLY**

Date of Receipt: 11 December 2017

☒ Correct-Complete ☐ Incorrect-Incomplete

Date: 29 December 2017

Date of Notice Issuance: 2 January 2018

Property Owner at Time of Notice

Name: F & J Homes LLC

Address: 625 S. Delhi Street

City: Philadelphia State: PA Postal Code: 19147

Date(s) Reviewed by the Committee on Historic Designation: 14 February 2018 rec: A, B, I, J

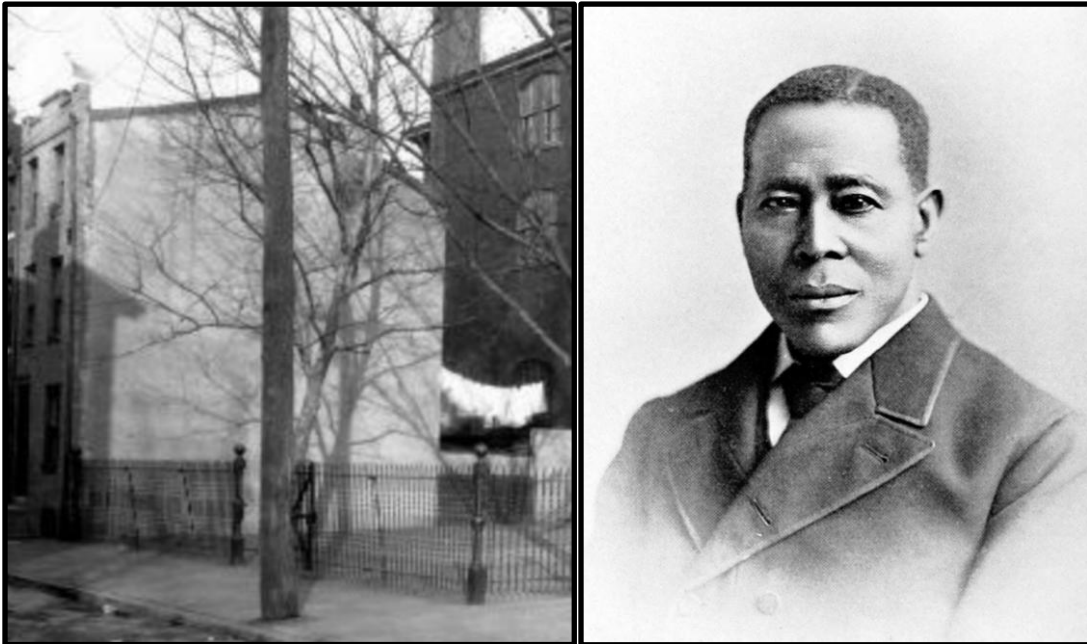
Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: 3/9/2018

Date of Final Action: 3/9/2018, Criteria A, B, I, J

☒ Designated ☐ Rejected

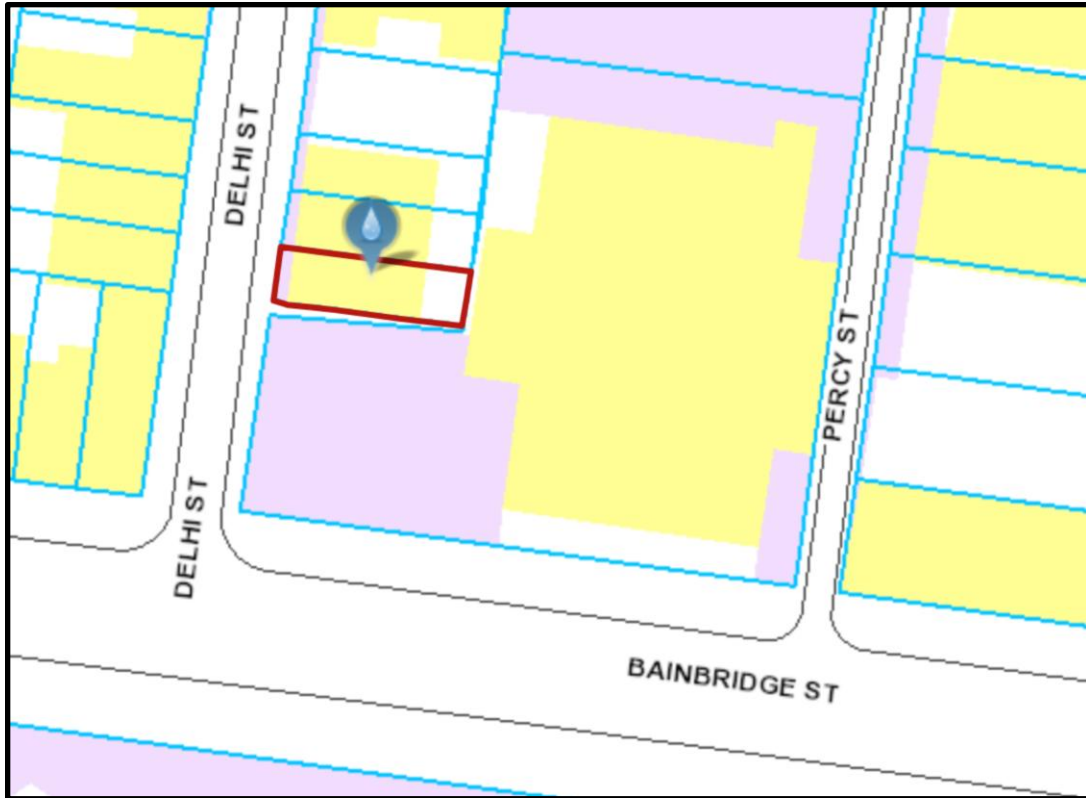
4/11/13

**Nomination**  
**for the**  
**Philadelphia Register of Historic Places**



Left: Subject building in 1935 showing refaced façade. Source: Phillyhistory.org. Right: William Still. Source: Temple University Libraries.

**William & Letitia Still House**  
**Underground Railroad Way Station**  
**625 S. Delhi Street**  
**Philadelphia, Pennsylvania**



Above is delineated (in red) the boundary of the subject designation.

Source: Philadelphia Water.

##### **5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

ALL THAT CERTAIN lot or piece of ground with the buildings and improvements thereon erected. SITUATE on the East side of South Delhi Street (formerly called Ronaldson Street) as the same has been at this point widened by the addition of 1 foot throughout by Peter Glasgow from his lot for public use forever at the distance of 44 feet Northward from Bainbridge Street, CONTAINING in front or breadth on the said Delhi Street 12 feet and extending Eastward between lines parallel with the said Bainbridge Street in length or depth 40 feet. BEING 625 South Delhi Street.

OPA Property No.: 023248200

Philadelphia Deed Register No.: 05S02-0081



Looking southeast at the William & Letitia Still House at 625 S. Delhi Street. Source: Oscar Beisert.

## 6. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

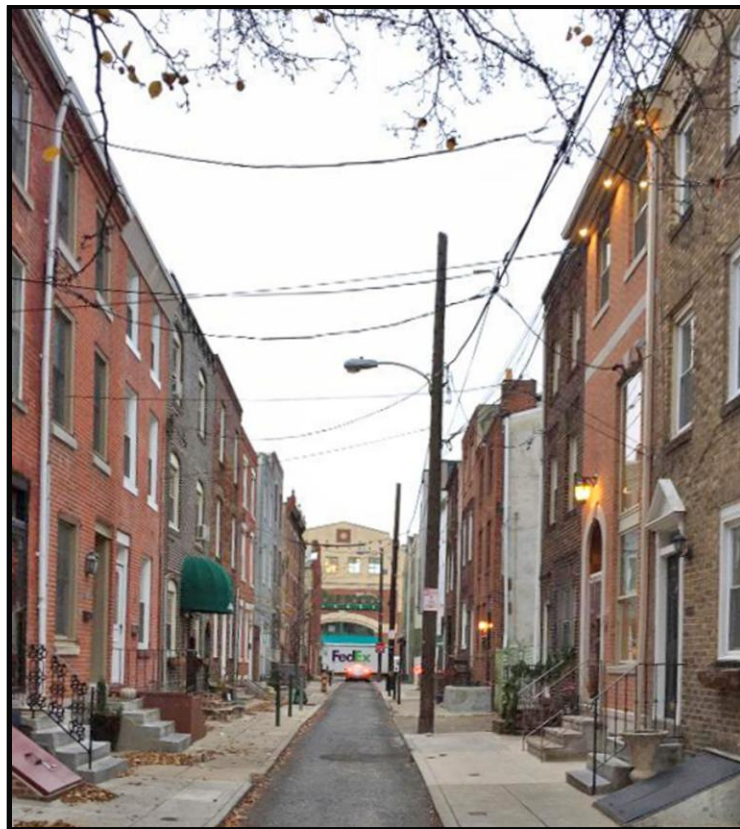
Situated on the east side of S. Delhi Street in South Philadelphia, the William & Letitia Still House and Underground Railroad Way Station at 625 S. Delhi Street is a typical pre-Civil War-era row house that was refaced in the twentieth century. The building stands three stories, features a double-pile plan, and is of loadbearing masonry construction. It originally featured the ubiquitous red brick façade found upon most Philadelphia houses of the 1840s. The building spans roughly two bays in width, featuring its original and symmetrical fenestration with two openings per floor. The first floor features a single pedestrian door on the north side of the façade that is accessed by three original-appearing marble steps and a later iron railing. Beneath the first-floor window and to the south of the marble stoop is a basement entrance that may have been added later. The second aperture within the primary elevation of the ground floor is a single window to the south. Two windows per floor rise above in a typical symmetrical arrangement. The red brick façade of the dwelling was refaced and/or replaced with the current lightly colored masonry units. The side, south-facing elevation is a blank brick party wall with a roughcast finish. The rear, east-facing elevation is also brick with a roughcast finish. There is a small rear yard that is adjacent to the former Institute for Colored Youth. While there have been alterations to the primary elevation, these changes are not unlike many houses that were designated historic in Society Hill and other areas of the city.

