

**PPS RECORDS FOR  
223 MORRIS AVENUE  
PLAT 86, LOT 219**

**JOSEPH G. AND ANNA S. DORAN HOUSE  
Built 1926**

**DESCRIPTION:**

A two-story, single family Colonial Revival style house with side gable roof of multi-colored slate, wood shingles on the walls, and a center entrance projecting from the 5-bay façade. The windows on the first floor are grouped in threes, with 4/4, 8/8 and 4/4 wooden sash; the second floor windows are all 8/8. Above the entryway, on the second floor, the window has a wood “sunburst” detail underneath a pediment.

The house stands on a slightly raised, 5,712 sq.ft. lot on the east side of Morris Avenue between Doyle Avenue to the south and Emeline Street to the north. The lot measures 54.26 feet wide on Morris Avenue and 94.73 feet deep.

**HISTORY:**

In 1925, Joseph G. Doran purchased a lot of land on the east side of Morris Avenue from his widowed mother, Annie F. Doran, who lived next door at 225 Morris. (At the time, Joseph and his wife Anna were living on Irving Avenue.) Joseph built 223 Morris Avenue in between his mother’s house at 225 Morris and his brother James A. Doran’s house at 221 Morris; by the late 1930s, other Dorans were also living at 229 Morris, turning this block into a virtual Doran family residential compound. Joseph G. Doran was secretary of James C. Doran & Sons, a jewelry manufacturing company founded by his father and headquartered at the Doran Building, 150 Chestnut Street in Providence’s Jewelry District. Joseph Doran occupied this house until 1973, when he sold it to the present owners, Richard and Karen Jessup.

**DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT:**

In the late 18<sup>th</sup> 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). At that time, this area was relatively remote and inaccessible from the settled part of Providence, and thus it developed very slowly. Not until the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries did substantial residential construction occur here.

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 Sally Brown’s property, the Sally Brown Farm Plat of 1851 subdivided the farm amongst 16 separate beneficiaries. The boundary line between Lots 5 and 6 of the Sally Brown Farm Plat is approximately where Doyle Avenue now runs between Morris and Elmgrove Avenues. Both Lots 5 and 6 eventually ended up in the possession of Elizabeth Smith, whose father William Morris was a second cousin of Sally Brown. No record exists of Elizabeth Smith living on this land, and it remained vacant and undeveloped until well after her death.

In 1878, Elizabeth Smith's heirs created a plat extending Doyle Avenue eastward from Morris Avenue to Elmgrove Avenue: the plat covered both sides of Doyle Avenue and included the lot on which 223 Morris Avenue (two lots north of Doyle Avenue) now stands. Still fairly swampy, this land remained largely unsuitable for development until after 1900, when both public transportation (streetcar lines on nearby Hope Street, one block to the west) and public utilities (sewer, water, and electricity) became available in this area.

In 1905 James C. and Annie F. Doran moved into 225 Morris Avenue, where they raised a family and lived for the rest of their lives. Several of their children, including son Joseph G. Doran, grew up to join the family business and to build homes of their own next door to their parents.

## **DESIGNATIONS**

223 Morris Avenue is not listed on the National Register of Historic Places, nor located within a local historic district overlay zone designated by the City of Providence.

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

### **Maps and Atlases (Archives and Registry of Deeds)**

**1798:** "A Map of Owners of Lots in Providence," compiled by Henry B. Chace in 1912: Plates VII and VIII show Dexter Brown's 51-acre farm located south of "Cat Swamp Lane" (Sessions Street) and east of the "Road to Providence [from Pawtucket]" (Morris Avenue). *(Archives)*

**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 (see Deed Book 121, Page 332). Lot #6, a long narrow lot fronting on Olney Street about 130 feet wide and 1,500-1,800 feet deep, went to Frederick H. Smith (husband of Elizabeth Smith). The southern boundary line of Lot #6 approximately marks the future Doyle Avenue right-of-way. *(Registry of Deeds)*

