



The Bowne House Historical Society, Inc.



The Bowne House 70th Anniversary Celebration – Honoring Our Past and Imagining Our Future*

The Bowne House Historical Society marked the occasion of its 70th anniversary with a festive gathering on Saturday, October 10th. That day is the anniversary of the original charter of the Town of Flushing, in 1645. And as a member of the Landmarks50 Alliance, Bowne House also observed the 50th anniversary of New York's City's Landmarks Preservation Law.

The day began with a breakfast in the garden, followed by an invocation and rededication, by the Reverend Wilfredo Benitez of St. George's Episcopal Church, of the museum as a site associated with the First Amendment and the principle of freedom of conscience and religious liberty in America.

U.S. Congresswoman Grace Meng, representing the 6th District, Queens, gave an address. She was followed by Queens Borough President Melinda Katz, NYS Senator Tony Avella, and NYS Assemblyman Ron Kim, who spoke

about the significance of Bowne House and its role in history and presented proclamations recognizing the occasion.

We had three informative talks covering a range of topics: commitment, history, and the First Amendment, all timely subjects.

Dr. Barbaralee Diamonstein-Spielvogel, the chairman of NYC Landmarks50 Alliance and a member of the Bowne House museum advisory committee, addressed the audience, speaking about *Courage and Commitment*.

Celebrating Bowne House was the topic of the speech by Donald R. Friary, the chair of the Bowne House Museum Advisory Committee. Mr. Friary's speech is printed in this newsletter.

Richard Epstein, the Lawrence A. Tisch Professor of Law at New York University, spoke about *Religious Liberty Today*, a timely and relevant subject.

Afternoon activities included guided walking tours of local historic sites by Jack Eichenbaum, Queens County Historian, Thomas Lim and Brandon Loo, interns; an archaeology exhibit and talk: *The Archaeology of Greater New York*, by Christopher Ricciardi of Chrysalis Archaeological Consultants; and *The Bowne House: A Historical Retrospective*, an exhibit on the history of the Society from our archives.

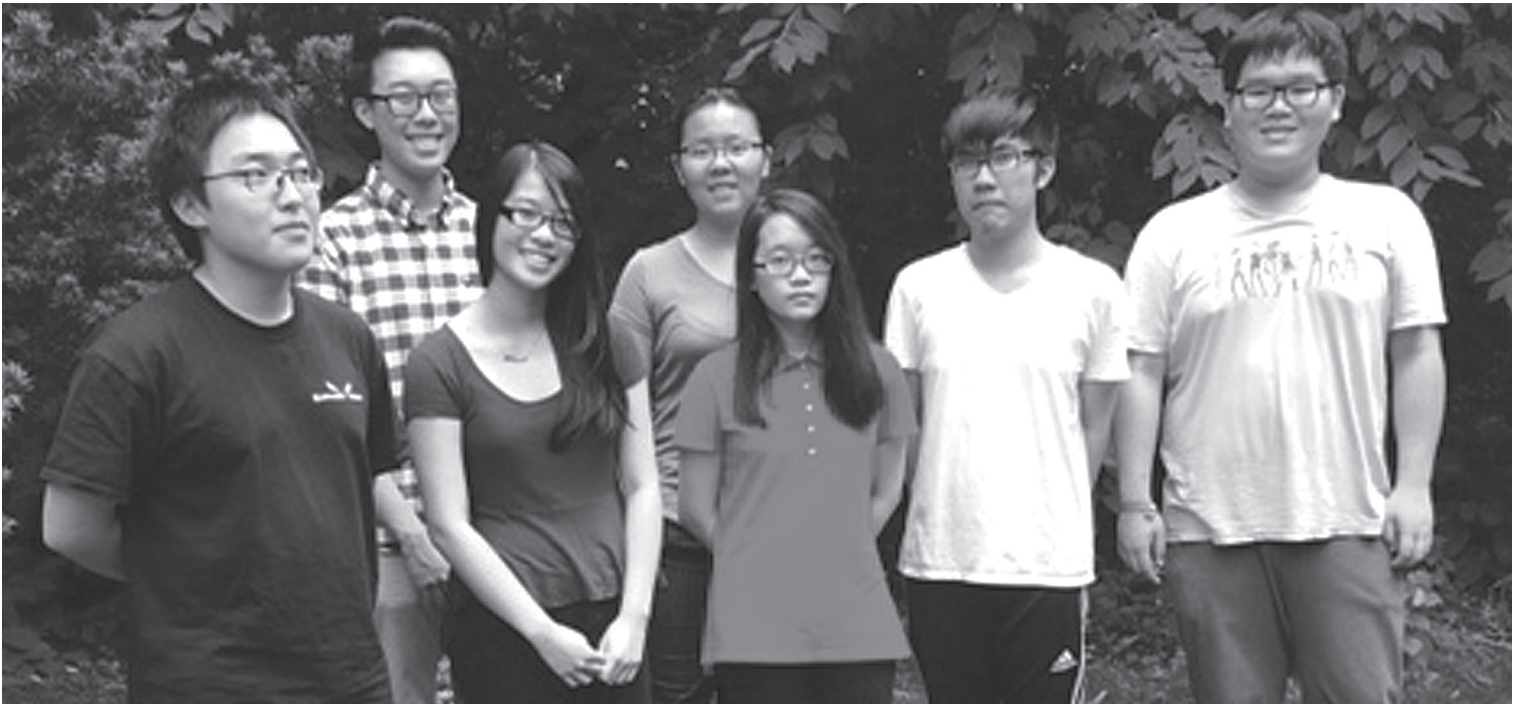
We had a capacity crowd for the day; visitors came from as far away as Canada, Florida, Oregon, Michigan and Ohio, as well as from the city and the tri-state area to help us celebrate, to meet other members and guests and extended family, and to see and admire the museum's newly restored exterior.

