

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

Charlotte Forten Grimke' House

AND/OR COMMON

Charlotte Forten Grimke' House

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

1608 R Street, Northwest

__ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Washington

__ VICINITY OF

000

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

D. C.

11

001

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

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Mr. & Mrs. David Baker

STREET & NUMBER

1608 R Street, Northwest

CITY, TOWN

Washington

__ VICINITY OF

STATE

D. C.

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Recorder of Deeds

STREET & NUMBER

515 D Street, Northwest

CITY, TOWN

Washington

STATE

D. C.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Charlotte Forten Grimke' House at 1608 R Street, Northwest Washington is a two story attached rowhouse (exposed on the west side) in modified English Regency design. The house is fashioned of brick and sits on a raised brick foundation. Six wrought iron steps rise to the entrance door, which sits on the northwest corner, topped by a glass light and overhanging hood on ornamented consoles. On the first level is a bay with three sets of double-hung windows containing single light sashes. On the second level of the north side are three windows of the same character as appears in the bay below. All windows on the north facade are topped with segmented arched lintels.

The east side of the house has a plain efface of brick though there are two double-hung two over two sash windows. The house has a L shape plan and there is a one story section which appears an addition, though of same design, which is the kitchen.

The Grimke' House has been renovated. The house now has central air conditioning as well as a modernized interior. Though the house has been altered the overt character of the late 19th century has not changed.

From the southeast side of the front section a wooden fence has been constructed which completely encircles the rear portion of the house.

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 checked="" 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				

SPECIFIC DATES **Charlotte Forten Grimke' (1838-1914)** BUILDER/ARCHITECT
Residency (1881-1886) Not Known

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Charlotte Forten Grimke' was a pioneer black female educator, an early supporter of women's rights, a writer and an active abolitionist. She was with the first group of northern educators to enter the war torn isolated areas of South Carolina providing instruction to those slaves who resided in Union occupied territory. Most significantly, Charlotte Forten Grimke' kept a journal of her experiences while at Port Royal, South Carolina. This journal provided a vivid picture of her student's progress and growth which negated the prevailing assumptions of that day that blacks were unable to benefit from exposure to education. Her activities set an example for the increased involvement of northern black men and women in the task of lending their skills in support of the newly freed black population throughout the South.

BIOGRAPHY

Charlotte Forten was born of wealthy free black parents in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1838. She grew up in a prosperous home surrounded by a family which was in the forefront of black activism. Her grandfather, James Forten was a wealthy sailmaker and active abolitionist. Her father, Robert Forten, had been a staunch opposer of prejudice and refused to subject his daughter to the segregated school system of her native city after she was refused entrance into a local white school.

Charlotte received her early training from private tutors and by age sixteen her father enrolled her in the public school system of Salem, Massachusetts. She resided at the home of Charles Lenox Remond, a prominent black follower of William Lloyd Garrison.

Charlotte entered the Higginson Grammar School where she studied avidly. Upon graduating in 1855, she enrolled in the Salem Normal School completing the course with honors in July of 1856. To her surprise, Miss Forten was offered a position as teacher at the Epes Grammar School of Salem and served as its first and only black teacher. For the next two years she taught her students and read widely from the classics to popular novels of the day.

It was during this time that Miss Forten developed an interest in writing. She was the author of several poems and articles printed in Garrison's abolitionist newspaper, the Liberator. Other articles appeared in the National Anti-Slavery Standard and the Evangelist. Miss Forten spoke

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Bellington, Ray A. "A Social Experiment: The Port Royal Journal of Charlotte Forten." Journal of Negro History, 1862-1863. Vol. XXXV, 1950.

