

**PPS RECORDS FOR
173 Morris Avenue
PLAT 86, LOT 425**

**FISHER-SAMDPERIL HOUSE
Built 1928**

DESCRIPTION:

173 Morris Avenue is a 2-story, 3-bay facade, rock-faced-concrete-block-and stucco-clad, hip-roof dwelling with a 1 story pedimented entrance porch centered on the facade.

The house stands on a 7,602 sq. ft. lot on the east side of Morris Avenue, between Freeman Parkway and Hazard Avenue. The lot is the second lot south of Hazard Avenue. It has about 79 feet of frontage and measures about 93 feet deep on the north and about 104 feet deep on the south.

HISTORY:

In November 1927, developer Harry Fisher purchased 5 lots on the east side of Morris Avenue, which he recorded as the Harry Fisher Plat. Lot "B" in this plat was the future site of 173 Morris Avenue. (A small southern portion of Lot "A" was later joined with Lot "B.") Although the parcel of 5 lots was transferred to Fisher "with all buildings and improvements thereon," not all of the lots had houses on them, because the deed included specific restrictions on the construction of new buildings.

A building permit was not found for 173 Morris Avenue, but Plat 86 Lot 425 first appears in tax records in 1928, with Harry Fisher as the owner of a building on that lot, so it seems clear that Fisher built the present house shortly after purchasing the land. Fisher quickly sold the property in August 1928 to George and Fannie Samdperil, who became the first occupants of the house. Thus, the house is given the name Fisher-Samdperil House.

DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT:¹

For more than two centuries after Providence was founded, the area where 173 Morris Avenue 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.

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

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.

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."²

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 were designed

² Jones, p. 27.

by architects for private clients; others (such as 173 Morris Avenue) were built speculatively by developers and contractors.

DESIGNATIONS:

Listed on the National Register of Historic Places as a contributing building within the Freeman Plat Historic District. The inventory in the NR nomination identifies the building as the George and Fannie Sandperil House (ca 1928.)

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: Plate VII shows that the future site of 173 Morris Avenue appears to lie on the Dexter Brown Farm to the east of the "Road to Providence and the Old Road to Pawtucket" (Hope Street) and north of land owned by Phineas Brown and the road to Governor Fenner's and Moses Brown's Bridge.

1857: "Map of Providence," by H.F. Walling, Page B5 (11) shows the future site of 173 Morris Avenue on land bounded by Olney Street on the north and west and Friend Street to the south. The area contains linear lots of land owned by Frederick Smith, George Mason, Ann Miller, and Charles Potter (heirs of Sally Brown, daughter of Dexter Brown).

1875: "Atlas of the City of Providence," by G.M. Hopkins Co., Vol. 1 (Ward 1), Plate J shows the area to the north of Arlington Avenue and the Friends Yearly Meeting School House laid out in six large undeveloped lots of land under private ownership. The future site of 173 Morris Avenue lies on land owned by Chas. A. Nichols containing 250,009 sq. ft. There appears to be a driveway and possibly a stable-like structure (no longer extant).

1882: "Atlas of the City of Providence" by G.M. Hopkins Co., Plate 4, shows the future site of 173 Morris Avenue on the parcel of land owned by Nicholas et al (Charles A. Nicholas, Ann A. Miller, Mrs. A. G. Vanzandt) bounded by Olney Street (Morris Avenue) on the west, Howell Street (Hazard Avenue) on the north, and Cat Swamp lots and Friends Yearly Meeting School House lot on the south and east. The area is undeveloped, but surveyed and platted.

1895: "Atlas of the City of Providence" by Everts & Richards, Plate 6, shows the future site of 173 Morris Avenue bounded by Olney Street on the west, Hazard Avenue on the north, Elmgrove Avenue on the east, and Arlington Avenue on the south. This large area is land is parceled but undeveloped, with the exception of the RI Homeopathic Hospital on Hazard Avenue.