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Nomination to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, December 2017–Page 3





Looking north at the stucco-clad party wall of the subject house at center with the narrow streetscape of Delhi Street on left and the former Institute for Colored Youth on right. Source: Oscar Beisert.



Looking north at S. Delhi Street with the subject house immediately on right. Source: Oscar Beisert.



Looking east at the doorway of the subject house. Source: Oscar Beisert.



Looking east, the original marble steps of the subject house. Source: Oscar Beisert.



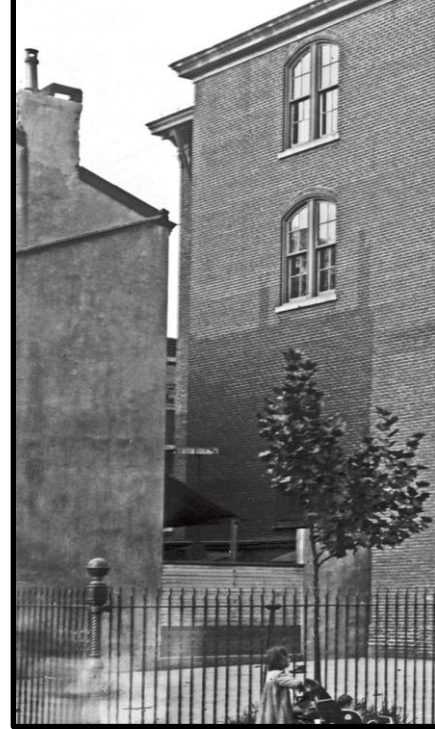


Detail of subject property in photograph of the Samuel J. Randall Public School, originally the Institute for Colored Youth, 1935. Source: Phillyhistory.org.



Detail of subject property in photograph of the Samuel J. Randall Public School, originally the Institute for Colored Youth. Source: Oscar Beisert.





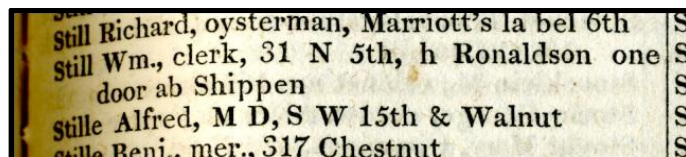
Left: the subject building in 1935 showing refaced façade. Source: Phillyhistory.org. Right: the subject building in 1912. Source: Free Library of Philadelphia.

## 7. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

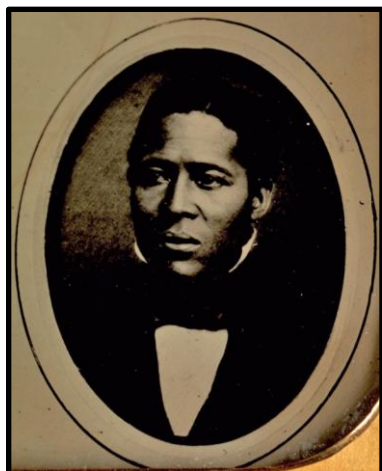
The William & Letitia Still House at 625 S. Delhi Street is a significant historic resource that merits designation by the Philadelphia Historical Commission and inclusion on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. Located in the South Philadelphia, the building satisfies the following Criteria for Designation as enumerated in Section 14-1004 of the Philadelphia Code:

- (a) *Has significant character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage, or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth, or nation or is associated with the life of a person significant in the past;*
- (j) *Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social, or historical heritage of the community.*

Period of Significance: 1850-55.



1854 city directory listing for Still. Source: McElroy's Philadelphia Directory for 1854.



Left: William Still, ca. 1855. Detail from photograph of Philadelphia Vigilance Committee. Source: Boston Public Library. Right: William Still, ca. 1870, engraving by John Sartain. Source: William Still, *The Underground Rail Road* (1872).

**CRITERION A. The William & Letitia Still House and Underground Railroad Way Station represents the life and work of the important African American abolitionist, businessman, leader on the Underground Railroad, historian, writer, and civil rights activist William Still (1821–1902). Their home (the subject building) is one of the most important surviving stations of the Chesapeake-Pennsylvania-New York-Canada network of the eastern Underground Railroad.**

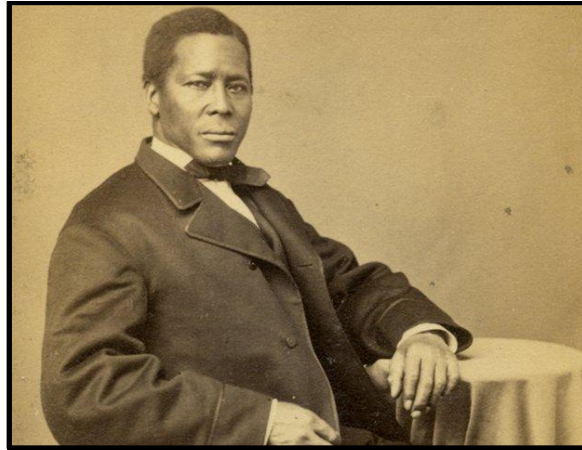
Still arrived in Philadelphia as a laborer and quickly became a major leader in the abolitionist movement and the Underground Railroad, as well as Philadelphia’s African American community. In 1847, just three years after his arrival in Philadelphia, Still was employed by the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society. While serving in this role he was an active agent on the Underground Railroad, at which time it was estimated that as many as 1,000 enslaved people per year had “taken their liberty” through the larger national network.<sup>1</sup>

In a direct response to the passage by the U.S. Congress of the Fugitive Slave Act in September 1850, which required all U.S. citizens even in free states to assist in the seizure of “fugitive slaves,” the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society revitalized its Vigilance Committee and made Still chairman.<sup>2</sup> The committee’s purpose was to aid escaping enslaved people who had arrived in Philadelphia, providing resources to ensure their freedom and future, while also providing immediate care and shelter. It appears that upon receiving this appointment, William and Letitia Still removed from cramped quarters in the rear of 22 Washington Street (present-day 1128 Rodman Street) to the subject building at 17 Ronaldson Street (present-day 625 S.

<sup>1</sup> Larry Gara. “William Still and the Underground Railroad,” *Pennsylvania History* 28 (1961): 33-44.

<sup>2</sup> Stanley W. Campbell. *The Slave Catchers: Enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law, 1850-1860* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1970); Elizabeth Varon, “‘Beautiful Providences:’ William Still, the Vigilance Committee, and Abolitionists in the Age of Sectionalism,” in *Antislavery and Abolition in Philadelphia: Emancipation and the Long Struggle for Racial Justice in the City of Brotherly Love*, Richard Newman and James Mueller, ed. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2011), 229–45.

Dehli Street).<sup>3</sup> The Stills rented the subject house from 1850 to 1855, during which time William Still's service as Chairman of the Vigilance Committee led him to become an integral figure of the Underground Railroad. While the movement pre-dates Still, he is often referred to as the "Father of the Underground Railroad." In their home on Ronaldson Street, many enslaved people received assistance and care from the Stills on their journey to points farther North. Among these was nationally and internationally known Jane Johnson and her daughters, who spent their first evening of freedom in the Stills' home in the summer of 1855.<sup>4</sup>



William Still, ca. 1880. Source: Swarthmore College Library.

