

**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: 5401-3 Vine St

Postal code: 19139-2041

**2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE**

Historic Name: Crystal Bird Fauset 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: Part-time residence

**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 c.1933 to 1944

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration: c.1875

Architect, engineer, and/or designer: unknown

Builder, contractor, and/or artisan: unknown

Original owner: n/a

Other significant persons: Arthur Fauset; Marian Anderson

**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 Preservation Alliance for Greater Phila. Date October 18, 2022

Name with Title Justin Wilson; Derek Duquette Email patrick@preservationalliance.com

Street Address 1608 Walnut St, Suite 1702 Telephone 215-546-1146 x5

City, State, and Postal Code Philadelphia PA 19103

Nominator  is  is not the property owner.

**PHC USE ONLY**

Date of Receipt: October 18, 2022

Correct-Complete  Incorrect-Incomplete Date: December 13, 2022

Date of Notice Issuance: December 15, 2022

Property Owner at Time of Notice:

Name: UCM ENTERPRISES LLC

Address: 7039 Clover Ln

City: Upper Darby State: PA Postal Code: 19082

Date(s) Reviewed by the Committee on Historic Designation: 1/18/2023

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: 2/10/2023

Date of Final Action: 2/10/2023

Designated  Rejected

## **5. Boundary Description**

The boundary for the designation of the subject property is as follows:

“ALL THAT CERTAIN lot or piece of ground with the buildings and improvements thereon erected, SITUATE in the 4th Ward of the City of Phila., bounded and described as follow: BEGINNING at the intersection of the North line of Vine Street (80 feet wide) and the Westerly line of 54th Street (60 feet wide as laid down on the confirmed plan of that part of said City); thence extending Westwardly along the Northerly side of said Vine Street 52 feet 7 inches; thence Northwardly on a line at right angles to said Vine Street by ground now or late of Elizabeth H.L. Stout 120 feet to the Southerly side of a 4 feet wide alley; thence Eastwardly along the Southerly side of said 4 feet wide alley 16 feet 8-1/2 inches to the West side of 54th Street aforesaid; thence Southward along the West side of the same 125 feet 3 inches to the place, of beginning.”



**Figure 1.** Aerial photo of 5401-03 Vine Street, Philadelphia, PA showing the lot boundaries. Vine Street appears at the bottom of the image and 54<sup>th</sup> Street to the right. Image from Atlas.phila.gov.

## **6. Description**

In 1991, the Pennsylvania Historical and Museums Commission dedicated a Pennsylvania State Historical Marker to the Crystal Bird Fauset House. The three-story brick townhouse was built as a single home in the Victorian Italianate style at 54th and Vine Streets in the Haddington

section of West Philadelphia between 1872 and 1878. Fauset lived here with her husband, Arthur Huff Fauset, between 1933 and 1944.<sup>1</sup>

The house was built at the southwest corner of a trapezium-shaped double corner lot (5401 and 5403 Vine St.) The front entrance faces Vine Street to the south, and the porch, typically in the front, was placed on the eastern side facing 54th street. The southern face of the house, facing Vine Street, is approximately 22 feet in length, while the house extends approximately 88 feet from Vine Street north along 54th Street.<sup>2</sup> The property was large enough to include a carriage house on the narrower northern portion of the lot also facing 54th St. By 1889, a house of similar style was built in the narrow adjoining lot (5405 Vine St.) making it a twin house. The lot size was decreased to accommodate the widening of 54th Street.

The house demonstrates the typical features of the Victorian Italianate style that was popular between 1850 and 1890: flat roofs, wide cornices with single and paired decorative brackets, and narrow one over one double-hung shuttered windows with curved window caps. The entrance steps on the south side of the building are marble, typical of the Victorian Italianate style. The simple style of the brick twin features bracket detailing at the cornice line with pronounced masonry window head trim on the north side of the building. The south side also features two basement windows with identical masonry window trims.



**Figure 2.** South façade of 5401-03 Vine Street, Philadelphia, December 2022. Photo by Ted Maust.

---

<sup>1</sup> “Crystal Bird Fauset Historical Marker,” ExplorePAHistory.com, accessed April 25, 2022, <https://explorepahistory.com/hmarker.php?markerId=1-A-340>.

<sup>2</sup> City of Philadelphia Atlas, <https://atlas.phila.gov/5401-03%20VINE%ST/property>, accessed May 4, 2022.