**1857:** "Map of Providence," by H.F. Walling, Page B5 shows the same division of the former Sally Brown Farm as per the 1851 plat. Frederick H. Smith owns Lot #6 (which isn't numbered on this map). *(Archives)*

**1875:** "Atlas of the City of Providence," by G.M. Hopkins Co., 1875, Vol. 1 (Wards 1, 2 and 3), Plate J, shows that Lots #5 and 6 of the Sally Brown Farm Plat, east of Olney Street (now Morris Avenue), have been combined into one lot of 696,290 square feet of vacant land, all owned by Elizabeth Smith. Doyle Avenue only runs from North Main Street as far east as East Avenue (Hope Street). *(Archives)*

**1878:** "Plat of Land Owned by Heirs of Elizabeth Smith," surveyed by A.R. Sweet in 1878 (recorded that same year in Plat Book 13, Page 24, copied on Plat Card 508), shows house lots laid out on both sides of Doyle Avenue between Olney Street (now Morris Avenue) and Elmgrove Avenue. The second lot on the east side of Olney Street north of Doyle is numbered

95, measuring 54.26 feet on the west, 105.36 feet on the south, 54 feet on the east and 100 feet on the north; this is the future site of 223 Morris Avenue. (*Registry of Deeds*)

**1882:** "Atlas of the City of Providence" by G.M. Hopkins Co., Plate 4, shows the vacant lot #95 on the east side of Morris Avenue, two lots north of Doyle Avenue, consistent with the 1878 Elizabeth Smith Heirs Plat; the north side of Doyle is labeled "Elizabeth Smith Plat." Neither the lot size nor its owner's name are indicated. (*Archives*)

**1895:** "Atlas of the City of Providence" by Everts & Richards, Page 32, shows the vacant lot on the east side of Morris Avenue, two lots north of Doyle Avenue, measuring 5,544 sq.ft. By this time, houses have been erected on the other three lots on the east side of Morris Avenue in this block bounded by Emeline Street, Elmgrove Avenue, and Doyle Avenue. (The house now known as 225 Morris is numbered 387 Olney Street on this map, so the street addresses were later renumbered.) Owner names are not indicated. The Hope Street streetcar line does not yet extend as far north as Doyle Avenue, and no utilities are available on Morris Avenue north of Doyle. (*Archives*)

**1902:** Assessors Plat Maps, Plat 86 shows the lot on the east side of Morris Avenue, two lots north of Doyle Avenue, numbered #247, measuring 5,544 sq.ft. This lot number was later changed. This map indicates neither any building footprints nor owner names, but the house at 223 Morris had not yet been built. (*Archives*)

**1908:** "Atlas of the City of Providence" by L.J. Richards Co., Plate 6, shows the vacant 5,544 sq.ft. lot on the east side of Morris Avenue, two lots north of Doyle Avenue, owned by J.C. Doran, who also owns the house next door at 225 Morris. (Note street numbers have been changed since 1895). Water and sewer lines are now installed on Morris from Olney Street north past Emeline Street, and on Doyle Avenue for its entire length. The Hope Street electric streetcar line runs one block west on Hope Street. (*Archives*)

**1918:** "Atlas of the City of Providence" by G.M. Hopkins Co., Plate 22, shows the vacant 5,544 sq.ft. lot on the east side of Morris Avenue, two lots north of Doyle Avenue, owned by A.F. Doran, who also owns the houses on either side, at 221 and 225 Morris. The map references the Elizabeth Smith Heirs Plat. (*Archives*)

**1926:** "Atlas of the City of Providence" by G.M. Hopkins Co., Plate 22, shows the house at 223 Morris Avenue, on a 4,961 sq.ft. lot owned by J.G. Doran. (A.X. Doran owns 221 Morris, A.F. Doran owns 225 Morris.) The lot sizes of both 223 and 225 Morris have been reduced by the subdivision of a small lot at their east ends, on which stands a large outbuilding, accessed from Doyle Avenue. The map references the Elizabeth Smith Heirs Plat. (*Archives*)