### **Historical Context: A Brief Biography of William Still**

William Still has been described as "second only to Harriet Tubman in underground railroad operations."<sup>5</sup> He was one of the most active and crucial African American members of the Vigilance Committee of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society (PAS) in the 1850s.<sup>6</sup> The Vigilance Committee was the arm of the PAS that assisted men and women fleeing from bondage in the slave states and ushered them on to freedom along a network of abolitionists stretching from the Upper South to Canada. The Committee was especially active after the reign of terror created by the Fugitive Slave Act (1850), which required Northerners to assist in the capturing of putative fugitives, and penalized those who would not do so, and forced many former enslaved African Americans living free in the North to be in daily fear of being taken

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<sup>3</sup> McElroy's *Philadelphia Directory for 1849* (Philadelphia: Edward C. & John Biddle, 1859); African-American Census of Philadelphia 1847, p. 79, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College.

<sup>4</sup> William Still, *The Underground Rail Road: A Record of Facts, Authentic Narratives, Letters &c. Narrating the Hardships, Hair-breadth Escapes and Death Struggles of the Slaves in their Efforts for Freedom, as Related by Themselves and Others or Witnessed by the Author; Together with Sketches of Some of the Largest Stockholders and Most Liberal Aiders and Advisers of the Road* (Philadelphia: Porter & Coates, 1872), 92.

<sup>5</sup> Benjamin Quarles, *Allies for Freedom: Blacks and John Brown* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 40, as quoted by Aslaku Berhanu, "Biography of Caroline Still Anderson," William Still: An African American Abolitionist, accessed 3 October 2017, <http://stillfamily.library.temple.edu/exhibits/show/william-still/historical-perspective/biography-of-caroline-still-an>.

<sup>6</sup> Varon, " 'Beautiful Providences:' William Still," 229-45.

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away in slavery or to seek secure freedom in Canada. William Still put his life and livelihood at risk helping and harboring such fugitives. He and his wife Letitia sheltered, healed, and fed many of them in their home on Ronaldson Street (now S. Delhi Street).

William Still was born in 1821 in Burlington County, New Jersey. His father Levin Steel, later Still, had been enslaved in Maryland but purchased his freedom in 1798 and migrated to New Jersey. Levin Still's wife Sidney (later Charity) subsequently escaped enslavement and joined her husband. William was the youngest of the couple's eighteen children.

In childhood, Still assisted his family in maintaining a small farm and adding to the household resources by doing odd jobs in the rural community. He had only rudimentary schooling, his education and that of his siblings having been discouraged by desultory and/or racist teachers. In 1844, he moved to Philadelphia in hopes of finding better employment prospects. Still arrived in a city that was still plagued by the depression that followed the Panic of 1837. He found only short-term, seasonal, and menial work for his first two years in Philadelphia, and eventually conceded to go into household service for an elite elderly widow, Elizabeth Langdon Elwyn (1777–1860).<sup>7</sup> She opened her library to him, shared intellectual conversations with him, and treated Still without prejudice. The experience, reputation, and literacy he attained enabled him to gain employment with the PAS in September 1847. While he began as a janitor and messenger, he quickly rose to clerk and in 1850 became a key force on the Vigilance Committee.<sup>8</sup>

William Still married Letitia George in 1847. Letitia was a partner in William's work, aiding him in sheltering "fugitive guests" in their home. William Still received numerous letters from former enslaved people whom the Vigilance Committee had managed to conduct to Canada and other safe locations; many sent warm regards to Mrs. Still and the children and thanked them for their hospitality.<sup>9</sup> Newly resettled in western New York, former enslaved women Charlotte and Harriet, for example, wrote to Still sending "love ... to Mrs. Still and thank[ing] her for her kindness to us while at your house."<sup>10</sup> Ellen Saunders wrote from her new home in New Bedford,

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<sup>7</sup> She was the mother of Dr. Alfred L. Elwyn, founder of the Elwyn School.

<sup>8</sup> James P. Boyd, "William Still: His Life and Work to This Time," in William Still, *Still's Underground Rail Road Records: with a Life of the Author: Narrating the Hardships, Hairbreadth Escapes and Death Struggles of the Slaves in their Efforts for Freedom: Together with Sketches of Some of the Eminent Friends of Freedom, and Most Liberal Aiders and Advisers of the Road* (Philadelphia, William Still, 1886); Larry Gara, "Still, William (1821–1902), abolitionist and businessman," in *American National Biography*. Accessed December 1, 2017, <http://www.anb.org/view/10.1093/anb/9780198606697.001.0001/anb-9780198606697-e-1500657>.

<sup>9</sup> Letter of L.D. Mansfield to William Still, 54; Emma Brown to Still, 76; "[G]ive my kindes[t] regards to Mrs Still and children and receive a portion for yoo self [sic]," Flarece P. Gault to Stille, 172; H. Hill to Still, 202; John Hall to Still, 252–53; Henry Washington to Still, 261 – all page references are from Still, *The Underground Rail Road* (1872).

<sup>10</sup> Harriet Eglin to Still, Still, *The Underground Rail Road* (1872), 221.

Massachusetts to send her “love to Mrs. Still and also your dear little children.... Please tell Mrs. Still I have not met any person who has treated me any kinder than she did since I left.”<sup>11</sup> Letitia Still’s work as a dressmaker contributed to the household expenses, and suggests that her skills also assisted in clothing and disguising fugitives.<sup>12</sup>

One of the most famous freedom seekers to find shelter in the subject building was Jane Johnson (ca. 1820–1872).<sup>13</sup> Johnson and her two sons were rescued by William Still and Passmore Williamson in the summer of 1855 when her master, John Hill Wheeler, was traveling through Philadelphia to New York on his way to Venezuela. Under Pennsylvania law she was entitled to seek her freedom as soon as she set foot in the state. Williamson and Still effected a daring rescue in front of her master when she and her children were on board the ferry for Camden at the Philadelphia dock. While Williamson and some African-American dock workers detained Wheeler, Still whisked Johnson and her children away and they spent the night in the Still’s home. The ensuing arrest of Still, Williamson and the dock workers made the national news. Williamson’s 100-day imprisonment by a pro-slavery Philadelphia federal court judge garnered much support for the abolitionist cause. Jane Johnson’s surprise and daring appearance at Still’s trial where she stated unequivocally that she was not forced off the boat and wanted freedom for herself and her children helped to put an important human face to the case. Her story was the inspiration for Lorene Cary’s novel *The Price of a Child* among other works.<sup>14</sup>

At the start of the Civil War, Still resigned his position at the PAS but continued civil rights work. Between his home (then on North 5<sup>th</sup> Street) and Camp William Penn, in Cheltenham Township, where he served as Post Sutler, Still was forced to ride on the outside of the horse-drawn streetcar, despite inclemency of the weather. He thereafter worked with a cadre of African American activists, among them Octavius V. Catto, to end racial segregation on Philadelphia’s streetcars.<sup>15</sup>

After he ended his tenure with PAS, Still established himself in the stove business (initially repairing and selling second-hand stoves) in a store in the former Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society office on North 5<sup>th</sup> Street. He also began a coal

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<sup>11</sup> Saunders to Still, 276; see also Frances Hilliard, 289, Still, *The Underground Rail Road* (1872).

<sup>12</sup> Boyd, “Life of William Still,” xix, xxiv.

<sup>13</sup> Still, *The Underground Rail Road* (1872), 92.

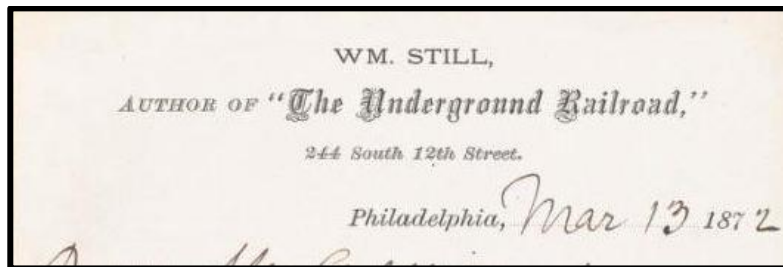
<sup>14</sup> Nat Brandt and Yanna Brandt, *In the Shadow of the Civil War: Passmore Williamson and the Rescue of Jane Johnson* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2007).

