

**ADDRESS: 1006 BAINBRIDGE ST**

Name of Resource: Frances Ellen Watkins Harper House

Proposed Action: Designation

Property Owner: Jay Stolzenberg

Nominator: Historical Commission staff

Staff Contact: Kim Chantry, kim.chantry@phila.gov

**OVERVIEW:** This nomination proposes to designate the property at 1006 Bainbridge Street as historic and list it on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The nomination contends that the property satisfies Criterion for Designation A, for its association with the life of Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, who owned the property from 1871 until her death in 1911. Frances E. W. Harper achieved acclaim as a reformer as well as a literary figure among African Americans. Harper's achievements as a reformer in the anti-slavery movement, women's rights movement, temperance movement, and post-Civil War civil rights movement spanned many decades and many states. Her poetry and essays were numerous and told of the Black female experience, advocating for equal rights, job opportunities, and education for the Black community.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** The staff recommends that the nomination demonstrates that the property at 1006 Bainbridge Street satisfies Criterion for Designation A.



**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 (CD, EMAIL, FLASH DRIVE)  
ELECTRONIC FILES MUST BE WORD OR WORD COMPATIBLE

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

Street address: 1006 Bainbridge Street

Postal code: 19147

**2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE**

Historic Name: Frances Ellen Watkins Harper house

Current/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: Residential

**5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

*Please attach a narrative description and site/plot plan of the resource's boundaries.*

**6. DESCRIPTION**

*Please attach a narrative description and photographs of the resource's physical appearance, site, setting, and surroundings.*

**7. SIGNIFICANCE**

*Please attach a narrative Statement of Significance citing the Criteria for Designation the resource satisfies.*

Period of Significance (from year to year): from 1871 to 1911

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration: c. 1845; 1923; 1987

Architect, engineer, and/or designer: \_\_\_\_\_

Builder, contractor, and/or artisan: \_\_\_\_\_

Original owner: \_\_\_\_\_

Other significant persons: \_\_\_\_\_

**CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION:**

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

- (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
- (j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.

**8. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

*Please attach a bibliography.*

**9. NOMINATOR**

Organization Philadelphia Historical Commission Date 18 February 2021

Name with Title Philadelphia Historical Commission staff Email Kim.Chantry@phila.gov

Street Address 1515 Arch Street, 13<sup>th</sup> Floor Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, and Postal Code Philadelphia, PA 19102

Nominator  is  is not the property owner.

**PHC USE ONLY**

Date of Receipt: 18 February 2021

Correct-Complete  Incorrect-Incomplete Date: 19 February 2021

Date of Notice Issuance: 19 March 2021

Property Owner at Time of Notice:

Name: Jay Stolzenberg

Address: 1006 Bainbridge Street

City: Philadelphia State: PA Postal Code: 19147

Date(s) Reviewed by the Committee on Historic Designation: \_\_\_\_\_

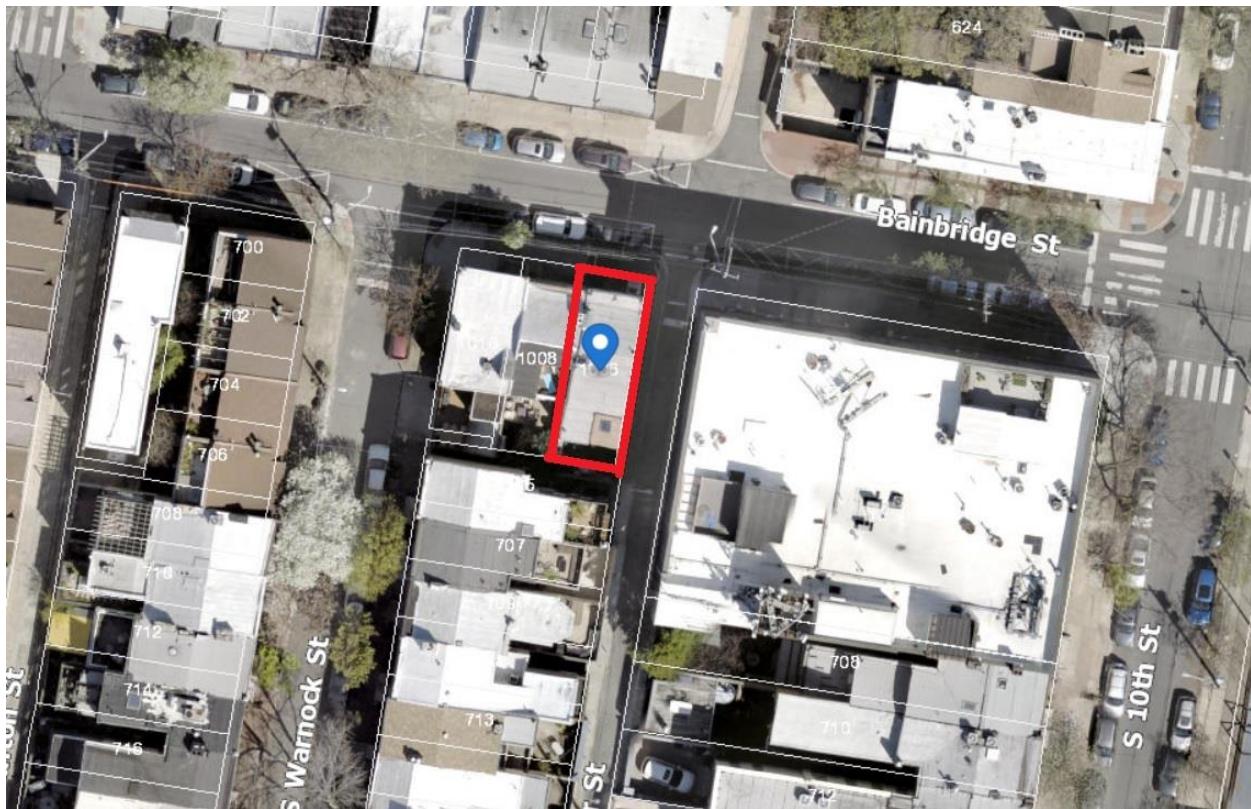
Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Final Action: \_\_\_\_\_

