

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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DATE ENTERED

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Frances Ellen Watkins Harper House

AND/OR COMMON

Frances Ellen Watkins Harper House

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

1006 Bainbridge Street

__ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Philadelphia

__ VICINITY OF

First

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

Pennsylvania

42

Philadelphia

101

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

DISTRICT
 BUILDING(S)
 STRUCTURE
 SITE
 OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

PUBLIC
 PRIVATE
 BOTH
PUBLIC ACQUISITION
 IN PROCESS
 BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

OCCUPIED
 UNOCCUPIED
 WORK IN PROGRESS
ACCESSIBLE
 YES: RESTRICTED
 YES: UNRESTRICTED
 NO

PRESENT USE

AGRICULTURE
 COMMERCIAL
 EDUCATIONAL
 ENTERTAINMENT
 GOVERNMENT
 INDUSTRIAL
 MILITARY
 MUSEUM
 PARK
 PRIVATE RESIDENCE
 RELIGIOUS
 SCIENTIFIC
 TRANSPORTATION
 OTHER

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Edward H. Gornish and Company

STREET & NUMBER

620 South Broadway

CITY, TOWN

Philadelphia

__ VICINITY OF

STATE

Pennsylvania

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Registry of Deeds, City Hall

STREET & NUMBER

Broad & Market Streets

CITY, TOWN

Philadelphia

STATE

Pennsylvania

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

None Known

DATE

__ FEDERAL __ STATE __ COUNTY __ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Located on the northeast corner of Bainbridge and South Adler Streets, this structure is a three story corner rowhouse with masonry exterior. The first floor appears to have been converted from a previous commercial use as a store back to a residential facade.

Where a glass front use to exist, the area has been enclosed in brick and two new sash windows of aluminium material have been added. The two windows and door on this are characterized by a continuous line of three rows of dentilation separating this level from the second. The brick used on this first floor level is also yellow but of a more recent type than that used on upper floors. A permit on file in the Tax Assessor's office, dated 1968 and requesting approval of the change of facade is further evidence of the structure's prior function.

The second and third floors are of an older yellow brick material. Each floor is two sash windows wide. The cornice line of the flat roof is of an indistinguishable type with a brick chimney that seems to sevice both 1006 and 1008 Bainbridge. While the front part of the chimney is stucco the sides and rear are of the brick material that is on the second and third floors. This brick apparently was the original material.

The west side of the structure has been covered over with stucco. The only distinguishing features of this side are a door and small window on the first floor level and small sash windows on the second and third floors. A small window at the top indicates an attic area.

Attached to the rear of the structure is an addition that is partially of yellow brick and shingle material. Its, rather dilapidated condition and appearance indicates a storage and service function. The close proximity of the side and rear structures prevent a more detailed investigation of the structure.

It is obvious that this structure has undergone numerous alterations to the point that the house has no definable architectural style. It, along with the other houses in the section have all been severely altered since their original construction before the turn of the century. A system of building permits was not installed until 1890 so a definite date of the construction of the building cannot be determined. However, use of platt maps and simple title searching indicate that the structure was the one Frances Ellen Watkins occupied from 1870 until her death in 1911.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

Afro-American History

SPECIFIC DATES	Frances E. W. Harper (1825-1911) Residency (1870-1911)	BUILDER/ARCHITECT	Not Known
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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The life of Frances Ellen Watkins Harper spanned eighty-six eventful years wherein she achieved acclaim as a reformer as well as a literary figure among Afro-Americans. Harper's achievements included her activities as a reformer in the anti-slavery movement, in the women's rights movement, in the temperance movement, and in the civil rights movement of the post Civil War years. In addition, her poetry and essays are significant because she used them as vehicles to comment upon the life and times of her people.

BIOGRAPHY

Frances Ellen Watkins was born of free blacks in Baltimore, Maryland in 1825. She was orphaned early in life and raised by an aunt and an uncle, abolitionist William Watkins, an A.M.E. minister who wrote for The Liberator and operated a religious academy in Baltimore.

Free blacks were limited in mobility and lived close to the realities of slavery, a theme which later characterized much of Harper's poetry. As a result, she learned early that "freedom was an arbitrary condition." Although Frances was an educated young woman, she shared the realities of most Afro-American women in the nineteenth century. Her economic status was limited to service oriented jobs. She began her first job at the age of fourteen in the home of a white Baltimore family where she worked as a seamstress and nursemaid. While in her teen years, she wrote her first small book of verse, "Forest Leaves," which reflected her preoccupation with religion and her ability to transcend the daily routine of domestic work.

