

BOWNE HOUSE MOURNS TRUSTEE SENATOR FRANK PADAVAN

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LITERACY AND COMMUNICATION THROUGH THE CENTURIES AT THE BOWNE HOUSE

BY ELLEN M. SPINDLER, COLLECTION VOLUNTEER,

WITH SPECIAL THANKS TO CHARLOTTE JACKSON, ARCHIVAL CONSULTANT

The Bowne House has numerous documents and artifacts in its Collection showing the importance of reading, writing, and literacy to the Bowne and (through marriage) Parsons' families, throughout its occupancy by descendants from 1661-1946. Even more significantly, the Collection demonstrates how their Quaker faith inspired them to fulfill a mission of providing and improving educational opportunities to the less advantaged.



JOHN BOWNE'S 17TH CENTURY JOURNALS, WRITING PAPER SALES AND BOOK TRADING

The House Archives include several copies of a Journal of John Bowne first begun in 1649, a year after he moved from Matlock, England to Boston at age 21, including a daily record of his voyage to England in 1650 and return in 1651.ⁱ The journal spans from 1649-1694, including almost all of the years he lived in the Bowne House until his death in 1695.ⁱⁱ The journal indicates frequent travel by Bowne and correspondence with Friends in Europe. He also maintained regular correspondence with Quakers in Barbados. There are also copies of an account book for the period 1649-1703 that includes an agreement in 1692 between John and his son Samuel Bowne (born 1667) on how to harvest a crop of wheat and Indian corn, oats, wheat flax, and barley and their respective shares.



John Bowne traded cloth and many other products, but also traded books throughout his life. Records from 1663 indicate that writing paper was for sale in his house.ⁱⁱⁱ In 1676, he was commissioned to bring two bibles from England. From 1686 to 1691, he acted as a middleman in the sale of books. He mostly bought books from England, and then sold them in Flushing, but he also sold books for William Bradford, a Quaker printer in New Netherlands. This included the almanac, the most popular book of the time.^{iv}

FAMILY BIBLES

The Collection also includes numerous family bibles. For example, there is the title page of Samuel Bowne's bible, date unknown, listing his children on reverse, and a bible gifted to Samuel Bowne (likely Samuel's grandson) from Thomas Pearsall (likely the father-in-law of his daughter, Mary) with inscriptions of various dates and information regarding family births and deaths from 1717 and 1817. Other bibles include an unattributed 1690 Dutch bible; John Bowne's, dated 1800 (possibly John Bowne's great-grandson); Thomas P. Bowne's, dated 1821 (possibly Thomas Pearsall Bowne); and an undated bible of Walter Bowne (possibly the former mayor). The Collection also includes a bible game undoubtedly used as a learning tool.

(CONT'D)

FAMILY PERSONAL BOOKS AND PARTICIPATION IN LENDING LIBRARIES



(example of
handwriting in book)

The Bownes and Parsons give every indication of being well read. For example, the Archives has a book passed down from John Bowne to his son Samuel entitled “The Memorable Works of a Son of Thunder and Consolation: Namely, That True Prophet, and Faithful Servant of God, and Sufferer for the Testimony of Jesus, Edward Burroughs Who Dyed [sic] a Prifoner [sic] for the Word of God, in the City of London, the Fourteenth of the Twelfth Moneth [sic], 1662” Handwritten inside is “Samuel Bowne / His Book given him / by his father John Bowne / in 1689.”

The book also has handwriting showing its history in being passed through generations, including “John Bowne His Bock / Bought of his sisters 1745” (possibly the grandson of the original John Bowne); “John Essington / His Booke. [sic] / ? Apriell [sic] 18 1677” (possibly a predecessor owner who came over from England with William Penn); “This Book of John Bowne doe [sic] / Bequeath unto my sone [sic] Samuel / after my decease / written ye 6th of ye 10/mo 1689 [sic]”; “Hannah Lawrence / Her Book 1717” (possibly Samuel’s daughter and John Bowne’s granddaughter); “John Bowne His / Boock [sic] bought of his / fathers effect [sic]” (possibly referring to John Bowne’s father Thomas).

Other early books in the Collection include, inter alia, a book with handwriting Sam Bowne’s and Hannah Bowne, still wrapped in brown paper, and “The Evening Fire-Side; or Weekly Intelligence in the Civil, Natural, Moral, Literary and Religious Worlds”, Volume I, 1805, with handwriting Jane Bowne, and Anne Bowne. This latter example shows the increased secularization of the family’s reading over time.

The Collection also has a bookmark described as made of silk ribbon and perforated paper with the name of Catherine L. Bowne, probably the sister of Mary Bowne Parsons (nee’ Mary Bowne, married to Samuel Parsons). Another metal bookmark described in the accession records has a “B” on the back and was located in the library (a designated room adjoining the 1669 room at the House).

