

PROVIDENCE PRESERVATION SOCIETY

RECORDS FOR

33-35 OAK STREET Plat 35, Lot 145

Frederic R. Harris House Built 1898

Summary: Built toward the end of a period of great expansion for the West Side of Providence, when the area west of the Dexter Parade Ground saw significant residential development, 33-35 Oak Street was constructed as an owner-occupied two-family house in 1898. William M. Harris, a salesman of hay, straw and lumber, purchased the lot in 1897 and had the house built for his son Frederic R. Harris, who acquired the property in 1898 and lived here for more than twenty years. Frederic R. Harris started his career as a clerk in his father's company but in 1911 opened his own lumber business, Frederic R. Harris & Co., on Allens Avenue. Since Mr. Harris sold the property in 1921, it has changed hands four times. The current owner, Dianne V. Poullos, purchased the house with her husband George Poullos in 1983.

33-35 Oak Street is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as part of the Broadway-Armory Historic District (listed 1974). In the inventory, the house is dated ca. 1900, and not named. In fact records reveal that it was constructed in 1898.

Note: Oak Street addresses were renumbered in 1910. The original street address of this property was 13-15 Oak Street.

Chronology

After the founding of Providence in 1636, the area west of the Providence River was initially used for common grazing land. Isolated farmsteads began to appear on the "West Side" in the 18th century, after the construction of several highways leading to the hinterlands of the Providence Plantations and to distant towns in other British colonies. The Plainfield Road (portions of which were later called High Street, and now Westminster Street), was laid out in 1711, extending from the Weybosset Bridge over the Providence River many miles westward into Connecticut; and in 1717, the Moshanticut Road, now Cranston Street, was built. The first village on the West Side grew up around the intersection of these two roads, after 1769, and by the time of the Revolution, more than 1,600 people lived on the West Side. As the city grew increasingly industrialized throughout the 19th century, and its population swelled with immigrants, Irish and later Italian enclaves developed on the West Side. Most of the neighborhood was built out by about 1900. (*RIHPC Survey Report P-P-1: "The West Side, Providence," 1976*)

1798

"Map Showing the Owners of Lots in Providence in 1798" (by Henry Chace, 1912), Plate 13. This map shows more than 50 acres of land bounded by the Plainfield Road (now Westminster Street) on the north, the Cranston Road (now Cranston Street) on the south, a "new highway" on the west (now Messer Street), and Dexter Lane (now Parade Street) on the east. This land is divided among three owners, with the northernmost 20 acres owned by Nathan and Rufus Waterman. (From later city records, Nathan appears to have been either Rufus's son or his brother.) Oak Street would later be laid out within the Waterman parcel. (*Archives*)

1829-1833

Rufus Waterman (who also owned considerable land on Providence's East Side, on Angell and Waterman Streets), died in late 1829. His death is not listed in Providence's *Index of Births, Marriages and Deaths 1636-1850*, so he apparently did not die in Providence, but his will was filed there (Will Book 13, Page 478, recorded September 22, 1829, probated on January 4, 1830). Rufus Waterman's will divided the bulk of his real estate in Providence into shares distributed to his wife Hannah Waterman, his five surviving children (Nathan Waterman, Richard Waterman, Mary Waterman, Elizabeth Waterman and Sally Thompson), and his two grandsons Rufus and Edward Waterman (sons of the late Henry Waterman). Rufus's wife Hannah and his son Richard served as executors of the will. Note: even though Rufus's son Nathan was named as one of his heirs, that son was missing and presumed dead when the will was written in 1829. The will also notes that Rufus had a brother named Nathan. No Nathan Waterman is listed in the *Index of Deaths* before 1850, nor was his will recorded, but the *Probate Index* mentions a document of administration filed for Nathan Waterman in 1830 (file number A5271). Whether Nathan was Rufus's son or his brother, he was almost certainly declared legally dead sometime between 1830, when the West Side parcel he had owned with Rufus was surveyed and platted, and 1833, when the plat was officially recorded. (Archives)