Frances left Baltimore at age twenty-six for "free soil," in Columbus, Ohio where she taught domestic science at Union Seminary. Shortly after her departure Maryland enacted a law forbidding free blacks living in the North to immigrate into that state. The penalty was imprisonment and sale into slavery. Homesick and concerned for her friends and family, Frances was forced to live in exile, and it was during these times that she began to realize that teaching was not her calling. She decided to dedicate her efforts to the anti-slavery crusade.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Primary Sources:

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Anthony, Susan B., and Haroer, Ida Husted, eds. History of Woman Suffrage, 1883-1900.
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10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY Less than one acre

UTM REFERENCES

A | 1, 8 | 4 | 8, 6 | 3, 8, 0 | 4, 4 | 2, 1 | 0, 8, 0 |

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

D | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The Frances Ellen Watkins Harper House at 1006 Bainbridge is located on the northwest corner of Bainbridge and South Adler Street. It is bounded on the west by a rowhouse, 1008 Bainbridge Street, on the south by the rear of a rowhouse 705 South Warnock Street; on the east by South Adler Street; and on the north by Bainbridge Street.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE CODE COUNTY CODE

STATE CODE COUNTY CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Lynne Gomez-Graves, Historical Projects Director

ORGANIZATION

Afro-American Bicentennial Corporation

DATE

STREET & NUMBER

1420 N Street, Northwest

TELEPHONE

(202) 462-2519

CITY OR TOWN

Washington

STATE

D. C.

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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CONTINUATION SHEET Frances Ellen Watkins
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Frances joined her cousin, William Watkins, Jr. and the two set-out for New England where they both launched careers as anti-slavery lecturers. In 1860, while on tour in Cincinnati, Ohio, Frances met and married Fenton Harper. The couple settled upon a small farm near Columbus and had one child, Mary. Frances continued her literary work when she found time; however, the death of Fenton Harper, in May, 1864 shortened her experience with domestic life and shortly thereafter she returned to the lecture circuit.

An analysis of Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, the activist and reformer, begins with her years as Frances Ellen Watkins, the abolitionist. For eight years prior to her marriage, Frances lectured, wrote essays and poems, and contributed money to the anti-slavery cause.

She began her professional career as an abolitionist lecturer in 1854 when she was hired by the Maine Anti-Slavery Society to lecture in New England and lower Canada. The same year, she published her first major book of essays and poetry, Poems on Miscellaneous Subjects, to which abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison wrote the introduction. The success of the book can be measured by the fact that it was reprinted several times between 1854 and 1871 when it entered the twentieth edition. Her writings contained not only verse on the plight of the slave and on religious life, but commentary on the quality of life of her people. In the essay, "The Colored People of America," Frances focused not only upon the struggle to survive among black women, but upon their aspirations and values. She wrote: "I see women, whose lot is unremitted labor, saving a pittance from their scanty wages to defray the expenses of learning to read."¹ Frances knew of what she spoke because she had lived this reality while a youth in Baltimore. Her experiences from 1856 through 1859 reinforced her assessment of the poor quality of black life in America as she lectured in cities and towns throughout the North.

Within this brief period, she established a national reputation as a race spokeswoman. Her poems and essays could be found in the pages of black journals. Thomas Hamilton, publisher of the Anglo-African Magazine, as well as the publisher of the Weekly Anglo-African, listed her among the prominent Afro-Americans in the United States in 1859. During that year, Frances contributed an essay, a poem and a short story to the journal. Her essay, "Our Greatest Want," is indicative of her ideology as a race spokesperson during this period. She disagreed with the view that riches and intelligence were the greatest needs of the race and claimed, rather, that, "We need more unselfishness, earnestness and integrity. Our greatest need is not gold or silver, talent or genius, but true men and true women."²

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Harper Home

The actions as well as the words of Frances Watkins demonstrate her sincere dedication to the cause of freedom for black people. She sympathized with John Brown and his Harper's Ferry insurrectionists and her concern was so great that she spent two weeks with Mrs. Brown as she awaited the execution of her husband. At the same time, she also sent provisions to Brown's comrades who awaited their fates in prison. After the executions, Frances eulogized the insurrectionists in her lectures.

After the Civil War, Frances Harper embarked upon a tour of the South, determined to see the conditions of the freedmen first hand and bring them encouragement. During this period of the late 1860s and the 1870s she became involved in the struggle of women's rights as well as the struggle for civil rights and the advancement of her race.