Designated  Rejected

12/7/18

## **5. Boundary Description – 1006 Bainbridge Street**



**Figure 1. 1006 Bainbridge Street. Base map: City Atlas**

Situate on the South side of Bainbridge Street at the distance of 34 feet Eastward from the East side of S. Warnock Street. Containing in front or breadth on said Bainbridge Street 18 feet and extending in length or depth Southward 52 feet. **Being No. 1006 Bainbridge Street.**

## **6. Physical Description – 1006 Bainbridge Street**

1006 Bainbridge Street is a three-and-one-half story pre-Civil War era corner rowhouse located on the southwest corner of Bainbridge Street and S. Alder Street in the Bella Vista neighborhood of South Philadelphia. The surrounding neighborhood consists primarily of dense red brick rowhouses dating to the mid-to-late nineteenth century.



**Figure 2. 1006 Bainbridge Spruce Street, January 2021.**

### North (Primary) Façade

The front facade of the building at 1006 Bainbridge Street is clad in red brick which dates from a 1987 restoration. Two basement windows are infilled with glass block, the westernmost opening featuring a metal door for basement access. A marble stoop leads from the red brick sidewalk to the front entrance, which features a colonial-style six-panel door with single-lite transom above. Two windows to the west of the entrance are vinyl one-over-over double-hung sash with wood brickmould and paneled shutters, with marble lintels and cast stone sills. The pairs of windows on the second and third floor match those on the first floor. A paneled wood cornice with finials tops the façade.



Figure 3. North (primary) façade of 1006 Bainbridge Street, January 2021.

### East (Side) Façade



Figure 4. East (side) façade of 1006 Bainbridge Street, January 2021.

The side of the building at 1006 Bainbridge Street runs approximately 40 feet along S. Alder Street, and exposes the slight gable of the roof. The wall of the main block is clad in stucco. A marble stoop leads from the red brick sidewalk to the side entrance, which features a colonial-style six-panel door with single-lite transom above. The door frame with stepped trim above the transom is often found on buildings of this era (Figure 5). Each floor features one double-hung window with a small window opening at the attic level. The red brick rear addition features a one-over-one double-hung window on the first and second floors, with the third floor being a covered deck.



Figure 5. Side entrance with historic door frame and transom, February 2021.

South (Rear) Façade

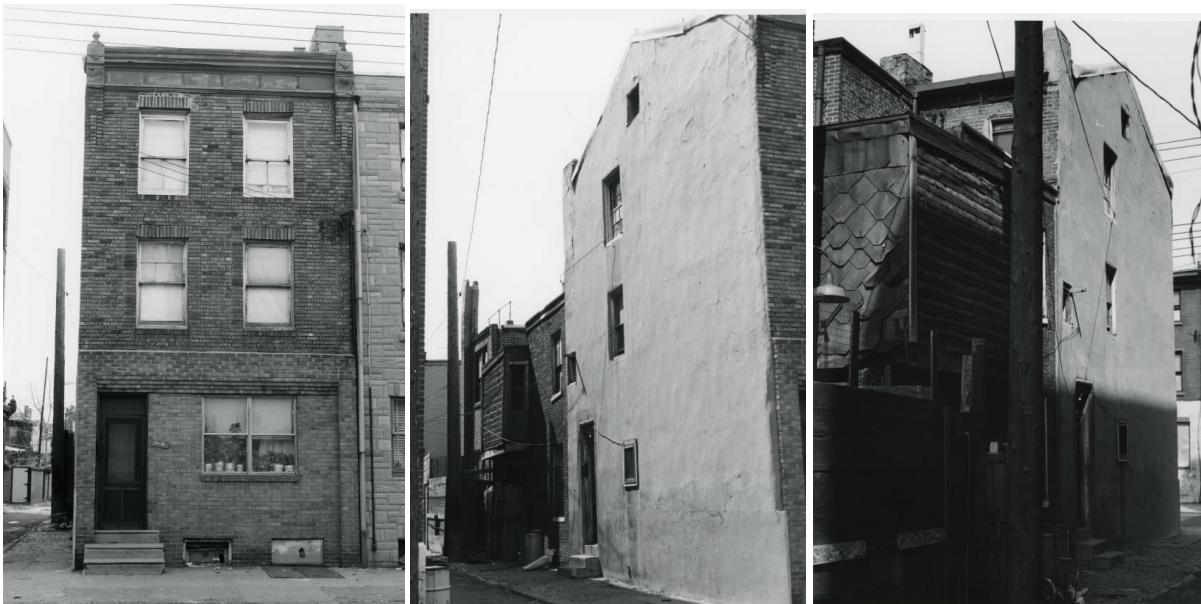


Figure 6. South (rear) façade of 1006 Bainbridge Street taken from S. Alder Street, January 2021.

The rear of 1006 Bainbridge Street is a three-story red brick rear addition with openings of various sizes. A black metal gate along S. Alder Street leads to a brick patio at the rear yard. The first floor of the rear addition has one window and provides rear door access into the building. The second floor features one window and a set of French doors leading out to a small balcony. The third floor has one very small window and a covered deck at the corner.