We additionally have evidence that some of the Bowne family participated in a lending library. For example, the Archives include shares of the NY Society Library, transmitted from Robert Hartshorne Bowne (son of Robert Bowne, founder of the Bowne and Co. printing company at South Street Seaport discussed below) to his son Robert Hartshorne Bowne, Jr. (1792), and then from the latter to his own son, Richard Hartshorne Bowne (1842). It also includes a James Parsons’ certificate of admission to a library society in 1793 (possibly Samuel Parsons’ father).

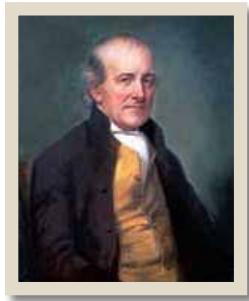
18TH CENTURY BOWNE PRINTING AND BOOK TRADING

A Revolutionary war letter dated 1776 exists in the Archives written by Robert Bowne (1744-1818), the great-grandson of John Bowne. Robert Bowne wrote the letter to his brother John Bowne (1742-1806) who lived in the House.

This same Robert Bowne was the founder of Bowne & Co. Stationers in 1775, now at 209 Water Street and operating under the name Bowne Printers on behalf of the South Street Seaport museum. A newspaper advertisement of the day announced:



“Bowne & Co., newly established at No. 39 Queens Street, has for sale Writing Paper; English and American; Account Books; Quills and Pens; Binding and Printing Materials; Bolting Clothes; Powder; Furs, Nails, Glass and Dry Goods; Pitch Pine Boards; and a few casks of low-priced Cutlery.”^v



By 1783, after the War's end, the company had also begun printing work and specialized in stationary supplies and book printing. By the early 1800's, it dealt in a variety of goods and services, including acting as agents for other merchants, land speculation, the sale of commodities and providing banking services to clients.^{vi} Even after Robert Bowne's death in 1818, his two sons Robert H. Bowne and John L. Bowne continued the family's long involvement in the sale of writing paper, book trading, and printing.

For example, Robert's son John (born 1779) appears on two indentures made regarding the disposition of the assets of a book stall business operating in the vicinity: an 1807 Indenture between John L. Bowne and Stanley Stansbury regarding selling stock from his discontinued book business and an 1807 follow-up indenture where Bowne disavows assignment and passes management to two other parties, William Pryor and Julius L. Dunning, to permit Stansbury's business to continue. The Bowne Printers Company's long standing history for over 200 years up until the present time makes it iconic in the New York City area.



FAMILY SAMPLERS REFLECTING FEMALE LITERACY

Literacy in the family was also aided by embroidered samplers, a method commonly used by young girls to become literate at the time. There are 27 samplers in the Collection, although it is not known if all are original to the house or were stitched by family members. One of the oldest samplers in the accession records dates to 1798.

The Collection includes an early sampler from Eliza Bowne (1787-1852), John Bowne's great-great granddaughter, with the notation of a verse beginning with "Blest solitude!..." It is signed with "Eliza Bowne Nine Partners Boarding School 1800 aged 12 y." The Nine Partners Boarding School operated from 1796-1863 in a settlement called Mechanic (now near Millbrook, New York) in Central Dutchess County next to the "Old Brick" meeting house, a center of Quaker activity.



(Drawing of Nine Partners boarding school in 1816) vii

According to a 1920 article in the Bulletin of Friends' Historical Society, "There was a certain prestige in having attended Nine Partners..." The school was the first coeducational boarding and day school in the State but had separate classes and little contact among the sexes. It taught reading, math, and other such subjects to both sexes and was designed to inculcate Quaker values and discourage materialism.viii

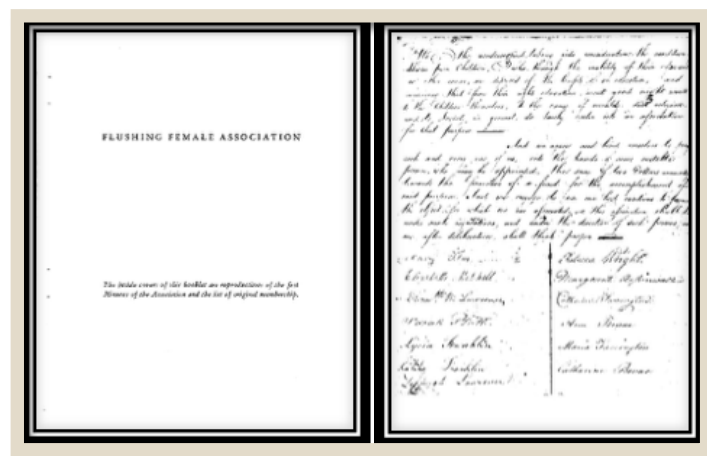
Lucretia Coffin Mott attended in the early 1800's (@1806 at age 13) and graduated in 1810 soon after Eliza Bowne. Many students like Lucretia Mott embarked on lives as abolitionists and women's suffrage campaigners, grounded in Nine Partners' values and education. Throughout the Civil War, the Nine Partners Meeting and School coordinated Underground Railroad activities in Dutchess and Columbia counties.ix

