

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

RECEIVED
HISTORIC PRESERVATION

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic WILLIAM C. SHARPLESS HOUSE

and/or common None

2. Location

street & number 5446 Wayne Avenue NA not for publication

city, town Philadelphia N/Avicinity of

state Pennsylvania code 42 county Philadelphia code 101

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Carl & Joy McHenry

street & number 5446 Wayne Avenue

city, town Philadelphia N/Avicinity of state Pennsylvania

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Philadelphia City Hall

street & number Room 153 City Hall

city, town Philadelphia state Pennsylvania

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title None has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date federal state county local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input checked="" 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
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date <u>N/A</u>

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The William C. Sharpless House, located at 5446 Wayne Avenue is situated on the southwest corner of Wayne Avenue and Schoolhouse Lane in Central Germantown. It is a three story, coursed Wissahickon schist structure with decorative quoining, scalloped shingling, lattice and clapboard detail work; gable and hipped, terra cotta shingle roof lines; and a full basement. The building, located on a rectangular shaped lot of land 70 feet wide and extending a depth of 182 feet 6 inches to the adjoining property line on Schoolhouse Lane, rests on a slight knoll set back off street grade. Defining the boundaries of the property is a wrought iron, hair pin fence with fleur-de-lis detailing and small stone pillars flanking the gateway.

Built in the Queen Anne style, circa 1886, the Sharpless House characterizes nineteenth century suburban residential architecture and is quite similar in design to the work of George W. Hewitt, Hewitt, known for his fine residences in Chestnut Hill and Germantown, designed many commissions for Henry H. Houston, one of the major forces in the development of Philadelphia's nineteenth century suburban communities. Although the Sharpless House can only be attributed to the work of Hewitt, it has the polish and refinement of an architect built building, reflecting the popular taste of the time.

The period, 1872-1913, is often referred to as the Age of Elegance. It was during this time that men like Charles Lock Eastlake greatly influenced interior design and finish, elevating it to an integral part of nineteenth century residential design. Eastlake, an English architect, long reigned as the voice of authority in American interior design, strongly advocated the use of encaustic tiles as an effective and durable means of interior decoration. Mr. Sharpless, a purveyor of fine marbles and architectural tile, obviously a student of Mr. Eastlake's philosophy, incorporated his principles and some of the finest European and American decorative tiles into his Germantown villa.

Queen Anne architecture popularized in America after it appeared at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition of 1876, is characterized by an asymmetrical facade; irregular plan and massing; variety of colors, textures and wall surfaces; varied fenestration; multiple roof lines and porch gables. Although the Sharpless House is more restrained than many examples of this style, it is an excellent example of this school of design.

The first floor facade is masked by a large enclosed wood and glass porch, originally open, with segmented lattice work archways and a large lattice work pediment above the entry. On the left side is a three part, projecting bay, on the right side is a large, single window with segmentally arched stone lintels over both. The main entrance has a reveal frame, segmentally arched opening with double leaf, wood frame, single light doors, segmentally arched single light transom and brass door escutcheon embossed with a shell motif.

Highlighting the second floor is an oriel window, triangular in plan, with double hung stained glass over single light sash; crowned by a pedimented, scalloped shingle hood with large brackets. One large segmentally arched double hung 2 over 2 window and two smaller segmentally arched double hung 1 over 1 window, both with segmentally arched, cut stone lintels, completes the second floor fenestration.

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The hipped roof line extends down to the third floor where two gable ends, of varying sizes, both clad with scalloped wood shingling, have been introduced. The larger gable, finished with a molded wood barge board and single pediment, houses a tripartite, double hung one over one window, while the smaller gable is decorated with a clapboard pediment and double hung sash. Capping the building is a simple, molded wood cornice with exposed rafters and large, solid paired brackets at the building ends. Two large brick chimneys with fluted caps are located on the left side and rear of the building.