## ***Alterations***

The building at 1006 Bainbridge Street has undergone alterations over the years, most notably at the front façade. A 1923 building permit abstract documents the insertion of a new bulk front, stating that the building is currently vacant but that the new use will be as a store and tenement dwelling.<sup>1</sup> In 1982, the building's occupancy was reduced from five units to two units.<sup>2</sup> Photographs from 1976 (Figure 7) show that the storefront was removed. Around this time, the property owner met with the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service, Northeast Regional Office about proposed restoration work to the building and the opportunity to qualify for historic tax credits, as the building had been listed on the National Register several years earlier. The owner was advised that the cornice may be original and should remain, and that the façade could be rebuilt to a more historic appearance. The owner also intended to rebuild a collapsed rear wall, replace windows, replace stucco, and reopen historic window openings on the side wall.<sup>3</sup> In 1987, the brick front façade was removed and was rebuilt to a more historic appearance using red brick.<sup>4</sup> The existing three-story rear addition spanning the full width of the property was constructed around this time, although zoning documents do not provide an application for it. The rear addition replaced a narrower two-story rear addition, partially shown in Figure 7.



**Figure 7. Photographs from May 1976 showing the front, side, and partial rear of the building at the time of its listing as a National Historic Landmark. Source: National Register of Historic Places property photographs.**

<sup>1</sup> Building Permit Abstract, permit 1923 # 3668, April 16, 1923. Contained within the Philadelphia Historical Commission file on property.

<sup>2</sup> Application for Zoning Permit and/or Use Registration Permit, Application No. 52849, August 10, 1982.

<sup>3</sup> Meeting Report: Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service, March 16, 1981. Contained within the Philadelphia Historical Commission file on property.

<sup>4</sup> Application for Zoning Permit and/or Use Registration Permit, Application No. 125118, June 25, 1987.



**Figure 8.** Two photographs from 1983 showing the property at 1006 Bainbridge Street prior to restoration to its current appearance. Source: Philadelphia Historical Commission files.

### **Statement of Significance**

1006 Bainbridge Street is a significant historic building in Philadelphia and should be listed on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. Pursuant to Section 14-1004(1) of the Philadelphia Code, the property satisfies Criterion for Designation A, for its association with the life of Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, who owned the property from 1871 until her death in 1911. Frances E. W. Harper achieved acclaim as a reformer as well as a literary figure among African Americans. Harper's achievements as a reformer in the anti-slavery movement, in the women's rights movement, in the temperance movement, and in the post-Civil War civil rights movement spanned many decades and many states. Her poetry and essays were numerous and told of the Black female experience, addressing crucial issues of her time and anticipating the issues that were to come.

***Criterion 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.***



**Figure 9. Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission plaque located at 1006 Bainbridge Street, summarizing the significance of Frances E. W. Harper.**

### Brief Building History Prior to Harper's Ownership

The building at 1006 Bainbridge Street was constructed c. 1845 on what was then named Shippen Street. In its earliest years, the address of the property was 306 Shippen Street (Figure 10). It appears to have been renumbered in 1858 to be 1006 Shippen Street (Figure 11), and the street was renamed Bainbridge Street in 1870, resulting in the current address of 1006 Bainbridge Street.

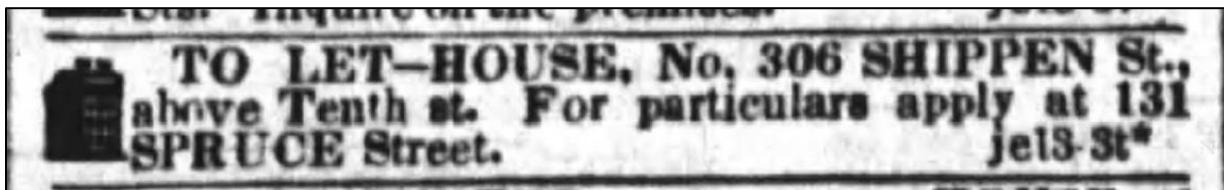


Figure 10. Newspaper advertisement from 1848 documenting original address of 306 Shippen Street. Source: *Public Ledger*, June 15, 1848, p. 4.

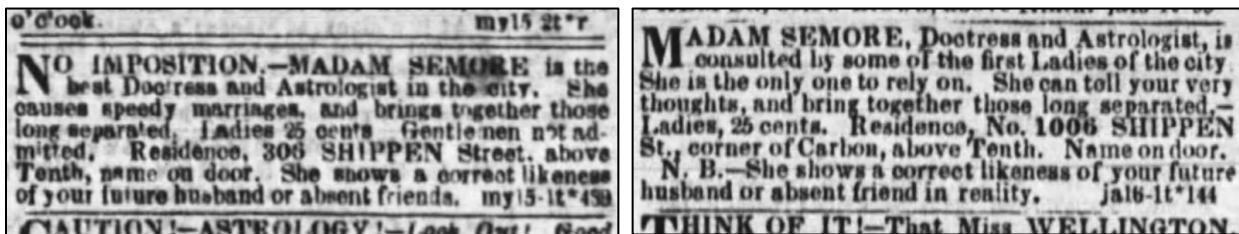


Figure 11. Newspaper advertisements from 1857 (left) and 1858 (right) for Madam Semore (Eliza Semore), indicating address numbering change. Source: *Public Ledger*, May 15, 1857, p. 3 (left); January 16, 1858, p. 3 (right).

The building was constructed as a multi-unit building, having five units at its peak with shared bathrooms, and was referred to as a tenement house in a zoning archive document. The earliest property owners included Jacob Weaver and Henry Volkmar, both grate manufacturers, and Matthew Cooper, M.D., druggist, who also lived in the building. The earliest tenants starting in 1845 included Charles Clement, bricklayer; Eliza Semore, fortune teller (Figure 11); Thomas Hargraves, laborer; and

Frederick Armstrong, dealer. John Bailey, machinist, purchased the property in 1863 and lived there while renting out rooms to other tenants.<sup>5</sup>

On September 8, 1871, John Bailey sold the property at 1006 Bainbridge Street to Frances E. W. Harper for \$2,266.67.<sup>6</sup> This begins the Period of Significance, which ends in 1911 with the passing of Harper.