Eliza Bowne shows up in the 1850 census living at the House at age 62, together with her sister Ann, age 64. Eliza and Ann were the sisters of Catherine Bowne and Mary B. Parsons, originally Mary Bowne prior to her marriage to the Quaker minister Samuel Parsons. All were children of John Bowne (John Bowne's great-grandson), as well as nieces of the Robert Bowne who founded the printing company discussed above. This census lists the occupants of the house as including these two aunts, their nephews Robert B. Parsons, 29, horticulturist, his brother William B. Parsons, 27, horticulturist, and their nieces Mary B. Parsons, 36, and Jane Parsons, 24. Another nephew, horticulturist Samuel B. Parsons, Sr., 31, and his family, including his son Samuel B. Parsons, Jr., 6 (the later landscaper) are listed as living in a different household.

The Collection also includes a sampler done by Eliza's niece Mary B. Parsons, referenced above as living in the House with her in 1850, described as featuring alphabet and cross stitch and eyelet stitch with the notation "Mary B. Parsons, 1821." The embroidery described is blue, pink, lavender, and gold silk on a plain weave ground. Mary would have been 8 years old at the time she did the sampler.

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT IN ESTABLISHING SCHOOLS

Eliza Bowne was a later participant in the Flushing Female Association, in effect from 1814-1967, which focused "On the poor children of Flushing who from the incapacity of their parents to give them education, are growing up in ignorance...." Her sisters Catherine (1789-1848, buried at Quaker Meeting house) and Anne Bowne (1785-1863) were also founding members. Other descendants later involved in the Female Association include Miss Anna H. Parsons (last resident of Bowne House) who was an officer and member in 1914. X See image of booklet below.



The Flushing Female Association laid the foundation of the first free school in Flushing by each member's agreement to pay \$2 annually. A school was opened April 1814 after donations and teachers were procured. Meetings were usually held at the Bowne House until at least the time of the Draft Riots in 1863. A pamphlet mentions that until there was a bequest received in 1838 for books for poor Negro children and to pay for their schooling, "there is no mention of a color line and colored and white children appear to have been mingled." In 1866, there is a record of a donation to a "Colored Sunday School" and the Flushing Colored Mission Sunday School continued until 1910.

Several Bowne descendants other than Eliza Bowne were also instrumental in establishing public education for African American students and others in New York City even earlier in the eighteenth century. For example, Robert Bowne (the printer) and Robert J. Murray, Jr., father-in-law of Catherine Bowne Murray (daughter of James, another of John Bowne's great-grandsons), were prominent figures in the Abolitionist movement and trustees of the NY Manumission Society (1785), which founded the African Free School in 1787.^{xi} Significantly, Robert Bowne was a founding director of the Manumission Society with George Clinton, Alexander Hamilton, John Jay and others, while Robert Murray, Jr. was a long standing treasurer. Robert Bowne was also a founder of the Society for Establishing a Free School in the City of New York (1805).^{xii}

PARSONS' BOOKS AND WRITINGS

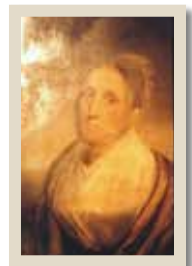
A. SAMUEL AND MARY BOWNE PARSONS The Parsons' family first became involved with the House through the 1806 marriage of Mary Bowne (1784-1839) to Samuel Parsons (1771-1841), a Quaker minister.

Since Mary eventually inherited and we believe co-owned the Old Bowne House with her sisters, her share of the house passed from the Bowne family to the Parsons family upon her death. All of her children (James B., Mary B., John B., Samuel B., Robert B., William B. and Jane Parsons) were born in the House and four still resided there in 1850 at the time of the census.



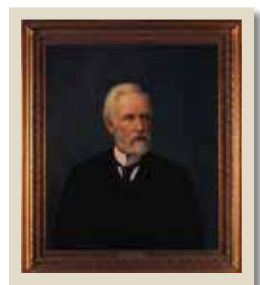
The Archives include a memoir excerpt by Samuel Parsons describing his wife's death in St Croix and his 1839 handwritten obituary about her. Other letters from the family's voyage(s) to a warmer climate in the hopes of Mary's recovery and describing her eventual death include one written by their son Samuel B. Parsons, Sr. to his brother Robert on board a ship to St. Cruz (probably St. Croix) in

December 1839. There is also a letter from their daughter Mary B. Parsons to her aunt Eliza F. Bowne from St. Croix in the second month of 1839 reflecting the possibility that she had already travelled there with her mother earlier in the year.