*"Honor Our Past and Imagine Our Future" is the theme of the NYC Landmarks 50 Alliance. ■



Bowne Mansion House, Flushing, L. I.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATION AND ACTIVITIES AT THE BOWNE HOUSE



In the late spring and early summer, the Bowne House Museum participated in several weekend events: NYC Parks and Recreation Department's "It's My Park Day"; Yale Service Day, The New York Landmark Conservancy's Sacred Site Weekend and New York State's Path Through History Weekend.

With the conclusion of the exterior restoration work at the museum in early 2015 we have been able to resume a more active schedule of tours as well as offer a greater variety of activities to our summer interns.

This summer we had a number of interns working with us on a range of projects. Thomas Lim, a graduate of Stuyvesant High School who is currently a student at NYU, conducted primary research, writing a paper on the Flushing Remonstrance which is published here. Interns Brandon Loo, a student at SUNY Stony Brook, and Stephanie Chu, a student at Rochester Institute of Technology, were museum assistants. They worked on several projects. One project

involved developing a preliminary prototype of walking tours of Flushing's historical and cultural sites for NYC & Co.'s promotional materials. These materials are designed to encourage visitation. Stephanie researched the history of the mechanical systems at the house while Brandon outlined from our database a listing of our museum collection. Brandon and Stephanie also conducted tours for visitors in English and Mandarin.

A high school intern updated our mailing lists and scanned historical materials in our collections, including *The Keift Patentees of Flushing, 1645 and Profiles of the Original Proprietors of Jamaica 1656*. A second high school intern worked with William Guo writing code and helping to upgrade our website. Other projects included graphics work; illustrations for our webpage, design of banners, educational materials on the kitchen herb garden, the Parsons nursery trees and the Flushing Freedom Mile, and the layout for our October 10th Anniversary Celebration. A returning intern, Michael Dispensa, a student at the School

of Visual Arts, continued his work as a botanical illustrator and helped in the garden, assisted by high school students.

We were thrilled to have such a talented and committed group of young people; the projects were overseen by Anne Perl de Pal, our capable resident manager and volunteer coordinator.

Also this year, we welcomed a new volunteer, Ellen Spindler. An attorney by profession, Ellen has been helping with research on our vast collection of kitchen equipment. She also provided some legal perspective for Thomas Lim's Remonstrance article.