<sup>15</sup> Boyd, “Life of William Still,” li-lviii; William Still et al., “Petition for the Colored People to Ride in the Cars,” June 10, 1862, <https://digitalhistory.hsp.org/pafirm/doc/petition-colored-people-philadelphia-ride-cars-june-10-1862>; William Still, *A Brief Narrative of the Struggle for the Rights of Colored People of Philadelphia in the City Railway Cars* (Philadelphia: Merrihew & Son, 1867); Stephen G. Hall, “To Render the Private Public: William Still and the Selling of *The Underground Rail Road*,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 127 (2003): 35-55; John Hepp, “Streetcars,” In *Encyclopedia of Greater Philadelphia*, Charlene Mires, Howard Gillette, Randall Miller, and Tamara Gaskell, ed., Rutgers University-Camden, Mid-Atlantic Regional Center for the Humanities, 2009–, Accessed December 6, 2017. <http://philadelphiaencyclopedia.org/archive/streetcars/>

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business, which proved very successful. He managed even as a young married man to invest in real estate in West Philadelphia, and was buoyed by the increased value of the parcel to make small investments from time to time. His biographer James Boyd thus represented him as a reliant, enterprising, and respectable black man—much as Still presented himself in an 1872 photograph.<sup>16</sup>

By 1867, Still had decided to write a book documenting the perilous struggles of the African American men and women who had been assisted by the Vigilance Committee.<sup>17</sup> Still's *Underground Rail Road* was first published in 1872. A monumental tome of 800 pages, it is filled with the stories of fugitives whom Still had interviewed when they arrived in Philadelphia. Beginning around 1854, Still kept notes, which he hid in a shed in the nearby African American Lebanon Cemetery. After the War, he used these journals to reconstruct the flights of slaves from bondage. The work was like no other history of the antislavery movement in its focus and gripping, real-life stories of escaped slaves. It is the only first-person account of African American activities on the Underground Railroad.<sup>18</sup>



William Still letterhead, 1872. Source: Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

Still's *Underground Rail Road* reinforced that blacks were key actors in their self-liberation, and contrasted with narratives that focused on white abolitionists. While it praised many white "Aiders and Advisers of the Road," it emphasized the actions of African Americans. The book appeared at a moment when the nation was becoming fatigued with Reconstruction, white Redeemers were reclaiming political, social, and economic dominance in the South, and both Union and Confederate veterans were memorializing the war in ways to reconcile the two antagonists. White southern Democrats promoted the defense of "states' rights" as the cause of the war, and slavery was being written out of the country's memory. Thus Still's accomplishment in showing the brutality of slavery, the ways it had severed families, the vigorous and brave actions taken by freedom seekers, and the

<sup>16</sup> Boyd, "Life of William Still," xlvii.

<sup>17</sup> Wm Still to Caddy [daughter Caroline], August 13, 1867, William Still: An African American Abolitionist, accessed 3 October 2017, <http://stillfamily.library.temple.edu/stillfamily/items/show/204>

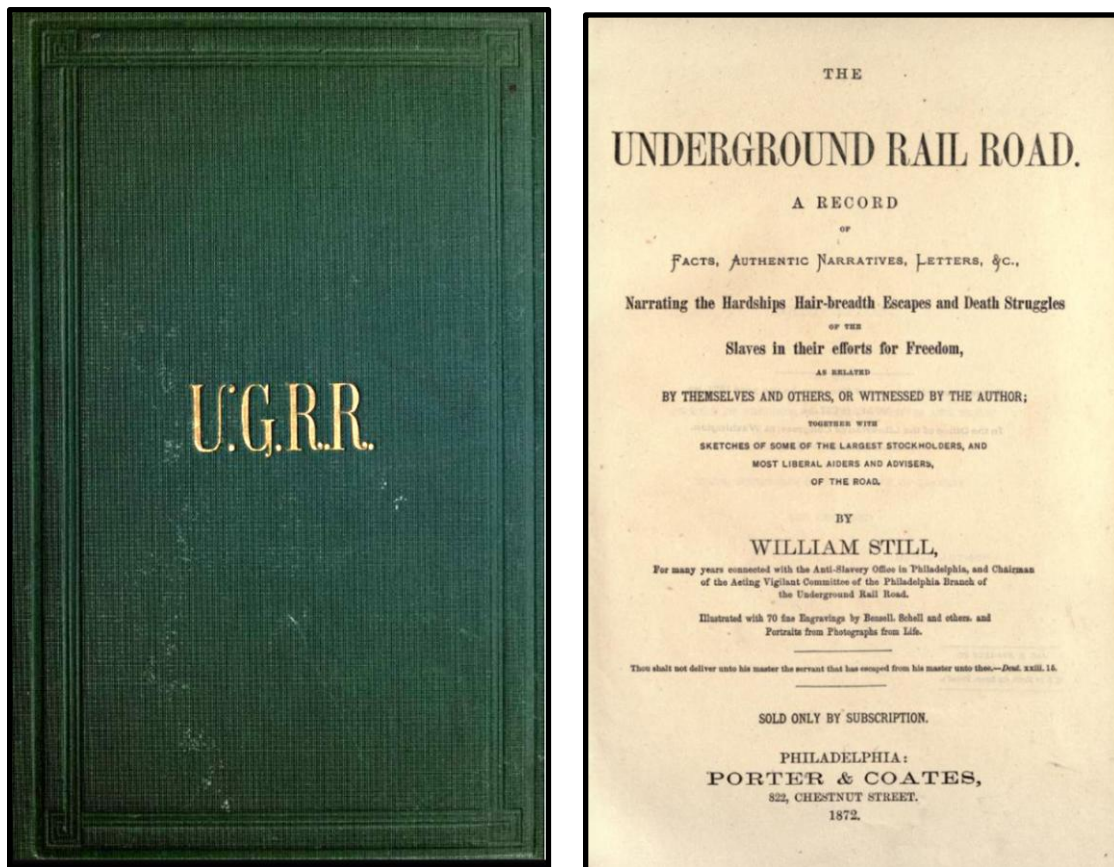
<sup>18</sup> Boyd, "Life of William Still," xxxiv; Still, *The Underground Rail Road*; Diane D. Turner, "William Still's National Significance," in <http://stillfamily.library.temple.edu/stillfamily/exhibits/show/william-still/historical-perspective/william-still---s-national-sig>.

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successful lives they had established (through letters sent to Still from their new homes) underscored African Americans' claims to the nation's history.<sup>19</sup>

Still worked tirelessly to get his *Underground Rail Road* printed, distributed, endorsed, reviewed, and sold. According to historian Stephen Hall, Still's marketing plan showed "sophistication" gleaned from his business experience.<sup>20</sup> He singlehandedly organized commission agents throughout the nation to hawk the work, and encouraged them when book sales lagged in the depression of 1873. He promoted the book on the lecture circuit. His sales goals were ambitious (50,000 as his target), but the stories riveting. The book was displayed at Philadelphia's Centennial Exhibition and appeared in subsequent editions. As an author, entrepreneur, and civil rights activist, Still succeeded in getting compelling narratives of brutality, desperation, flight, and (often) freedom to an eager American audience.<sup>21</sup>



William Still's seminal work *The Underground Rail Road*, 1872. Source: Internet Archive.

<sup>19</sup> Julie Roy Jeffrey, *Abolitionists Remember: Antislavery Autobiographies and the Unfinished Work of Emancipation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 61; Hall, "To Render the Private Public"; David Blight, *Race and Reunion: the Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001).

<sup>20</sup> Hall, "To Render the Private Public," 46.

<sup>21</sup> Hall, "To Render the Private Public," 54.

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Even while Still continued to promote his *Underground Rail Road*, he served in a number of positions to advance the African American community. In 1888, he was President of the Berean Building and Loan Association. The next year, he traveled to Tennessee as Pennsylvania's delegate to the Nashville Convention of Colored Men. He also served in executive positions for the Home for Aged and Infirm Colored Persons, where he was president between 1887 and 1901.<sup>22</sup> William Still died in 1902.

William and Letitia Still raised four children. Caroline, Frances Ellen (named after the contemporary African American poet, author, abolitionist and friend Frances Ellen Watkins Harper), William Wilberforce (after the British activist who fought to end the slave trade), and Robert George. Caroline received a medical degree from the Woman's Medical College of Philadelphia, and went on to work as a community and social reformer.<sup>23</sup>



Detail of subject property in photograph of the Samuel J. Randall Public School, originally the Institute for Colored Youth, in 1912. Source: Franklin Davenport Edmunds Glass Plate Negatives Collection, Free Library of Philadelphia.

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<sup>22</sup> Hall, "To Render the Private Public," 54; Aslaku Berhanu, "The Home for the Aged and Infirm Colored Persons," William Still: An African American Abolitionist, accessed 3 October 2017, <http://stillfamily.library.temple.edu/stillfamily/exhibits/show/william-still/people-and-places/home-for-the-aged-and-infirm-c>.

<sup>23</sup> Berhanu, "Biography of Caroline Still Anderson."

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**CRITERIA A & J.** The William & Letitia Still House & Underground Railroad Way Station represents an important aspect of the abolitionist movement and the Underground Railroad in Philadelphia, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and in the United States. Furthermore, the building served as a critical way station for fugitive enslaved people who arrived and passed through Philadelphia, representing a hugely significant aspect of the political and historical heritage of Philadelphia when it was a hotbed of Underground Railroad activity. Two buildings within the dense sections of Philadelphia were critical venues for the work of William Still and the Vigilance Committee in the early 1850s—the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society at 105 N. Fifth Street (just above Arch Street), and William Still’s residence. The former was demolished; however, the latter, the subject building, stands as the primary representative of William Still’s significant contributions to the Underground Railroad. Because the subject building was a residence, both William and Letitia Still put their lives and livelihoods at risk helping and harboring fugitive enslaved people. Furthermore, the Stills healed, and fed many freedom seekers in this building.