A "Plat of Lots on Christian Hill in the City of Providence, owned by the heirs of Nathan and Rufus Waterman, deceased," was surveyed December 18, 1830 by S.B. Cushing and recorded on February 22, 1833 in Plat Book 1, Page 6 (copied on Plat Card 2). The map shows a block bounded by High Street on the north (now Westminster Street), Parade Street on the east, an unnamed street to the south (now Oak Street), and an unnamed street to the west (now Sycamore Street). This block is subdivided into 17 numbered lots. Lot #30, on the north side of Oak Street near the middle of the block, had 50 feet of frontage. This lot is where the house at 33-35 Oak would eventually be built. (Registry of Deeds)

1848-1858

A Richard Waterman died in Coventry in 1847 or 1848. This man, while not the son of Rufus Waterman (see below), almost certainly was related to the Providence Watermans, because his estate included 16 lots from the 1830 Christian Hill Plat, as well as other property on Angell and Waterman Streets on Providence's East Side. On January 8, 1848, the Coventry Probate Court appointed John Ormsbee, Truman Beckwith and Rufus Waterman (likely the original Rufus's grandson) as Commissioners to oversee the disposition of Richard Waterman of Coventry's real estate in Providence, Coventry and Foster. His 11 heirs included Stephen, Caleb, Caroline and Helen Waterman, Elizabeth Leadbetter, Mary Dyer, and Leonard, Anna and Grace Whiting. The Commissioners' report dated May 23, 1848, describing the partition of Richard Waterman of Coventry's estate, was filed in Providence on August 4, 1848 (Deed Book 96, Page 399). Of the 16 Christian Hill Plat lots distributed to Richard Waterman of Coventry's heirs, however, none was Lot #30. (Archives)

A "Plat of the Division of the Richard Waterman of Coventry Estates" was also recorded in Providence in 1848 (Plat Book 3, page 77, copied on Plat Card 97). This plat is identical to the 1830 Christian Hill plat, and shows the same layout of streets and blocks (except that on this map, Oak Street is named Willow Street, and vice versa. Neither of these streets was actually built at this time.) The block bounded by High Street, Parade Street, "Willow Street" (now Oak Street), and Sycamore Street contains 17 lots, numbered and configured exactly as they were on the 1830 plat map. Two of the lots in the block are labeled "Caleb" and one is labeled "Stephen." Lot #30 is also in this block, but is not labeled with anyone's name. (Registry of Deeds)

Providence City Directories, 1850-1853: The 1850 directory, the earliest extant in Providence's Archives, notes that Oak Street extended from Messer Street to Parade Street; the 1852-1853 directory indicates that Oak Street further extended from Parade Street to the Johnston line. At this time, Willow Street only extended from Carpenter Street to Federal Street. (*Archives*)

Richard Waterman, son of Rufus, died on November 30, 1856 at age 71. His death and will were both recorded in Providence (Will Book 9, page 220). This will made no specific mention of real estate on the West Side of Providence. Waterman's heirs were his wife and children. (*Archives*)

It appears, therefore, that Elizabeth Waterman, daughter of Rufus Waterman, received Lot #30 in the Christian Hill plat as part of her inheritance from her father back in 1830. The *Grantee Index 1677-1875* lists 20 separate real estate transactions for which Elizabeth Waterman was the grantee; none of these refer to Lot #30, therefore Elizabeth does not seem to have acquired Lot #30 from anyone else before she sold it in 1858. (*Archives*)

Providence Deed Book 149, Page 441: On January 2, 1858, Elizabeth Waterman of Providence sold to Oliver Waterman of Providence, for \$10, Lot #30 on the Christian Hill Plat. The deed refers to the plat recorded in 1830 in Plat Book 1, page 5 (note this page number is wrong – it's page 6) and also the Richard Waterman of Coventry Plat recorded in 1848 in Plat Book 3, page 77. (*Archives*)