In response to an increase in requests for tours, we have been joined by Elizabeth Martin, who is director of education. Lizzie has a Ph.D. in archaeology and is particularly enthusiastic about working with our visiting school groups.

2015 has been a good year and we are looking forward to even more activities next year. ■



CELEBRATING BOWNE HOUSE

Remarks prepared by Donald R. Friary for the celebration of the 70th anniversary of the Bowne House Museum and the 50th anniversary of New York City's Landmarks Preservation Law

Seeing the Bowne House is always a surprise. Walking or driving along Bowne Street amidst the dense concentration of apartment buildings, coming over from Main Street or up from Northern Boulevard with their traffic congestion, their neon lights, shop and restaurant signs in many languages, we do not expect to find a small house with an air of antiquity and a bit of open, unoccupied, unbuilt space around it. Bowne House is an anachronism surrounded by high-rise buildings, wide streets, and constant motion in the diverse population of 21st-century Flushing.

In 1661 it was also out of place, a tight little house in the wilderness, a Dutch house in an English settlement, an English family living under a Dutch government, Quakers among Puritans recently arrived from Massachusetts and Connecticut, in a colony where the Dutch Reformed Church was legally established as the only church that could hold public worship.

Here was a very mixed population— English, Dutch, Native American, African, and others. The Dutch West India Company had encouraged settlers from many nations. In 1643 the French Jesuit missionary Isaac Vogues traveled from Québec to New Amsterdam and recorded in his journal, "On this Island of Manhate . . . the Director General told me that there were men of eighteen kinds of languages . . ." The Van Cortlandts were Swedish, the Zabriskies Polish, New Rochelle and New Paltz French towns. A census taken of Flushing in 1698 recorded 113 Blacks in a total population of 643—17% or one in six. All these groups interacted with the dominant Dutch.

We all know that Native Americans taught European settlers to plant and grow corn. *New Netherland Connections*, a recent book by the historian Susannah Shaw Romney, reveals that Natives in the Hudson Valley sold surplus foodstuffs to European colonists. These were delivered in canoes so deftly designed, constructed and navigated by the Natives. Enslaved Africans in New Netherland often had no canoes and hired Dutch settlers to ship firewood cut at their own initiative in their spare time to New Amsterdam. Into this culturally and linguistically varied environment John Bowne migrated from Boston early in the 1650s and flourished as a farmer, trader, and community leader.

John Bowne was an Englishman, born in 1627 at Matlock in Derbyshire in the north central part of the country, far from North Sea ports that had regular trade and communication with the Dutch. Bowne and his



father and sister emigrated to Boston in New England in 1649. After establishing himself there, John Bowne decided to migrate to Long Island in New Netherland because he saw opportunity under the Dutch government—certainly economic opportunity to trade in a fledgling colony, religious opportunity to escape the orthodoxy of the Puritan establishment in Massachusetts Bay, and the opportunity to live in an English community chartered by the Dutch to expand the population and the economy of that area. The settlement at Flushing, named for Vlissingen in the Netherlands, was established in 1645 in a sort of buffer zone between Dutch western Long Island, Kings County or Brooklyn as we know it, and English eastern Long Island, settled by and governed by the colony of Connecticut.

New Netherland and its port city of Nieuw Amsterdam at the southern tip of Manhattan Island were an effort by the Amsterdam-based Dutch West India Company to gain a foothold on the mainland of North America only 21 years before. The new colony had the advantage of the



Bowne Mansion, Flushing, L. I.

Netherlands' position in the 1620s as the preeminent maritime power in Europe, but it had the drawback of Holland's economic prosperity. There was little incentive for an ambitious Hollander to leave opportunities at home to seek a less certain fortune in a struggling colony, and if they did, they went to more promising Dutch colonies in the Caribbean and Surinam and Brazil. Consequently, the West India Company encouraged immigration from many parts of Europe, attracting men and women from the Rhineland, France, central Europe, Scandinavia, and the British Isles to join them in their new venture. The company granted land and self-government to English communities in Flushing, Rustdorp (later Jamaica), Newtown, and Hempstead.