B. THEIR SON SAMUEL B. PARSONS, SR. Notably, their son Samuel Bowne Parsons, Sr. (1819-1906) founded the Parsons nursery approximately 1838-1840 after his father had purchased farmland surrounding the "Bowne Homestead." The

Archives includes a journal/memoir written by him explaining how he founded the Parsons Nursery and some of his travels, from which he procured horticultural specimens. He describes how he obtained the money (borrowed) to buy the land, so we know he did not rely exclusively on land his father had purchased.



The Collection also includes an 1864 ledger called Abstract and Searches, Accounts of the Bowne Estate with a map of surrounding areas in Flushing with handwriting on the flyleaf of Armstrong & Fosdick, Counsellors at Law, Jamaica, Long Island.

S.B. Parsons, Sr. wrote two books about roses called “The Rose, its History, Poetry, Culture and Classification” (1847) and “A Treatise on the Propagation, Culture, and History of the Rose” (1869).



The preface to his earliest book on the Rose effusively states as follows:

The commencement and partial preparation of this work assisted to beguile the tedium of a winter's residence from home, where even Orange and Magnolia groves, with the luxuriant vegetation of a semi-tropical region, could scarcely dispel the ennui attending a life of idleness. Our especial object has been to throw around the culture of the Rose a halo of pleasant thoughts and associations; and while to the mere cultivator there may seem much irrelevant matter of history, poetry, and the like, we think that it will not thus seem to all.

Samuel then goes on to attribute the earliest history of the Rose to the gardens of Babylon approximately 1200 years before Christianity and demonstrates considerable knowledge of its history, literary references, and of course its horticultural properties.

Intriguingly, some Quaker houses in Philadelphia have reported that the green rose was a symbol or signal of involvement in the Underground Railroad, a natural fit for a Quaker family in Queens also involved in the Underground Railroad and well versed in exotic horticulture. Samuel's obituary noted, “It was his boast that he assisted more fugitive slaves to freedom than any other man in Queens County”. His brothers Robert Bowne Parsons who helped him run the nursery and William B. Parsons who also lived in the House were known abolitionists.^{xiii} Some descendants believe that if slaves were hid by any Bowne family member, it may have occurred at the family grist mill located on the water. There are also stories (not yet documented) that fugitive slaves may have been hidden in carts going to and from the nursery and the water.

In the 1860 census, S.B. Parsons, Sr.'s real estate is listed as valued at \$150,000 and his personal estate at \$102,000, most likely for the farm and the business. Clearly he was able to afford a prosperous lifestyle; the Collection includes a 70+page travelogue from a trip to Europe with his family. As the family travelled and had increased educational opportunities, their reading seems to have become more secularized and varied.

The Archives also includes a telegram by S.B. Parsons, Sr. from Litchfield (probably from his brother James' house) to his brother Robert Bowne Parsons in 1862 advising of their sister Jane's death, reflecting his use of the latest technological advance in communication. Samuel's will probated in 1906 gave his full estate to his son Samuel B. Parsons, Jr., including a residuary estate he had inherited from his sister Mary B. Parsons.

C. SAMUEL B. PARSONS, SR.'S SISTER, MARY B. PARSONS Mary B.

Parsons (1813-1878) was one of several children of Samuel Parsons, the minister, and his wife (nee' Mary Bowne, also known as Mary B. Parsons). She was the sister of Samuel B. Parsons, Sr., Robert B. Parsons, William B Parsons and Jane Parsons, as well as James B. and John B. Parsons.



The Collection includes a bible from 1836 with an 1841 inscription from Mary B. Parsons to “her dear sister Jane” with a beautiful poem written inside, stating in part: “When in future distant years, Thou shalt look upon this page, Through the crystal vale of tears, That dim our eyes in after age, Think it was a sister’s hand, Though her smile no more thou’lt see...”



The Collection also includes a book entitled *The Book of Private Devotion: A Series of Prayers and Meditations*, with an Introductory Essay on Prayer, Chiefly from the Writings of Hannah More, with handwriting “Mary B Parsons / from her / loving brother / William / 1st mo 1st 1847”. There is a further small book bound in black leather entitled *Daily Food for Christians*, 1831, with “Mary” handwritten, believed to have probably belonged to her.

The 1870 census showed Mary living alone (with a \$4000 estate) and an Irish servant. She is described as a Lady, 57 years old. Her death is recorded in grave records as 1878. Although one Genealogy book describes her as having died young, the sampler, the census and a variety of other artifacts in the Collection demonstrate that, in fact, she lived until age 65.

There are numerous other artifacts associated with communication involving Mary B. Parsons. For example, there is a calling card holder from Mary B. Parsons with two of her calling cards inside. The card holder is navy blue ribbed velvet lined with cream satin. Historically, there was a social protocol involved with calling upon friends and acquaintances in the 18th and 19th centuries to introduce oneself or visit, including calling hours, place of reception, topics of conversation and length of stay, among other areas. In general, a prospective invitee would leave a card at another’s house and, only if they received a card in response would a personal visit be considered welcome. Visiting cards were often kept in highly decorated cases such as this one.