Harriet Tubman Dec. 29/54  
 Arrived. John Chase (now Dan. Lloyd), Benj. Ross (now Jas. Stewart), Henry Ross (now Levin Stewart), Peter Jackson (now Stanch Tilghman), Jane Kane (now Catherine K.), Robert Ross  
 John is 20 Yrs of age, Chesnut Colon, Hair black, Smart

William Still’s entry in Journal C of Station No. 2 for Harriet Tubman’s arrival in Philadelphia on December 29, 1854. Source: Journal C of Station No. 2 of the Underground Railroad, 1854–57, HSP.



It is clear that William Still had very limited boundaries between his professional and private life even at his home in Ronaldson Street. And in many cases, it was likely inside the subject building that Still's recorded biographical information and the significant stories of those he welcomed to Philadelphia. Creating "Journal C of Station No. 2 of the Underground Railroad, 1852-1857" (see above illustration) introduced a much greater risk for Still, as it was documentary evidence of his violation of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. Yet this did not restrain his heroic and significant decision to make this record, which not only tells the stories that would otherwise be lost, but also allows one to estimate the number of fugitives assisted each month between late 1852 and 1857. Between December 1852 and December 1855, for instance, the journal reflects that 238 fugitive enslaved people passed through Philadelphia; many of these men and women were housed in the subject building.<sup>24</sup>

Fugitive Enslaved Recorded in William Still's Journal C of Station No. 2 at Philadelphia														
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total	
1852												1	1	
1853	3	2	3	9	1		3	4	3	6	11	9	54	
1854	2	5	12	16	18	7	2	7	8	9	11	12	109	
1855	15	4	6	1	2	22	2	22	13	10	33	6	74	
1856	20	1	23	10	17	13	29	10	24	12	19	2	180	
1857	2	3											5	
	<b>42</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>485</b>	<b>Total</b>

Source: Journal C of Station No. 2 of the Underground Railroad, 1854–57, HSP.

### Historical Context: The Underground Railroad in Philadelphia

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Philadelphia became the center of anti-slavery activity, of which the Underground Railroad was one part. In fact, the first abolitionist society in the United States, the Society for the Relief of Free Negroes (later the Pennsylvania Abolition Society), was founded in Philadelphia in 1775. It focused on preventing "unscrupulous persons" from attempting to "claim as slaves people who were free under the law." This was necessary work, even after the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania abolished slavery (for most, but not all enslaved persons) on March 30, 1780.

The Underground Railroad originated around 1804. States that were "close to either Canada or the Southern regions... established [its] most successful operations." By 1860, nearly nine thousand slaves passed through Philadelphia (including those who settled in the city) in pursuit of freedom.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Journal C of Station No. 2 of the Underground Railroad, 1854–57, HSP

<sup>25</sup> Nilgun Anadolu Okur, "Underground Railroad in Philadelphia, 1830–1860," *Journal of Black Studies* 24 (1995): 537–57.

According to historian Nilgun Anadolu Okur, the Underground Railroad functioned in the following way:

The “railroad” was made up of a loosely knit network of stations, located at points a day’s journey apart, to which a runaway would be brought by a “conductor.” Conductors, sometimes referred to as pilots, were the men and women who often went to the heart of Southern territories and helped the fugitives to escape by leading them along secret routes to freedom. Along these routes were the houses or places of friendship, known as “stations” or “depots,” and the men and women who ran them were known as “station masters.” Without having a formal organization, leadership in the Underground Railroad was reached by individual performance and example, not by election or appointment. The conductors had to conceal their identities; they were unknown except by those in need of their help.<sup>26</sup>

The Underground Railroad encompassed “highly organized” efforts, yet its activities were “sometimes spontaneous,” as the National Park Service has asserted. Moreover,

[w]hile most runaways began their journey unaided and many completed their self-emancipation without assistance, each decade in which slavery was legal in the United States saw an increase in public perception of a secretive network and in the number of persons willing to give aid to runaways.<sup>27</sup>

Philadelphia’s place in the anti-slavery movement – as its birthplace and center – can be attributed to the fact that Philadelphia was “the antebellum ‘capital’ of the largest and wealthiest northern Black community.”<sup>28</sup> By 1830, Pennsylvania was home to 38,000 African American residents and Philadelphia County was home to 15,000. By 1860, Philadelphia’s African American population grew to 22,185, making it the largest concentration of free African Americans in the North, a position it held since 1790.<sup>29</sup> This was, in large part, due to the Quakers’ early welcoming presence. By the early nineteenth century, the Quakers vehemently opposed the practice of slavery and tirelessly worked to end it. The formation of strong African American institutions, moreover, made Philadelphians a vibrant force in abolitionism.

That cooperation between Quakers and African Americans was evident in the Underground Railroad, which, according to Okur, “was operated by interracial groups under the direction of an efficient “vigilance committee.”

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<sup>26</sup> Okur, “Underground Railroad in Philadelphia,” 45–46.

<sup>27</sup> National Park Service, “Aboard the Underground Railroad: A National Register Travel History,” accessed December 2, 2017, <https://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/underground/ugrrhome.htm>

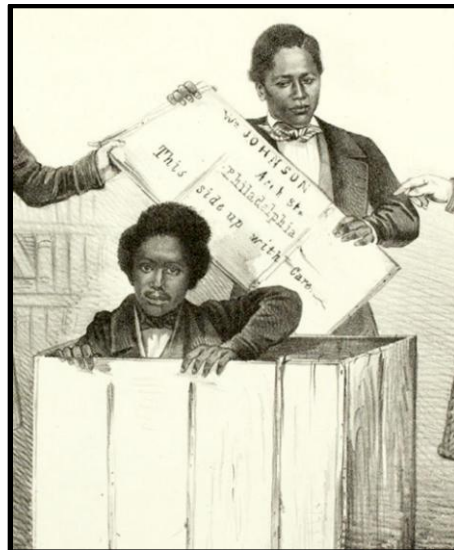
<sup>28</sup> Okur, “Underground Railroad in Philadelphia,” 540.

<sup>29</sup> Campbell Gibson and Kay Jung, “Historical Census Statistics On Population Totals By Race, 1790 to 1990, and By Hispanic Origin, 1970 to 1990, For Large Cities And Other Urban Places In The United States,” Population Division Working Paper No. 76, U.S. Census Bureau, February 2005.

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After the Underground Railroad secured the flight of the fugitive, the vigilance committee helped him or her get established in the new location – finding a home and a job – and protected the fugitive while doing so. The corresponding secretary of the Philadelphia committee was William Still, and he was among the city’s leading African American men along with James Forten and Robert Purvis.

Philadelphia formed its first vigilance committee in 1837, known as the Vigilant Association of Philadelphia, largely through the efforts 27-year-old Purvis (1810–1898). It was a fairly successful group drawing in a wide variety of black and white Abolitionists, including many Quakers (such as Germantowner Ellwood Johnson (1823–1907) of the Johnson House). The Association, however, operated under difficult circumstances in Philadelphia owing to the virulent anti-abolitionist and pro-slavery sentiments of a large portion of the population. A series of race riots in the 1840s hampered the efforts of the group and forced its operations to become less public. It was reinvigorated around 1850 as the Vigilance Committee. As of 1852, William Still was a key member. The Vigilance Committee was in many ways a much more effective organization than the former Association because it was very adept at publicizing its activities in Abolitionist newspapers throughout the country. Members also participated in lectures tours throughout the North and even Great Britain, promoting their work by telling stories of those people they rescued. Their efforts even extended to correspondence with anti-slavery groups in Scotland, who sent them money.<sup>30</sup>



William Still assisting with the rescue of Henry “Box” Brown in 1849 at the offices of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society office on N. 5<sup>th</sup> Street (demolished) from an accurate lithograph of the event. Source: Peter Kramer, *The resurrection of Henry Box Brown at Philadelphia: Who escaped from Richmond Va. in a box 3 feet long 2 1/2 ft. deep and 2ft. wide* (Philadelphia, 1850). Courtesy of the Library Company of Philadelphia.

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<sup>30</sup> Joseph A. Boromé, “The Vigilant Committee of Philadelphia,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 92 (1968): 320–51; Varon, “ ‘Beautiful Providences:’ William Still,” 229–45.

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William Still refused to define or summarize his activities, as he believed that the hundreds of stories he had transcribed spoke for themselves, and that any definition he could provide would be based on his experience alone and would not encompass the full breadth of the “movement” or “enterprise.” “Movement” and “enterprise” are the terms that he used to describe his activities. For this reason, the Underground Railroad – within the context of Philadelphia – is often described in terms of its key figures and “stations.”