John Bowne was clearly English in language and culture as well as in a network of family and trading partners, but he was living and working among Dutch and French and other Europeans and in the midst of a significant population of Native Americans and of Africans, both enslaved and free. Bowne was in a core group of English people, but he needed craftsmen, whether English or not, to build his house, to make or import furniture and furnishings, to craft equipment, and to build boats. He also needed servants to aid in his agricultural labor. He relied on carters and boatmen to transport his agricultural surpluses and goods in trade between Flushing Creek and Manhattan Island.

In 1661, not long after his 1656 marriage to Hannah Feake, John Bowne had a house built for his growing family. We do not know the name of his housewright, but we do know that the man was Dutch, because he built a Dutch house for an English family. I suspect that many of you have seen the Winne House installed a few years ago in the American Wing of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. It is a later structure, erected in 1751 in Bethlehem, New York, south of Albany. It too is clearly not an English house. Dutch construction was quite different, utilizing a series of bents in an H-shape—like goal posts in football. Inside the Bowne House you can see the H-bent construction in the original middle room on the first floor.

Hannah and John Bowne had some English furniture, possibly pieces brought from England, but more likely items made by English-born and -trained craftsmen in Flushing or Manhattan. The Bownes also had Dutch furniture. We know from John Bowne's account book that he paid Francis Bloetgoet for building a "Cabein bedstead"—the kind of enclosed bed that we see in 17th-century Dutch paintings—and a cupboard that was in all likelihood a Dutch *kast*, those great wardrobes for storing clothing and other textiles before the days of closets. There were also furnishings made in the Netherlands in the Bowne House—an elaborate linen press now at the Museum of the City of New York and a large engraved pewter dish, dated 1656, here in the Bowne House collection. Among the fireplace and cooking equipment, agricultural and craft tools in the Bowne household there must have been items rooted in both English and Dutch traditions, and French and other European origins. A recent scholar, Neil Kamil of the University of Texas, in his book, *Fortress of the Soul*, has written extensively about a network of French craftsmen, the Delaplaines, the Clements, the Lawrences, and others who worked in Manhattan and Flushing producing furniture for families like the Bownes.

Until his death in 1695, John Bowne, three successive wives and 16 children, were living in a Dutch house with Dutch and English furnishings. Bowne and his servants were working with both Dutch and English tools and equipment. They were learning agricultural methods and crops from the Dutch, French, Africans, and Natives among others. They were communicating in several languages with craftsmen, carters, and boatman who supplied their needs and trade goods. Inevitably, there was cross-cultural fertilization. We know that John Bowne's first wife spoke Dutch. It is likely that Bowne himself did as well. He was familiar with the language from his voyage to Amsterdam and interaction with Dutch craftsmen, traders, and neighbors. A Huguenot woodworker, James Clement, was in 1663 bound as an indentured servant to John Bowne, living in the Bowne House and speaking French there.

The diversity in which the Bowne family lived in Flushing was quite unlike the environment that they had known in Derbyshire or in Massachusetts. It inevitably had an effect on their worldview. They were not rigid Puritans like those they had encountered in Boston, nor did they subscribe to the Dutch practice of religious toleration, but not religious freedom. The Dutch in New Netherland and in Holland permitted all to retain their theological beliefs, but not to practice openly any but Dutch Reformed Calvinist worship. John Bowne and his fellow townsmen in Flushing had neighbors who spoke different languages, followed distinct customs, had dissimilar craft traditions and agricultural practices, ate varied foods. They recognized and respected these differences. However, when the English settling at Flushing attracted members of the new, radical sect called Quakers, Governor Pieter Stuyvesant cracked down and enforced Dutch law and custom in an ordinance directed at Flushing. This forbade the conduct of public worship by Quakers, or by anyone other than Dutch Reformed clergy. Stuyvesant also threatened to seize any vessel that brought Quakers into the colony. A group of English inhabitants of Flushing responded in the Flushing Remonstrance, a valiant defense of religious liberty issued on December 27, 1657.