Satisfying Criterion A, the property at 1006 Bainbridge Street is associated with the life of Frances Ellen Watkins Harper (1825-1911), an influential abolitionist, suffragist, reformer, poet, author, and lecturer.



MRS. F. E. W. HARPER

Figure 12. Portrait of Frances E. W. Harper, undated. Source: <http://www.blackhistoryheroes.com/2015/04/frances-ellen-watkins-harper-early.html>

<sup>5</sup> McElroy's Philadelphia city directories, years spanning 1845 through 1867.

Frances Ellen Watkins (Harper) was born to free Black parents in Baltimore, Maryland on September 24, 1825. She was orphaned by the age of three and was raised by her aunt and uncle, Henrietta and William Watkins. Her uncle William Watkins was a major influence on Harper's political, religious, and social views. William Watkins was an outspoken abolitionist, organized a Black literary society, and established his own school in 1820 called the Watkins Academy for Negro Youth. Frances Harper attended the Watkins Academy until she was thirteen years old, at which time she was expected to enter the workforce. She took a job as a nursemaid and seamstress for a white family that owned a bookshop, where she spent her free time developing her love for literature. She began to write poems, the first of which were published in abolitionist periodicals, such as *Frederick Douglass' Paper*. Harper wrote her first small volume of poetry called *Forest Leaves* by age 21.<sup>7</sup>

Harper left Maryland in 1851, at the age of 26, to become the first woman instructor at Union Seminary in Ohio. Union Seminary was a school for free Blacks. She taught domestic science for a year, and then moved on to a teaching position at a school in York, Pennsylvania. Her time in York offered her frequent opportunities of seeing passengers on the Underground Railroad.<sup>8</sup> In 1853, her home state of Maryland enacted a law that said that free Blacks living in the North were no longer allowed to enter the state of Maryland, and if found, they would be imprisoned and sold into slavery. Harper was now unable to return to her own home, and she resolved to devote her time and efforts to the antislavery cause.<sup>9</sup>

Harper moved in with William and Letitia Still in Philadelphia, who were abolitionists and friends of her uncle. The Stills were living at 625 S. Delhi Street (designated March 9, 2018 to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places), and were highly active in the Underground Railroad, with their home functioning as

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<sup>6</sup> Deed between John Bailey and Frances E. W. Harper, September 8, 1871. Deed book JAH No. 173 pages 308-10. Harper has cousins residing in Washington D.C. mentioned in her will who have the last name of Bailey, but the author was unable to determine if this John Bailey was of relation to Harper.

<sup>7</sup> Kerri Lee Alexander, "Frances Ellen Watkins Harper," National Women's History Museum, 2020, [www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/frances-ellen-watkins-harper/](http://www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/frances-ellen-watkins-harper/); "Frances Ellen Watkins Harper." Iowa State University Archives of Women's Political Communication.

<https://awpc.cattcenter.iastate.edu/directory/frances-ellen-watkins-harper/>; See <http://commonplace.online/article/lost-no-more-recovering-frances-ellen-watkins-harpers-forest-leaves/> for an account of finding a copy of *Forest Leaves*, once believed to be lost forever.

<sup>8</sup> William Still, *The Underground Rail Road: A Record of Facts, Authentic Narratives, Letters &c* (Philadelphia: Porter & Coates, 1872), 757. "Domestic Science" is otherwise described as sewing and plain serving in Melba Joyce Boyd, *Discarded Legacy: Politics and Poetics in the Life of Frances E.W. Harper, 1825-1911* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1994), 38.

<sup>9</sup> Kerri Lee Alexander, "Frances Ellen Watkins Harper," National Women's History Museum, 2020, [www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/frances-ellen-watkins-harper](http://www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/frances-ellen-watkins-harper).

an Underground Railroad way station. Thus, Harper witnessed the workings of the Underground Railroad and the movement of slaves toward freedom. William Still described Harper's stay as follows:

"She visited the Anti-Slavery Office and read Anti-Slavery documents with great avidity; in the mean time making her home at the station of the Underground Rail Road, where she frequently saw passengers and heard their melting tales of suffering and wrong, which intensely increased her sympathy in their behalf. Although anxious to enter the Anti-Slavery field as a worker, her modesty prevented her from pressing her claims; consequently as she was but little known, being a young and homeless maiden (an exile by law), no especial encouragement was tendered her by Anti-Slavery friends in Philadelphia."<sup>10</sup>

