DESCRIPTION:

98 Meeting Street is a single family, Colonial Revival style house, 2-1/2 stories tall, with a flank gable roof featuring two connected pedimented dormers facing the street. Clad in wood shingles, the house has a glass-enclosed porch across the front, and one-over-one wooden double hung windows. The house is well set back from Meeting Street (a much deeper setback than abutting homes), and the lot is raised above street grade several feet. This section of Meeting Street slopes sharply between Congdon and Prospect Streets.

The house stands on a 6,405 square foot lot on the north side of Meeting Street between Congdon Street to the west and Prospect Street to the east. (The other boundary street of the block is Cushing Street.) The lot measures approximately 50 feet wide on Meeting Street and approximately 131 feet deep.

HISTORY:

A Newport resident named Josephine A. Binney, whose family had owned the three lots just east of this one for more than a quarter century, had 98 Meeting Street built in 1909 as an investment property. Its first occupant was Charles M. Parker, a carpenter who lived here for nearly a decade (and possibly longer). The lot had had a house standing on it previously, built in 1873 with a street address of 52 Meeting Street (the street was renumbered sometime before 1895). Operated as a multi-family rental property, the 1873 house was demolished in 1909, probably at Josephine Binney’s direction, to make way for the current house. Since Josephine Binney never lived in this house, its historic name is derived from its original occupant.

Although Josephine Binney did not live in Providence, her address of Catherine Street in Newport matches that of William Binney, who also maintained a residence at 72 Prospect Street at the corner of Meeting Street and owned two other adjacent lots on the north side of Meeting Street. It appears that Josephine was a relative of William, perhaps his daughter. (William's wife was named Charlotte.) William Binney, a founder of the Rhode Island Hospital Trust Company, died in 1909, and it may be that her inheritance allowed Josephine to purchase the property at 98 Meeting Street, immediately adjacent to her family’s holdings. Josephine Binney kept the property as an investment until 1938; since then the house has had six owners, most recently changing hands in 2000.

DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT:¹

This part of the College Hill neighborhood is the original settlement area of Providence, established in 1636 by Roger Williams. Meeting Street is one of the oldest streets in Providence, originally an unnamed lane connecting the two main roads of the colonial settlement, now North Main and Hope Streets. In 1733, a county jail was built at what is now the corner of Meeting and Benefit Streets, and the street became known as Gaol Lane. It was renamed Meeting Street in 1772, after a Quaker meetinghouse was built at the corner of Gaol Lane and North Main Streets. Neither the jail nor the meetinghouse survive today.

The upper slope of College Hill remained largely undeveloped throughout the 18th century, while most of the town was clustered along the riverbanks at the base of the hill. After Benefit Street was laid out in 1769, residential development began to move uphill, but slowly. Not until after the Civil War did the land north and east of Brown University begin to be built up, reaching its current density after the turn of the 20th century.

DESIGNATIONS

98 Meeting Street is a contributing building within the College Hill National Landmark District, listed on the National Register of Historic Places; in the inventory, the house is dated 1875-1895, but not named. This date is in error, as a close examination of the records show.

98 Meeting Street is also located within the College Hill local historic district zone, designated by the City of Providence.

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

Maps and Atlases (Archives)

1798: "A Map of Owners of Lots in Providence," compiled by Henry B. Chace in 1912: Plate III shows Old Gaol Lane (now Meeting Street) running from Main Street east to the Ferry Road to India Point (now Hope Street). By 1798, Prospect Street, Benefit Street, and "Powder House Lane" (now South Court Street) were all laid out. (The name Powder House Lane derives from a structure at the northwest corner of Prospect and Old Gaol Lane, directly across Prospect Street from a signal beacon fire used during the Revolutionary War.) The Heirs of Ambrose Page owned the land east of the intersection of Powder House Lane and Old Gaol Lane, where 98 Meeting Street now stands.

1875: “Atlas of the City of Providence,” by G.M. Hopkins Co., Vol. 1 (Ward 2), Plate M shows the block bounded by Meeting, Prospect, Cushing and Congdon Streets, divided into a number of house lots (this layout is substantially intact today). A house stands on a 6,834 square foot lot numbered 52 Meeting Street, 3 lots east of the intersection of Meeting, Congdon and South Court Streets. This house is not the current structure at 98 Meeting Street: it is sited toward the front of the lot, and has two wings at the rear and an ell on the west side. An F. Miller owns the property. All the lots to the east as far as Prospect Street are owned by W. Binney, whose house stands at the corner of Meeting and Prospect.

1882: “Atlas of the City of Providence” by G.M. Hopkins Co., Plate 2, shows the same configuration of lots in the block bounded by Meeting, Prospect, Cushing and Congdon Streets. The house at the front of the lot still stands, although the map does not indicate the street address, lot size, or owner’s name.