Stuyvesant responded quickly and vigorously to the Remonstrance, and quelled the incipient rebellion. Five years later, when the Bowne House was less than a year old, John Bowne put the Flushing Remonstrance into action. Although Bowne himself had not been among the 30 signers of the Remonstrance, he transformed their words into a most significant deed by permitting Quakers to gather for their distinctive worship in his new house.

When he learned in 1662 that John Bowne was permitting Quaker worship in his house, Stuyvesant had Bowne arrested and imprisoned for months, several weeks in solitary confinement. He then extradited Bowne to Amsterdam, where he was exonerated by the Dutch West India Company, and returned to New Netherland in 1663. Dutch rule ended in 1664, when English conquest turned New Netherland into New York, but freedom of religious belief and worship, as John Bowne envisioned it and for which he offered his life, liberty, and property, had been established in Flushing and in the larger colony of which it was a part.

Bowne's conflict with the New Netherland government is recounted



Bowne Mansion, Flushing, L. I.



PHOTO BY ANNE PERL DE PAL

in meticulous detail in his journal, which survives in original manuscript at the New-York Historical Society. Bowne records that Sheriff Resolved Waldron came to arrest him “with a company of men with swords and gonns” on September 1, 1662. Although Bowne challenged the arrest, he was taken by boat to Manhattan, and fined 150 gilders. Because he refused to pay the fine, he was imprisoned and for a time “allowed no thing but cors bread and water.” After four months in jail, Bowne was put aboard a ship to sail to Holland, where he presented his case in writing and in oral testimony to the Dutch West India Company. He was finally released and returned to New Netherland, where Governor Stuyvesant had received word from the Dutch West India Company that Bowne and the Quakers should be permitted to practice their religion without interference. Bowne had succeeded in establishing religious liberty for the Quakers of Flushing, and had set a precedent for religious liberty in the colonies that would in another century become the United States.

We can thank John Bowne’s commitment to religious liberty for the preservation of the oldest house in Flushing—and one of the oldest in metropolitan New York. On September 10, 1887, an article in *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper* under the title, “Flushing’s Antique Buildings,” described the Bowne House:

The ancient town of Flushing lies but half a score of miles from New York, on Long Island’s beautiful northern shore . . . A furnace heats

it and gas illuminates it, but the oak rafters and floors are unchanged; the tall old clock ticks as busily as it has for two hundred years . . . with many a relic . . . of the long-ago to keep it company . . . Family pride has turned the Bowne House into as much a well-cared for museum as a dwelling . . . –[a] noble [link] reaching back to a brave and sturdy past.

Open for tours to a visiting public, the Bowne House was an attraction in part because of the antiquity of the house and its furnishings, but most of all because it was a memorial to John Bowne and the stand he took in 1662 for religious freedom.

The Bowne House allows us to reconstruct how the Bowne family lived and worked, how they interacted with their Dutch neighbors and, later, with the City of New York and the wider world. The Bownes preserved family possessions to remember John Bowne and other family members who represented for them the role the family played in helping to build a new American nation. Books and manuscripts can aid us in reconstructing the history of a household or a community, as can everyday objects—chairs and tables, copper kettles and brass candlesticks, portraits and wineglasses. The family that saved John Bowne’s house also preserved furnishings on which he and his wives and children and their children sat and slept, prayed and conversed, ate stew and drank tea, learned and taught, and became aware of and fascinated by a world outside Flushing. The Bowne House is full of objects that tell the story of the Bownes, Flushing, New York, and America.

By the early nineteenth century, the Bowne House already represented an era long past. Family members expressed the wish to preserve the house as a Bowne memorial. When Mrs. Robert Bowne Parsons purchased the house from a cousin in 1886, she installed caretakers who showed it to the public. Visitors saw “the tall old clock” and “many a relic . . . of the long-ago . . .”

Some items have remained in the old house in Flushing since bought new by the family. Others have been returned to the Bowne House by thoughtful and generous descendants. Each has stories to tell—of work in a new settlement, life in a country village, raising a family in a challenging environment, reconciling differing cultural backgrounds and religious beliefs, looking to New York City for taste and refinement and imported goods, welcoming New Yorkers on summer excursions, remembering the past and honoring John Bowne.

