

**PPS RECORDS FOR  
153 BOWEN STREET  
PLAT 10, LOT 350**

**BURGESS-HARRIS HOUSE  
Built 1896-1897  
Built by W.H. Colwell**

**DESCRIPTION:**

“Colonial Revival; 2-1/2 stories; hip [roof]; clapboard and shingle; Doric porch flanked by bay [window] on west and bow [window] on east; square turret springing up from 2<sup>nd</sup> floor on west; deep eaves; broad slated dormer on front. W.H. Colwell.”

*--College Hill National Historic Landmark District Nomination (1976)*

The house stands on a 4,982 sq.ft. lot on the south side of Bowen Street, three lots east of Prospect Street, in the block bounded by Bowen on the north, Brown Street on the east, Cushing Street on the south, and Prospect Street on the west.

**HISTORY:**

This house was built for Marion M. Burgess, wife of Edwin A. Burgess, as an investment property; she purchased this property as a vacant lot in 1894, took out a building permit in 1896, and the house was completed by 1897. She never lived in this house, however; the first person recorded as living at this address, in 1897, was Frederick A.W. Harris, who was superintendent, and later president, of the William Harris Steam Engine Co.; his wife Stella was a daughter of Marion Burgess. The Harrises lived here until 1903, when Stella Harris and her sister Edith Burgess sold the property to Ella E. Palmer, wife of Charles R. Palmer, who worked at a lumber yard. The Palmers lived here until both of their deaths (by 1936); their son Edward C. Palmer held the house in trust until 1941. The house has changed hands seven times since then.

**DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT:<sup>1</sup>**

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, merchant Zachariah Allen acquired a 14-acre tract of land between Prospect and Hope Streets, north of Meeting Street. Bowen Street was built through this area in the late 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Zachariah Allen's son Crawford Allen inherited part of this land from his father in 1810, and Crawford's wife Sarah inherited a portion from her husband in 1870. (Meanwhile, this part of College Hill was platted for residential development by the Allens and other landowners by the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.)

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<sup>1</sup> Sources: Providence: A Citywide Survey of Historic Resources, by Edward F. Sanderson and William MacKenzie Woodward (Providence: RI Historical Preservation Commission, 1986); and other PPS marker reports.

## DESIGNATIONS

Listed as a contributing building in the College Hill National Historic Landmark District (1976); the inventory lists this as "Marion M. Burgess House, ca. 1897." Also located within the College Hill Historic District designated by the City of Providence, and subject to the jurisdiction of the Providence Historic District Commission.

**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 III shows the division of property between Prospect Street and "The Highway at the Head of the Lots" (now Hope Street), north of "Old Goal Lane" (now Meeting Street). The map indicates Zachariah Allen (died 1809) owned 14 acres in the area where Bowen, Cushing, and Brown Streets are now located (these streets did not exist in 1798).

1857: "Map of Providence," by H.F. Walling, Page C4 shows the block bounded by Bowen, Thayer, Cushing, and Prospect Streets; Brown Street did not extend north of Olive Street (3 blocks south of Bowen) at this time. On the south side of Bowen Street, the 3<sup>rd</sup> lot east of Prospect Street is vacant; owner name and lot size are not indicated.

1860: "Plat of Lots Awarded to Z. Allen, assignee of P. Allen, by referees, copied from Plat of the Estate of the Late Ann Allen as divided by Truman Beckwith, Henry Anthony and Adam Anthony, Commissioners appointed by the Supreme Court at the March term thereof in Providence, A.D. 1860, in the Case In Chancery: Crawford Allen vs. George C. Nightingale," surveyed and platted in June 1860 by S.B. Cushing and H.A. DeWitt, recorded in Plat Book 6, Page 6, and copied on Plat Card 164. (The original Ann Allen Estate Plat is in Plat Book 5, Page 19.) This map shows lots along the south side of Bowen Street, east of Prospect Street. The future site of 153 Bowen appears to lie within a large corner lot measuring 205.2 feet along Bowen Street. No buildings are shown on this plat map [note that it is not entirely consistent with the 1897 city map]. *(Registry of Deeds)*

1875: "Atlas of the City of Providence," by G.M. Hopkins Co., Vol. 1, Plate M shows part of the block bounded by Bowen, Thayer, Cushing, and Prospect Streets; Brown Street did not yet extend north of Olive Street. (The Thayer Street end of the block is on Plate L.) On the south side of Bowen Street, the 3<sup>rd</sup> lot east of Prospect Street is vacant, containing 5,067 sq.ft. (slightly larger than its present size), owned by C.A. Whitaker. Houses standing on either side of this vacant lot are numbered 83 and 87 Bowen (so the street was later renumbered).