1875

1875 Atlas of the City of Providence by G.M. Hopkins Co., Vol. 2, Plate K (showing part of Ward 8). By this time considerable residential construction had been built on the block bounded by Oak, Parade, High and Sycamore Streets. Two houses are shown on the north side of Oak Street, numbered 17 and 19 (today these are 41 and 45 Oak). What the 1830/1848 plat maps call Lot #30 is directly east of 17 Oak, but not labeled with any street address or lot number on this map. The lot is vacant and owned by O. Waterman; the map says it measures 7,677 square feet (slightly bigger than its original area of 7,500 square feet). (*Archives*)

1882

1882 Atlas of the City of Providence by G.M. Hopkins & Co., Plate 15, shows the block with 17 lots (some of which have been reconfigured), and a bit further developed. Oak Street now has four houses on its north side: 5 Oak and 19 Oak are labeled, while 7 Oak and 17 Oak are not. Lot #30, directly east of 17 Oak, is not labeled with any street address or lot number on this map, and is still vacant. (*Archives*)

1889

Deed Book 351, Page 290: On March 26, 1889, Oliver Waterman of Providence sold to Stephen Mathewson of Cranston, for \$100, Lot #30 on the Christian Hill Plat of 1830 (also as shown on the Richard Waterman of Coventry Plat of 1848). The deed describes the lot as bounded southerly by Oak Street, 50 feet, and extending back from Oak Street 150 feet. "Being the same lot conveyed to this grantor by Elizabeth Waterman," in 1858 (reference Deed Book 149, Page 441). (*Registry of Deeds*)

Assessor's Plat Card for Plat 35, Lot 145 lists Stephen Mathewson of Cranston as the property owner on June 1, 1889. (*Assessor's Office*)

1895

Atlas of the City of Providence by Everts & Richards, Plate 10, shows the same four houses on the north side of Oak Street: #5, 7, 17 and 19. (The rest of the block is almost entirely built out.) Lot #30, directly east of 17 Oak Street, is still vacant and still contains 7,677 square feet of land. (*Archives*)

1897

Deed Book 410, Page 499: On June 12, 1897, Henry F. Root, Commissioner appointed by the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court in Providence, in the cause of *Luther Mathewson v. George G. Mathewson et al*, sold Lot #30 on the Christian Hill Plat of 1830 at public auction (held June 2) to the highest bidder, William M. Harris of Providence, for \$2,000. The lot is described as "being the same lot conveyed to Stephen Mathewson by Oliver Waterman by deed dated March 26, 1889 (reference Deed Book 351, Page 290; also reference the Richard Waterman of Coventry Plat of 1848). The deed mentions improvements on the lot, but no buildings. (*Registry of Deeds*)

Assessor's Plat Card for Plat 35, Lot 145 lists William M. Harris as the property owner on July 1, 1897. (*Assessor's Office*)

Tax Records, 1897: William M. Harris of Eaton Street owned 46 lots in Providence, including Lot 145 in Plat 35, which was assessed at \$1,920. (*Archives*)

Providence City Directory, 1897: William M. Harris owned a hay, straw and lumber business at 77 Dyer Street, and a "yard" at 363 Charles Street; he lived at 276 Eaton Street. (*Archives*)

Building Permit Records, 1897: Permit #855, issued to William M. Harris of 77 Dyer Street on September 2, 1897, for construction of a 2-1/2 story wood dwelling house (containing 2 tenements) at 15 Oak Street. The estimated cost of construction was \$4,000. (*Archives*)

1898

Deed Book 419, Page 23: On June 29, 1898, William M. Harris of Providence sold to Frederic R. Harris of Providence, for \$10, the southerly portion of Lot #30 on the Christian Hill Plat of 1830 (also as shown on the Richard Waterman of Coventry Plat of 1848), with buildings and improvements thereon. The property is described as bounding southerly on Oak Street, 50 feet, and containing about 4,500 square feet of land. William Harris's wife Ellen M. Harris released all her rights to this property as well. (*Registry of Deeds*)