In the midst of pulsing, contemporary life, here remain reminders of Flushing’s past—the Bowne House, where the family lived from the 17th century to the 20th; the Friends Meeting House, where many Bownes worshiped. These landmarks offer Flushing’s residents and visitors a link to its past. They remind us that John Bowne brought with him values that we still hold dear—freedom of expression and belief, economic opportunity, and a future for our children. The Bowne House still stands here in Flushing, in the 21st century a community even more diverse than it was in the 17th. Visitors can stand in the room built for John Bowne in 1661, where Flushing’s Quakers gathered to worship according to the dictates, not of civil government, or of a distant ruler, or of the majority, but of their own consciences. ■



THE FLUSHING REMONSTRANCE: INFLUENCES, EFFECTS, AND IMPACTS

BY THOMAS LIM

Although it may be surprising to some, the Flushing Remonstrance is perhaps one of the most important, yet least appreciated documents pertaining to the establishment of freedom of religion in the formation of the United States. Flushing as we know it today is an enclave that embodies Asian culture to the extent that it is commonly called the “Chinatown of Queens”. But in the mid-1600’s, Flushing was known as the town of Vlissingen, and its population consisted largely of English settlers living under Dutch rule.

Vlissingen, known to the English townspeople that corrupted the pronunciation as “Vlissing” or “Flushing”, was founded in 1645, formed under a patent granted by William Kieft. In addition to the English, the area also had some Dutch settlers as well as Native Americans. The patent granted certain rights to the people living in the town of Flushing; this would eventually cause grief to Kieft’s successor, Peter Stuyvesant.

New Amsterdam was arguably governed by the Union of Utrecht, a document signed in 1579 to unify the northern provinces of the Netherlands, and was used as the de facto constitution for these states, who were previously under Hapsburg Spanish rule. The Union of Utrecht stated that “for the matter of religion, the States of Holland and Zeeland shall act according to their own pleasure...” and that “no other province shall be permitted to interfere [...] provided that each person shall remain free in his religion and that no one shall be investigated or persecuted because of his religion”(The Union of Utrecht).

The Union of Utrecht expressly provided for freedom of religion without government interference and arguably provided for a right to assemble to practice that religion, whether in private or public. Instead, it was a common practice in Europe at the time to stifle a variety of religious beliefs, because it was thought that religious differences led to conflict and eventually to war, and this policy was enforced in the Netherlands to an extent. Peter Stuyvesant, appointed as governor of New Amsterdam by the Dutch West India Company after William Kieft, similarly required adherence to the Dutch Reformed Church.

In 1657, the policy in the Netherlands and, by extension, the policy concerning religious freedoms in the Dutch-owned New Netherlands was, in a nutshell, “don’t ask don’t tell”. This was reinforced in New Netherland’s 1640 Charter of Freedoms and Exemptions, which said “no other Religion [is] publicly admitted in New Netherland except the Reformed, as it is at present preached and practiced by public authority in the United Netherlands” (O’Callaghan 123). What this meant for people of faiths other than the Dutch Reformed Church was that they either had to meet in secret,

or practice their religion privately in order to avoid persecution or fines. This carried over into the New World, despite the Vlissingen patent sharing the Union of Utrecht’s policy of permitting freedom of religion as we know it today. (Zwierlein 161-162) Thus, despite the variety of people of different faiths coming to the New World to settle in New Amsterdam, only those belonging to the Dutch Reformed Church were able to publicly practice their religion. The rest were forced to keep their religion hidden under threat of fine or imprisonment.

The Quakers (also called the Society of Friends) were one such religious sect which came to the colonies to practice their faith, but were practically turned away at the docks because of their then eccentric, evangelical and vociferous nature. Many were jailed, and were forced to deny their faith and pay a fine, or be expelled to Rhode Island (at the time considered the “latrine of New England”), or even banished all the way to Holland. However, the Quakers who came to Flushing found a reception from the townspeople, who were more welcoming.