Harper travelled in most of the southern states. According to William Still, she found South Carolina the most interesting and the friendliest state. She was there in 1867, a period when blacks were gaining in political power. While travelling she witnessed the poverty and deprivations of the freedmen whom she travelled among in South Carolina and in the South as a whole. She concluded that the state contained the greatest avenue of any state in the nation for black development and progress. Yet she did not discount the abuses and atrocities that she saw being perpetrated against blacks. In December, 1870 while in Alabama she heard of an attack upon a black woman by two white men who forcibly entered her cabin and beat her. Her outrage and concern motivated her to give free private lectures to freedwomen whom she felt were being continually abused and kept in a state of ignorance. In a letter to William Still she wrote from Greenville, Georgia, "Now is the time for our woman to begin to try to lift-up their heads and plant roots of progress under the hearthstone."³

Mrs. Harper's concern for the plight of the men and the women of the race was evident not only in her personal interactions with them, but in her political activities during the post Civil War years. During the late 1860s, she attended meetings of the American Equal Suffrage Association in Washington and in New York City. She joined former abolitionists Frederick Douglass, Charles Remond, Sojourner Truth, George T. Downing, and Harriet and Robert Purvis, all of whom were members of the association. The organization was a biracial group committed to the struggle for the attainment of universal suffrage.

Harper's views about suffrage were similar to those of Frederick Douglass, especially in regard to the controversy over the Fifteenth Amendment. White female suffragists, for the most part, disapproved of the amendment because it contained the word "male," restricting

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the franchise to that sex. Most black suffragists realized that the women's suffrage cause was opposed by most Americans during the period, and consequently argued for the separation of woman's suffrage from "Negro suffrage." Once the black man was enfranchised, these proponents believed, the struggle for women's suffrage could be resumed with the added strength of the black male vote. This controversy caused a rift between the black male and female suffragists. Some white female suffragists led by Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton broke from the Equal Rights Association to form the National Woman's Suffrage Association in 1869. Frances Harper joined the men and women who supported the Fifteenth Amendment to form the American Woman Suffrage Association.

Frances Harper was so pleased with passage of the Fifteenth Amendment that she wrote a poem titled after it. Her stirring lines expressed her optimism for the future of the race. The last two stanzas of the poem in particular exemplify this hopefulness:

With freedom's chrim upon thy head,
Her precious ensign in thy hand,
Go place thy once despised name
Amid the noblest of the land.⁴

Within a few years after the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment, the intensification of the struggle for political control of the South between the Radical Republicans and the Conservative Democrats, resulted in numerous acts of violence. As a consequence, the newly freed black men and women were usually caught in the middle. Harper expressed her fear that the black male would lose his vote in the South. She also reinforced her belief in the need for women's suffrage because of the violence and continuous degradation of black woman of the South. She attended meetings of the American Woman Suffrage Association during the 1870s and the 1880s and participated in their meeting held at Cooper Institute in New York City where she gave the closing speech. It stated her belief "that as much as white women need the ballot, colored women need it more." She also emphasized that although black women were no longer sold as slaves, their civil rights were being violated by "degraded men." Harper pleaded for equal rights and equal education for the women of her race.

The temperance issue was one in which Mrs. Harper was particularly interested. She associated alcoholism with the demise of the black family and the decline of black political influence in the South. For the most part, she blamed black men for allowing themselves to be the pawns of white politicians who often bought their votes with liquor. On the other

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Frances Ellen Watkins

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hand, she praised the black women in the South for their continuous hard work toward political and educational goals.

In 1885, Frances Harper was a director of the Women Congress and an outspoken foe of stimulants and narcotics. Writing from Philadelphia, she announced her desire to work with women of the race in an attempt to teach them about the evils of intemperance. She joined the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) and became the Pennsylvania State Superintendent for Work Among the Colored People. By 1888, she had been appointed the first National Superintendent of Work Among Colored People of the North.

Frances Harper did not allow her organizational activities to prevent her from using her literary talents to comment upon the life and times of her people during the late nineteenth century. In a book of her essays and poems, Sketches of Southern Life, she spoke through a fictional character, Aunt Chloe, whose simple wisdom warned blacks against political corruption. She said:

And this buying up each other
Is something worse than mean,
Though I think a heap of voting,
I go for voting clean.

Two poems in her book of verse, Atlanta Offering, published in 1895, expressed her views on woman's rights and temperance respectively. She did not earn a national reputation as an outstanding black poet, but she did become the first Afro-American woman to publish a novel. Her work, Iola LeRoy or Shadows Uplifted, was published in 1892. In this book she sought to inspire black youth to work to uplift the race as well as to educate white Americans about her people. Harper considered her novel part of her "mission" to the race.

Frances Ellen Watkins Harper spent the first decade of the twentieth century in her Philadelphia home at 1006 Bainbridge where she lived from 1870. Her last poem was published in 1909 and she died after a brief illness in 1911.

W. E. B. DuBois commented upon her life 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.

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Unfortunately, Americans have been late in acknowledging the loss of Frances Harper. Not until 1922, eleven years after her death, did the convention at the World's WCTU, held in Philadelphia, accord a single honor to her memory. Her name was placed on the Red Letter Calendar along with the names of WCTU leaders Frances Willard and the Lady Henry Somerset.