Assessor's Plat Card for Plat 35, Lot 145 lists Frederic R. Harris as the property owner on July 1, 1898. (*Assessor's Office*)

City Directory, 1898: Fred. R. Harris, a clerk at 363 Charles Street, boarded at 276 Eaton Street. These were also one of William M. Harris's business addresses, and his residence. (*Archives*)

Tax Records, 1898: Frederick R. Harris owned three lots in Providence, including Plat 35, Lot 145, which was assessed at \$5,360 (note this is almost \$4,000 greater than the previous year's assessment, reflecting construction of the house on the lot). (*Archives*)

1899

City Directory, 1899: Fred. R. Harris, a clerk at 77 Dyer Street, lived at 15 Oak Street. (The other of William M. Harris's business addresses was 77 Dyer). (*Archives*)

House Directory, 1899: The address "15 Oak Street" appears for the first time this year. It was listed as the home of Fred. R. Harris, clerk. *(Archives)*

Tax Records, 1899: Frederick R. Harris owned three lots in Providence, including Plat 35, Lot 145, which was again assessed at \$5,360. *(Archives)*

1902

1902 Tax Assessor's Map for Plat 35 shows Lot 145 on the north side of Oak Street, in the middle of the block between Parade and Sycamore Streets. The lot has a frontage on Oak Street of 50.15 feet and a depth of 90 feet, for a total area of 4,514 square feet. *(Archives)*

1908-1911

1908 Atlas of the City of Providence by G.M. Hopkins Co., Plate 15, shows the house at 13-15 Oak Street, on a lot of 4,514 square feet, owned by F. R. Harris. *(Archives)*

House Directory, 1909 and 1911: The addresses 13 and 15 Oak Street both appear in the 1909 directory. John C. Budlong, Jr. (who worked in insurance) lived at 13 Oak, while Fred. R. Harris, clerk, lived at 15 Oak. In the 1911 directory, the street numbers have been changed: Budlong's address was now 33 Oak, while Harris's was 35 Oak. By 1911 Mr. Harris also shared his home with a Mrs. Anna Barnes, a nurse, and his profession had changed to "lumber." *(Archives)*

City Directory, 1911: Frederick R. Harris & Co. was a lumber business on Allens Avenue. *(Archives)*

1918

1918 Atlas of Providence, Plate 18, shows the same lot configuration and layout of houses in this block as on the 1908 atlas, but the street addresses on Oak Street have been changed. The house F.R. Harris owns on Oak Street is now numbered 33; the lot still measures 4,514 square feet. *(Archives)*

1921

Deed Book 615, Page 135: On September 10, 1921, Frederic R. Harris of Providence sold to Paul R. Picerne and Ettore C. Picerne, d/b/a/ The Picerne Company, the southern portion of Lot #30 on the Christian Hill Plat of 1830 (also as shown on the Richard Waterman of Coventry Plat of 1848), containing about 4,500 square feet, with buildings and improvements thereon. The deed notes that this is "the same premises conveyed to the grantor by William M. Harris and wife Ellen M. Harris on June 29, 1898 (reference Deed Book 419, Page 23). *(Registry of Deeds)*

Assessor's Plat Card for Plat 35, Lot 145 lists Paul R. and Ettore C. Picerne d/b/a The Picerne Company as the property owners on December 15, 1921. *(Assessor's Office)*

City Directory, 1921: The Frederick R. Harris company continued in business on Allens Avenue, but Harris himself no longer lived in Providence. *(Archives)*

1923

Deed Book 625, Page 461: On January 30, 1923, Paul R. Picerne and Ettore C. Picerne, both unmarried, quitclaimed to Emilia (Emelia) W. Picerne, for \$1, all their interest in the southerly portion of Lot #30 on the Christian Hill Plat of 1830 (also as shown on the Richard Waterman of Coventry Plat of 1848), with all buildings and improvements thereon, containing approximately 4,500 square feet of land. (*Registry of Deeds*)