1902: Assessors Plat Maps, Plat 86 shows the future site of 173 Morris Avenue lies in a large, undeveloped and unplatted parcel of land numbered 116 containing 253,127

square feet of land. The parcel is bounded by Morris Avenue on the west, Hazard Avenue on the north, Elmgrove Avenue on the east, and Arlington Avenue on the south.

1908: "Atlas of the City of Providence" by L.J. Richards Co.: Plate 6 shows a block bounded by Morris Avenue on the west, Hazard Avenue on the north, Taber Street on the east and a road not identified on the south (later Freeman Parkway.) The future site of 173 Morris Avenue lies within a large parcel on the northern corner of Morris and Hazard that runs to the east on Hazard Avenue and contains the School for Boys with buildings made of stone and brick and a frame house named the John R. Freeman Residence. Another large parcel of land bordering Morris Avenue and the Road "not identified" is owned by John R. Freeman. The total area including proposed streets is 1,095,449 square feet of land. The remaining area (approximately half of the block) is parceled. Water and sewer lines are shown on the map.

1918: "Atlas of the City of Providence" by G.M. Hopkins Co.: Plate 22 shows a block bounded by Morris Avenue on the west, Hazard Avenue on the north, a Private Way on the south (later Freeman Parkway) that turns to the north in the center of the block (later Abbotsford Court,) and Freeman Parkway to the east. The lot configurations have changed from 1908. A 4,512 square foot parcel of land on the corner of Morris and Hazard Avenues (numbered 151 Morris Avenue) has been carved out from the land that contains the Morris Heights School for Boys (private). The future site of 173 Morris Avenue is located within that parcel, containing 24,265 square feet of land and a stone building. There are water and sewer lines on the street and a street car line on Hope Street.

1919: "Plat No. 2 (Being a Revision of a Portion of Plat No. 1) of Land in Providence, RI Belonging to John R. Freeman surveyed (originally) June and December 1916. The Present Plat shows revised lines for Abbotsford Court." This map is recorded in Book 34 Page 39, and copied on Plat Card #1048. The map shows the block bounded by Morris Avenue on the west, Hazard Avenue on the north, Abbotsford Court on the east, and Freeman Parkway on the south. Six parcels are identified. The future site of 173 Morris Avenue lies within the large parcel #109 that has 62.6' of frontage on Morris Avenue.

1926: "Atlas of the City of Providence" by G.M. Hopkins Co., Plate 22. The block is bounded by Morris Avenue on the west, Hazard Avenue on the north, Abbotsford Court on the east and Freeman Parkway on the south. The lot dimensions have further changed from 1918. #151 Morris Avenue (the corner lot) contains 3,995 sq. ft. John R. Freeman is identified as the owner of 18,295 square foot lot containing the Stone House on Hazard Avenue. He is also the owner of two lots to the south that contains 7,828 sq. ft. and 5,782 sq. ft. Water and sewer lines are in place on the street. Reference to John Freeman Plat No. 2 Plat Card #1048.

1927: "The Fisher Plat" by J. A. Latham and Son recorded in Plat Book 37 Page 88, and copied on Plat Card 1112, shows five lots identified as Lots A, B, C, D, and E, bounded by Morris Avenue on the west, Hazard Avenue on the north, Abbotsford Court

on the east, and lots owned by Goldsmith and Mary Hartwell on the south. Lot A contains 5,557 sq. ft. of land and runs 62' southerly on the east side of Morris Avenue and 87' on the south side of Hazard Avenue. Lot B is the second lot south of Hazard Avenue and runs 67' on the east side of Morris Avenue, and contains 6,570 sq. ft. Lot C contains 7,042 sq. ft. and runs 65.60' on the east side of Morris. Lot D (7,826 sq. ft.) and Lot E (8,482 sq. ft.) lie to the east of these lots along Abbotsford Court. No buildings or owners are shown on this map.

1937: "Atlas of the City of Providence" by G.M. Hopkins Co.: Plate 22 shows the block bounded by Morris, Hazard, Abbotsford Court and Freeman Parkway. There is a stone or concrete building at 173 Morris Avenue, standing on a 7,042 sq. ft. lot, which is the second lot south of Hazard Avenue. The maps identifies #173 and the 7,042 sq. ft. lot to the south as owned by Samdperil Realty Co. Water and sewer lines are in place on the street and a street car line is on Hope Street. The area is developed. Reference to the Fisher Plat, Plat Card 1112.

