PPS RECORDS FOR
140 FREEMAN PARKWAY
PLAT 86, LOT 449

ARTHUR L. and WINIFRED B. ALDRED HOUSE
Architect/Builder: Marshall B. Martin
Landscape Architects: Olmsted Brothers
Built 1925

DESCRIPTION:

“A broadly proportioned 2-story, hip-roofed, brick-clad Colonial Revival dwelling with side wings and Federal-derived detailing, including splayed window lintels with keystones, an engaged column and pediment enframement around a recessed doorway, and a modillion cornice. The Olmsted firm laid out the grounds, including terrace arbor, service drives, a garden area, and boundary planting. The landscape scheme was implemented between 1924 and 1932.”

--Freeman Plat Historic District National Register Nomination, 1995.

A one-story, hip roofed, wood-frame addition to the east side and a one-story, hip roofed, brick, attached 3 car garage at the north side were both added in 2005.

The house stands on a 17,362 sq.ft. lot on the southeast corner of Freeman Parkway and Elmgrove Avenue, in a block bounded by Freeman Parkway on the south, Taber Avenue on the west, Hazard Avenue on the north, and Elmgrove Avenue on the east.

HISTORY:

Arthur L. Aldred, who was president of the Gladding Department Store at 291 Westminster Street in downtown Providence, was living at 552 Angell Street when he purchased two adjacent vacant lots on Freeman Parkway from John R. Freeman in 1924. By 1925 this house was constructed at the corner of Freeman Parkway and Elmgrove Avenue, and Aldred had taken up residence. The Aldred family continued to own the property until 1947.

DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT:¹

For more than two centuries after Providence was founded, the area where 140 Freeman Parkway now stands was part of the Cat Swamp, a large area of both wetlands and arable land located about two miles northeast of the original settlement area, remote and not readily accessible.

¹ From “Historic and Architectural Resources of the East Side, Providence,” by Robert Owen Jones, published by the R.I. Historical Preservation Commission, 1989; and previous PPS marker reports.
In the late 18th century, Dexter Brown owned a 51-acre farm in the Cat Swamp, south and east of today’s Morris Avenue and Sessions Street. (Both streets were originally part of a zigzag extension of Olney Street that ran north and east through the Cat Swamp to what is now Rochambeau Avenue). After Dexter Brown’s death in 1810, his farm was divided in two: the western half (abutting Morris Avenue and Sessions Street) passed to his daughter Sally Brown, who died intestate in 1849. To settle a lawsuit over the disposition of her property, the Sally Brown Farm Plat of 1851 subdivided the farm amongst 16 separate beneficiaries. The southern boundary line of Lot 4 of the Sally Brown Farm Plat is approximately where Freeman Parkway is today.

In the early 19th century, institutional uses began to appear in northeast Providence (Butler Hospital, the Moses Brown School, Swan Point Cemetery), capitalizing on its relative isolation and scenic qualities. But most of this area remained undesirable for residential development until the mid- to late 19th century. As the city’s population grew and its transportation systems were enhanced, suburban residential neighborhoods began to take shape on the East Side.

In 1896 John R. Freeman, a civil engineer, arrived in Providence from Boston to assume the presidency of the Manufacturers’ Mutual Insurance Company. Five years later, in early 1901, Freeman purchased a large tract of land on the east side of Morris Avenue and built himself a home. Over the next several years, Freeman acquired some 50 additional acres of adjacent land in an effort to forestall undesirable development near his residence. His holdings eventually extended north almost as far as Sessions Avenue, east to Cole Avenue, and south to Laurel Avenue. His tax burden for this land was quite significant, and thus, after failing to persuade the City to develop a public park on part of his property, Freeman decided to drain his lands and plat them for residential development.

The John R. Freeman Plat #1, recorded in 1916, covers a large land area that includes Doyle, Upton, Hazard, Laurel, Wayland, Elmgrove, and Taber Avenues, Freeman Parkway, Barberry Hill, and Abbotsford and Rose Courts. (Four additional plats were recorded later.) “Its layout incorporated features first utilized in the designs of the best 19th century rural cemeteries and garden suburbs. Upton, Hazard, Freeman, and Barberry Hill, all new streets, were plotted with gentle curves, and a triangular parcel at Freeman and Elmgrove was reserved as a small green. Wayland, Elmgrove, Doyle, and Laurel, all previously platted, were partially realigned to introduce curved sections. The Freeman Plat thus has greater variety than the standard grid used for most East Side subdivisions. … The verges bordering streets and sidewalks are much wider than average. … some of the verges, most notably those along Freeman Parkway, are planted with ornamental shrubs and trees … In addition, the average lot size in the Freeman Plat is 8,000 sq.ft., 60% larger than the standard Providence house lot, and the parcels were sold with deed restrictions to control the type and quality of construction.”