Deed Book 644, Page 106: On July 24, 1923, Emilia U. Picerne, widow, sold to Eraclio Caduto and wife Giovannina Caduto, for \$10, the southerly portion of Lot #30 on the Christian Hill Plat of 1830 (also as shown on the Richard Waterman of Coventry Plat of 1848), with all buildings and improvements thereon. The lot is described as 50.15 feet wide by 90 feet deep. deed references the previous transaction from Paul and Ettore Picerne to Emilia Picerne earlier that year (Deed Book 625, Page 461). (*Registry of Deeds*)

Assessor's Plat Card for Plat 35, Lot 145 lists Emilia W. Picerne as the property owner on May 1, 1923 and Eraclio Caduto and wife Giovannina Caduto as the property owners on November 1, 1923. (*Assessor's Office*)

1924-1926

Deed Book 661, Page 116: On July 24, 1924, Eraclio Caduto and Giovannina Caduto on Providence sold to Nicolo Conca and Domenica Conca, for \$10, the southerly portion of Lot #30 on the Christian Hill Plat of 1830 (also as shown on the Richard Waterman of Coventry Plat of 1848), with all buildings and improvements thereon. The lot measurements match those described in the previous deed. (*Registry of Deeds*)

Assessor's Plat Card for Plat 35, Lot 145 lists Nicolo Conca and wife Domenica Conca as the property owners on November 1, 1924. (*Assessor's Office*)

1926 Atlas of the City of Providence by G.M. Hopkins Co., Plate 7, shows 33-35 Oak Street owned by N. Conca. The map references Plat Card 735, the "Mathewson v. Mathewson Partition Plat" (see 1897, above). (*Archives*)

1933-1937

Deed Book 773, Page 248: On October 26, 1933, Nicola (note the variation on the spelling) Conca quitclaimed to Domenica Conca all interest in the southerly portion of Lot #30 on the Christian Hill Plat of 1830 (also as shown on the Richard Waterman of Coventry Plat of 1848), with the same boundaries as described previously. (*Registry of Deeds*)

Assessor's Plat Card for Plat 35, Lot 145 lists Domenica Conca as the property owner in January 1934. (*Assessor's Office*)

1937 Atlas of the City of Providence by G.M. Hopkins Co., Plate 7, shows 33-35 Oak Street owned by D. Conca. This map also references Plat Card 735, "Luther Mathewson v. Geo. G. Mathewson et al." (*Archives*)

1953-1958

Deed Book 1005, Page 438: On February 9, 1953, Domenica Conca of Providencen transferred to herself and her husband Nicola Conca of Providence, the southerly 90 feet in depth and entire width (50.15 feet) of Lot #30 on the Christian Hill Plat of 1830 (also as shown on the Richard Waterman of Coventry Plat of 1848). (*Registry of Deeds*)

Assessor's Plat Card for Plat 35, Lot 145 lists Nicola Conca and wife Domenica Conca as the property owners in August 1953, Domenica Conca as owner in December 1957, and Edith and Albert Conca and Mary Norato as the owners on December 1, 1958. (*Assessor's Office*)

1983

Deed Book 1244, Page 618: On May 25, 1983, Albert Conca, Edith Conca, and Mary Norato of Providence sold to George M. Poulios and wife Dianne V. Poulios of 41 Oak Street, the southerly 90 feet in depth and entire width (50.15 feet) of Lot #30 on the Christian Hill Plat of 1830 (also as shown on the Richard Waterman of Coventry Plat of 1848). (*Registry of Deeds*)

Assessor's Plat Card for Plat 35, Lot 145 lists George M. Poulios and wife Dianne V. Poulios as the property owners as of May 25, 1983. The card refers to Deed Book 1244, Page 618. (*Assessor's Office*)