Mary B. Parsons’ will is also in the Collection, handwritten in black ink, dated October 24, 1878. We are thus able to see how she first learned her letters in her sampler at age 8 until her final words written for her will at her death at age 65.

D. SAMUEL B. PARSONS, SR.’S SON, SAMUEL B. PARSONS, JR.



Following in his father’s horticultural tradition as the founder of the Parsons Nursery, his son Samuel B. Parsons, Jr. (1844-1923), a noted landscape architect, wrote several books, including *Landscape Gardening: Notes and Suggestions* (1891), *Hints on Landscape Gardening*, and *How to Plan the Home Grounds* (1899), *Landscape Gardening Studies* (1910), and *The Art of Landscape Architecture* (1915).

Parsons served as Superintendent of Planting of the NYC Parks Department, and designed multiple other parks, as well as planning private gardens and playgrounds. Most notably, he helped Calvert Vaux design the plantings for Central Park.



COMMUNICATION ARTIFACTS USED BY THE FAMILY

The Collection also has various unattributed communication artifacts such as a wooden seal (with initials P and B); a wooden stamp from Parsons and Company, Flushing listed as formerly located in the library, and a possible Chinese ink stamp with a gold Asian dog on top. There are at least seven inkwells made of stoneware, ceramic, and other materials. There are also two silver-plated stamp boxes, two bone letter openers, a pocket pen made of bone and metal with blackened metal point from the library, and pencil case, with hinged lid and floral and ecclesiastical decoration dated circa 1900.

Known letters date back as far back as John Bowne's own letters, including from jail in Amsterdam following his arrest for holding Quaker meetings in the House. A vast trove of archival documents, including hundreds of letters, are still being examined by the House Archival Consultant. Poignantly, there is a letter to Samuel B. Parsons, either the father or son, dated 1892 from Samuel B. Parsons Sr.'s brother James B. Parsons about saving the Bowne House from leaving the family. The House is now in the hands of the Bowne Historical Society and is a New York City Landmark and listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

CONCLUSION

The Bowne and Parsons' families have a long and commendable history of furthering literacy among the poor in general, as well as African-Americans, at a time when there were limited educational opportunities for both. These efforts, together with the family's documented involvement with the Underground Railroad, were demonstrable ways of putting their religious beliefs into concrete action. Both families also helped broaden communication and literacy with the renowned Bowne Printers Company, and multiple books written by Parsons' on horticulture and landscaping, the focus of commercial activities at the House since the founding of the Parsons Nursery. The Collection, both the Archives and the artifacts, thus embody not just the outward-looking, evangelical aspect of the Bowne and Parsons' family Quaker activities, but the everyday, domestic literacy and means of communication utilized by a prosperous and educated family over a period of time encompassing three centuries.

ⁱ AN #1954.17. The original is in the New York Historical Society. For further information about the accession numbers of artifacts or archival documents mentioned in this article, contact the Bowne House.

ⁱⁱ The original is in the NYPL Archives and Manuscripts.

ⁱⁱⁱ Gerald R. McDonald, "William Bradford's Book Trade and John Bowne, Long Island Quaker, as his Book Agent, 1686-1691", 212. For example, it states "In 1669, according to the account book, he had writing paper for sale in his house." It further states "When he went to England in 1676, he undertook many commissions, one being the purchase of two Bibles for which he had been given money to cover their cost." Another reference states "In some cases John Bowne acted as a middleman, as in 1687, when Charles Morgan took a dozen almanacs for further sale."

^{iv} Id.

^v Since 1775..., *The Story of Bowne & Co.*, New York, 1952.

^{vi} Edmund A. Stanley, Jr., *Of Men and Dreams*, Bowne & Co., 1975, p.32.

^{vii} Paula Tarnapol Whitacre, "Nine Partners & a Neat Picture", paulawhitacre.com.

^{viii} "Bulletin of Friends' Historical Society of Philadelphia, Vol. 10, No. 1 (Eleventh Month (November), 1920", pp. 11-15

^{ix} Melodye Moore (October 1988) "National Register of Historic Places nomination, Nine Partners Meeting House and Cemetery", New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

^x See "Flushing Female Association" booklet in the Archives.

^{xi} New York Historical Society, "Guide to the Records of the New-York Manumission Society."

^{xii} *Of Men and Dreams*, supra.

^{xiii} William was the recipient of a letter now in the Archives dated September 28, 1850 from L.I. Jocelyn (believed to be Simeon S.) to William B. Parsons who was living in the house at the time with his brother and others requesting assistance in the escape of a "colored man". The letter was written very soon after passage of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act, amplifying the danger involved. Parsons is requested to see if he can be kept perfectly unobserved in his neighborhood as Williamsburgh was considered too close to the City for safety. The letter concludes by stating [t]his is a strong case and great care and caution is involved.