Frances Ellen Watkins Harper was one of the most outstanding women of the nineteenth century contributing to America's literature and actively fighting to abolish the country's social problems. Her overall concern for mankind materialized into her involvement in the abolitionist movement, the women's suffrage movement, the temperance movement, and the education and protection of the newly freed black men and women of the South. Her deep concern for people had to find other means of expression outside of physical involvement and so she wrote numerous pieces of poetry and one novel all with a social perspective. Frances Ellen Watkins Harper was a major social humanitarian and writer of American history and culture.

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2. The Anglo-African Magazine, Vol. 1 (New York, 1859), p. 160.
3. William Still, The Underground Railroad: A Record of Facts, Authentic Narratives, Letters, Etc (New York: Arno Press, 1968), p. 768
4. Ibid, p. 769.

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Frances Ellen Watkins

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Harper

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PAGE Two

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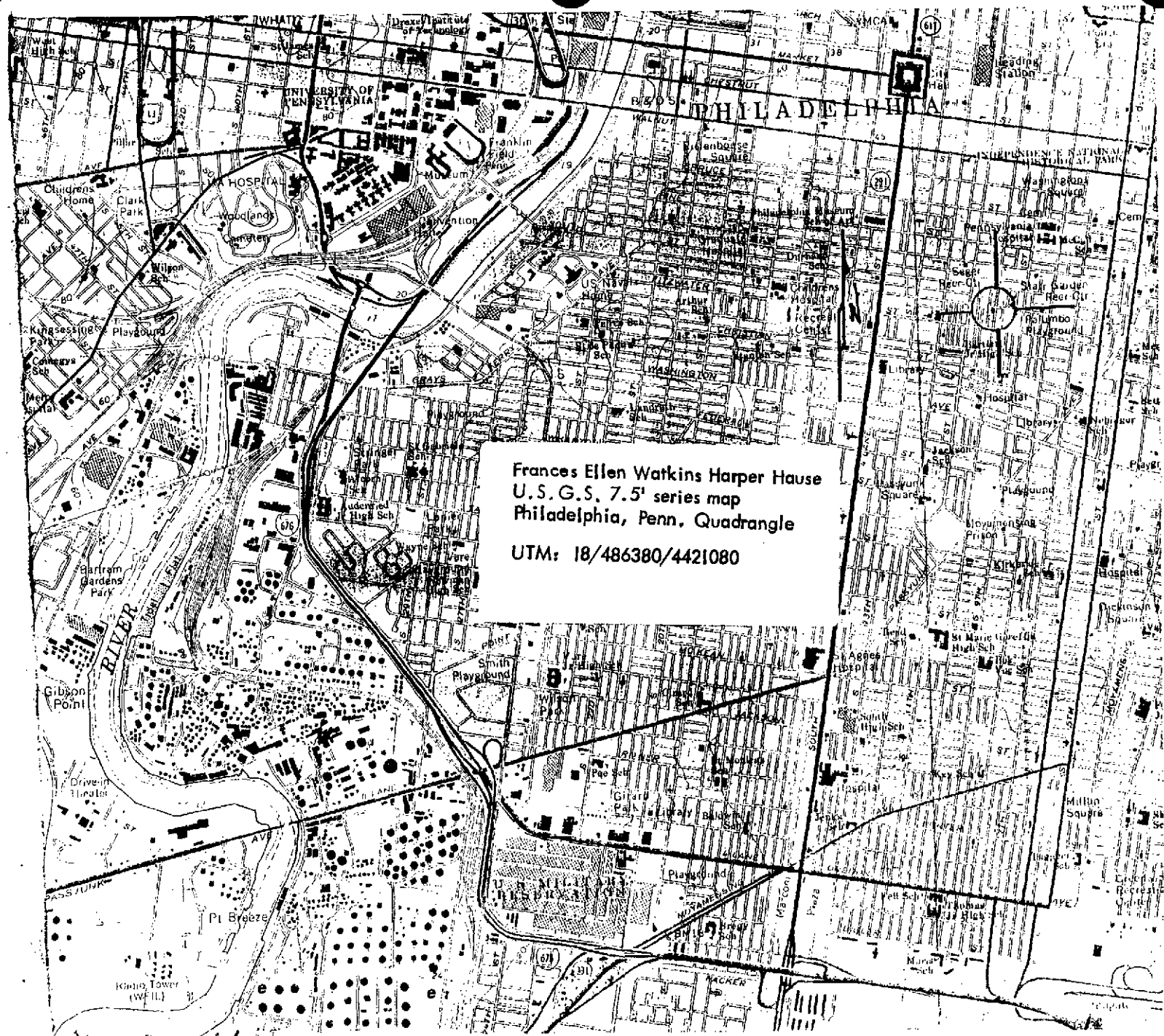
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Frances Ellen Watkins Harper House
U.S.G.S. 7.5' series map
Philadelphia, Penn. Quadrangle

UTM: 18/486380/4421080