The cornice continues to the east façade of the house. The bay window facing east was built styled with inset wooden panels, corner boards, and bracket details similar to the main roof cornice. A skirt of shaped shingles was added to update its style. The east porch that overlooks the garden would have had elaborate moldings and brackets complimenting the style of the period. Over the years, the rear decorative elements have largely been lost, either through lack of maintenance or remodeling. The lower half of the east bay window was at one point repaired with stucco but recently has had the scalloped-shaped shingles restored. A carriage house that was at the rear of the property has since been demolished and today a small garage sits at the rear of the lot.



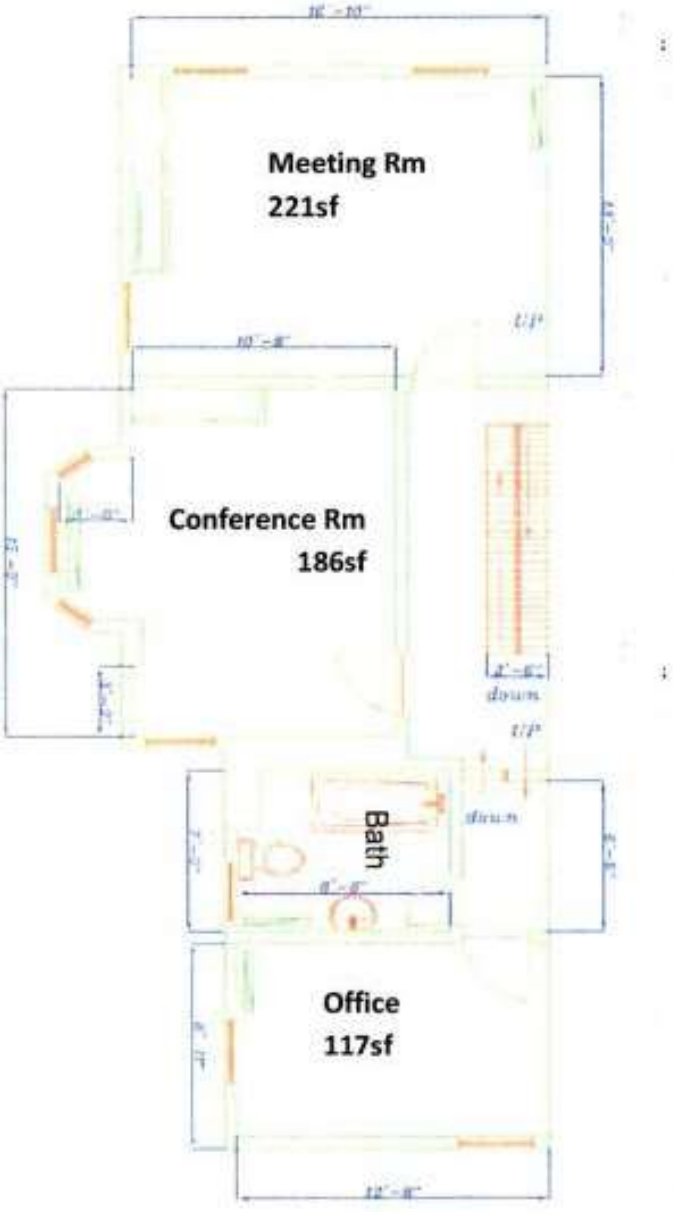
**Figure 3.** Southeast corner of 5401-03 Vine Street, Philadelphia, December 2022. Photo by Ted Maust.