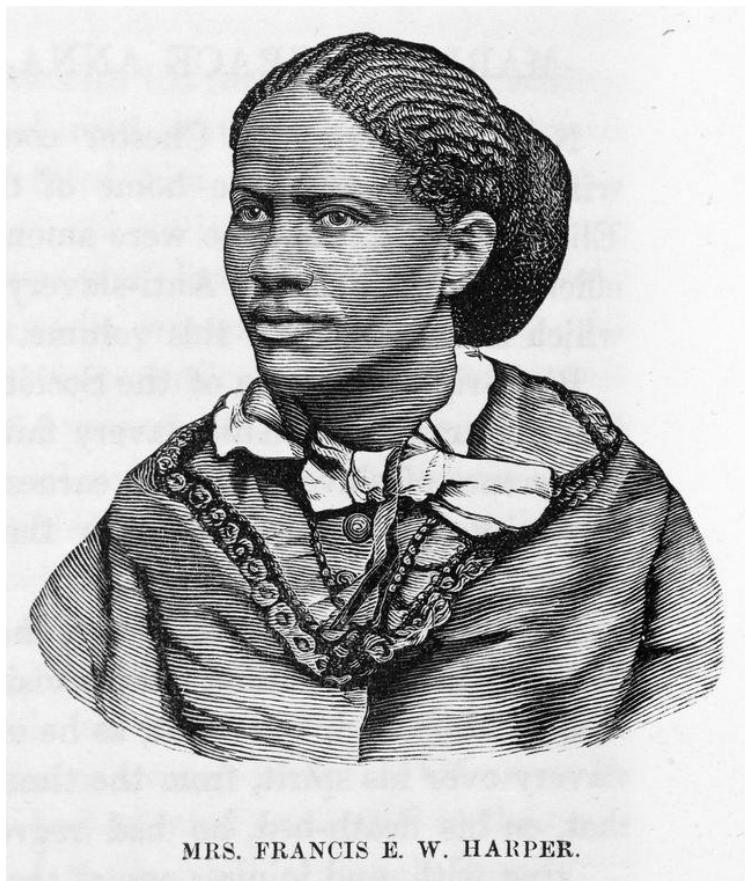


Figure 13. Portrait, "Mrs. Frances E.W. Harper," engraving taken from *The Underground Railroad: A Record of Facts, Authentic Narratives, Letters, &c.*, by William Still. (Philadelphia: Porter & Coates, 1872).<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> William Still, *The Underground Rail Road: A Record of Facts, Authentic Narratives, Letters &c* (Philadelphia: Porter & Coates, 1872), 758.

<sup>11</sup> Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library. "Earnest in the cause; Mrs. Frances E. W. Harper." New York Public Library Digital Collections. Accessed January 24, 2021. <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47df-79e4-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>

During her first stay in Philadelphia, Harper wrote poetry for antislavery newspapers, and her poem "Eliza Harris" was published in *The Liberator* and in *Frederick Douglass' Paper*. Harper had compiled her second small volume of poetry, called *Poems on Miscellaneous Subjects*, by the time she left Philadelphia in 1854.<sup>12</sup> That book sold several thousand copies over the next few years and was reprinted 20 times, and Harper donated a portion of the proceeds to the Underground Railroad cause.<sup>13</sup> The book included poems about religion, slavery, gender, temperance, and poverty, which served as a thematic basis for all subsequent poetry and prose by Harper.<sup>14</sup>

Harper traveled across the United States and Canada as a lecturer over the next eight years, starting first with Boston, then New Bedford, Massachusetts, and lecturing in the eastern states for the first year and a half, returning to Philadelphia as needed and sending monetary donations for the Underground Railroad cause while she was away. Her first speech was entitled "The Elevation and Education of our People" in 1854, which advocated for education as a means of advancement for Black Americans. After this speech, she was hired as a traveling lecturer for organizations including the Maine Anti-Slavery Society and the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society. Harper also took up the causes of women's rights and the temperance movement. She began to publish novels, short stories, and poetry on topics of racism, feminism, and classism. In 1859, her short story about women's education in the *Anglo-African Magazine* called "The Two Offers" was the first short story published by an African American woman.<sup>15</sup>

While in Ohio in 1860, Frances Watkins married Fenton Harper, a farmer and widower. She purchased a small farm in Ohio and two years later, they had their only child together, a daughter named Mary. In 1864, Fenton Harper died, and Frances Harper left Ohio and began touring again. Her speech at the 1866 National Woman's Rights Convention entitled "We Are All Bound Up Together" urged fellow attendees to include Black women in their fight for suffrage. She highlighted how Black women were facing both racism and sexism at once, and therefore the fight for women's suffrage must include suffrage for Black Americans. The following day, the American Equal Rights Association was formed at

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<sup>12</sup> Kerri Lee Alexander, "Frances Ellen Watkins Harper," National Women's History Museum, 2020, [www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/frances-ellen-watkins-harper](http://www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/frances-ellen-watkins-harper).

<sup>13</sup> "Frances Ellen Watkins Harper." Iowa State University Archives of Women's Political Communication. <https://awpc.cattcenter.iastate.edu/directory/frances-ellen-watkins-harper/>

<sup>14</sup> Melba Joyce Boyd, *Discarded Legacy: Politics and Poetics in the Life of Frances E.W. Harper, 1825-1911* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1994), 14.

<sup>15</sup> Kerri Lee Alexander, "Frances Ellen Watkins Harper," National Women's History Museum, 2020, [www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/frances-ellen-watkins-harper](http://www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/frances-ellen-watkins-harper); William Still, *The Underground Rail Road: A Record of Facts, Authentic Narratives, Letters &c* (Philadelphia: Porter & Coates, 1872), 758, 760-61.

the Convention, which was intended to advocate for suffrage for both African Americans and women. That organization soon split over the decision to support the Fifteenth Amendment, granting African American men the right to vote. Many including Harper and Frederick Douglass supported the amendment, and helped to form the American Woman Suffrage Association in 1869.<sup>16</sup> Harper used the late 1860s to travel throughout the southern states, excepting Texas and Arkansas, to deliver her message of freedom and equality to the masses.<sup>17</sup>

In addition to her general lectures, Harper ensured she held private lectures to freedwomen, described by William Still as “the objects of so much wrong and abuse under Slavery, and even since Emancipation, in a state of ignorance, not accessible always to those who would or could urge the proper kind of education respecting their morals and general improvement.”<sup>18</sup> Harper wrote to him from Greenville, Georgia in March 1870 to relay her efforts:

“But really my hands are almost constantly full of work; sometimes I speak twice a day. Part of my lectures are given privately to women, and for them I never made any charge, or take up any collection. But this part of the country reminds me of heathen ground, and though my work may not be as recognized as part of it used to be in the North, yet never perhaps were my services more needed; and according to their intelligence and means perhaps never better appreciated than here among these lowly people. I am now going to have a private meeting with the women of this place if they will come out. I am going to talk with them about their daughters, and about things connected with the welfare of the race. Now is the time for our women to begin to try to lift up their heads and plant the roots of progress under the hearthstone. Last night I spoke in a school-house, where there was not, to my knowledge, a single window glass; to-day I write to you in a lowly cabin, where the windows in the room are formed by two apertures in the wall. There is a wide-spread and almost universal appearance of poverty in this State where I have been, but thus far I have seen no, or scarcely any, pauperism. I am not sure that I have seen any. The climate is so fine, so little cold that poor people can live off of less than they can in the

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<sup>16</sup> Kerri Lee Alexander, “Frances Ellen Watkins Harper,” National Women’s History Museum, 2020, [www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/frances-ellen-watkins-harper.](http://www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/frances-ellen-watkins-harper.); William Still, *The Underground Rail Road: A Record of Facts, Authentic Narratives, Letters &c* (Philadelphia: Porter & Coates, 1872), 764.

<sup>17</sup> William Still, *The Underground Rail Road: A Record of Facts, Authentic Narratives, Letters &c* (Philadelphia: Porter & Coates, 1872), 767.

<sup>18</sup> Idem, 772.

North. Last night my table was adorned with roses, although I did not get one cent for my lecture."

"The political heavens are getting somewhat overcast. Some of this old rebel element, I think, are in favor of taking away the colored man's vote, and if he loses it now it may be generations before he gets it again. Well, after all perhaps the colored man generally is not really developed enough to value his vote and equality with other races, so he gets enough to eat and drink, and be comfortable, perhaps the loss of his vote would not be a serious grievance to many; but his children differently educated and trained by circumstances might feel political inferiority rather a bitter cup."

"After all whether they encourage or discourage me, I belong to this race, and when it is down I belong to a down race; when it is up I belong to a risen race."<sup>19</sup>

Harper returned to Philadelphia in 1871 after her many months of hard work in the South, and purchased the property at 1006 Bainbridge Street in September of that year, using it as her home when she was not traveling on the lecture circuit.<sup>20</sup> The location of her new home would have been familiar to Harper, because William Still's former home where she stayed years earlier and assisted with the Underground Railroad was just a block away. Also a block away was the Institute for Colored Youth at 915 Bainbridge Street, an institution whose mission Harper would have whole-heartedly supported. According to William Still, instead of seeking needed rest and recreation, Harper scarcely allowed a day to pass "without seeking to aid in the reformation of the outcast and degraded."<sup>21</sup>

The Philadelphia that Harper returned to must have seemed improved in a few ways since her stay with the Stills, although she would have recognized that much more work was needed. Slavery had been abolished, Blacks were now allowed to ride the city's street cars, and determined African Americans were becoming teachers, ministers, business owners, artists, musicians, doctors, and lawyers. However, the Black community still faced extreme racism, limited jobs, few educational opportunities, and inadequate housing options. White Philadelphians focused on the poverty and crime in poorer neighborhoods, and white reformers grew concerned with these conditions. In 1896, African American

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<sup>19</sup> William Still, *The Underground Rail Road: A Record of Facts, Authentic Narratives, Letters &c* (Philadelphia: Porter & Coates, 1872), 772-73.

<sup>20</sup> John Bailey to Frances E.W. Harper, deed dated September 8, 1871. JAH book no. 173, pages 308-10.

<sup>21</sup> William Still, *The Underground Rail Road: A Record of Facts, Authentic Narratives, Letters &c* (Philadelphia: Porter & Coates, 1872), 778.

sociologist W. E. B. DuBois was hired to study Philadelphia's Black community, purportedly as a means of guiding the work of white settlement workers. His findings of the city's Seventh Ward (for which Harper's home was one block south of the boundary) in *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study* described a community of diversity and advancement that was struggling to overcome systemic racism.<sup>22</sup>

Harper spent this second half of her life and career headquartered in Philadelphia and advocating for equal rights, job opportunities, and education for Black women through lecturing and writing. It was during this second-half of her career that she was co-founder and vice president of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs (1897), director of the American Association of Colored Youth, and superintendent of the Colored Sections of the Philadelphia and Pennsylvania Women's Christian Temperance Unions.<sup>23</sup> Harper also used this time to publish even more collections of poetry, including *Poems* (1871), *Sketches of Southern Life* (1872), which chronicles Reconstruction, *The Martyr of Alabama and Other Poems* (1892), *The Sparrow's Fall and Other Poems* (1894), and *Atlanta Offering* (1895). Harper published the novel *Iola Leroy or Shadows Uplifted* in 1892. *Iola Leroy* tells the story of Harper's struggles being orphaned, searching for work, and experiencing racism, and was one of the first novels published by a Black woman in the United States. The book weaved the issues of racism, sexism, and classism in ways that had not yet been recognized as intersecting issues.<sup>24</sup>

William Still concludes his 780-page book with the following powerful tribute from Grace Greenwood, in the *Philadelphia Independent*, regarding a lecture in Philadelphia from Harper:

"Next on the course was Mrs. Harper, a colored woman; about as colored as some of the Cuban belles I have met with at Saratoga. She has a noble head, this bronze muse; a strong face, with a shadowed glow upon it, indicative of thoughtful fervor, and of a nature most femininely sensitive, but not in the least morbid. Her form is delicate, her hands daintily small. She stands quietly beside her desk, and speaks without notes, with gestures few and fitting. Her manner is marked by dignity and composure. She is never assuming, never theatrical. In the first part of

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<sup>22</sup> Dana Dorman, *Philadelphia's African American Heritage: A Brief Historic Context Statement for the Preservation Alliance's Inventory of African American Historic Sites*. September 3, 2009.