### **Historical Context: William Still’s Ronaldson Street**

In the mid-nineteenth century, Philadelphia’s African American community clustered along South Street. William Still described the neighborhood in 1859 as composed of:

... neat and genteely furnished three story brick houses, owned, occupied and paid taxes for, almost entirely by colored people—on Rodman street, Ronaldson street and Washington street; ... observe the extent of valuable property owned on South and Lombard streets (in the most respectable part of those streets;) ....

...[M]y own immediate neighborhood ... is on South street, between Eighth and Ninth streets. Just in the square, there are six or seven stores—five of furniture, stoves, &c., one confectionery, and one small trimming store. I am sure these places are neatly and well kept, are well stocked generally, and these owners are active, intelligent and sober business men.<sup>31</sup>

Ronaldson Street, after 1897 South Delhi Street, was in the center of this community. The street’s prominence in the African American community came about in the 1840s.

Ronaldson Street was created in 1841 when Quaker merchant Isaac Starr (1798–1877) entered into a development agreement with lumber merchants and brothers-in-law Hugh Stevenson (1809–1893) and William Maris, Jr. (1814–1894). The lumber merchants were to lay out the street and turn Starr’s original property into 24 lots – 16 on Ronaldson Street and 8 on South and Shippen (now Bainbridge) Streets. Starr sold all but two of the lots to Stevenson and Maris on ground rent with the stipulation that they build “a good and Substantial Brick Dwelling House at least three Stories high” on each of the 22 lots within four years.<sup>32</sup> The development proved to be too ambitious for Stevenson and Maris. In three years they were only able to build five houses on Ronaldson Street and had to return all the undeveloped lots to Starr.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Letter to the editor of the *North American and U.S. Gazette*, August 30, 1859, reprinted in *Friends’ Intelligencer* 16 (1859): 457–59.

<sup>32</sup> Articles of Agreement between Isaac Starr, of the city, merchant, and Hugh Stevenson and William Maris, Jr., of the city, lumber merchants, 26 May 1841, Philadelphia Deed Book (hereafter PDBk) G.S., No. 27, p. 283, City Archives of Philadelphia. Starr acquired the larger lot in 1835 (Deed: The Roman Catholic Society of Saint Joseph for Educating and Maintaining Poor Orphan Children to Isaac Starr, of the city, merchant, 23 February 1835, for \$9,000, PDBk A.M., No. 52, p. 654.) All subsequent Deed references are to the City Archives of Philadelphia records.

<sup>33</sup> Deed Poll: Hugh Stevenson and William Maris, Jr., to Isaac Starr, 3 August 1844, PDBk R.L.L., No. 24, p. 395; Deed: Hugh Stevenson and Elizabeth, his wife, to Isaac Starr, 3 August 1844, PDBk R.L.L., No. 24, William & Letitia Still House, Underground Railroad Way Station, 625 S. Delhi Street, Philadelphia Nomination to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, December 2017–Page 19



Isaac Starr decided to sell off the remaining Ronaldson Street lots in 1847 on ground rent with the same building requirements. Though he sold the largest number to white men in the local building trades, five lots on the east side of Ronaldson Street (now 611 to 619 S. Delhi St.) were sold to African Americans. The purchasers included a pastry cook, Ann James (d. 1854), a shoemaker, Henry C. Cornish (b. ca. 1815), and three waiters, Jacob Reed (b. ca. 1813), Johnston Vanorkey/Vararkey (b. ca. 1803), and Samuel Roberts (1798–1868).<sup>34</sup> The white builders who purchased Starr's other lots in turn sold the majority of their lots with new houses to African Americans in 1847 and 1848.<sup>35</sup>

The subject property was part of a large lot extending to Bainbridge Street that plasterer Peter Glasgow purchased from Starr in 1847. Glasgow immediately built six houses on the lot and sold the three Ronaldson Street houses to African Americans: 621 to a tailor, Robert Douglass (b. ca. 1820); 623 to a tailor, Nicholas Green Bolivar (ca. 1826–1854); and 625 to Frank Williams.<sup>36</sup>

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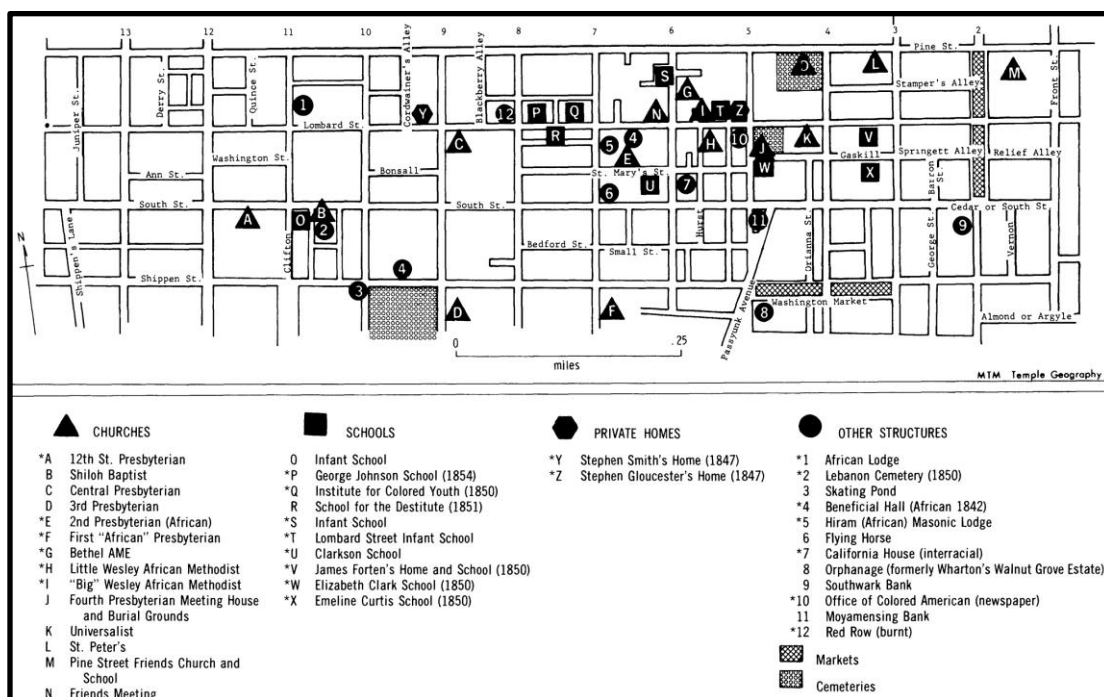
pp. 367–80; Deed: William Maris, Jr., and Margaret, his wife, to Isaac Starr, 3 August 1844, PDBk R.L.L., No. 24, pp. 282–93. The five lots that were improved were 606, 608, 610, 612 and 609 S. Delhi St.

<sup>34</sup> 611 – Deed: Isaac Starr, of the city, merchant, and Lydia, his wife, to Henry C. Cornish, of the city, shoemaker, 12 June 1847, PDBk A.W.M., No. 38, p. 537; 615 – Deed: Isaac Starr, of the city, merchant, and Lydia, his wife, to Jacob Reed, of Moyamensing Township, waiter, 12 June 1847, PDBk A.W.M., No. 38, p. 535; 617 – Deed: Isaac Starr, of the city, merchant, and Lydia, his wife, to Johnston Vanorkey, of the city, waiter, 2 August 1847, PDBk A.W.M., No. 43, p. 14. African American identification is based on listings in census records and city directories (such as the 1860 directory which notes African Americans).

<sup>35</sup> 616 was sold to Lydia Duffin (ca. 1787–1871) (Deed: Marmaduke L. Burr, of the city, gentleman, to Lydia Duffins, of the city, 28 Sept 1848, for \$1,200, PDBk J.A.H., No. 172, p. 445) and 620–24 was sold to Jane M. (Young) Savage Durham (1811–1886) (Deed: Edmund Weatherby, of the city, bricklayer, and Rebecca R., his wife, to Francis Hopkinson, of the city, trustee for Jane M. Durham, late wife of John M. Savage, now of Jeremiah Durham, 31 January 1849, PDBk G.W.C., No. 7, p.267); and the lots sold by Peter Glasgow (see below).

<sup>36</sup> Deed: Peter Glasgow, of Moyamensing Township, plasterer, and Elizabeth F., his wife, to Robert Douglass, of the city, tailor, 22 June 1848, for \$1,200, PDBk A.W.M., No. 85, p. 341; Deed: Peter Glasgow, of Moyamensing Township, plasterer, and Elizabeth F., his wife, to Nicholas G. Bolivar, of the same, tailor, 2 December 1848, for \$1,200, PDBk G.W.C. No. 5, p. 23; Deed: Peter Glasgow, of Moyamensing Township, plasterer, and Elizabeth, his wife, to Frank Williams, formerly of Augusta, Georgia, now of Philadelphia, 18 August 1848, for \$1,200, PDBk A.W.M., No. 80, p.103.