**Figure 4.** Northeast corner of 5401-03 Vine Street, Philadelphia, PA. Photo by Ted Maust.

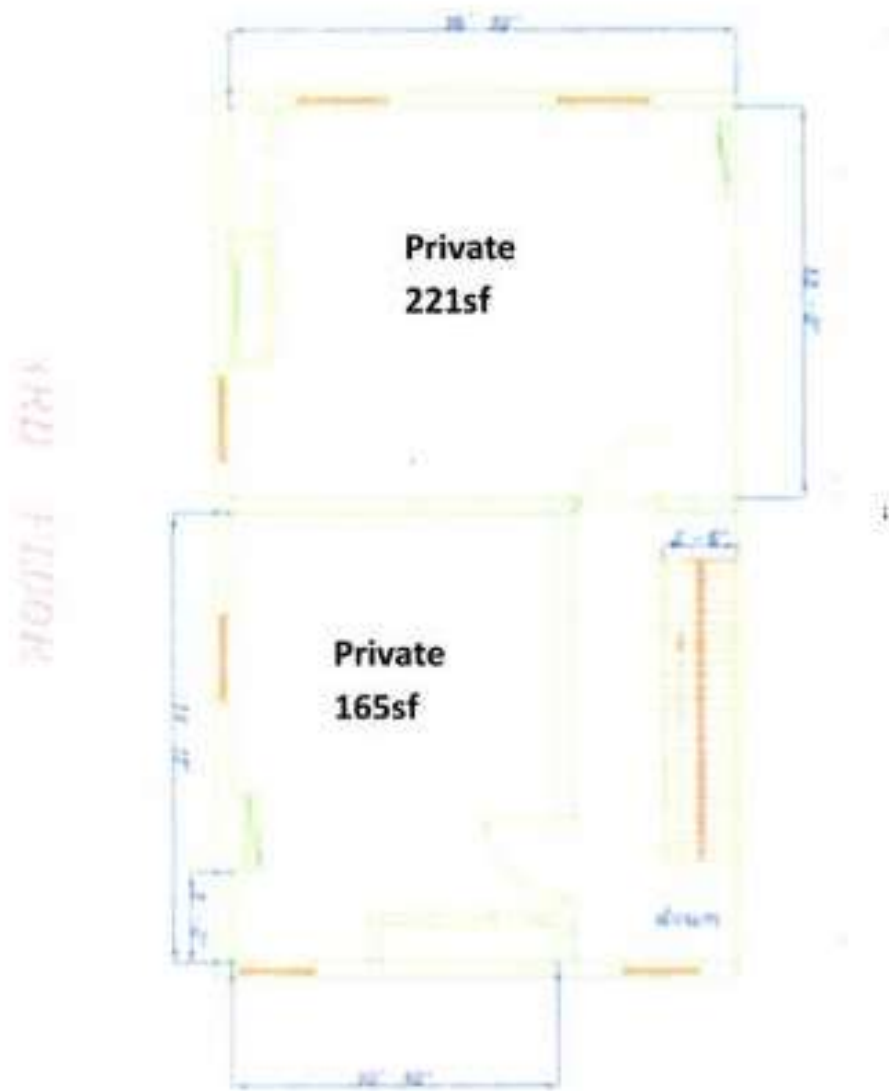


**Crystal Bird Fauset: House Interior Floor Plans**



**Figure 5.** Floor plans of 5403 Vine Street, Philadelphia, 2012. Source: Sam Lewis Personal Collection, Philadelphia, PA.





**Figure 7.** Floor plans of 5403 Vine Street, Philadelphia, 2012. Source: Sam Lewis Personal Collection, Philadelphia, PA.



## **Surrounding Neighborhood:**

The Crystal Bird Fauset House is a three-story brick townhouse that was originally a single standing house built in the Victorian Italianate style and completed c.1875. It was among the first of its type in the neighborhood.<sup>3</sup> Most of the houses in the immediate surrounding neighborhood were built in the same style beginning around 1875.

From 1869 to 1875, the City of Philadelphia hired a consulting firm for Philadelphia County whose task was to realign the streets of West Philadelphia to resemble the street grid of Central Philadelphia.<sup>4</sup> A neighborhood lot plan was finalized in 1875.

## **7. Statement of Significance**

The Victorian Italianate Style house at 5401-03 Vine Street is an impressive example of its style which was popular at the time of its construction, but it is its association with the significant political career of Crystal Bird Fauset, which truly makes the Crystal Bird Fauset House eligible for listing on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places.

Fauset moved to Philadelphia in 1931 and quickly engaged herself with the city's local Democratic Party. A representative of Philadelphia's 18<sup>th</sup> District in the Pennsylvania State Legislature, Fauset resided here at 5401-03 Vine Street from 1933 to 1944 during the beginning of her political career.<sup>5</sup> The house was purchased by Crystal Bird Fauset's sister Birdie O. Bird for Crystal Fauset (née Bird) and her new husband Arthur Fauset.<sup>6</sup> During her time at the residence, Fauset employed a personal assistant by the name of Alyse Anderson, sister of the acclaimed opera singer Marian Anderson.<sup>7</sup>

For this house's direct connection to Crystal Bird Fauset, her prolific national significance, and her enduring legacy within Philadelphia's political history the Crystal Bird Fauset House is eligible for listing on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and J. This structure's period of significance is ascribed based on the period of residence by renowned Philadelphia politician and early Civil Rights advocate Crystal Bird Fauset.

---

<sup>3</sup> 1895 G. W. Bromley Map, courtesy of the Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network <https://www.philageohistory.org/tiles/viewer/>, accessed December 13, 2022.

<sup>4</sup> City of Philadelphia, Department of Records, City Archives, Digest of Ordinances and Acts of Assembly, 1852, Volume 1, Index.

