

**PPS RECORDS FOR
157 BOWEN STREET
PLAT 10, LOT 351**

Previously known as: 87 Bowen (1873-1895)

**FRANCES A. & MARY A. WHITAKER HOUSE
Built 1873**

DESCRIPTION:

“Late Victorian; 2-1/2 stories; clapboard; hipped roof with modillion cornice; 2 bay façade with hipped-roofed portico.”

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

The house stands on a 5,146 sq. ft. lot on the south side of Bowen Street, four 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. The lot measures 53.2 feet along Bowen Street, 96.8 feet deep on the eastern boundary, and 98.83 feet deep on the western boundary.

HISTORY:

Misses Frances and Mary Whitaker purchased a vacant lot in June 1873. In the following month, Frances applied for a building permit to build a house at #87 Bowen Street. The house was numbered 87 until 1895 when the street numbers changed; thereafter it has been known as 157 Bowen Street. Frances and Mary owned the house together until Mary’s death in 1899. Frances continued to own the house until her death in 1907. Since Frances Whitaker’s death, the house has changed hands nine times.

DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT:¹

In the 18th 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 18th or early 19th 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-19th century.)

¹ 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 "Frances A. and Mary A. Whitaker House, 1857-1875." The listing also refers to Stephen C. Earle as architect; however, the evidence was not verified by the permit application.

157 Bowen is 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 4th 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 157 Bowen appears to lie within the third lot east of Prospect Street beginning at a point 257.1 feet from Prospect, and measuring 51.9 feet along Bowen Street. No buildings are shown on this plat map [note that it is not entirely consistent with the 1895 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, on the 4th lot east of Prospect Street, there is a frame house at #87, owned by F. A. and M. A. Whitaker. The lot contains 5,031 sq. ft. (slightly smaller than its present size). The street was later renumbered. There is water on the street.

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, on the 4th lot east of Prospect Street, there is a frame house at #87. No owner is identified. There are water and sewer lines on the 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, on the 4th lot east of Prospect Street, there is a frame house at #157. No owner is identified. The lot contains 5,146 sq. ft. (its present size.) The lots 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 351 on the south side of Bowen Street, 4 lots east of Prospect, containing 5,146 sq. ft. This map does not show building footprints or identifies owners.

1908: "Atlas of the City of Providence" by L.J. Richards Co., Plate 7, shows the house at 157 Bowen, standing on a 5,146 sq. ft. lot, owned by F. A. Whitaker Est. 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 157 Bowen, standing on a 5,146 sq. ft. lot, owned by M. L. Newcomb. 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.

1926: "Atlas of the City of Providence" by G.M. Hopkins Co., Plate 19 shows the house at 157 Bowen, standing on a 5,146 sq. ft. lot, owned by M. Newcomb. 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 (plat card 164.)

1937: "Atlas of the City of Providence" by G.M. Hopkins Co., Plate 19 shows the house at 157 Bowen, standing on a 5,146 sq. ft. lot, owned by A. L. Stearnes. 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)

DB 243/153: On June 26, 1873, George L. Clarke of Providence (for \$1) sold to Frances A. Whitaker and Mary A. Whitaker of Providence a certain lot of land situated in Providence on the southerly side of Bowen Street, Lot #12 as described in deed from Robert Mickle to Clarke on October 13, 1859 and recorded in DB 155/173. The lot was described as beginning on the northwest corner of the lot then runs southerly and bounded westerly on land belonging to C. Earle Whitaker 98 feet, more or less, to land of Thomas P. Shepherd, then easterly 51 feet 9 inches, more or less, to land of Crawford Allen, then northerly 98 feet, more or less to Bowen Street, then westerly to

the point of beginning. The lot in connection with a lot conveyed to C. E. Whitaker (on the same day) was subject to a mortgage of \$4,000—part of the consideration and assumed by the grantees.

Intent to Build Records (Archives)

On July 22, 1873, application to build #3025 was filed by Frances A. Whitaker, to build a house at #87 on the south side of Bowen Street, east of Prospect Street.

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.

1874 Miss Mary Whittaker and Miss Fanny Whittaker, home at 87 Bowen St.
60 Barnes St.

[Note: variant spelling of last name in the city directories]

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.

1894 87 Bowen St.: C. Earle Whitaker; Francis A. Whitaker; Miss Mary A
Whittaker; and Charles Grossman, Clerk.

1895 157 Bowen St.: Francis A. Whitaker, Miss Mary A. Whitaker

[Note: masculine spelling of the name Frances in the house directories]

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

Frances A. and Mary A. Whitaker owned the property as of July 1, 1873.

Frances A. and Est. Mary A. Whitaker owned the property as of July 1, 1899.

Frances A. Whitaker owned the property as of June 1, 1900.

Frances A. Whitaker Estate owned the property as of April 1, 1907.

Marie L. Newcomb owned the property as of May 1, 1914.

Nancy g. Mason owned the property as of June 15, 1931.

Amelia L. Stearns, wife Charles F., owned the property as of May 1932.

Amelia L. Stearns, widow of Charles F., owned the property as of March 1947.

Bettie S. Flather owned the property as of April 1947.

Frank S. Levin and wife Suzanne JT owned the property as of August 2, 1968.

(Refers to DB 1148/1164.)

Bayard Wharton and wife Marian C., Ten by Ent, owned the property as of May 3, 1971.

Pietro Doran and Youn Kyung Lee (wf), Ten by Ent, owned the property as of

December 4, 1987. (Refers to DB 1712/18.)

Parma Company owned the property as of November 16, 1992. (Refers to

DB 2659/019.)

Edward M. Burgess and Margaret W. Burgess, Ent, owned the property as of

August 30, 1994. (Refers to DB 3009/226.)

Margaret W. Burgess, Trust & Trustee, owned the property as of September 28, 2004.

Research compiled by Judith A. Barlow

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