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Map of Major Institutions in Philadelphia's African American Neighborhood, 1800–1860. Source: Emma Jones Lapsansky, " 'Since They Got Those Separate Churches:' Afro-Americans and Racism in Jacksonian Philadelphia," *American Quarterly* 32 (1980): 59.

Though the first houses built on Ronaldson Street were all owned by whites, the renters of these homes were predominately if not all African American.<sup>37</sup> This pattern persisted into the early twentieth century. The first residents were relatively prosperous in comparison to most African American Philadelphians at the time. They included community leaders such as Rev. Benjamin Franklin Templeton (ca. 1808–1854) of the Second African Presbyterian Church, Rev. Jeremiah Durham (1797–1857), and medical doctor Harry/Henry Lundy (1802–1867).<sup>38</sup> There was a mix between property owner residents and renters. During the period that the Stills lived on this street, close to 80% of the properties were owned by African Americans.<sup>39</sup> A number of the African American

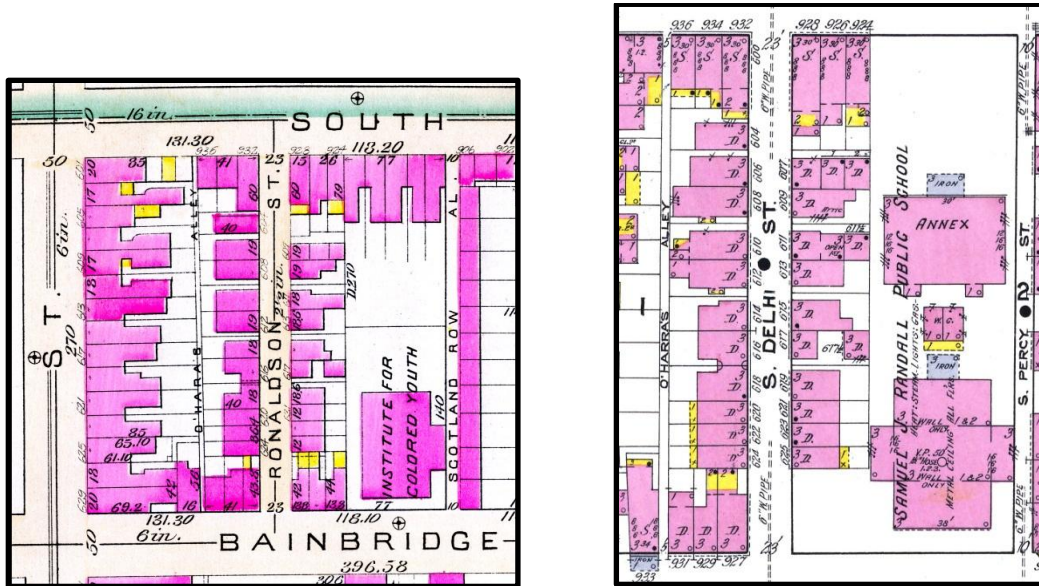
<sup>37</sup> The 1847 Quaker census of African Americans has 13 entries for Ronaldson Street (Ancestry.com, *Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, African-American Census, 1847*, pp. 22–23, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College).

<sup>38</sup> Templeton is listed in the city directories at 5 [now 611] Ronaldson from the late 1840s to 1851 and Durham also around the same period but with no house number. In the 1860s, Henry Lundy lived in a "neat little house in Ronaldson street" at 615 Ronaldson (*Christian Recorder*, November 4, 1865; Deed: Jacob Reed, of Camden, NJ, waiter, and Euphemia, his wife, to Harry Lundy, Doctor of Medicine, city, 8 February 1859, for \$1,500, PDBk A.D.B., No. 53, p.47).

<sup>39</sup> These were: 609 and 611 owned by Ann James (PDBk A.W.M., No. 27, p. 257; T.H., No. 90, p. 37); 613 owned by John Coalegate (PDBk D.H.L., No. 73, p. 62); 615 owned by Jacob Reed; 617 owned by Johnston Vanorkey; 619 owned by Samuel Roberts; 621 owned by Robert Douglass; Ann McCants and Eli Hopkins (PDBk A.W.M., No. 85, p. 341; T.H. No. 53, p. 562; T.H. No. 152, p. 560); 623 owned by Nicholas Green Boliver and Elizabeth Henderson (PDBk G.W.C., No. 69, p. 170); 625 owned by Frank Williams and Sarah S. Hawkins; 606 owned by Elizabeth Savage (PDBk R.L.L., No. 38, p. 32); 612 owned by Elizabeth Arney (PDBk A.D.B., No. 41, p. 125); 616 owned by Lydia Duffin; 620–24 owned by Jane M. (Young) Savage Durham.

owners held these houses as investment properties, which they rented to the other African Americans.

The near majority African American presence on Ronaldson Street made it a perfect setting to help those escaping slavery because it allowed them to blend in with the local population. Aside from the many people who passed through the Still's home, at least one of Still's neighbors also assisted those seeking freedom. Ann Laws, who rented 20 Ronaldson Street (622 S. Delhi St.) was paid by the Vigilance Committee of Philadelphia multiple times beginning in 1856 for boarding freedom seekers.<sup>40</sup>



Left: 1887 Bromley Atlas of Philadelphia, plate B. NB: There is typographical error in the addresses. “631” should read “621.” Right: 1917 Sanborn Insurance Map of Philadelphia, vol. 5, sheet 404.

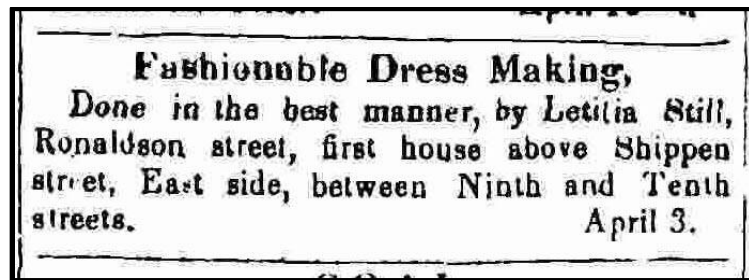
The house that served as a home for William and Letitia Still and a way station on the Underground Railroad was owned by an African American, Frank Williams (ca. 1807–1859). Williams purchased the house in August 1848.<sup>41</sup> He and his family had recently arrived in Philadelphia from Augusta, Georgia, but probably lived in the Ronaldson Street house for only about a year before he rented it to the Stills in 1850.<sup>42</sup> Williams and

<sup>40</sup> William Still, *The Underground Rail Road: A Record of Facts, Authentic Narratives, Letters &c* (Philadelphia: Porter & Coates, 1872), 219; Journal C of Station No. 2 of the Underground Railroad, 1854–57, pp 34, 35, 53, 64, Pennsylvania Abolition Society Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Laws appears in the city directories on Ronaldson Street in 1854 and remained there as late as 1860.

<sup>41</sup> Deed: Peter Glasgow, of Moyamensing Township, plasterer, and Elizabeth, his wife, to Frank Williams, formerly of Augusta, Georgia, now of Philadelphia, 18 August 1848, for \$1,200, PDBK A.W.M., No. 80, p.103. Williams' occupation is listed in other sources as grocer, dealer and furniture dealer.

<sup>42</sup> Only the 1849 city directory lists Williams on Ronaldson Street (*McElroy's Philadelphia Directory for 1849* [Philadelphia: Edward C. & John Biddle, 1849]). The Williams appear in the Locust Ward of the City of Philadelphia in the 1850 Census (Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, National Archives Microfilm Publication M432, Records of the Bureau of the Census, Record Group 29, National Archives, City of Philadelphia, Philadelphia County, p. 238). Williams' last home was at 1434 South Street which he purchased in 1855 (Deed: John O'Neill to Frank Williams, 4 May 1855, PDBk R.D.W., No. 24, p. 252). Though Williams appears to have been unable to write his name, he did manage to have connections with

his wife sold the house to Sarah Shorter Hawkins (ca. 1800–1880) in June of 1855.<sup>43</sup> Though she was married to mariner William H. Hawkins, Sarah acquired the property with her own money as an investment. Hawkins lived in and ran a grocery store at 615 (old no. 181) Lombard Street.<sup>44</sup> Hawkins held on to the property until 1870 when she sold it to another African American small business person, Morris Brown, Jr. (ca. 1812–1890), a shoemaker and son of the A.M.E. Church founder Morris Brown, Sr. (1770–1849). The house remained in the hands of the Brown family as a rental property until 1920.<sup>45</sup>



Advertisement showing location of the Still's home on Ronaldson Street,  
Source: *Pennsylvania Freeman*, April 24, 1851.