<sup>5</sup> "Crystal Bird Fauset Historical Marker."

<sup>6</sup> A. Beverton, "Crystal Bird Fauset (1894-1965)," *Black Past* (blog), September 26, 2009, <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/fauset-crystal-bird-1894-1965/>.

<sup>7</sup> *The Philadelphia Independent*, Vol. 4, no. 30, July 29, 1934. Accessed from Historical Society of Philadelphia, Philadelphia, September 14, 2022.



**Figure 8.** Crystal Bird Fauset at 5401-03 Vine Street on Election Day, November 1938. Source: John Mosely, Charles Blockson Collection, Temple University, Philadelphia, PA.



**Figure 9.** Crystal Bird Fauset with Eleanor Roosevelt, Alyse Anderson (second from right), and Marian Anderson (third from right) when Crystal became Pennsylvania State Representative, circa 1939. Source: John Mosely, *The Philadelphia Independent*.

This Statement of Significance is intended to provide a brief overview of the life of Crystal Bird Fauset and her contributions to the world of politics as an African American woman. Her political life included distinctions on the local, state, and federal level, as well as proving herself a commentator on issues affecting the lives of people of color around the world. In addition, this document is intended to link the life of Crystal Bird Fauset to this property. This document is not intended to be an exhaustive account of her life, rather it is an overview of her professional and personal accomplishments and her legacy as a legislator and activist among Philadelphia's black women leaders.

### **Early Life (1893-1918)**

Crystal Dreda Bird was born on June 27, 1893, in Princess Anne, MD, to Benjamin Bird and Portia E. Lovett. Benjamin Bird was the high school principal at Princess Anne Academy, an all-black school (later a part of the University of Maryland). Benjamin Bird died when Crystal was only four years old, and Crystal's mother took over her husband's principalship for three years until her own death in 1900. Crystal, now age seven, remained committed to her education, citing the influence of her parents. Perversely, the early loss of her parents may have improved her access to educational opportunities in Maryland's segregated Eastern Shore.<sup>8</sup>

After being raised by her mother's sister in Boston, she attended an integrated public school and graduated from Boston Normal School in 1914. Upon graduation, she taught in Boston for three

---

<sup>8</sup> "Crystal Bird Fauset Raises Her Voice for Human Rights," *Pennsylvania Heritage Magazine*, accessed April 22, 2022, <http://paheritage.wpengine.com/article/crystal-bird-fauset-raises-her-voice-human-rights/>.

years, and it is possible that during this time she began to view racial inequality as a problem in many parts of the United States, not just in the South. In 1918 she resigned as a teacher.<sup>9</sup>

### **Early Professional Career (1918-1931)**

Amid the wave of African Americans left the farms of the South to move to the industrialized cities of the North, West and Midwest, since dubbed “The Great Migration,” Crystal Bird left her career as a teacher to take a position as a field secretary for the National Board of the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA). This allowed her the opportunity to travel the country to address the needs of African American students and to organize social programs for black women. Her experiences helped to forge a connection across race, gender, and class, and began a lifelong crusade for justice.<sup>10</sup>

Beginning in 1927, Crystal began working with the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), an organization whose aim was to communicate the needs and desires of African Americans to whites. The activist extension of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), the American Friends Service elevated Fauset’s voice in Philadelphia as she discussed the culture, history, and needs of African Americans.<sup>11</sup> She proved herself a strong communicator who had a gift for charm, vividness, and exceptional “fire and magnetism.” It is estimated that during her time with the AFSC, her 210 speeches had been received by almost 50,000 people.<sup>12</sup> During her tenure with the AFSC, Crystal completed her formal education and earned a B.S. from Teachers College, Columbia University in 1931. That same year, she married Arthur Huff Fauset, a Philadelphia school principal. The couple separated soon after the marriage and had no children. Their divorce was finalized in 1944. (Some sources say they were married in 1935.)<sup>13</sup>

### **Professional Career (1931-1938)**

The house was purchased by Crystal Bird Fauset’s sister, Birdie O. Bird, for Crystal and her new husband Arthur Fauset.<sup>14</sup> During this earliest period of her residence at 5401-03 Vine Street, Crystal Bird Fauset deepened her involvement in the needs of African Americans and delved deeper into city, state, and national politics. A resident of Philadelphia since 1931, Crystal joined the Democratic Party as it began to challenge the reigning Republican-led city government. She objected to City Hall’s mismanagement of the city and was vocal about making sure that all “living people be given a chance to live.” In 1932, she helped African American women register to vote through the Democratic National Committee’s Colored Women’s Activities Club, and in 1936, she became its director.<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> A. Beverton, “Crystal Bird Fauset (1894-1965),” *Black Past* (blog), September 26, 2009, <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/fauset-crystal-bird-1894-1965/>.