BOWNE HOUSE MOURNS TRUSTEE SENATOR FRANK PADAVAN

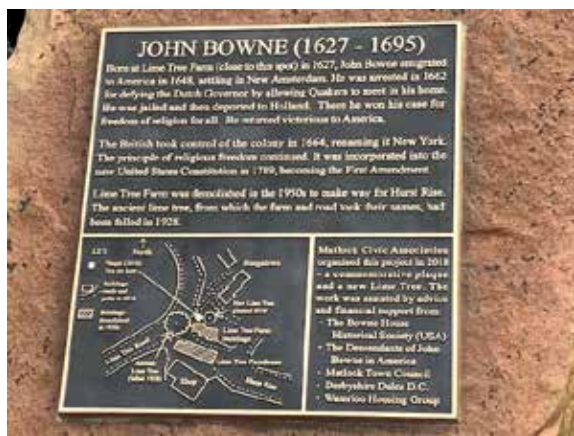
It is with great sadness that we announce the death of Life Member and long-time trustee Senator Frank Padavan on October 8, 2018. We will miss his enthusiasm, encouragement and wise counsel, which were of great help to us as we navigated the complex process of the restoration of the museum.

Senator Padavan joined the Bowne Board after 38 years of service in the New York state senate, where he represented District 11, Queens. He was Vice President pro-tem of the senate and served on a number of committees. Senator Padavan was a Colonel in the US Army Reserves and was active in a number of community-based organizations. During his time in the senate, he took an active interest in local cultural organizations such as the Bowne House, the Queens County Farm Museum, Alley Pond Environmental Center, and Poppenhusen Institute.

Senator Padavan was responsible for obtaining the state grant for our recently completed 3-D Scanning Project of the 1661 Bowne House. The scan results have been utilized in planning for the restoration of the house and have been shown in educational presentations around the country and abroad, enhancing interest in and appreciation of the museum and its history.

Senator Padavan is survived by two children, Alison Padavan and Dr. Scott Padavan, and one grandchild.

JOHN BOWNE HONORED IN MATLOCK, ENGLAND ON OCTOBER 20TH, 2018



John Bowne was honored with a commemorative plaque at the site of his birthplace and ancestral home, Lime Tree Farm in Matlock, Derbyshire on October 20. The tribute was the inspiration of the Matlock Civic Association (MCA), who arranged for the plaque, plinth and new lime tree at the site.

Representing Bowne House were Rosemary Viator and Christine Schaller, who spoke at the event and Richard Viator. Speakers from

Derbyshire included officers of MCA, the Mayor of Matlock, the Chairman of the Derbyshire Dales District Council, and a local Quakers group. The dedication and unveiling ceremony was attended by a number of local residents; the event was covered by the local and regional media and was followed by a reception at Sherriff Lodge. Three short videos about the museum and the Bowne family were viewed by the guests.



A LETTER IN THE TIME OF REVOLUTION

In her article on Bowne literacy and learning, Ellen Spindler references many “communication artifacts” from our Collections. Here is a closer look at one such artifact: a family letter.

“...no doubt you are anxious to hear how it fairs with us in this time of general Calammity...”

On December 12, 1776, a man in Shrewsbury, New Jersey penned the above words to his older brother in Flushing, New York. The writer's name was Robert Bowne, thirty-one years old with a wife, young daughter, and newborn son. Born in 1744/45 to two Quaker ministers, he was the great-grandson of John Bowne. His brother, John Bowne (1742-1806), still lived in the Bowne House, where they both had grown up. Robert had fled New York City after the Battle of Long Island in August 1776, reluctantly leaving his newly opened stationery business, Bowne & Co. He and his wife Betsey took refuge with her father, Robert Hartshorne, in rural Monmouth County. Now he was writing to his childhood home across enemy lines. Luckily, Robert's letter survived to be preserved there with other family papers, and ultimately bequeathed to the Museum.

In his letter, Robert describes the awkward position of Quakers during the Revolutionary War: *“I have endeavour'd to avoid giving offence to any, have associated with very few which I have found to be much the safest, as there are many warm persons near us that are ketching at everything they can take the least advantage of to distress those who do not approve of their violent and unjust proceedings.”* Then as now, most Quakers were pacifists (although some, such as General Nathanael Greene, chose to fight and were disowned by their Meetings.) The Quaker Peace Testimony in its best-known form dates from the 1660 Restoration of the Monarchy, when founder George Fox and eleven others proclaimed to King Charles the II:

“All bloody principles and practices we do utterly deny, with all outward wars, and strife, and fightings with outward weapons, for any end, or under any pretence whatsoever, and this is our testimony to the whole world.”

