

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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# 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

Mary Ann Shadd Cary House

AND/OR COMMON

Mary Ann Shadd Cary House

## 2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

1421 W Street, Northwest

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Washington

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

000

VICINITY OF

STATE

D. C.

CODE

11

COUNTY

D. C.

CODE

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

\_\_\_COMMERCIAL

\_\_\_EDUCATIONAL

\_\_\_ENTERTAINMENT

\_\_\_GOVERNMENT

\_\_\_INDUSTRIAL

\_\_\_MILITARY

\_\_\_MUSEUM

\_\_\_PARK

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

\_\_\_RELIGIOUS

\_\_\_SCIENTIFIC

\_\_\_TRANSPORTATION

\_\_\_OTHER

## 4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Doris T. Thomas

STREET & NUMBER

c/o Recorder of Deeds, 6th and D Streets, N.W.

CITY, TOWN

Washington

VICINITY OF

STATE

D. C.

## 5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Recorder of Deeds

STREET & NUMBER

6th & D Streets, 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

EXCELLENT  
 GOOD  
 FAIR

DETERIORATED  
 RUINS  
 UNEXPOSED

### CHECK ONE

UNALTERED  
 ALTERED

### CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE  
 MOVED DATE \_\_\_\_\_

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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The structure is a three story masonry building where the architectural detail at the cornice line and above the windows resembles the Italian Villa architectural style.

The interesting detail along the cornice line is distinguished by alternating segmented protrusions of eight and six rows of dentilation. The center and end protrusions are distinguished by the addition of ninth row.

The entire front facade has been painted over in red. There are three sash windows on the second floor level and two on the first. The simple brick detailing atop these windows and the front door protrudes slightly from the surface giving the facade some character and distinguishing features. The door, apparently a recent addition is wood with two long narrow glass panels in the upper portion.

The roof is flat with a chimney in the center. It is of the original brick material that is evident at the rear of the structure. The only distinguishing features of the rear of the building are single sash windows on each floor and a rear door. Otherwise the entire rear facade is the original, unpainted red brick masonry.

Gapping between the bricks at the front and rear is evidence of the structures general need for repair. Building permit records and platt maps prove that the present structure is the one Mary Shadd Cary occupied from 1881 until 1885.

# 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 checked="" 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 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  
Journalism**

SPECIFIC DATES Mary Ann Shadd Cary (1823-1893) BUILDER/ARCHITECT Not Known  
Residency (1881-1886)

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Mary Ann Shadd Cary was one of the most distinguished and versatile women of her day. The first black newspaperwoman on the North American continent, Mary Ann Shadd was also a writer, educator, lawyer, and anti-slavery abolitionist. A forceful lecturer she appeared before audiences throughout the country, speaking on topics of slavery and women's suffrage. In October, 1855, she attended the Philadelphia National Convention, the first black female to be admitted as a "corresponding member" of the national convention, and during the Civil War she was appointed to the post of Recruiting Officer for the Union Army. Her life is distinguished by her dedication to freedom, equality, and the advancement of her people.

BIOGRAPHY

Born in Wilmington, Delaware in October, 1823, Mary Ann Shadd was raised in a family dedicated to the abolition of slavery. Since her home often served as a shelter for fugitive slaves, Mary Shadd well understood the evils and dehumanization of bondage in America. Her father was a prominent member of the American Anti-Slavery Society and was president of the National Convention for the Improvement of Free People of Color in the United States in 1833. Raised in a household in which sustained efforts on behalf of blacks was the rule, Mary Ann Shadd became one of the most outspoken and articulate female proponents of the abolition of slavery and the promotion of equality for all people.

Since the education of blacks was forbidden in the slave state of Delaware, her family moved to West Chester, Pennsylvania in 1833 where Miss Shadd was placed in a Quaker Boarding School. She studied there until 1839 when she returned to Wilmington to conduct a private school for black children. During the next twelve years Miss Shadd taught in Wilmington, New York City, and Norristown, Pennsylvania. Her early interest in the education of black children throughout her life time and was accompanied by intermittent interests in journalism, lecturing, and the law.

In 1850 with the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law, Mary Shadd and her brother Isaac emigrated from the United States to Canada along with scores of other blacks. They were soon joined by other members of the family who had decided that Canada offered better and greater opportunities. With her family's assistance she soon prepared a pamphlet entitled "Notes on Canada West" that extolled the values, benefits, and opportunities favorable to black residences in the region. The pamphlet was widely circulated throughout the United States.





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Miss Shadd began to lecture throughout Canada and the United States. As a result of her popularity and success as a speaker, she began to emerge as a leader and spokeswoman of the free black communities of the United States and Canada. Her travels as a lecturer made her increasingly aware of the necessity for some means of communication among blacks. It was with this thought in mind that Miss Shadd helped to found the Provincial Freeman in 1853. A nonsectarian and nonpartisan newspaper devoted to the interests of blacks in Canada, the Freeman had as its motto, "Self-reliance is the True Road to Independence." With a sample copy published in Toronto in March, 1853 the paper became a weekly publication the following year after relocating to Chatham.

The newspaper had several objectives. One was to inform blacks of the United States of the true conditions in Canada so that they could determine "Whether or not to leave Yankeedom with disfranchisement and oppression" or to move to "a land of impartial laws and a Constitution having no distinctions of color."<sup>1</sup> The weekly was to serve as a means of education for uninformed and economically disadvantaged blacks, alerting them to issues and problems that affected them. The newspaper also strove to acquaint whites "with (the) noble deeds and heroism of the colored American," thereby justifying "Their claim for justice and equal treatment."<sup>2</sup> Known by her family and friends as "The Rebel," the dynamic young female editor vigorously attacked the slave interests in the United States and Canada. Turning over the literary and business departments of the paper to her brother Isaac Shadd and friend Henry Ford Douglass, Miss Shadd devoted her time to increasing the newspaper's circulation while frequently contributing editorials. Her lectures succeeded in achieving an increase in the number of subscribers, including regions where there were few blacks. She also publicly solicited aid for runaway slaves doing so at great risk to her own personal welfare.