<sup>23</sup> Kerri Lee Alexander, "Frances Ellen Watkins Harper," National Women's History Museum, 2020, [www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/frances-ellen-watkins-harper](http://www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/frances-ellen-watkins-harper).

<sup>24</sup> "Frances Ellen Watkins Harper." Iowa State University Archives of Women's Political Communication. <https://awpc.cattcenter.iastate.edu/directory/frances-ellen-watkins-harper/>; "Frances Ellen Watkins Harper." Poetry Foundation. <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/frances-ellen-watkins-harper>.

her lecture she was most impressive in her pleading for the race with whom her lot is cast. There was something touching in her attitude as their representative. The woe of two hundred years sighed through her tones. Every glance of her sad eyes was a mournful remonstrance against injustice and wrong. Feeling on her soul, as she must have felt it, the chilling weight of caste, she seemed to say:

‘I lift my heavy heart up solemnly,  
As once Electra her sepulchral urn.’

As I listened to her, there swept over me, in a chill wave of horror, the realization that this noble woman had she not been rescued from her mother’s condition, might have been sold on the auction-block, to the highest bidder – her intellect, fancy, eloquence, the flashing wit, that might make the delight of a Parisian saloon, and her pure, Christian character all thrown in – the recollection that women like her could be dragged out of public conveyances in our own city, or frowned out of fashionable churches by Anglo-Saxon saints.”<sup>25</sup>

Census records for the property at 1006 Bainbridge Street perhaps highlight Harper’s extensive travel schedule and her time away from home. The 1880 census record for the property shows Harper’s daughter Mary, her husband Latimer Perrnell, and their daughter residing at the property. The 1900 census record shows that a widowed Mary is renting the property with her five children. However, that same year brought the fourth reprint of Harper’s book *Poems*, where the title page lists the publisher as Frances E. W. Harper with an address of 1006 Bainbridge Street, Philadelphia.<sup>26</sup>

In 1894, Harper purchased a second rowhouse in Philadelphia, located at 775 N. 37<sup>th</sup> Street in the Mantua neighborhood of West Philadelphia, for which she paid \$1,350.<sup>27</sup> No records were located to document that Harper ever lived at this other property, but her daughter Mary was living there at the time of her death in 1908 at the age of 46.<sup>28</sup>

Perhaps owing to her health and not having her daughter available to assist her, Harper was living at 1507 Pine Street at the time that she wrote her will in 1909. She continued to rent her property at 1006

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<sup>25</sup> William Still, *The Underground Rail Road: A Record of Facts, Authentic Narratives, Letters &c* (Philadelphia: Porter & Coates, 1872), 779-80.

<sup>26</sup> Internet Archive, *Poems*, <https://archive.org/details/poems01harpg0og/page/n6/mode/2up>.

<sup>27</sup> John C. Crosin to Frances E.W. Harper, deed dated November 28, 1894. JCC book no. 16, pages 369-71.

<sup>28</sup> Certificate of Death for Mary Harper, file no. 110683. Ancestry.com. *Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, U.S., Death Certificates Index, 1803-1915* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011.

Bainbridge. The 1910 census records show that Lucinda and Henrietta Johnson, a mother and daughter from Maryland, were renting the property at that time.



Figure 14. Photograph of Frances E. W. Harper used in a 1900 reprint of *Poems*. Source: Library of Congress.<sup>29</sup>

Harper passed away in 1911 at the age of 86, after a brief illness during which time she was staying with her cousin Emily Mandrucu at 1809 Lombard Street. In her will, she left her house at 1006 Bainbridge Street to this cousin, which was valued at \$2,500. She also left her property at 775 N. 37<sup>th</sup> Street, valued at \$1,500 to Mandrucu.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Frances E.W. Harper, three-quarter length portrait, standing, facing front., 1898. Photograph. <https://www.loc.gov/item/97513270/>.

<sup>30</sup> Will of Frances E.W. Harper. No. 487, book 322, page 519, 1911; Certificate of Death for Frances E.W. Harper. File no. 19492, Registered no. 4865, 1911.

W. E. B. DuBois said the following of Harper in an editorial of the *Crisis* issue of April 1911:

"She was associated with all the great leaders of the abolitionist cause and has lectured to hundreds of audiences throughout the land. It is, however, for her attempts to forward literature among colored people that Frances Harper deserves most to be remembered."<sup>31</sup>

Harper's obituary ran in newspapers throughout the nation. Many stated that "it has been written of Mrs. Harper that she had done more for her race than any other woman."<sup>32</sup> A tribute in *The New York Age* from a member of Harper's church, First Unitarian Church of Philadelphia, speaks to her life's work (Figure 15).