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2 Jones, p. 27.
Despite Freeman’s careful attention to detail in both planning and execution, which resulted in an extremely attractive and livable neighborhood, the Freeman Plat developed fairly slowly at first, but the pace quickened once public utilities (water and sewer) and transportation (streetcars) were introduced. Some houses, like 140 Freeman Parkway, were designed by architects for private clients; others were built on spec by developers and contractors.

**DESIGNATIONS**

140 Freeman Parkway is located within the Freeman Plat Historic District, listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1995; the inventory calls it the “Arthur L. Aldred House, 1923,” and indicates both the architects’ and landscape architects’ names. [Note that deeds and tax records indicate that the house was actually built in 1925.] The house is not located in a local historic district zone.

**RECORDS (All Records were found in Providence City Hall unless otherwise noted).**

**Maps and Atlases (All in Archives unless otherwise noted)**

1798: “A Map of Owners of Lots in Providence,” compiled by Henry B. Chace in 1912, Plates VII and VIII. Shows “Cat Swamp Lane” (now Sessions Street) and the “Old Road to Pawtucket” (now Morris Avenue). The future site of Freeman Parkway lies well southeast of these roads, within a large lot of undeveloped land belonging to Phineas Brown. The shape of this lot is nearly identical to a lot shown on the 1857 city atlas as belonging to Candace Allen (see below).

1851: “A Plat of the Late Sally Brown Farm,” surveyed October 1850 by Lemuel Angell, recorded in Plat Book 4, Page 4 on July 5, 1851. Shows the division of the property east and south of Olney Street (now Morris Avenue and Sessions Street, respectively), in accordance with the settlement of the lawsuit brought by various heirs of Sally Brown (see Deed Book 121, Page 332). Lot #4, measuring 250,009 sq.ft., went to Charles A Nichols. The southern boundary line of Lot #4 approximately marks part of the future Freeman Parkway right-of-way. *(Registry of Deeds)*

1857: “Map of Providence,” by H.F. Walling, page B5. Shows the future site of Freeman Parkway lying well south and east of the zigzag course of “Olney Street” (now Sessions Street and Morris Avenue, respectively) within a large lot of undeveloped land consistent with the size and shape of Lot #4 on the Sally Brown Farm Plat. Adjacent to the east end of Lot #4 is a sizeable vacant parcel belonging to Candace Allen. The boundary between the two is the approximate future site of 140 Freeman Parkway.

1875: “Atlas of the City of Providence,” by G.M. Hopkins Co., Vol. 1 (Wards 1, 2 and 3). Plate J. Shows Taber and Elmgrove Avenues only extended as far north as the south side of Laurel Avenue. The future site of 140 Freeman Parkway is between a 250,009 sq.ft. lot belonging to Charles A. Nichols (Lot #4, referring to the Sally Brown Farm Plat), and a 26,021 sq.ft. lot belonging to Sarah S. Allen. Sarah Allen’s lot has 33 separate lot
numbers within it, but no lot lines; the lot number closest to the future site of 140 Freeman Parkway is Lot #37. Most of the land in this area is vacant and undeveloped. [Note: no plat in the name of Sarah S. Allen is contained within the plat index at the Registry of Deeds.] The area remains largely vacant and undeveloped.

**1882:** “Atlas of the City of Providence” by G.M. Hopkins Co., Plate 4. Shows Elmgrove Avenue extended all the way north to Olney Street (now Sessions Street); Taber Avenue in the same location as on the 1875 map; and Howell Street (now Hazard Avenue) in place intersecting with Elmgrove. The future site of 140 Freeman Parkway is between a large lot (size not specified) belonging to “Nicholas,” and Lot #37 of the Cat Swamp Lots. [Note: no plat in the name of Cat Swamp Lots was found within the plat index at the Registry of Deeds.] The area remains largely vacant and undeveloped.

**1895:** “Atlas of the City of Providence” by Everts & Richards, Plate 6 (pages 32-33). Shows two large rectangular tracts of land: one on the south side of Hazard Avenue between Olney Street (now Morris Avenue) and Elmgrove Avenue (253,127 sq.ft), and the other on the west side of Elmgrove between Hazard and Everett Avenues (103,312 sq.ft). The future site of 140 Freeman Parkway lies roughly on the diagonal boundary line between these two large lots. The area remains largely vacant and undeveloped.