The Quakers' desire to remain neutral in the conflict, and their refusal to swear loyalty oaths, made them suspect to both sides. Robert Bowne goes on to write, *“The New Yorkers have been repeatedly threatened that they should be all drove away from this quarter tho' they never put it in execution, many that was here have returned to New York. I should have been there myself before this had it not been for my family which I do not intend to leave as long as I can stay with them.”* This passage underscores the extent to which the American Revolution was truly a civil war, and nowhere more so than Monmouth County, which Governor Livingston dubbed “the theatre of spoil and destruction.” New Yorkers were regarded as likely Tory sympathizers, as even before the War the city contained one of the highest concentration of Loyalists in the Colonies. To compound the problem, the Hartshornes -Bowne's in-laws- were themselves suspected of Loyalist sympathies. His wife's cousin Lawrence spied for the British and fled to Nova Scotia after the war. His father-in-law, Robert Hartshorne, and the latter's brothers Essek and John, were regarded by their contemporaries and by later historians as “disaffected,” and suffered a variety of injuries during the Revolutionary period, including arrest, confiscation of property, and loss of public office.

“I am just informed that some of the King's Troops and Light Horse are 9 or 10 miles this side of Amboy which has occasioned the Provincials to withdraw the guard from along shore and given me this opportunity of writing to thee.” On this date, the Continental Army was in full-on retreat



following the loss of Fort Lee, with the British and Hessian troops in pursuit. It's not clear which exactly which units Bowne is referring to here. However, a skirmish was recorded near Amboy on December 12 involving the First New Jersey Volunteers, a regiment of Loyalist "refugees" from Monmouth who had been granted official militia status by the British. Homegrown units in the Colonies were often called "Provincials" by the British.

The latter part of the letter addresses the monetary problems of the day. Bowne writes, "*Joseph Thorne has been down here several times this fall, we have contrived matters in the best manners we were capable of, to avoid suffering by the Depreciation of the continental currency.*" After the outbreak of hostilities, the Continental Congress began printing paper money to fund the war. Due to excessive quantities printed, the currency succumbed to hyperinflation, becoming virtually worthless by the end of the War. Many Friends boycotted the Continental as enabling the war effort; the Philadelphia Meeting banned its use. Bowne and Thorne apparently did not shun it outright. Nor, notably, did they default to the London Trade, or black-market commerce with British encampments on Sandy Hook. This illicit traffic was rampant in shore-line communities such as Shrewsbury. Bowne and Thorne choose to convert their paper to commodity money, rather than British pounds: "*...he brought down with him 1500 dollars which seeing no prospect of laying out to advantage in these parts we concluded best for him to go down into Virginia and lay the same out in Tobacco and let it lay until matters are settled which we hope will not be long...*" Bowne makes clear that he is still hoping for a negotiated settlement.

Returning to New York after the peace, he built Bowne and Co. into a thriving printing company still doing business today, while also co-founding New York's first bank and first fire insurance company; co-founding the Manumission Society and the Society for Establishing a Free School; serving as governor of the New York Hospital; chairing the New York City Health Committee; and even building an early section of the Erie Canal. Robert Bowne may not have supported the Revolution, but afterwards he participated whole-heartedly in the task of building a revolutionary new society.

FURTHER READING:

Adelberg, Michael S. *The American Revolution in Monmouth County*. Charleston: The History Press. 2010

McCullough, David. 1776. New York: Simon & Schuster. 2005.

Stanley, Edmund A. *Of Men and Dreams*. New York: Bowne & Co. 1975.



THE DEDICATION OF THE JOHN BOWNE MONUMENT; MATLOCK, ENGLAND 2018

REMARKS BY ROSEMARY VIETOR, TRUSTEE, REPRESENTING BOWNE HOUSE

Good morning everyone.

We would like to thank the Matlock Civic Association for bringing us together today. It was the Civic Association's suggestion to commemorate John Bowne, a native of 17th century Matlock, for his role in shaping American history and values. We are thrilled that he will be commemorated today with this lovely plaque at the site of his birthplace and ancestral home.

John Bowne was born in Matlock in 1627. He was baptized in the Church of St. Giles here. In 1649, just after the death of King Charles I, John, with his father Thomas and sister Dorothy, left Lime Tree Farm, their home here, for America. John kept extensive journals, correspondence, and other records but did not cite any reason for the family's departure, so the reason remains a mystery. The family settled in Flushing, which is now part of New York City. Their wood frame house still stands there, on ½ acre of the original 400 acre parcel, lovingly preserved by nine generations of Bowne descendants. It is a city, state and national landmark, and is now a museum operated by the Historical Society.



John's values, goals and work ethic were shaped by his early life in England. The courage he showed in opposing an unjust law reflected his English values. He and his wife, Hannah (also of

English descent, from Groton Manor, Essex) were deeply religious, committed not only to home and family but to church, community and the welfare of others. These principles were carried from their homeland to their new life in America. Beliefs in liberty and freedom of conscience, combined with John's courage in putting his beliefs into action, took root, inspiring his fellow Americans, and evolved over a century later into the values espoused in the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

The town of Flushing was established in 1645; it was in Dutch New Amsterdam, but its residents were mostly English. In order to encourage people to settle there, the Dutch added an incentive and guaranteed "liberty of conscience" in the Town Charter.