Brown, William Wells. The Rising Sun or the Antecedents and Advancement of the Colored Race. Miami: Mnemosyne Publishing Company, 1969. (continued)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY Less than 1 acre

UTM REFERENCES

A	18	32,3	3,8,0	4,310,8	8,4,0	B					
	ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING			ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING	
C						D					

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The house at 1608 R Street is located approximately two hundred yards from the corner of 16th Street, situated on Lot 810 in Square 179. The property is east eighteen and four tenths feet front by the full depth of Lot 41 in J. B. Turton, Executor and other subdivision of Square 179.

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Lynne Gomez Graves, Historical Projects Director

ORGANIZATION

Afro-American Bicentennial Corporation

STREET & NUMBER

1420 N Street, Northwest

CITY OR TOWN

Washington

DATE

3 February 1976

TELEPHONE

462-2519

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 Charlotte Forten
Grimke' House ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE Two

out against the evils of slavery and called for the active participation of black women in the abolitionist crusade.

Charlotte Forten was exposed to the most active radical abolitionists. Her life in Salem was a constant round of anti-slavery meetings and lectures and her closest friends included such notables as: William Lloyd Garrison, Wendell Phillips, William C. Nell, Lydia Maria Child and John Greenleaf Whittier. It is of little wonder that in such an eclectic atmosphere that Charlotte Forten was influenced to dedicate her life to fight against the injustices of slavery and discrimination. Because of her training as a teacher, she held a strong belief in the improvement of blacks through self-help and education. The strength of her convictions is manifested by a diary notation in which she stated that her life would be directed toward ". . . the good I can do my oppressed and suffering fellow creatures."¹

Illness forced her to return to Philadelphia in 1858, and for the next four years she taught intermittently while attempting to recover her health. The years spent in Massachusetts had heightened her already stimulated interest in anti-slavery and feminist activities. She joined the Salem Female Anti-Slavery Society at the age of seventeen and was a constant lyceum and concertgoer.

Upon her return to Philadelphia, she attended a lecture, "Fair Play for Women" and was delighted to find the lecture both abolitionist and suffragist in content. At this juncture, Miss Forten explained in her diary, "I crave anti-slavery food continually."² Charlotte Forten had witnessed her father and grandfather's participation in the black protest movement and was herself a member of an anti-slavery society, however, she sought a more active role in the struggle to aid the enslaved members of her race.

With the outbreak of the Civil War, Charlotte Forten realized that she was in a position to make a unique contribution to the cause which interested her most, the education of other blacks. The opportunity arrived when the sea islands off the coast of South Carolina were captured early in the war. Port Royal contained some ten thousand slaves who were abandoned by their fleeing masters. Most were uneducated and isolated from the city life on the mainland. Continued contact with the plantation system left them illiterate and untrained. The plight of the black population on the island was publicized by the general in command of the region. In 1862, General Thomas W. Sherman urged that:

Suitable instructors be sent to the Negroes, to teach them all the necessary rudiments of civilization and . . . that agents properly qualified, be employed and sent here to take charge of the plantations. . . .³

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By March 3, 1862 the first contingent of superintendents and teachers arrived at Port Royal. The group included fifty-three white educators who were poorly suited for the difficult task and consequently were unable to bely the suspicions or gain the trust of St. Helena's black population. The initial experiment failed for neither teacher nor student could establish a bond from which to proceed with the work at hand.

It was into this situation that Charlotte Forten arrived as an optimistic pioneer. She left from New York in October 1862 with a letter from John Greenleaf Whittier and arrived at Port Royal Harbor on October 28. She remained at Port Royal, St. Helena's Island from 1862 to 1864 as a teacher and kept a detailed journal of her experiences. She was the first and one of the few northern black teachers to have left a written account of her impressions.