In the early 1900's a two story addition was put on the right side of the house, enlarging the dining room and second floor bedroom areas. The first floor is covered with schist; scalloped shingles and clapboard veneer on the second floor; and a slate shingle pedimented roof. Yet another two story addition was put on the rear of the structure in 1950. Two small, open wood porches, one on the left side of the house and one on the rear, both with turned wood balusters and slate shingle roofs, provide access to the yard.

At the rear of the property is a one and one-half story brick stable with stone quoining; saw tooth shingling on the upper story; two large diagonal pattern batten doors, hipped roof with projecting gable front; large decorated brackets; shed roof dormer and cupola with weathervane. The drive up to the stable is paved with cobbles.

The Sharpless House, while typical in interior layout to other nineteenth century suburban residences, is exquisitely and unusually finished with some of the finest English and American encaustic tiles available for interior use. Mr. Sharpless, a partner in the firm of Sharpless and Watts, agents and importers of fine tiles and marbles, obviously selected the best of their inventory for his new Germantown villa on Wayne Avenue.

The inner vestibule provides the first hint of the richness of the interior finishes, beginning with the mosaic tiled floor, decorated with bands, checker boards, greek key and diamond patterns done in blue, brown and white tiles. A hexagon with a star pattern and six sceptres radiating out from the center, and four star shaped designs in each corner, define the flooring. The walls are tiled in a combination of colors, patterns and texture, beginning with brown base tiles, ochre, blue and brown dado tiles imprinted with pointsettias; another band of brown tiles; blue and white transfer tiles with a pear branch motif; and brown, red, white and green embossed majolica enamel tiles from the Minton China Works. Set in below the ceiling, on either side of the hallway, are exquisite hand painted tile panels depicting Victorian hunting scenes, both signed "Slater". Albert Slater was one of the premier tile painters working in the 1880's, for the Minton Hollins Tile Works, Stokes on Trent, England. "Slater was an extremely skilled tile painter whose approach was more graphic than realistic. He undertook a considerable amount of work for Minton Hollins and Co. for which he produced large decorative panels ranging from Landseer - type animal studies to Victorian bathing scenes."¹ These handsome panels, although masked because of their location, are perhaps the most outstanding tile work in the house. The inner vestibule doors are double leaf wood with a single light transom, these doors are not however, original.

¹Austwick, J&B. The Decorated Tile, An Illustrated History of English Tile Making and Design, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York 1980 p. 105

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Entering the interior hallway, the floor tiles are particularly interesting. "Mosaic tiles" made by a German company, Sinzic Amrhein, stamped onto the back of the tiles, cover the main floor area. These tiles, which appear to be made of individual mosaic tiles, are in fact, a single pre-formed tile executed in brown, beige and blue, designed with an ogee arch pattern and guilloche banding. The process of creating this type of mosaic tiles began in France in the 1850's and was perfected and patented in England. "By incising their shape on a large panel, the incisions later being filled with cement, the result being indistinguishable from a genuine mosaic except that each panel is identical."² These tiles represent the only German decorative tiles in the house. At the doorway of each room, on the first floor, is a band of Minton Hollins tiles set in a geometric pattern of blue, white, brown and beige. The L-shaped hallway leading around to the kitchen area has a segmentally arched doorway with arched door, four wood panels with two beveled glass lights and single light side lights and wood dado. The corridor wainscoting is covered in lincrusta walton, a nineteenth century design technique where paper is pressed to form a pattern. In this case, the lower portion of the wainscot is designed to resemble stuccoing and the banding is pressed with a guilloche pattern.

The first floor is laid out on one level, with three rooms located off the main hall and two rooms behind the stair case. Both the library and front parlor have massive double leaf, six panel library doors with brass pulls, framed by a molded oak surround incised with a bulls eye panel along the top. On the left, off the hall is the library, simply detailed with the exception of the fireplace. The wooded mantelpiece is decorated with delicate wood carvings in a leaf and vine pattern. Posts supporting the mantel shelf have Eastlake style floral carvings. Delicate hand painted tiles showing Pre-Raphaelite style figures - women in classical dress and women's heads are interspersed with hand painted tiles with sunflower motifs, reminiscent of Japanese motifs. The figure tiles are signed "S.A." for Samuel Alcock, painter for the William Taylor Copeland Tiles Works on Stokes on Trent. "Of many other Copeland artists, the figure painting of Samuel Alcock is particularly fine and delicate."³

The second floor is laid out on one level with rooms opening off the oak parquet hallway. At the front of the house is a window seat with an oriel stained glass over a single light window. These lights are exquisitely detailed with multi-light pink glass and green jeweled sash and a circular pattern with floral and spider's web motifs done in vivid colors of purple, blue, red, yellow, grey and brown.

