DESIGNATIONS

The house at 100 Meeting Street is located in the College Hill National Historic Landmark District listed on the National Register of Historic Places; the district inventory identifies it only as “House, after 1895.” It is also located in the local College Hill Historic District designated by the City of Providence.

A NOTE ON THE HISTORIC NAME

Typically, a historic house is named for its owner at the time of construction, who in this case was William Binney. However, records clearly indicate that Binney never lived here; his own residence was around the corner at 72 Prospect Street, and he also had a home in Newport. If this house was merely intended to be a rental property, then why did Mr. Binney go to the extra expense of hiring one of the most prominent architectural firms in Providence, Clarke & Spaulding, to design it? But if the house was intended to be occupied by family members, then Mr. Binney might indeed have wanted to pay special attention to its design.

The house’s long-time first occupant, Mrs. Isabella B.S. Nichols, lived here for at least a decade, accompanied at various times by other residents, including two unmarried females who were likely her daughters: Isabella Nichols and Edith Nichols. After William Binney’s death, the ownership of this house was transferred first to Isabella N. Binney, and subsequently to Edith Nichols, who owned it until 1951.

While genealogical research is not typically conducted in the preparation of these reports for PPS, a little investigation seemed warranted to try to determine whether the Binney and Nichols families were somehow related.

Neither birth nor marriage records are currently available for the years after 1900 (those records, which are published in 10-year installments, are closed to the public for 100 years; birth and marriage records for 1901-1910 should be published by 2011). Death records are available up to about 50 years ago and helpfully do indicate some family relationships (although, interestingly, single men, married men, and single women are all typically identified by relationship to their parents, whereas married women are typically identified by relationship to their husbands). Death records indicate that:

- William Binney, son of Horace and Elizabeth, died in 1909 age 84
- Isabelle B.S. Nichols, widow of Charles A. Nichols, died in 1921, age unknown
Isabelle N. Binney, widow of Charles Binney, died in 1951, age unknown
Edith Nichols, daughter of Charles and Isabella, died in 1955, age unknown

From this limited information it seemed logical to surmise that the two families may indeed have been related. Therefore, I chose to name the house “Binney-Nichols” not only in honor of the Nichols family’s long association with the property, but also because the house may actually have been built specifically for the Isabelle B.S. Nichols by William Binney.

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

**Assessor’s Plat Maps and Chain of Title Cards (Assessor’s Office)**

The map for Assessor’s Plat 10 identifies 100 Meeting Street as Lot 240, a rectangular lot on the north side of Meeting Street between Congdon and Prospect Streets. The lot measures 52.3 feet on Meeting Street, 51.88 feet on the north, and 130.74 feet deep, for a total area of 6,708 sq.ft.

**Chain of title card for AP 10, Lot 240 – MEETING STREET:**

William Binney owned the property as of July 23, 1858
William Binney Estate owned the property as of January 2, 1915
Isabelle N. Binney of Philadelphia owned the property as of May 1, 1915
Edith Nichols owned the property as of December 1951 (Will Book 10/429)
Cathedral Corp. for the Diocese of Rhode Island owned the property as of December 1955 (Will Book 10/429)
Mary B. Grosvenor owned the property as of December 1956
Elizabeth N. Selle owned the property as of March 16, 1964 (refers to Deed Book 1124/Page 596)

According to the Assessor’s computerized data base, the current owner is Elizabeth N. Selle, with a mailing address at 100 Meeting Street.

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

*Maps indicate that the house was constructed sometime between 1895 and 1908.*

**1895:** “Atlas of the City of Providence” by Everts & Richards, Plate 5 (pages 28-29), shows the future site of 100 Meeting Street as a vacant lot of 6,550 sq.ft. on the north side of Meeting Street between Congdon and Prospect Streets. The owner name is not indicated. *(Archives)*
1908: “Atlas of the City of Providence” by L.J. Richards Co., Plate 7, shows a wood-frame house at 100 Meeting Street, standing on a 6,550 sq.ft. lot on the north side of the street. The owner is Wm. Binney. (Archives)