As a means of educating the black community to the forms of exploitation within their midst, Miss Shadd attacked organizations which she believed exploited the community by encouraging dependence, rather than instilling self-reliance. Because she viewed dependence as "materially compromising over manhood,"<sup>3</sup> Miss Shadd attacked the Refugee Home Society which had the stated purposes of assisting black settlement on low cost land in western Ontario. As a result of her findings, she felt the Society was selling land to black refugees at a much higher cost than if purchased directly from the government. She thought that the Society fostered subserviency among blacks while exploiting them. Because of these forceful opinions and others, Mary Shadd was often the subject of much of the criticism that the Provincial Freeman received. Not only were her opinions strongly stated but they were also issued by a woman whose position as the first black newspaperwoman on the continent was unique. This phenomena in itself probably accounted for much of the criticism.

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In 1856 Mary Shadd married a Toronto barber, Thomas F. Cary who had moved to Chatham and who was soon associated with the Freeman. Little is known of her married years, however, Mary Shadd Cary continued to befriend fugitive slaves and to edit the Provincial Freeman. During the years she operated a school for free blacks in Chatham, receiving financial assistance on several occasions from the American Missionary Association.

In 1858 radical abolitionist John Brown held his secret "convention" at the Chatham home of Isaac Shadd. The meeting brought Mary Shadd Cary's concern for the anti-slavery cause to a new height. Her interest in Brown was so deep that when the Harper's raid occurred, she began to compile notes on the raid's sole survivor, Osborne P. Anderson. As a result, Voice from Harper's Ferry, was published in 1861, as a tribute to the unsuccessful affair.

In 1864 during the Civil War, Mary Shadd Cary was appointed a Recruiting Officer for the Union Army. This office was the result of a special order by Governor Levi Morton of Indiana asking that Mrs. Cary serve in his state. Widowed sometime during the Civil War, Mary Shadd Cary moved to Washington, D. C. with her daughter Elizabeth where she taught for fifteen years in the city's school system and at the Howard University. She resided at 142<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> W Street, Northwest for five years from 1881 to 1885. From 1872-1874 she served as principal of the O Street School. While teaching she still continued to travel and to lecture. Since the issues of slavery and abolition had been resolved, Mary Shadd Cary now discussed aspects of women's rights and the women's suffrage movement in addition to the necessity for the education and moral improvement of the newly emancipated freedmen. In 1878 her acknowledgement as a leader of the women's suffrage movement came when she spoke before the annual convention of the National Suffrage Association.

Mary Shadd Cary's interest in teaching was followed by an interest in the law. While teaching during the day and making occasional speaking engagements throughout the country, she began to study law at Howard University from 1869 until 1871. Ten years later she resumed her legal studies and graduated in June 1883, one of four women and the only black woman in the class to receive the LLB that year. Apparently she gave up her teaching position in 1884 and concentrated on the practice of law. Little is known of her legal practice except that there is no evidence that she was ever admitted to the bar. Undoubtedly, the courage and determination that characterized her earlier activity led Mrs. Cary into the study and practice of law so late in her life. She is recognized today as one of the first black women lawyers not only in Washington but also in the United States. While practicing law seems to have supplanted teaching as her means of livelihood, Mary Cary continued her interest in journalism by contributing to The New National Era and The Advocate newspapers. The rest of her life

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was devoted to these various interests and the raising of her daughter. In 1893 she died and was interred in Harmony Cemetary in Washington, D. C.

Mary Shadd Cary distinguished herself as one of the most outstanding women of her time. She has generally been recognized as the first black newspaperwoman on the North American continent and as co-editor of Canada's first anti-slavery newspaper the Provincial Freeman. Besides co-editing the newspaper and contributing editorials to it, she was also responsible for the publication of several pamphlets and articles in Washington, D. C. newspapers. Her concern for the welfare and survival of her race led to a long career in the teaching profession in which she not only taught, but also supervised and established a school. Her ability as an effective and commanding speaker was acknowledged across the country and was probably a factor in her selection as a recruiter for the Union Army. While little is actually know about her years in the legal profession in Washington, D. C., the fact that she dared and succeeded in undertaking such an endeavor so late in her life is further testimony to her courage, versatility and determination which were exhibited throughout her life.

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1. Sylvia G. L. Dannett, Profiles of Negro Womanhood (New York: American Book-Stratford Press, 1965), p. 150.
2. Ibid, p. 150.
3. Charles H. Wesley, In Freedom's Footstep (Washington, D. C.: Publisher's Association, Inc., 1969), p. 207.



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CONTINUATION SHEET Mary Ann Shadd Cary  
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Dannett, Sylvia G. L. Profiles of Negro Womanhood. New York: American Book-Stratford Press, 1964.

Lerner, Gerda. Black Women in White America. New York: Pantheon Books, 1972.

Wesley, Charles H. In Freedom's Footstep. Washington, D. C.: Publisher's Association, Inc., 1969.

Winks, Robin W. The Blacks in Canada. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971.

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Mary Shadd Cary

CONTINUATION SHEET House

ITEM NUMBER 11

PAGE Two (Researchers)

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Dr. Janette Harris  
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