By 1657, the Dutch governor, Peter Stuyvesant had decided to restrict freedoms in the colony. He forbade the practice of any religion other than the Dutch Reformed Church. Thirty residents of Flushing got together to draw up a Remonstrance; a document designed to protest against what they saw as an unjust and illegal action. This was delivered to Governor Stuyvesant; punishment was swift, but the law remained in effect.

In 1662, John Bowne, probably not a Quaker at that time, challenged the law by allowing Quakers to gather for worship in his home. He was swiftly arrested, sent to prison in Manhattan, and later deported to England. He left behind his wife and several small children, and only his father to help in managing the farm. Bowne was away for two years, resulting in great hardship for his family.

John eventually made his way to Holland to meet with the governors of the Dutch West India Company. Carrying a copy of the original 1645 Charter of the town of Flushing, he pleaded



his case, citing the guarantees in the charter. Bowne won his case and made his way back to Flushing, arriving home in 1664. This was an example of non-violent protest to correct a wrong. The Dutch governors ordered Stuyvesant to honor the guarantees in the charter and to permit freedom of conscience in the colony. New York was the first colony to have such freedoms.

It wasn't until more than 100 years later that these principles became universally mandated in America. After the Revolution, they were enshrined in the First Amendment. Thus we have guarantees of freedom of religion, the right of assembly, and freedom of speech.

So we in America are grateful for the courage of an Englishman, a native of Matlock, from a family with deep roots in Derbyshire, whose actions secured these principles. The 1657 Flushing Remonstrance was the Word, but it was John Bowne, whose Deed in challenging an unjust law, resulted in the freedoms we enjoy today.

Thank you for honoring him.

ABOUT MATLOCK, DERBYSHIRE

Matlock, population about 20,000 is located in the picturesque Peak District of Derbyshire. It lies within the Peak District National Park, and is adjacent to the 10,000 acre Chatsworth Estate, property of the Duke of Devonshire. The town was settled before the 12th century, was known for its iron and coal mines, and was an important source of fine stone. Most of the area buildings are of stone. Near-by Bakewell is a picturesque village which is particularly popular with tourists. It is also home of the famous Bakewell Tart, a traditional dessert. The Peak District is very scenic; the approach from the north is via the winding Cat and Fiddle Road, which winds through spectacular moors, mountains and pasture land.



A SCENE ON THE RIVER WYE

The Wye is a beautiful local attraction, with trees overhanging the water, bridges ancient and new, old cottages and a profusion of water birds. It is one of the scenic sites of the Peak District National Park.



2018-2019 EVENTS



The Historic House Holiday Tour

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2018 1:00-4:00PM

Seven local sites decorated for the Holidays with special programs



Lunar New Year Celebration

SATURDAY, JANUARY, 2019 1:00-4:00PM

Celebrate Lunar New Year with family friendly activities & traditions from East to West.



Black History Month Weekend

SATURDAY, February 23, 2019 1:00-4:00PM



Garden Planting Spring Volunteer Day

SATURDAY, March 23, 2019 9:30AM-12:30PM



Arbor/Earth Date Celebration and Volunteer Day

SATURDAY, APRIL 20, 2019

Volunteers 9:30AM-12:30PM

Celebration 1:00-4:00PM



NYLC Sacred Sites Open House Weekend 2019

SATURDAY, May 18, 2019 1:00-4:00PM

Path Through History

DATE: TBD



Flushing's Third Spring History and Community Festival

DATE: TBD



**Please contact the museum for reservations
and/or
additional information.**



**2018 - 2019 MEMBERSHIP DUES RENEWAL
THE BOWNE HOUSE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
37-01 Bowne Street, Flushing, NY 11354
789-359-0528**

| | |
|---------------------------------------|------------|
| Individual | \$25.00 |
| Student (non-voting) | \$15.00 |
| Family | \$50.00 |
| Sustaining Membership | \$100.00 |
| Corporate Membership | \$500.00 |
| Life Membership (one time payment) | \$1,000.00 |

In addition to my dues, I would like to make a contribution in the amount
of \$ _____ .00

Signature _____

* Life Members may receive, if they wish, a complimentary framed hand painted Life Member Certificate, personalized with calligraphy. Please list your name as you wish to have it appear on the certificate.

Please print your name and address below as you would like them to appear on our mailing list, as well as email, fax and phone so that we can better communicate with you.

Referral names and contact information:

We welcome your suggestions of friends and family who like to hear about the Society. Please list names and contact information below.



The Bowne House
37-01 Bowne Street
Flushing, NY 11354

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The Bowne House
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