The Stills first appear on Ronaldson Street in the subject property in 1850. The move was a step up from their previous home in the rear of 22 Washington Street (present-day 1128 Rodman Street).<sup>46</sup> The 1850 city directory and 1850 census list them on Ronaldson Street.<sup>47</sup> The fact that no house number appears in William Still's listings in the directories from 1850 to 1852, and that the 1854 and 1855 directories only state William lived "one door ab[ove] Shippen" [now Bainbridge] has caused confusion for historians

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important people such as the president of the Pennsylvania Railroad, J. Edgar Thomson who, along with Jeremiah Bonsall, served as the executor of his will (Philadelphia Will Book 42, p. 428).

<sup>43</sup> Deed: Frank Williams, of the Fourth Ward of the city, second hand dealer, and Mary, his wife, to Sarah S. Hawkins, wife of William H. Hawkins, of the city, mariner, 27 June 1855, for \$1,400 (SSH's own money), PDBk R.D.W., No. 36, p. 31.

<sup>44</sup> She inherited the Lombard Street property from her father Charles Shorter, who had acquired it in 1842 (PDBk D.H.L., No. 189, p. 65).

<sup>45</sup> Deed: Sarah S. Hawkins, of Cape May City, New Jersey, (formerly of Philadelphia), to Morris Brown, Sr., city, boot and shoe maker, 18 October 1870, for \$1,350, PDBk J.A.H., No. 89, p. 160; Deed: Morris Brown, of the city, and Jane C., his wife, Charles H. Dover, of the city, and Mary V., his wife, Malcolm B. Brown, of the city, and Genevieve, his wife, to Salvatore Del Collo, of the city, and Carmela, his wife, 9 March 1920, for \$1,900, PDBk J.M.H., No. 762, p. 315. Del Collo was the first resident owner of the property since 1848 and his family remained here until 1959 (Deed: Carmello Del Collo, widow, of the city, to Joseph L. Frieson and Lillian L., his wife, of the city, 21 May 1959, for \$4,000, PDBk C.A.B., No. 1066, p. 234).

<sup>46</sup> *McElroy's Philadelphia Directory for 1849*; Ancestry.com, *Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, African-American Census, 1847*, p. 79.

<sup>47</sup> *McElroy's Philadelphia Directory for 1850* (Philadelphia: Edward C. & John Biddle, 1850); Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, National Archives Microfilm Publication M432, Records of the Bureau of the Census, Record Group 29, National Archives, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ward, Moyamensing Township, Philadelphia County, p. 448 (printed 235 verso).

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about which house the Stills actually lived in.<sup>48</sup> The key to solving this problem is an 1851 newspaper ad that Letitia Still placed in the *Pennsylvania Freeman*. The advertisement states that she lived on “Ronaldson street, first house above Shippen [now Bainbridge], East side.”<sup>49</sup> The Stills’ location at present-day 625 S. Delhi Street is confirmed by closely comparing the sequence of names in the 1850 census with the deed and directory lists for the other properties on the street.<sup>50</sup> A similar comparison of the sequence of names in the 1856 census of African Americans conducted by the Pennsylvania Abolition Society produces the same result.<sup>51</sup>

Sometime around the end of 1855 or the beginning of 1856 the Stills left the Ronaldson Street house and moved to 374 (now 832) South Street. They remained there until 1861 when Still left the employment of the Pennsylvania Abolition Society.<sup>52</sup> The Stills lived at the following addresses after 1861:

1862: 105 N 5th St. (demolished)<sup>53</sup>  
 1863 – 1866: 107 N 5th St (demolished)<sup>54</sup>  
 1867 – 1870: 413 Lombard St. (demolished)<sup>55</sup>  
 1870 – 1902: 244 S. 12th St. (demolished)<sup>56</sup>

<sup>48</sup> The 1853 directory appears to have completely skipped Ronaldson Street because there is only one entry in the entire directory for it that year. All directories referred to here are from *McElroy’s Philadelphia Directory*.

<sup>49</sup> *Pennsylvania Freeman*, April 24, 1851. The same advertisement appeared in paper on May 1, May 15, June 19, and October 2, 1851.

<sup>50</sup> The sequence in the 1850 census is in order as the census taker walked down one side of the street and up the other side. The sequence is: William Steel [Still], Henry Brown, Robert Douglas, William Lee, unoccupied house, Jacob Reed. Brown and his widow Eliza are listed in the directories at 17 and, after 1858, 623 Ronaldson Street from 1851 to 1860; Douglas owned 15 (later 621) from 1848 to 1852; Lee is listed at 13 (later 619) in 1854 to 1856 (no house number assigned for him before that); Reed owned 7 (later 617) from 1847 to 1859. NB: the 1854 directory incorrectly lists all the Ronaldson Street entries as “Ralston Street.”

<sup>51</sup> “Education and Employment Statistics of the Colored People of Philadelphia,” Pennsylvania Abolition Society Records, Ams 16, Historical Society of Pennsylvania. In this case the sequence is: William Still, Henry Brown, Amy Cornish, William Lee, and Eleanor Randolph, etc. Brown was at 17 (623) Ronaldson, Cornish was listed at 15 (621) (replaced by Eli Hopkins in 1855, the owner), Lee at 13 (619), and Randolph listed at 11 (617) from 1854 to 1856.

<sup>52</sup> The reference to his new address is found in a news item that appeared in *Frederick Douglass’ Newspaper* on November 16, 1855. There are no entries for Still in the city directories from 1856 to 1858.

<sup>53</sup> *McElroy’s Philadelphia City Directory for 1862*. This building and 107 were likely demolished shortly before the construction of the U.S. Mint here in 1968.

<sup>54</sup> *McElroy’s Philadelphia City Directory for 1863*, *McElroy’s Philadelphia City Directory for 1866*.

<sup>55</sup> *McElroy’s Philadelphia City Directory for 1867*, *Gopsill’s Philadelphia City Directory for 1870*. Still purchased this property which formerly was the home of the wealthy African American businessman Joseph Cassey (1798–1848) in 1866 at sheriff sale (Deed Poll: Henry C. Howell, sheriff, to William Still, 28 April 1866, District Court Sheriff Deed Book No. 64, p. 135; sold as the property of Alfred C. Cassey). The property included a small house at the rear – 406 Tenor Place (later Addison St) and is mentioned in James P. Boyd’s biographical sketch of Still (*Still’s Underground Rail Road* [1886], xlv–xlvii). Still sold the property in 1874 (Deed: William Still, of the city, coal dealer, and Letitia, his wife, to Rosi Nathan, of the same, soap manufacturer, 10 December 1874, for \$5,500, PDBk F.T.W. No. 244, p. 108). The house was demolished in 1964 (Philadelphia Building Permit No. 497 of 1964)

<sup>56</sup> *Gopsill’s Philadelphia City Directory for 1871*. Still purchased his property in 1870 (Deed: Benjamin S. Anderson, of Delaware Co., doctor of medicine, and Julia, his wife, to William Still, of the city, coal dealer, William & Letitia Still House, Underground Railroad Way Station, 625 S. Delhi Street, Philadelphia Nomination to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, December 2017–Page 24

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- Deed: Carmello Del Collo, widow, of the city, to Joseph L. Frieson and Lillian L., his wife, of the city, 21 May 1959, for \$4,000, PDBk C.A.B., No. 1066, p. 234.
- Deed: Peter Glasgow, of Moyamensing Township, plasterer, and Elizabeth, his wife, to Frank Williams, formerly of Augusta, Georgia, now of Philadelphia, 18 August 1848, for \$1,200, PDBK A.W.M., No. 80, p.103.
- Deed: Sarah S. Hawkins, of Cape May City, New Jersey, (formerly of Philadelphia), to Morris Brown, Sr., city, boot and shoe maker, 18 October 1870, for \$1,350, PDBk J.A.H., No. 89, p. 160.
- Deed: Frank Williams, of the Fourth Ward of the city, second hand dealer, and Mary, his wife, to Sarah S. Hawkins, wife of William H. Hawkins, of the city, mariner, 27 June 1855, for \$1,400 (SSH's own money), PDBk R.D.W., No. 36, p. 31.

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23 June 1870, for \$3,729, PDBk J.A.H., No. 56, p. 436). The Still family sold the house in 1906 (Deed: Caroline Virginia Anderson, William Wilberforce Still and Asa S., his wife, executors of the will of William Still, to Wesley R. Roe, of the city, dentist, 11 April 1906, for \$9,500, PDBk W.S.V., No. 604, p. 496). This house was demolished in 1958 (Philadelphia Building Permit No. 3560 of 1958). The Pennsylvania Historical Marker for William Still's house at this location currently stands in front of 246 S. 12<sup>th</sup> Street which is similar in appearance to what 244 S. 12<sup>th</sup> Street looked like.

William & Letitia Still House, Underground Railroad Way Station, 625 S. Delhi Street, Philadelphia  
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