1882: "Atlas of the City of Providence" by G.M. Hopkins Co., Plate 2, shows the block bounded by Bowen, Thayer, Cushing, and Prospect Streets; Brown Street did not yet extend north of Olive Street. On the south side of Bowen Street, the 3<sup>rd</sup> lot east of

Prospect Street is vacant; owner name and lot size are not indicated. Houses standing on either side of this vacant lot are numbered 83 and 87 Bowen. Water and sewer lines are shown on Bowen Street.

1895: "Atlas of the City of Providence" by Everts & Richards, Plate 5 (pages 28-29), shows the block bounded by Bowen, Brown, Cushing, and Prospect Streets. On the south side of Bowen Street, the 3<sup>rd</sup> lot east of Prospect Street is vacant, containing 4,952 sq.ft (slightly smaller than its present size); owner name is not indicated. This is the only vacant lot remaining on this side of the street in this block, but there are still several vacant lots on the Cushing Street side of the block. Houses standing on either side of this vacant lot have been renumbered. Water and sewer lines are shown on Bowen Street, and a streetcar line runs on Brown Street.

1902: Assessors Plat Maps, Plat 10, shows Lot 350 on the south side of Bowen Street, 3 lots east of Prospect, containing 4,952 sq.ft. (still slightly smaller than its present size). This map does not show building footprints.

1908: "Atlas of the City of Providence" by L.J. Richards Co., Plate 7, shows the house at 153 Bowen, standing on a 4,952 sq.ft. lot (still slightly smaller than its present size) owned by Eliza E. Palmer. [Note: according to deeds, her name was Ella E. Palmer.] Water and sewer lines are shown all around the block, and a streetcar line runs on Brown Street.

1918: "Atlas of the City of Providence" by G.M. Hopkins Co., Plate 19 shows the house at 153 Bowen, standing on a 4,982 sq.ft. lot (its present size – the lot next door at 147 Bowen has been reduced by 30 sq.ft) owned by E.E. Palmer. Water and sewer lines are shown all around the block, and a streetcar line runs on Brown Street. The map refers to the Commissioners Plat Z. Allen (no plat card number).

1926: "Atlas of the City of Providence" by G.M. Hopkins Co., Plate 19 shows the house at 153 Bowen, standing on a 4,982 sq.ft. lot (its present size – the lot next door at 147 Bowen has been reduced by 30 sq.ft) owned by E. Palmer. Water and sewer lines are shown all around the block; a streetcar line runs on Brown Street. The map refers to the Commissioners Plat Z. Allen (plat card 164).

1937: "Atlas of the City of Providence" by G.M. Hopkins Co., Plate 19 shows the house at 153 Bowen, standing on a 4,982 sq.ft. lot owned by E.C. Palmer. Most of the block is built out by this time. No water and sewer lines are shown (although they were present on earlier maps), and the Brown Street streetcar line is gone. The map refers to the Commissioners Plat Z. Allen (plat card 164).

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

Deed Book 33, Page 172: On March 29, 1810, Zachariah Allen's sizeable estate was divided into seven shares among his wife Ann and their six children: Zachariah Allen, Philip Allen, Lydia Dorr (wife of Sullivan Dorr), Candace Allen, Abigail Smith (wife of

Henry Smith), and Crawford Allen; distribution of the property was made by three “referees” appointed by the Probate Court: Jonathan Dorrance, William Holroyd and John Malden. Ann, Abigail and Crawford Allen all inherited property identified as east of Prospect Street. [The accompanying plat map (see Plat Card 392), entitled “Plat Accompanying Report on April 9, 1810 of the Committee Appointed to Divide the Estate of Zachariah Allen,” shows numerous separate plats of land, most without accompanying street names, so it is not possible to determine exactly where the future site of 153 Bowen is located.] (*Archives*)

Deed Book 385, Page 471: On May 15, 1894, Frances A. Whitaker and Mary A. Whitaker of Providence sold to Marion M. Burgess, wife of Edwin A. Burgess, of Providence, for \$10, a lot of land on the south side of Bowen Street, measuring 99.26 feet on the west (land of Dailey), 50 feet on the south (land of Shepard), 98.83 feet on the east (land of Whitaker), and 50 feet on Bowen Street. Being a portion of the land conveyed to these grantors by C. Earle Whitaker by deed recorded in DB 298/221. [Note: this deed book was not accessible at the Registry of Deeds.]