Three bedrooms, including the master bedroom suite, are located on the second floor. Immediately to the right off the stair landing is a medium sized room, simply detailed with a fireplace and marble top washstand. Closets flank the washstand, recessed into a decorative arched opening, which has a hand painted pink ceramic with bird motif. The mantelpiece is constructed of wood, decorated with paired supported consoles, turned wood columns, a cast iron firebox liner with a floral design, and hand painted tiles, of unknown origin, depicting oriental motifs.

²IBID page 60

³Cox, Warren. The Book of Pottery and Porcelain, Volume 1, Crown Publishers, New York, 1944 page 105

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Across the hall is a second bedroom with a small windowed alcove, giving the room a light airy atmosphere. The predominant feature of this room is the fireplace with beautiful hand painted Thomas Copeland robin's egg blue tiles depicting pre-Raphaelite women and cherubic youths. Although not signed, these tiles have the delicate detailing and ethereal quality of Samuel Alcock's work. The mantel frame, simply executed in wood with a segmentally arched center frieze and brackets supporting the mantel shelf, enhance the beauty of the tiles.

Connecting french doors with sunburst fanlights, open in to the master bedroom. High-lighting the room is the fireplace with magnificent hand painted mantel and hearth tiles, depicting vividly colored parrots, cockatoos and sparrows in natural surroundings. Dominating the mantelpiece is the hearth, displaying a majestic peacock, tail feathers slightly spread, surrounded by a lily pond and other fauna. The hearth is signed "Dixon", possibly a student of Albert Slater, since his work bears a striking resemblance to panels done by Slater portraying pheasants and grouses.⁴ Natural light to the room is provided by double hung one over one windows. Behind the bedroom is a modern bathroom and dressing room area; a sunporch at the very rear of the building, runs the width of the buildings.

The second floor bathroom is a statement of elegance, decorated almost completely with a mixture of English lithograph tiles, plain English tiles and Trent Tiles, an American tile manufacturer located in New Jersey. Covering the upper portion of the walls are burgundy and cream lithograph tiles with a snow flake design, of unknown origin, but likely English; mottled green circular leaf Trent border tiles done in a patented form called "alto-relievo" or high relief, and a patterned yellow and green encaustic wainscot tile. A magnificent wood frame, tiled tub with a plain cream tile liner, blue and cream border tiles and a wainscot tiling around the outside of the tub. A marble top, porcelain lined sink with mottled green and pink decorative tile base and brass legs inset with ladies heads indicates the popularity of decorative tiles for interior use in the nineteenth century house. An exquisite stain glass window provides a decorative juxtaposition to the handsome tile detailing.

The staircase leading to the third floor is handsomely detailed with turned wood balusters and decorative newel post; a double hung 28 over 2 stained glass and plain light window is located at the intermediate stair landing. The third floor, originally servants quarters, contains four simple rooms and a bathroom. An attic level provides storage space.

The William C. Sharpless House remains, largely intact both on the interior and the exterior, displaying some of the finest examples of architectural tiling design and finish. Inlaid mosaic tiles in the hearth, set in floral and diamond patterns, done in red, brown, and green tiles completes the piece. An original gas fixture, electrified, hangs from the center of the ceiling.