1895: "Atlas of the City of Providence" by Everts & Richards, Plate 29, shows the house (now numbered 98 Meeting) standing near the street line and straddling on two lots, one numbered 239 (4,039 sq. ft.) and one numbered 609 (2,793 sq. ft.). (Why the lot would have been subdivided is not clear.) Again, no owner names are indicated. Note that Meeting Street had sewer lines by now, and streetcar lines ran on Brown and North Main Streets: infrastructure improvements that undoubtedly facilitated residential development on College Hill in this era.

1902: Assessors Plat Maps, Plat 10 shows that Lots 239 (29 feet wide, 4,039 sq. ft.) and 609 (21 feet wide, 2,793 sq. ft.) on the north side of Meeting Street between Congdon and Prospect Streets. The map shows no buildings or owners names.

1908: “Atlas of the City of Providence” by L.J. Richards Co., plate 7 shows a building near the street line of 98 Meeting Street, on a 6,832 sq. ft. lot owned by John Fraden Estate. William Binney still owns all the adjacent property to the east; a house has gone up next door to this one, at 100 Meeting Street.

1918: “Atlas of the City of Providence” by G.M. Hopkins Co., Plate 19 shows a building toward the rear of the lot at 98 Meeting Street (the address is not given, but it is located between 94 and 100 Meeting).
footprint of this structure is different from that of the previous building on this property, indicating that the earlier building had been demolished and this one constructed in its stead, sometime after 1908. The lot size is still 6,832 sq. ft., and the property owner is J.A. Binney. (100 Meeting is owned by L.N. Binney, and the big house at 72 Prospect by the William Binney Estate.)


1937: “Atlas of the City of Providence” by G.M. Hopkins Co., Plate 19: 98 Meeting Street stands on a 6,405 sq. ft. lot owned by J.A. Binney. (Note the lot at 94 Meeting Street has increased by the same amount of area taken away from 98 Meeting, so Ms. Binney apparently sold some 400 sq. ft. of land to her neighbor, reducing her own property to its current size.)

**Intent to Build Records (Archives)**

Permit #2974, dated June 3, 1873, issued to G. T. Northwood to construct a dwelling house at 52 Meeting Street. (This is the previous building on this site.)

Permit #934, dated July 20, 1909, issued to Josephine A. Binney of Catherine Street, Newport, to construct a new wood 2-1/2 story single family house at 98 Meeting Street. The builder was A.C.J. Learned & Co. The estimated construction cost was $7,500.

**Directories (Archives)**

[Note: Josephine A. Binney is not listed in either Providence City Directories or Providence House Directories for the years 1908-1918.]

City Directory, 1909:
- William Binney resided at 72 Prospect Street and 80 Catherine Street, Newport.
- Charles M. Parker, a carpenter, resided on Admiral Street.

City Directory, 1910:
- William Binney died April 23, 1909; Mrs. Binney remained resident on Prospect and Catherine Streets (she later died in 1914, possibly in Newport as there is no record of her death in Providence).
- Charles M. Parker lived at 98 Meeting Street.

House Directory, 1907-1908:
- 98 Meeting Street had 3 residents: 2 men (who may have been related) and 1 woman, a widow.

House Directory, 1909-1910:
- 98 Meeting Street had 6 residents (3 men, 3 women, all unrelated), including 2 boarders.

House Directory, 1911-1912 through 1917-1918:
- 98 Meeting Street had one resident - Charles M. Parker, a carpenter. This change confirms that the property had gone from a multi-family to a single-family house.

House Directory, 1919-1920
- The address 98 Meeting Street disappears from the directory, as do all other addresses on Meeting Street between Congdon and Prospect Streets. No explanation was found for this.

**Tax Records (Archives)**

1908: Plat 10, Lot 239 was owned by the John Fraden Estate and valued at $2,220.
1909: Plat 10, Lots 239 and 609 were owned by Josephine A. Binney of Newport. Lot 239 was valued at $2,220 and Lot 609 at $1,720, for a total value of $3,940.

1910: Plat 10, Lot 239 was owned by Josephine A. Binney of Newport. Lot 239 was now valued at $6,940. This increase indicates that the house was built since the previous assessment.

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

Field Card for AP 10, Lot 239: Meeting Street

- Owned by John Fraden Estate as of May 15, 1879.
- Owned by Josephine A. Binney of Newport as of June 10, 1909.
- Owned by William E. Twamlay and wife Mary F. as of March 1938.
- Owned by RI School of Design as of July 14, 1964 (ref. Deed Book 1126, Page 546).
- Owned by Mary S. Foote as of September 30, 1976 (ref. DB 1194, Page 652).
- Owned by Martin Irwin as of September 13, 1985 (ref. DB 1308, Page 447).
- Owned by Nathaniel R. Tingley, Jr. and Alice C. Tingley as of July 17, 2000 (ref. DB 4412, page 3).

*Research compiled by Kathryn J. Cavanaugh, February 2002*