**1937:** "Atlas of the City of Providence" by G.M. Hopkins Co., Plate 22, shows the house at 223 Morris Avenue on a 4,961 sq.ft. lot owned by J.G. Doran etux. (A.X. Doran owns 221 Morris, A.F. and E.M. Doran own 225 Morris.) The large outbuilding remains on a separate 1,817 sq.ft. lot at the rear of 223 and 225 Morris. (*Archives*)

### **Deeds (Registry of Deeds)**

Deed Book 672, Page 236: On May 18, 1925 Annie F. Doran, widow, of Providence, sold to Joseph G. Doran of Providence, for \$10, a parcel of land with improvements on the east side of Morris Avenue, 54.3 feet north of Doyle Avenue. The lot measured 54.3 feet on Morris Avenue, 94.73 feet on its south line, 54 feet on its east line, and 89.02 feet on its north line, for a total of

4,961 sq.ft. The deed notes that this lot constituted all of Lot #95 on the Elizabeth Smith Heirs Plat of 1878 (recorded in Plat Book 13, Page 24, copied on card 508), less an 8.36 foot wide strip on the east side of the lot, being a greater portion of the premises conveyed to James C. Doran by the Pawtucket Institution for Savings on June 10, 1905 (reference to Deed Book 473, Page 196) and to Annie F. Doran by James C. Doran on July 23, 1914 (DB 544/291).

Deed Book 674, Page 448: On September 1, 1925 Eugene H. Sullivan, single, of Providence quitclaimed all rights and title to the same land described in DB 672/236 to Joseph G. Doran and Anna S. Doran of Providence. (It is not known who Eugene Sullivan was, or how he came to have some claim on the lot where 223 Morris Avenue was later built, but his claim ended before the houses was constructed.)

### **Intent to Build Records (Archives)**

No building permits were found for this house.

### **Tax Records (Archives)**

- 1925            Joseph G. Doran of 136 Irving Street owned AP 86, Lot 219. The land was valued at \$2,240; no assessment was made for buildings and improvements.
- 1926            Joseph G. Doran and wife Anna S. Doran of 223 Morris Avenue owned AP 86, Lot 219. The land was valued at \$2,240, and buildings and improvements were valued at \$7,500. Thus, the house was constructed by this time.

### **Directories (Archives)**

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

- 1925            Joseph G. Doran, secretary of James C. Doran & Sons, 150 Chestnut Street; home 136 Irving Avenue.
- 1926            Joseph G. Doran, same business address, home 223 Morris Avenue.
- 1927-1972      Joseph G. Doran continued to reside at 223 Morris Avenue.
- 1973            Richard Jessup Jr. lived at 223 Morris Avenue.

*Providence House Directories* (published separately from the city directory, 1895-1937; published biannually from 1901. Lists all residential buildings by street address, and also contains a street directory. This directory is typically a year behind the city directory.)

- 1927-1928      223 Morris Avenue (first listing) – Joseph G. Doran, secretary.  
(221 Morris Avenue – James A. Doran, treasurer; 225 Morris Avenue – Mrs. Annie F. Moran)

**Assessor's Field Cards (Assessor's Office)**

Field Card for AP 86, Lot 219: MORRIS AVENUE

Charles C. Taber Estate and Henry M. Taber Estate owned the property as of April 15, 1891.

William B. Weeks of Barrington owned the property as of January 2, 1899.

Howard J. and Edward H. Weeks Trustees owned the property as of November 1, 1900.

Waldo I. Getchell owned the property as of January 2, 1901.

Charles E. Holmes owned the property as of February 1, 1902.

Susan B. Miller, wife of Warwick E. Miller, owned the property as of November 1, 1916.

DROPPED as of March 1, 1920.\*

Joseph G. Doran owned the property as of June 15, 1925.

Joseph G. Doran and wife Anna S. Doran owned the property as of February 1926.

Richard Jessup Jr. and wife Karen L. Jessup owned the property as of January 26, 1973  
(reference Deed Book 1172, Page 485).

\*The previous lot number for this property, Lot 247 (shown on the 1902 map of Plat 86; see Maps and Atlases, above) was dropped in 1920.

*Research compiled by Kathryn J. Cavanaugh  
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