More ornate detailing may be found in the front parlor, enhanced by oak parquet flooring; walnut trim around the door and window frames; flutes base board moldings and molded wood

⁴Austwick, J&B. The Decorated Tile, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York page 104, plate no. 278

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cornice. The library doors are "sandwiched" with an oak surface on the hall side and walnut on the library side. A segmentally arched alcove houses two single windows flanking a center double window, all with molded wood surround and recessed walnut shutters. The single windows have solid panel shutters, while the center window has solid and operable louvered shutters. A large floor to ceiling window, facing Wayne Avenue has the same molding and shutter treatment. Highlighting the room is a gas fireplace, wooden mantel and mirrored overmantel, handsomely decorated in Eastlake design. The overmantel mirror is trimmed with bead and reel molding, flanked by turned wood balusters with volutes, a scalloped and dentiled cornice with cove molding carved with reeds and fauna, and pinnacles. The hearth elaborately appointed with classical style, green Cambridge Art Tiles, represent one of only two American tiles found in the house. These tiles, popular in the 1880's depict women in classical dress posed with children and cherubic youths playing with goats, alternating with festoon, tulip pattern and urn panels. The hearth is enhanced by a shell and leaf motif kerb with canted ends, apparently added when the fireplace was converted to gas, and mottled tiles with shell banding. The gas heating unit is housed in a brass frame with fleur-de-lis and egg molding. A handsome, simple crystal chandelier, originally gas lit, has been converted for electrical use.

Immediately behind the parlor is a formal dining room finished with ochre colored lincrusta walton wainscotting and wood molding trim. A single leaf, six panel oak door links the front parlor with the dining room. This space was enlarged as part of the first building addition, adding an alcove with two double hung, one over one windows, deep sills and the same window surround treatment as in the other rooms. Set into the corner is a built-in oak china cabinet. The fireplace, resting catty corner to the wall, originally situated along part of the exterior wall, has an unusual hammered copper mantel with raised figures of cherubs and a fire, fountains, peacocks and ladies all done in exquisite and precise detail. Rust and black transfer tiles done in a floral motif, possibly from the Minton China Works, are set into the firebox, and plain brown tiles in the hearth. A simple wood mantel with fluted pilaster, supported by decorative brackets and an unadorned mantel shelf, provide an appropriate frame for the copper work. The dining room opens onto a modern kitchen housed in the 1950 addition.

The old pantry with built-in cabinets serves as a walk through to the original kitchen, now serving as an office. Diamond pattern Minton Hollins tiles in vivid shades of blue and brown decorate the floor while tiles with brown circles set into each corner; brick and yellow triangular shaped tiles and English floral & leaf lithograph tiles, with a Registry stamp dating from 1879, decorate the walls.

The main staircase is turned with two wide steps leading to a small landing. The stairs have plain risers and treads with boxed oanel stair ends, diagonally cut to match the slope of the stair. An ornately carved, large wood newel post with boxed paneling and gadrooning trim along the top; lincrusta walton wainscotting; bronze statuette of a women holding a globe, turned wood baluster and heavy wood railing finish the stairway. At the intermediate level landing is a deep sill; a three part stained glass window, the center panel stolen, and side panels richly detailed with a floral and jeweled design in shades of red, green, turquoise, blue purple and orange.

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 type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1886 **Builder/Architect** Attributed to G.W. Hewitt

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Germantown in the nineteenth century offered a unique opportunity for wealthy Philadelphians seeking an alternative to in-town living. The opening of the Pennsylvania Railroad, west of Germantown Avenue, in 1884, made suburban living accessible while maintaining business and social contacts in the city. Handsome, planned residential developments or "garden suburbs" such as Pelham and Chestnut Hill, and individually built neighborhoods such as Central Germantown flourished. Wealthy merchants and other notables commissioned local architects to build lavish villas, many constructed of local stone, to suit their particular lifestyles and positions in society.

During the period, 1870-1900, architecture reached a pinnacle, when architects, free to express themselves through their work, created a wide range of styles from frenzied Eclecticism to the reverential re-creation of classical form, and everything in between. Queen Anne, Eastlake, Shingle, and Revival designs were all represented in these new suburban communities which boasted the most modern, built-in conveniences and the most sophisticated interior design and finishes.