**1902:** Assessors Plat Maps, Plat 86. (Note that the present Assessor’s Lot number for 140 Freeman Parkway, Lot 449, did not apply to this property in 1902.) Shows the same lot layout as seen on the 1895 map. The future site of 140 Freeman Parkway lies roughly on the diagonal boundary line between Lot 116 (253,127 sq.ft) on the south side of Hazard Avenue and Lot 114 (103,312 sq.ft) on the west side of Elmgrove Avenue.

**1908:** “Atlas of the City of Providence” by L.J. Richards Co., Plate 6. Shows the early layout of Freeman Parkway (not named on this map) as a private access road to John R. Freeman’s residence, which stood just north of the north end of Arlington Avenue. This street extends only as far east as Taber Avenue, although dotted lines on the map indicate an intention to take it as far east as Elmgrove Avenue. A large block bounded by Taber, Doyle, Elmgrove, and Everett Avenues is shown as one single vacant parcel, not yet subdivided into house lots, belonging to John R. Freeman (lot size not indicated). Streetcar lines, water and sewer lines are shown on Elmgrove Avenue.

**1916:** “Plat No. 1 of Land Belonging to John R. Freeman,” surveyed June 1916 by W.V. Polleys, recorded in Plat Book 34, Page 24, and copied on Plat Card 1036. This map shows 198 numbered house lots along a series of new streets, roughly bounded by Doyle Avenue on the north, Cole Avenue on the east, Laurel Avenue on the south, and Arlington Street and Morris Avenue on the west. Freeman Parkway has a curving layout from Morris to Cole, intersecting Abbotsford and Rose Courts, Arlington Street, and Taber, Elmgrove, and Wayland Avenues along the way. The lot at the southeast corner of Freeman Parkway and Elmgrove Avenue is numbered #95, measuring 83.25 feet on Freeman and 99.04 feet on Elmgrove. Immediately to the west is Lot #94, measuring 81.12 feet on Freeman, 116.01 feet on the west, 81 feet on the north, and 108.94 feet
on the east. These two lots together are the future site of 140 Freeman Parkway. No buildings are shown on this map. *(Registry of Deeds)*

1918: “Atlas of the City of Providence” by G.M. Hopkins Co., Plate 21. Shows the block bounded by Freeman Parkway on the south, Taber Avenue on the west, Hazard Avenue on the north, and Elmgrove Avenue east. The entire block is vacant; all house lots belong to John R. Freeman. (The Freeman Plat No. 1 of 1916 is readily discernible on this map; most of it is not yet developed, and all of it owned by J.R. Freeman.) The lot at the southeast corner of Freeman Parkway and Elmgrove Avenue measures 8,546 sq.ft.; the lot abutting to the west contains 9,016 sq.ft. (these two add up to the current dimensions of the lot for 140 Freeman Parkway, 17,562 sq.ft.) The map references the John R. Freeman Plat No. 1 (no plat card number indicated. Water and sewer lines and streetcar service are shown on Elmgrove Avenue.

1926: “Atlas of the City of Providence” by G.M. Hopkins Co., Plate 21. Shows the brick house and separate outbuilding at 140 Freeman Parkway, standing on a 17,562 sq.ft. lot at the corner of Elmgrove Avenue, owned by A.L. Aldred. The streetcar lines are still shown on Elmgrove Avenue; water and sewer lines are now installed around the entire block, but only the south side of it is built out by this time. The map refers to the J.R. Freeman Plat No. 1 on plat card 1036.

1937: “Atlas of the City of Providence” by G.M. Hopkins Co., Plate 21. Shows the brick house and separate outbuilding at 140 Freeman Parkway, standing on a 17,562 sq.ft. lot at the corner of Elmgrove Avenue, owned by John E. Aldred etal. The streetcar lines are still shown on Elmgrove Avenue; water and sewer lines are not shown but did appear on earlier maps. The entire block is built out by this time, mostly with brick houses (as is typical of Freeman Parkway in general). The map refers to the J.R. Freeman Plat No. 1 on plat card 1036.

**Deeds (Registry of Deeds)**

Deed Book 652/Page 67: On November 5, 1923, John R. Freeman sold to Arthur L. Aldred, for $100, a parcel of land with improvements thereon, located on the north side of Freeman Parkway and the west side of Elmgrove Avenue, measuring 99.06 feet on Elmgrove, 164.01 feet on the north, 116.01 feet on the west, and 164.39 feet on Freeman Parkway. [Note: these dimensions correspond to Lots #94 and #95 on the Freeman Plat No. 1.] The deed was conveyed with several restrictions: setbacks of 20 feet must be maintained from both streets; setbacks of 12 feet on the west and north sides; no garage could be constructed within 40 feet of either Freeman Parkway or Elmgrove Avenue unless contained within the dwelling; and the property could only be used for a single-family house and private garage until January 1, 1960 (shops, stables, and commercial garages were prohibited).