<sup>10</sup> Beverton.

<sup>11</sup> “Crystal Bird Fauset Historical Marker.”

<sup>12</sup> Steven J. Niven, “Fauset, Crystal Bird,” Oxford African American Studies Center, May 31, 2013, <https://oxfordaasc.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780195301731.001.0001/acref-9780195301731-e-34382>.

<sup>13</sup> Beverton.

<sup>14</sup> Beverton.

<sup>15</sup> *The Philadelphia Independent*.

Building on her continued efforts to articulate the needs of African Americans to whites, she helped to create the Swarthmore College Institute of Race Relations in 1933, and for two years served as joint Executive Secretary of its summer seminar program. The institute helped to document employment and housing discrimination against African Americans. Earlier in 1933, Fauset was recognized for her work in “interracial interpretation” when she received a Golden Scroll from the Philadelphia Junior Citizens School Attendance League, alongside significant local figures like celebrated contralto Marian Anderson.<sup>16</sup> It was through the Institute of Race Relations that she established a rapport with Eleanor Roosevelt.<sup>17</sup>

Between her ongoing work at Swarthmore College and her personal mobilization effort to register other African-American women to vote in the 1932 election, Fauset made a strong impression on the Roosevelt Administration, including on Eleanor Roosevelt. While the Democratic Party did not carry Philadelphia during the 1932 election, the Roosevelt administration rewarded Fauset for her work by appointing her Director of the Women and Professional Project within the Works Progress Administration in Philadelphia in 1935. The aim of the project was to ultimately provide training for women to move off of relief rolls to employable skilled labor. One of the project’s activities involved learning to sew and knit. Although the original quota for African American women in this project was capped at thirty-three and one-third percent, Fauset was able to convince the WPA to increase that quota to fifty percent, allowing 3000 African American women to come off of public relief rolls.<sup>18</sup>

Beginning in 1935, Fauset served on the Federal Housing Advisory Board working towards providing equitable housing opportunities for Philadelphia’s African-American communities.<sup>19</sup> During discussion, Fauset offered the following insights and recommendations based on her own investigation into Philadelphia’s housing problem:

*The colored people, representing the most disadvantaged group in the city, would look with a great deal of joy to better home conditions. And low cost housing is the answer. Such a building program would provide them with employment, besides raising their level of existence. I have personally inspected some of the houses they live in and the conditions are deplorable. Backyard toilets, no bathrooms, and whole families living in one room, are some of the things I saw.*<sup>20</sup>

In 1936, Fauset organized female African-American WPA workers to entertain delegates to the 1936 Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia. From this group Fauset then organized the all-female Willing Workers Democratic Organization (WWDO) to increase voter registration and membership in Philadelphia. In clarifying her support for the Roosevelt administration, at that time, Fauset stated that “President Roosevelt ... has a record of accomplishment based on a social point of view involving the mass of the people,” in other words the proactive inclusion of

---

<sup>16</sup> “Golden Scrolls to Be Given Phila. Citizens: Junior League Will Honor Them at Interracial Dinner,” *Philadelphia Tribune* (1912-), February 9, 1933,

[http://www.proquest.com/cv\\_701361/docview/531315100/abstract/375270EA9CAD426DPQ/12](http://www.proquest.com/cv_701361/docview/531315100/abstract/375270EA9CAD426DPQ/12).

<sup>17</sup> “Crystal Bird Fauset Raises Her Voice for Human Rights.”

<sup>18</sup> “Crystal Bird Fauset Raises Her Voice for Human Rights.”

<sup>19</sup> “Crystal Bird Fauset Historical Marker.”

<sup>20</sup> “Crystal Bird Fauset Raises Her Voice for Human Rights.”

diverse peoples, something she asserted was lacking in other political organizations.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, newspapers reported on correspondence between Fauset and Dr. Mary MacLeod Bethune, in which Dr. Bethune echoed similar support for the administration.<sup>22</sup> Her diligence and dedication proved successful, when for the first time in Philadelphia history, voters in predominately black wards voted Democratic in 1936.<sup>23</sup>

Building on her platform of affordable housing, fair employment legislation, and clearance of slum areas, Crystal won the Democratic Party's nomination for the Pennsylvania State Legislature in 1938.<sup>24</sup> The *Philadelphia Tribune* credited Fauset's ability as a public speaker as an asset to both her campaign and larger political career.<sup>25</sup> This, combined with the staunch support of women and an innovative telephone appeal, won Fauset the election in a district where two-thirds of the voters were white.<sup>26</sup>



**Figure 10.** Crystal Bird Fauset, c. 1938. Source: <https://blackthen.com/crystal-bird-fauset-first-black-woman-state-legislator-in-the-united-states/>

### **Political Career (1938-1944)**

---

<sup>21</sup> "Mrs. Fauset Sees Value of Mrs. Roosevelt in White House," *Kansas American*, (Topeka: October 16, 1936).