Charlotte Forten's journal indicated the wide range of activities in which she was involved. Her duties as teacher were combined with such after school activities as song leader, story-teller, nurse, Sunday school teacher and companion to the elderly. Miss Forten taught her students of deeds of black men and women who were a part of their heritage. She told of Toussaint L'Overture of Haiti believing that:

It is well that they should know what one of their own color could do for his race. I long to inspire them with courage and ambition (of a noble sort), and high purpose. . . ."⁴

She prepared a Christmas festival for the children and adults of St. Helena's and received a poem from John Greenleaf Whittier for the children to learn and recite during the festivities. After decorating the church, Miss Forten distributed gifts for all one-hundred and fifty expectant children which included dresses, trouser material and story books. As a surprise, her students sang Whittier's seven stanza "Christmas Hymn."

Charlotte Forten's educational and humanitarian works continued, and when the Emancipation Proclamation was signed she and her students celebrated the coming of freedom. She continued her work at St. Helena's, finding gifts of apples, figs and oranges left by her students. She wrote that "It is a great happiness to teach them,"⁵ and the affection for her students was reciprocated in full measure.

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The "Port Royal experiment" was a noble effort to provide the freedmen of St. Helena's Island with a basic education. Its significance lies in the fact that the Federal government recognized the need to prepare freed blacks for a life as free men and women in the hope of easing the transition from bondage to freedom. The experiment proved to become a basic principle under which the Freedmen's Bureau would operate as an agency for the benefit of ex-slaves and displaced persons.

As the first northern black female to offer her services as a teacher during the war, on St. Helena Island, Charlotte Forten was successful in securing the confidence of one-hundred and fifty students. She layed a foundation upon which subsequent teachers and administrators could utilized her methods in relating and thus educating ex-slaves. In addition to teaching, Charlotte Forten also actively sought and obtained the friendship and cooperation of the inhabitants in a non-paternalistic approach. Her contribution led the way for the hundreds of northern blacks who followed and joined her in the effort of aiding their newly freed brothers to enter into a free society. Miss Forten espoused the sentiments of those Afro-Americans who had been spared from the brutalities of enslavement within the bonds of the "peculiar institution:

The bond between me and other, freedmen and slaves, came from our common yearning to improve the welfare of our race and to reestablish ourselves as capable human beings after the chattle years.

There is little documentation of Charlotte Forten's teaching activities after her departure from St. Helena in 1864. By the end of the war she had returned to Philadelphia and continued to involve herself in social reform activities.

In 1878 Charlotte Forten was married to the Reverend Francis J. Grimke' of Washington, D. C. who was the nephew of the South Carolina Grimke' sisters, Angelina and Sarah. The marriage occurred shortly after Francis' graduation from the Princeton Theological Seminary. During the majority of his life in the ministry, Francis Grimke' served as pastor of the Fifteenth Street Presbyterian Church in Washington, D. C. The Grimke's resided near the parish at 1608 R Street, Northwest. They were the parents of one child who died shortly after birth.

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Charlotte Forten Grimke' worked as assistant to her husband and continued to be a contributor to newspapers and periodicals. She served as trustee and Secretary of the Board at the Westborough Insane Hospital in 1889 and never lost interest in education and social welfare activities.

In 1914 Charlotte Forten Grimke' died, leaving a legacy of service to her people from the times of bondage to the reality of freedom. Her work at Port Royal, St. Helena Island was preserved in her journal and her activities forged a path for a wider participation of black female involvement in education, social welfare and humanitarian endeavors. Northern blacks followed her example and by the end of the war, hundreds of black men and women were involved in teaching and missionary activities throughout the South.

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CONTINUATION SHEET Charlotte Forten
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1. Benjamin Quarles, The Negro in the Civil War (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1953), p. 176.
2. Benjamin Quarles, Black Abolitionists (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 180.
3. Ray A. Bellington, "A Social Experiment: The Port Royal Journal of Charlotte Forten, 1862-1863", Journal of Negro History. Vol. XXXV, 1950, p. 236.
4. Gerder Lerner, Black Women in White America: A Documentary History (New York: Random House, 1972), p. 96.
5. Benjamin Quarles, The Negro in the Civil War (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1953), p. 296.
6. Polly Longworth, Char Forten Black and Free (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1970), p. 232.

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