The quality and character to nineteenth century interior design also peaked in the years after the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition of 1876, as the use of decorative art tiles for interior use gained popularity. Lavish displays exhibiting European advances and production techniques of encaustic tiles played a significant role in showing the American public how art tiles could enhance the overall look, texture and dimension of their living quarters. "Eventually the fashion for tiles became an obsession. Tiles were everywhere: in the bathrooms, the bedroom, the kitchen, even in the garden, if they were not fixed to the walls, or floors, they were incorporated into the furniture."⁵

This new interest in interior design was also promulgated, in part, on the rise in popularity of design and aesthetic Critics, Charles Lock Eastlake author of Hints on Household Taste and Clarence Cook, author of House Beautiful, the design "bibles" of the nineteenth century. Eastlake, a student of the work of William Morris and John Ruskin, closely followed the principles of the Arts and Crafts Movement which promoted the "honest use of materials and frank expression of structure." High on his list of interior design materials was the use of encaustic tiles. Speaking about the advances in the production and use of tiles, Eastlake said in Hints on Household Taste, "It (tiles) has not only reached great technical perfection as far as material and colour are concerned, but aided by the designs supplied by many architects of acknowledged skill, has gradually become a means of decoration which for beauty of effect, durability, and cheapness has scarcely a parallel."⁶

⁵Austwick, J&B. The Decorated Tile. Charles Scribner's Sons pages 8 & 9

⁶Eastlake, Charles Lock. Hints on Household Taste, originally published 1868, reprinted Dover Publication, Inc. 1968 p. 50

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The Arts and Crafts Movement brought about many changes in the means of production of tiles including a shift from mass produced goods to more individualized designs and hand painted tiles, further elevating the quality of this medium to fine art applied to floors, walls and mantels.

William C. Sharpless, partner in a well known and respected Philadelphia firm, Sharpless and Watts, agents and importers of tiles, further promoted the principles of Eastlake in the arrangement and execution of interior tile designs for many of the most prestigious banking and commercial buildings in Center City. Their firm won a Medal for Progress at the Philadelphia Centennial, as well as a Silver Medal and Diploma from the Franklin Institute for their display at the 1885 Novelties Exhibition.

Clearly Mr. Sharpless turned his talents and trained eye to complete the interior design of his new Germantown residence. The Sharpless House contains some of the finest imported and American art tiles available in the nineteenth century; a statement of elegance both on the interior and exterior. Architectural tiles act as a primary finish to the room rather than wall paper, paintings and other objet d'art as an enhancement of these spaces. The combination of warm woods, muted tones, stained glass and unusual decorative tiles creates a spectacular, commodious atmosphere. In all, the Sharpless House is an excellent, intact example of suburban residential design complete with some of the finest interior finishes, located in one of Philadelphia's elegant, nineteenth century commuter suburbs.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Brief of Title - City Hall
Eastlake, Charles Lock, Hints on Household Taste
Austwick, J&B. The Decorated Tile

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property .3

Quadrangle name Germantown

Quadrangle scale 7.5 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	8	4	8	14	9	10	10	4	4	3	10	8	9	0
Zone			Easting					Northing						

B

Zone			Easting					Northing						

C

Zone			Easting					Northing						

D

Zone			Easting					Northing						

E

Zone			Easting					Northing						

F

Zone			Easting					Northing						

G

Zone			Easting					Northing						

H

Zone			Easting					Northing						

Verbal boundary description and justification

Located on the southern corner of Wayne Avenue and Schoolhouse Lane. Beginning at the intersection of the southwest side of Wayne Avenue and southeast side of School Street; thence extending along the southwest side of Wayne Avenue, southeastwardly 70 feet to a

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Elizabeth R. Mintz

organization ELIZABETH R. MINTZ date July, 1983

street & number 301 Cherry Street telephone (215) 592 - 0465

city or town Philadelphia state Pa.