<sup>22</sup> "Dr. Mary M. Bethune Believes Strongly in Roosevelt Washington," *The Capitol Plaindealer* (Topeka, Kansas: November 1, 1936).

<sup>23</sup> "Fauset, Crystal Bird (1893–1965) | Encyclopedia.Com," accessed April 25, 2022, <https://www.encyclopedia.com/women/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/fauset-crystal-bird-1893-1965>; Beverton.

<sup>24</sup> "GOP in 'Philly' Make History in Primary," *The Plaindealer* (Kansas City, Kansas: May 27, 1938); "Wins for Women," *The Metropolitan Post* (Chicago, Illinois: November 26, 1938); Orrin Evans, "Henry Loses as Fauset and Rhodes Win: Mrs. C. Fauset Chosen State Legislator Is First Colored Woman Elected in Long History of State," *Philadelphia Tribune* (Philadelphia: November 10, 1938).

<sup>25</sup> "Crystal Bird Fauset's Ability As Public Speaker Is Asset To Political Career: First Negro Woman Nominee For Legislature Sought By Party Leaders," *Philadelphia Tribune* (1912-), June 2, 1938, [http://www.proquest.com/cv\\_701361/docview/531497017/abstract/375270EA9CAD426DPQ/131](http://www.proquest.com/cv_701361/docview/531497017/abstract/375270EA9CAD426DPQ/131).

<sup>26</sup> Evans.



Representing the 18<sup>th</sup> District of Philadelphia, Crystal Bird Fauset became the first black woman elected to a state legislature as well as the first black woman elected to Pennsylvania's House of Representatives.<sup>27</sup> She served one term; however, during that brief period she introduced nine bills and three amendments on issues related to public health, public relief, housing for the poor, and women's rights in the workplace. In 1939 she received Pennsylvania's Meritorious Service Medal.<sup>28</sup>

Fauset also sponsored an amendment to the Pennsylvania Female Labor Law of 1913 to better protect women in the workplace. During discussions Fauset urged her colleagues to extend the protections within the law to domestics, many of whom were African American. When confronted with male legislators resistant to restriction on moonlight employment of female factory workers, Fauset responded as follows:

*I do think that the men of this House (as they sit around and smoke their cigars, and as they get a great sense of well-being from doing so), should think what their ideas would be if some day their own economical status should change and their wives for some reason or other should be compelled to work, whether or not they would be willing to see their wives go out of their homes at four o'clock in the afternoon, with the knowledge that they would not return [home] until one or two o'clock the following morning. Certainly, a group of women, for the sake of bringing a few industries into the state of Pennsylvania, should not be subjected to the thing which we, as perfectly normal human beings, think of as being abnormal.<sup>29</sup>*



**Figure 11.** Crystal Bird Fauset and Eleanor Roosevelt, c. 1942. Source: <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/fauset-crystal-bird-1894-1965/>

---

<sup>27</sup> Evans.

<sup>28</sup> "Fauset, Crystal Bird (1893–1965) | Encyclopedia.Com."

<sup>29</sup> "Crystal Bird Fauset Raises Her Voice for Human Rights."

Crystal resigned from the Assembly in 1940, and through her friendship with Eleanor Roosevelt, became the assistant state director of the Education and Recreation program and Pennsylvania race relations adviser of the WPA.<sup>30</sup> Her relationship with the First Lady allowed Fauset to press for black concerns at a national level. In 1941, she joined President Roosevelt's so-called "Black Cabinet," through her appointment as assistant director and race relations director to the Office of Civilian Defense (OCD).<sup>31</sup> President Roosevelt's "Black Cabinet" included other prominent figures like Mary McLeod Bethune and Arthur W. Mitchell, among others.<sup>32</sup> This new position allowed Fauset to promote civil defense planning activities in the country's black communities, engage in military recruitment for blacks, and address issues of racial discrimination, including the exclusion of African Americans from combat missions in World War II. Furthermore, Fauset actively urged communities in the south to involve African Americans in their own civil defense planning.<sup>33</sup>