Deed Book 469, Page 104: On October 11, 1904, Stella M. B. Harris, wife of Frederick A.W. Harris, and Edith S. Burgess, of Providence, sold to Ella E. Palmer, wife of Charles R. Palmer, of Providence, for \$10, a lot of land with buildings and improvements on the south side of Bowen Street, measuring 99.26 feet on the west (land of Dailey), 50 feet on the south (land of Shepard), 98.83 feet on the east (land of Whitaker), and 50 feet on Bowen Street. Being the same lot conveyed to Marion M. Burgess, wife of Edwin A. Burgess, by Frances A. and Mary A. Whitaker by deed dated May 15, 1894 and recorded in DB 385/471; these grantors having inherited the same as sole heirs of Marion M. Burgess.

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

On June 19, 1896, permit #11256 was issued to Marion M. Burgess, per W.H. Colwell [builder], to built a house on Bowen Street, Plat 10, Lot 350.

### **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.*

Ledger E2/170      As of July 2, 1894, Marion M. Burgess, wife of Edwin A. Burgess, owned Plat 10, Lot 350, measuring 4,952 sq.ft., valued at \$2,476 for land and \$0 for buildings.

1895                Marion M. Burgess owned Plat 10, Lot 350, measuring 4,952 sq.ft., valued at \$4,480 [no separate values for land and buildings].

1896 Marion M. Burgess owned Plat 10, Lot 350, measuring 4,952 sq.ft, valued at \$8,980 [no separate values for land and buildings, but such a significant jump in valuation in one year indicates construction of the house].

### **Directories (Archives)**

*Note: In both directories, the designation (h) means head of household; (b) indicates a boarder.*

*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 and again since 1937.*

1896 Frederick A.W. Harris, supt. W.H. Harris Steam Engine Co., home 60 Barnes St.

1897 Frederick A.W. Harris, supt. W.H. Harris Steam Engine Co., home 153 Bowen St.

*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.*

1895-1896 153 Bowen St. not listed

1897 153 Bowen St.: Frederick W. Harris, supt. (h); William Harris, student (b)

1903 153 Bowen St.: Frederick W. Harris, pres.

1905 153 Bowen St.: Charles R. Palmer, lumber

1907-1935 153 Bowen St: Charles R. Palmer, lumber (h); listed as pres/vice pres. as of 1925. Edward C. Palmer, clerk (h), listed in 1907 only.

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

PLAT 10/LOT 350 – BOWEN STREET

Marion M. Burgess, widow Edwin A. Burgess, owned the property as of July 1894.

Marion M. Burgess Heirs owned the property as of June 1902.

Ella E. Palmer, wife Charles R. Palmer, owned the property as of December 1904.

Ella E. Palmer, wife of Charles R. Palmer, Estate owned the property as of April 1936.

Edward C. Palmer, Trustee under the will of Ella E. Palmer, owned the property as of April 1936.

Edward C. Palmer and Julia P. Flagler owned the property as of February 1941.

Theron S. Curtis and wife Hope W. Curtis owned the property as of June 1941.

Gladys H. Porter owned the property as of March 1949.

Rhode Island School of Design owned the property as of December 1954.

John Ladd and wife Hylde H. Ladd owned the property as of November 1955.

James K. Sunshine and wife Anne F. Sunshine owned the property as of December 1959.

Peter S. Gill and Susan K. Gill owned the property as of February 1, 1991. (Refers to Deed Book 2355/Page 348.)

Adam H. Silverman and Barbara A. Bester owned the property as of November 16, 1999 (ref DB 4228/301).

Adam Silverman Trustee, Barbara Bester Trustee, Bestor Silverman Family Trust, Owned the property as of February 1, 2000 (ref DB 4285/241).

Note: current owners Sally and Timothy Dukes are not listed on the chain of title card.

*Research compiled by Kathryn J. Cavanaugh  
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