**Deeds (Registry of Deeds)**

*Deeds indicate that the property was a vacant lot when acquired by William Binney in 1858, forty years before the house was actually built.*

Deed Book 150/Page 432: On July 23, 1858, Charlotte R. Goddard of Providence sold to William Binney of Providence, for $1, two tracts of land (no buildings are mentioned): one at the northwest corner of Prospect and Meeting Streets, measuring 130 feet on Prospect and 100 feet on Meeting; and the other on the north side of Meeting Street “a little westerly of the first,” measuring 50 feet on Meeting Stret by 130 feet deep. The deed identifies these lots as the 4th and 3rd (in that order) of certain estates which Thomas M. Burgess, administrator of the estate of the late George W. Page of Providence, granted to Nicholas Brown and Thomas P. Ives by deed dated February 26, 1835 and recorded in DB 48/276

DB 548/265: On March 17, 1915, five heirs of the late William Binney of Newport (Hope Ives Powell of Newport, widow; William Binney, Jr. of Warwick; Horace Binney of Newport; Charlotte H.B.T. Montgomery of Villa Nova, Penn.; and George F. Tyler of Elkins Park, Penn.), conveyed to Isabelle N. Binney, widow, of Chestnut Hill, Philadelphia, Penn., a lot of land on the north side of Meeting Street, located 200.73 feet west of the northwest corner of Meeting and Prospect Streets, measuring 52.32 feet on Meeting, 130.74 feet on the west, 51.88 feet on the north, and 127.36 feet on the east (6,708 sq.ft.). “Being part of the land devised to these grantees as residuary devisees under the last will and testament of William Binney, late of Newport.” The deed also refers to William Binney’s acquisition of the property from Charlotte Goddard on July 23, 1858 (DB 150/432). [Note that although the deed does not specify any buildings on this lot, other records clearly indicate that the house had been built 17 years earlier.]

DB 1052/460: On July 16, 1956, Marianna F. Taft, as executrix of the will of Edith Nichols, deceased of Providence, sold to Mary Burnett Grosvenor, for $10, a lot of land with buildings and improvements on the north side of Meeting Street, located 200.73 feet west of the northwest corner of Meeting and Prospect Streets, measuring 52.32 feet on Meeting, 130.74 feet on the west, 51.88 feet on the north, and 127.36 feet on the east (6,708 sq.ft.).

**Intent to Build Permits (Archives)**

*These records indicate that a building permit was applied for in the summer of 1897; however directories indicate that the house wasn’t completed until 1898.*
Application #12035, dated August 12, 1897, to build a house on the north side of Meeting Street between Congdon and Prospect Streets, for William Binney per Clarke & Spaulding; Clarke & Spaulding, architects.

**Directories (Archives)**

Directories indicate that the house was standing and occupied as of 1898. However, William Binney never lived here.

*Providence City Directories* contain a street directory (listing all existing streets), and a residents’ directory organized alphabetically by last name, beginning in 1850. From 1892-1894 city directories also included a section listing residential buildings by street address, later separately published as a House Directory.

1897

Binney, William, house 72 Prospect St. and at Newport [Mrs. Isabella B.S. Nichols is not listed]

1898-1910

Binney, William, house 72 Prospect St. and at Newport
Nichols, Mrs. Isabella B.S., house 100 Meeting Street

*Providence House Directories* were published separately from the City Directory, 1895-1937 (published biannually from 1901) and list all residential buildings by street address. This directory is typically a year behind the city directory. “(h)” indicates a head of household; “(b)” indicates a boarder.

1897

The address 100 Meeting Street is not listed.

1898

100 Meeting Street: Mrs. Isabella Nichols (h)

1899

100 Meeting Street: Mrs. Isabella Nichols (h); James Y.S. Nichols, student (b)

1900

100 Meeting Street: Mrs. Isabella Nichols (h); William L. Hodgman, lawyer (h)

1901-1906

100 Meeting Street: Mrs. Isabella Nichols (h); Isabella Nichols, teacher (b)

1907-1910

100 Meeting Street: Mrs. Isabella Nichols (h); Edith Nichols (b)

*Research compiled by Kathryn J. Cavanaugh* February 2010