Deeds (Registry of Deeds)

DB 708/30: On November 16, 1927, John R. Freeman and Elizabeth Clarke Freeman of Providence sold to George T. Foulkes, of Mansfield, Massachusetts, a tract or parcel of five lots (A, B, C, D, E) with all buildings and improvements thereon.

DB 703/354: On November 23, 1927, George T. Foulkes of Mansfield, Massachusetts, sold to Harry Fisher of Providence, for \$10, that certain tract or parcel of 5 lots with all buildings and improvements thereon comprising of Lots A, B, C, D, E. The sale was subject to certain restrictions that no part of any building shall be located or maintained nearer than 20' from Morris Avenue or Abbotsford Court, nor nearer than 12' from the southerly line of Lots C or E. The parcel was also conveyed subject to a first mortgage of record of \$19,500 owed to John R. Freeman; the payment of the mortgage was to be assumed by Harry Fisher as part of the consideration.

DB 718/116: On August 13, 1928, John R. Freeman quitclaimed Lot "B" to Harry Fisher, for \$3,610, and released the parcel from the lien and operation of the mortgage from George T. Foulkes to John R. Freeman dated November 14, 1927 and recorded in Mortgage Book 574/469.

DB 716/261: On August 22, 1928, Harry and Ida Fisher of Providence sold to George Samdperil and his wife Fannie Samdperil, for \$10, a lot of land with all buildings and improvements thereon situated on the easterly side of Morris Avenue and bounded and described as Lot "B" in the deed from John R. Freeman to George T. Foulkes dated November 14, 1927. Said premises were conveyed subject to all the restrictions of record and subject to the City of Providence Taxes assessed in June 1928 and payable in October 1928; the payment of which was to be assumed as part of the consideration.

DB 720/202: On November 18, 1928, and recorded February 4, 1929, Harry Fisher of Providence sold to George and Fannie Samdperil of Providence, for \$10, that certain

small parcel of land situated on the easterly side of Morris Avenue and being the southerly portion of Lot A, described in the deed from John R. Freeman to George T. Foulkes dated November 14, 1927 and recorded November 16, 1927 in Book 708/30. The parcel is further described as situated 63.20' from the southeast corner of Hazard and Morris Avenues.

Intent to Build Records (Archives)

None 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.

1927 Ledger: No record was found for Plat 86 Lot 425 under the ownership of Harry Fisher, George T. Foulkes, or John Freeman.

1928 Ledger: Harry Fisher of 393 Lloyd Avenue owned Plat 86 Lot 425. The land was valued at \$3,820 and building valued at \$12,000.

Directories (Archives)

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, indicating the names of all residents and often their occupations as well. No distinction is made between owners and tenants. House directories also contain a street directory. This directory is sometimes a year behind the city directory.

House Directory

1930 #173 is occupied by George Samdperil, iron and metals.

City Directory

1928 George Samdperil and wife Annie lived at 341 Smith Street.

1929 George Samdperil (of NE Metal Co.) and wife Annie lived at 173 Morris Avenue.

1931 George and Fannie Samdperil lived at 173 Morris Avenue.

Assessor's Chain of Title Cards (Assessor's Office)

Thomas E. Hickey owned the property as of June 10, 1911.

The Lot Dropped as of March 1, 1922.

Harry Fisher owned the property as of May 1928.

George Samdperil owned the property as of December 1928.

Samdperil Realty Co. owned the property as of January 1930.

Levi Solomon owned the property as of February 1945.

Leonard Goldman owned the property as of December 1950.

John B. Montgomery and wife Margaret M. owned the property as of July 1, 1969. Ref DB 1153/559.

Margaret M. Montgomery owned the property as of September 12, 1991. Ref DB 2449/267.

*Research compiled by Judith A. Barlow
October 2006*