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.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

Dr. Larry E. Tise

title State Historic Preservation Officer date 11/23/83

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest: date

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

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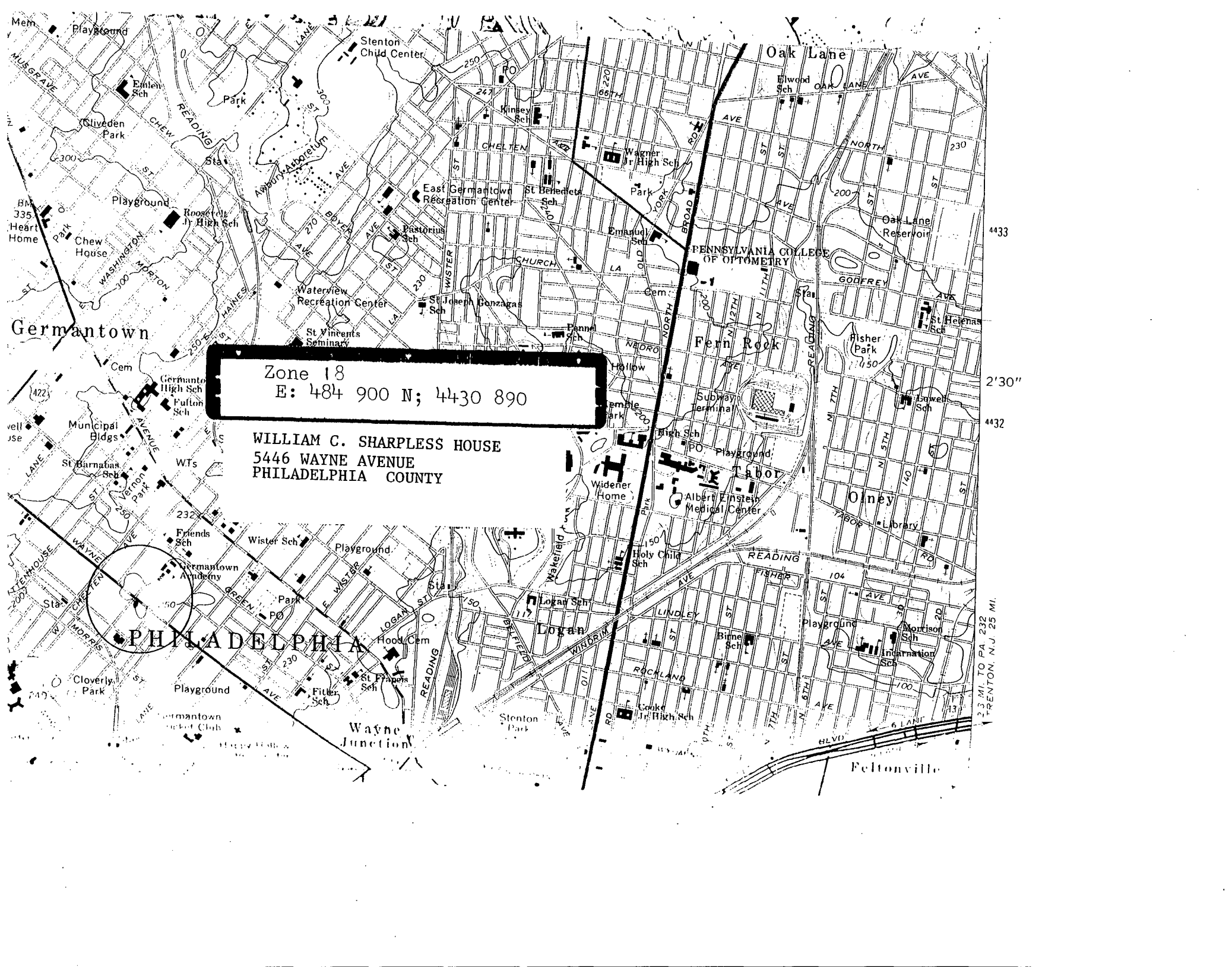


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corner of ground late of Andrew Weidener of which part was formerly part, southwest
184 feet, $2 \frac{19}{100}$ of an inch to a corner and the point of beginning.



Zone 18
E: 484 900 N; 4430 890

WILLIAM C. SHARPLESS HOUSE
5446 WAYNE AVENUE
PHILADELPHIA COUNTY

2.3 MI. TO PA. 232
TRENTON, N.J. 25 MI.