Deed Book 920/Page 415: On June 6, 1947, Frederick W. Aldred and the R.I. Hospital Trust Co., as surviving trustees under the will of Arthur L. Aldred late of Providence, deceased, sold to Abraham Blackman and Martha P. Blackman of Providence, for $1, a
parcel of land with buildings and improvements thereon, located on the north side of
Freeman Parkway and the west side of Elmgrove Avenue, measuring 99.06 feet on
Elmgrove, 164.01 feet on the north, 116.01 feet on the west, and 164.39 feet on
Freeman Parkway. Being the same premises conveyed to Arthur L. Aldred by John R.
Freeman by deed dated November 5, 1923, recorded in Deed Book 652, Page 67.

**Intent to Build Records (Archives)**

No records were found.

**Tax Records (Archives)**

*Tax records are available from 1827 to the present. Prior to 1854, tax records were
published in a book listing the property owner alphabetically by name, the total
assessment for any real and personal property (without specifying where real estate
was located), and the total tax due. Beginning in 1854, the city kept ledgers (organized
by property owner name) indicating the plat and lot number of any real estate and the
assessed value and taxes therefor.*

1923  Plat 86, Lot 449, owned by John R. Freeman of 235 Arlington Street, was
assessed for land valued at $4,100, and $0 for buildings.
Arthur L. Aldred is not listed in the 1923 tax book.

1924  Plat 86, Lot 449, owned by Arthur L. Aldred of 552 Angell Street, was
assessed for land valued at $4,100, and $20,000 for buildings. [This
indicates construction of the house.]

**Directories (Archives)**

*Providence City Directories contain a street directory, noting all existing streets, and a
residents’ directory organized alphabetically by last name; these also included a house
directory, listing residential buildings by street address, from 1892-1894.*

1924  Arthur L. Aldred, president 291 Westminster Street, home 552 Angell
Street. [291 Westminster Street is listed in the 1923-1924 House
Directory as B.H. Gladding Dry Goods Co.]

1925  Arthur L. Aldred, president 291 Westminster Street, home 140 Freeman
Parkway
[Note: other Aldreds associated with Gladdings Dept. Store:
Mrs. Anna L. Aldred, clerk 291 Westminster, home 111 Laura Street
Frederick W. Aldred, sec/treas 291 Westminster, home 25 Grotto Avenue]

1947  Mrs. Winifred B. Aldred, home 140 Freeman Parkway

1948  Abraham Blackman, home 140 Freeman Parkway
Providence House Directories were published separately from the city directory, 1895-1937 (published biannually from 1901). These directories list all residential buildings by street address, and also contain a street directory. This directory is sometimes a year behind the city directory.

1923-1924  The address 140 Freeman Parkway is not listed.

1925-1926  140 Freeman Parkway, Arthur L. Aldred, general manager.

Assessor’s Chain of Title Cards  (Assessor’s Office)
PLAT 86, LOT 449 – FREEMAN PARKWAY

John R. Freeman owned the property as of June 15, 1917.
Arthur L. Aldred owned the property as of March 1, 1924.
John E. Aldred, Frederick W. Aldred, and R.I. Hospital Trust Co., in trust under the will of Arthur L. Aldred, owned the property as of May 1933.
R.I. Hospital Trust Co., John E. Aldred, and Frederick W. Aldred, in trust under the will of Arthur L. Aldred, owned the property as of December 1942.
R.I. Hospital Trust Co. and Frederick W. Aldred, as trustees under the will of Arthur L. Aldred, owned the property as of November 1945.
Abraham Blackman and Martha P. Blackman owned the property as of June 1947.
Martha P. Blackman owned the property as of December 1952.
Paul Bardach and wife Bessie Bardach owned the property as of December 1954.
Bessie Bardach owned the property as of December 1955.
Robert A. Reisman and wife Marcia S. Reisman owned the property as of December 1957.
Robert A. Reisman and wife Marcia S. Reisman owned the property as of December 1958.

Note:  No subsequent owners after 1958, including the current owners Heather and Brian Bell, are indicated on the chain of title card.

Research compiled by Kathryn J. Cavanaugh
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