One of Fauset's key objectives within the Office of Civil Defense was to convince the Roosevelt administration that both black men and women were willing and able to serve in the military during World War II. When American involvement in World War II began, less than five thousand of the two hundred and thirty thousand men in the U.S. Army were African American. The military only reluctantly allowed African Americans to serve in segregated regiments and, of these, most were restricted to noncombat missions. This, too, was something Fauset combatted within the Office of Civil Defense. In July of 1940, Fauset expressed her frustration to the press, stating "America is not and never has been a real democracy," arguing that the nation's founders, contrary to common belief, were not universally benevolent statesmen, but upper-class white men with their own class-based concerns that, historically, did not extend to the concerns of African Americans.<sup>34</sup>

In January of 1944, Crystal resigned from the OCD to dedicate her full-time efforts to support the Democratic National Committee and the upcoming presidential election. However, tensions with the head of the DNC and the failure of the party to end segregation, advance civil rights, and the rejection of the campaign efforts of African American women led her to leave the Democratic Party and endorse then GOP candidate Thomas Dewey.<sup>35</sup> This severed her ties to the White House and her relationship with Eleanor Roosevelt. Dewey rewarded Fauset's switch to the GOP with a position in the Republican National Committee's Division on Negro Affairs.

---

<sup>30</sup> "Crystal Bird Fauset Quits; Philly Wonders," *New York Amsterdam News (1938-1941), City Edition*, November 18, 1939, [http://www.proquest.com/cv\\_701361/docview/226059952/abstract/375270EA9CAD426DPQ/189](http://www.proquest.com/cv_701361/docview/226059952/abstract/375270EA9CAD426DPQ/189); "Mrs. Fauset Not To Quit," *The Plaindealer* (Kansas City: Kansas, August 16, 1940).

<sup>31</sup> "Mrs. Fauset Named Civil Defense Aide," *The Washington Post (1923-1954)*, October 21, 1941, [http://www.proquest.com/cv\\_701361/docview/151420306/abstract/375270EA9CAD426DPQ/269](http://www.proquest.com/cv_701361/docview/151420306/abstract/375270EA9CAD426DPQ/269).

<sup>32</sup> Beverton.

<sup>33</sup> "Crystal Bird Fauset Historical Marker."

<sup>34</sup> "Crystal Bird Fauset Raises Her Voice for Human Rights."

<sup>35</sup> "Woman Negro Leader Supports Gov. Dewey," *New York Times*, 1944, [http://www.proquest.com/cv\\_701361/docview/106748469/abstract/375270EA9CAD426DPQ/375](http://www.proquest.com/cv_701361/docview/106748469/abstract/375270EA9CAD426DPQ/375); "Mrs. Fauset Cannot Back Biased Party," *Philadelphia Tribune (1912-)*, October 14, 1944, [http://www.proquest.com/cv\\_701361/docview/531701587/citation/375270EA9CAD426DPQ/399](http://www.proquest.com/cv_701361/docview/531701587/citation/375270EA9CAD426DPQ/399).

Although separated for many years, two days after Crystal joined the GOP, Arthur Fauset, a Democrat, filed for divorce.<sup>36</sup>

### **Later Life (1944-1965)**

Fauset's shift to the Republican Party in 1944 coincided with her departure from 5401-03 Vine Street, but it was by no means the end of her political career. If anything, Fauset's political shift highlights a shared frustration among African Americans with the Roosevelt Administration and Democratic Party. In 1944, Fauset proudly introduced Eleanor Roosevelt to speak to a convention of five thousand members of Philadelphia's African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church. In her speech, Roosevelt observed that the war was changing America and that "we must face the fact that in the future, we have to work with people of all races." Her words, however, sounded like her own, and not those of President Roosevelt with whom many African Americans were tired of waiting for equality in the armed forces. As a result, a straw poll of fifteen hundred women attending the A.M.E. convention showed African Americans choosing New York Governor Thomas E. Dewey over F.D.R. for the presidency that November. The National Negro Council conducted a similar poll among 150,000 African Americans in twenty-three states which similarly favored Dewey over Roosevelt by a margin of three to one. Fauset, undoubtedly aware of these results, more than likely made her switch from the Democratic to the Republican Party accordingly.<sup>37</sup>