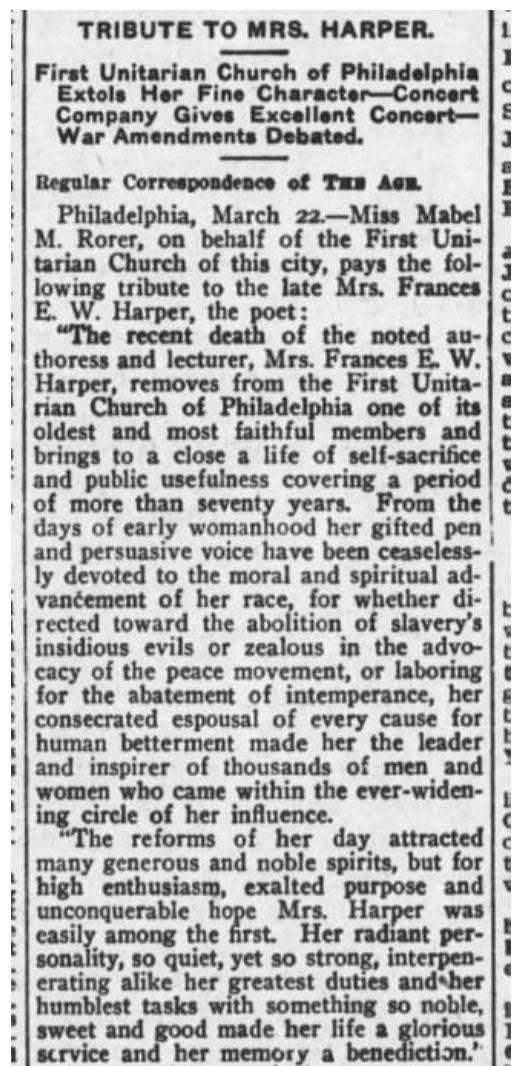


Figure 15. A tribute to Harper after her death. Source: *The New York Age*, March 23, 1911, p. 2.

<sup>31</sup> National Register of Historic Places Inventory – Nomination Form, Frances Ellen Watkins Harper House. Contained within the Philadelphia Historical Commission file on property.

<sup>32</sup> *Chattanooga Daily Times*, February 23, 1911, p. 3; *The Indianapolis Star*, February 23, 1911, p. 9, et. al.

Harper's poetry has been collected in *Complete Poems of Frances E.W. Harper* (1988, ed. Maryemma Graham), and *A Brighter Coming Day* (1990, ed. Frances Smith Foster).<sup>33</sup>

In 2020, the Commonwealth Monument Project of Harrisburg honored the Old 8<sup>th</sup> Ward, a storied Black neighborhood razed to build Pennsylvania's Capitol Park, by dedicating a new monument near the State Capitol. The monument includes four life-sized bronze statues representing legendary Pennsylvania orators who visited or resided in Harrisburg in the late 1800s: educational reformer and civil rights pioneer William Howard Day, local musician and sergeant in Company D of the 24<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Infantry Jacob T. Compton, Civil War correspondent and recruiter T. Morris Chester, and Frances Harper, who made many visits to the Old 8<sup>th</sup> Ward to give speeches (Figure 16).<sup>34</sup> The Commonwealth Monument Project facilitated the Frances Project, a Philadelphia-based celebration of Frances Harper's life and work, for which multiple events were planned for 2020, being the 150th anniversary of the 15th Amendment and 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.<sup>35</sup>



Figure 16. "A Gathering at the Crossroads" by artist Becky Ault. Showing Frances Harper and William Howard Day. Source: <https://www.facebook.com/OldEighth/>

<sup>33</sup> "Frances Ellen Watkins Harper." Poetry Foundation. <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/frances-ellen-watkins-harper>.

<sup>34</sup> Digital Harrisburg, Commonwealth Monument Project, <https://digitalharrisburg.com/commonwealth/>.

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.francesproject.org/>.

According to Melba Joyce Boyd, author of *Discarded Legacy*, when plans were made to restore Harper's home at 1006 Bainbridge Street in 1988, her poem "Bury Me In A Free Land" (below) was to be engraved on a bronze plaque and mounted next to the front door. As the "bronze muse" of the abolitionist movement, this was the most recognized of Harper's antislavery poems.<sup>36</sup> This bronze plaque appears to not have materialized, but a state historic marker dedicated in 1992 in front of the property admirably attempts the nearly impossible: summarizing Frances Ellen Watkins Harper's significance in 33 words.

#### Bury Me In A Free Land

Make me a grave where'er you will,  
In a lowly plain, or a lofty hill;  
Make it among earth's humblest graves,  
But not in a land where men are slaves.

I could not rest if around my grave  
I heard the steps of a trembling slave  
His shadow above my silent tomb  
Would make it a place of fearful gloom.

I could not rest if I heard the tread  
Of a coffle gang to the shambles led,  
And the mother's shriek of wild despair  
Rise like a curse on the trembling air.

I could not sleep if I saw the lash  
Drinking her blood at each fearful gash,  
And I saw her babes torn from her breast,  
Like trembling doves from their parent nest.

I'd shudder and start if I heard the bay  
Of bloodhounds seizing their human prey,  
And I heard the captive plead in vain  
As they bound afresh his galling chain.

If I saw young girls from their mothers' arms  
Bartered and sold for their youthful charms,  
My eye would flash with a mournful flame,  
My death-paled cheek grow red with shame.

I would sleep, dear friends, where bloated might  
Can rob no man of his dearest right

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<sup>36</sup> Melba Joyce Boyd, *Discarded Legacy: Politics and Poetics in the Life of Frances E.W. Harper, 1825-1911* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1994), 34.

My rest shall be calm in any grave  
Where none can call his brother a slave.

I ask no monument, proud and high,  
To arrest the gaze of the passers-by;  
All that my yearning spirit craves,  
Is bury me not in a land of slaves.

Frances E. W. Harper, 1858  
in *Anti-Slavery Bugle*



Figure 17. Mrs. F. E. W. Harper, Author and Lecturer, Philadelphia, Pa. Photograph taken circa 1903. Source: The New York Public Library Digital Collections.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Jean Blackwell Hutson Research and Reference Division, The New York Public Library. "Mrs. F. E. W. Harper, Author and Lecturer, Philadelphia, Pa." New York Public Library Digital Collections. Accessed January 24, 2021. <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47dd-f262-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>

In conclusion, the building at 1006 Bainbridge Street is a significant historic resource in Philadelphia and merits listing on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. Pursuant to Section 14-1004(1) of the Philadelphia Code, the property satisfies Criterion for Designation A, for its association with Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, the social activist, author, lecturer, and educator, who chose 1006 Bainbridge Street as her Philadelphia home for nearly 40 years.

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