This switch, combined with Dewey's failure in the election rendered Fauset a political pariah. She realized the Republican Party had little to offer, and that she had burned her bridge with the Democratic Party. Fauset's political life turned to focus on global issues beginning in 1945. She became a founding member of the United Nations Council of Philadelphia, which later became the World Affairs Council. She also attended the inaugural sessions of the United Nations Conference on International Organization in San Francisco. Crystal continued to develop educational programs to foster race relations and to increase understanding between whites and nonwhites.<sup>38</sup>

In 1945 she aided in the founding of the United Nations Council of Philadelphia, which later became the World Affairs Council, and served as an officer, attending the founding United Nations Conference on International Organization in San Francisco. In the 1950s she began speaking tours in India, the Middle East, and Nigeria, meeting with independence leaders.<sup>39</sup>

Crystal was also a believer in African independence, and in the 1950s traveled to Africa, India, and the Middle East to support post-colonial independence leaders. But as these countries were gaining their independence, she expressed frustration at the United States' failure to advance the civil rights of all of its citizens. Crystal also openly protested the lack of a woman of color to

---

<sup>36</sup> Beverton; "Crystal Bird Fauset Raises Her Voice for Human Rights."

<sup>37</sup> "Crystal Bird Fauset Raises Her Voice for Human Rights."

<sup>38</sup> "Crystal Bird Fauset Raises Her Voice for Human Rights."

<sup>39</sup> "Mrs. Fauset Off to India, World Tour," *Philadelphia Tribune (1912-)*, January 21, 1950, [http://www.proquest.com/cv\\_701361/docview/531870920/abstract/375270EA9CAD426DPQ/458](http://www.proquest.com/cv_701361/docview/531870920/abstract/375270EA9CAD426DPQ/458).

represent the U.S. delegation celebrating the independence of Ghana, citing a woman like herself would have represented the “millions of slaved mothers” of America’s past.<sup>40</sup>

In 1955 Fauset was awarded a second Meritorious Service Medal from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania (the first was awarded in 1939). In the final years of her life, Crystal Bird Fauset lived in New York City. While visiting Philadelphia, she died in her sleep on March 27, 1965, just months before the passing of the Voting Rights Act.<sup>41</sup> For her unprecedented and remarkable career as an advocate for African Americans, and especially women, the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission erected a historical marker at the Crystal Bird Fauset House in 1991.<sup>42</sup>

### **Crystal Bird Fauset Legacy**

Although her distinction as the first black woman state legislator is significant, the arc of her life must also be viewed as a testament to her dedication to the betterment of women and people of color throughout the world. Her oratorical skill and outspoken demeanor in addressing racial and economic inequities allowed her to further the passage of Pennsylvania state legislation on public health, public relief, housing for the poor, and women’s rights in the workplace, ultimately elevating her to national and global stages and into association with other prominent peers like Mary MacLeod Bethune and Marian Anderson. However, her greatest legacy may be that of a role model for advocacy for those whose voices have historically been marginalized. For her enduring legacy as a trailblazing and global political voice, the Crystal Bird Fauset House is eligible for inclusion in the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and J.

---

<sup>40</sup> “Crystal Bird Fauset Raises Her Voice for Human Rights.”

<sup>41</sup> “Crystal Bird Fauset Historical Marker.”

<sup>42</sup> “Fauset, Crystal Bird (1893–1965) | Encyclopedia.Com.”

## **Selected Bibliography:**

- Beverton, A. "Crystal Bird Fauset (1894-1965)." *Black Past* (blog), September 26, 2009. <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/fauset-crystal-bird-1894-1965/>. City of Philadelphia, Department of Records, City Archives, A1457, Digest of Ordinances and Acts of Assembly, 1852, Volume 1, Index.
- ExplorePAHistory.com. "Crystal Bird Fauset Historical Marker." Accessed April 25, 2022. <https://explorepahistory.com/hmarker.php?markerId=1-A-340>.
- Pennsylvania Heritage Magazine*. "Crystal Bird Fauset Raises Her Voice for Human Rights." Accessed April 22, 2022. <http://paheritage.wpengine.com/article/crystal-bird-fauset-raises-her-voice-human-rights/>.
- "Fauset, Crystal Bird (1893–1965) | Encyclopedia.Com." Accessed April 25, 2022. <https://www.encyclopedia.com/women/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/fauset-crystal-bird-1893-1965>.
- Niven, Steven J. "Fauset, Crystal Bird." Oxford African American Studies Center, May 31, 2013. <https://oxfordaasc.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780195301731.001.0001/acref-9780195301731-e-34382>.
- The Philadelphia Independent*, Vol. 4, no. 30, July 29, 1934. Accessed from Historical Society of Philadelphia, Philadelphia, PA, September 14, 2022.