The English settlers of Flushing, appalled by the harsh treatment by the Dutch-controlled government towards these people, in a fashion befitting the Society of Friends gathered together on December 27, 1657 to write the Flushing Remonstrance in order to make it clear to Governor Peter Stuyvesant that the Quakers were not “destructive unto Magistracy and Ministeyre [...] for the Magistrate hath his sword in his hand and the Minister hath the sword in his hand,” (Flushing Remonstrance) to say that the Quakers were not a threat to the local government, or the local church, and that neither should have the right to interfere with the religious practices of the Quaker community.

The Flushing Remonstrance was signed in 1657 by 30 English colonists, some of whom were unable to read and signed with a symbolic mark. These signers were stratified among their positions in town, from Tobias Feake, the town sheriff, to Edward Hart, the town clerk and the drafter of the Remonstrance. Perhaps what is most surprising is the fact that none of the colonists were identified as Quakers at the time of signing the Remonstrance. Perhaps most important of all, none of the English settlers who signed the Remonstrance were identified as Quakers, meaning they had everything to lose but nothing to gain from directly confronting Governor Stuyvesant through the Remonstrance.

The style of writing of the Flushing Remonstrance is thought to be significant by historians, as it is diplomatic in both text and subtext. The tone is almost typical of contemporary Quaker texts, in the sense that it draws imagery of a biblical tale, where the inhabitants of the town of Flushing not only feel that they need to treat the Quakers fairly, but they also suggest that God would punish them for not doing so. In fact, it’s thought



that Edward Hart was himself influenced by Roger Williams, having lived in Rhode Island briefly. In addition to this Quaker influence, the diplomatic attitude of the Remonstrance comes from some of the Dutch elements incorporated into it. Remonstrances were used as a form of protest in the Netherlands, in at least one instance to protest against the Calvinist ideas the Dutch Reformed Church was adopting, through the Five Articles of Remonstrance in 1610.

The Flushing Remonstrance interprets the language of the established law in the Union of Utrecht to support their cause, asserting that “The law of love, peace and liberty in the states extending to Jews, Turks and Egyptians, as they are considered sons of Adam, which is the glory of the outward state of Holland [...] condemns hatred, war, and bondage” (Flushing Remonstrance). Using the “outward appearance” of the laws in the Netherlands, they made the argument that the case for religious liberty already existed, and that none of these groups can argue that their belief was correct, or they would be condemned under the law. Ipso facto, the authorities appointed by the Dutch West India Company violated the very law that they operated under, as a Dutch company.

Whatever diplomatic measures may have been employed in their endeavor, the Flushing Remonstrance proved fruitless for the time being. Peter Stuyvesant took to this response as well as any person familiar with his reputation for intolerance might expect, and had four of the officials associated with the Flushing Remonstrance arrested and jailed after a speedy trial (because none of the English officials could speak Dutch and were unable to defend themselves). Edward Farrington and William Noble recanted immediately, but Edward Hart and Tobias Feake held out in solitary confinement, subsisting on bread and water for a few weeks. Tobias Feake eventually recanted, but Edward Hart’s family and friends petitioned on his behalf, and he was released on penalty of banishment.

In further response to the Flushing Remonstrance, Peter Stuyvesant declared March 13, 1658 a Day of Prayer to absolve the people of Vlissingen of their sin of religious tolerance. This proclamation asked the townspeople to resist the influence of Quakers, because Stuyvesant believed that tolerance would result in divine punishment, saying “[God] hath visited near and remote places, towns and hamlets with hot fevers and dangerous diseases, as a chastisement [...] for the thankless use of temporal blessings.” (Day of Prayer) Although it was made quite clear that Stuyvesant would not be welcoming Quakers into Vlissingen anytime soon, the attitude of tolerance had truly permeated the community of Vlissingen, despite the punishment of those four officials who were thought to be responsible.

Flushing resident John Bowne was an English merchant and farmer. Through his marriage to Hannah Feake, who had joined the Quakers after their marriage, he became a member of the Society of Friends. Bowne was not among the signers of the Remonstrance, although he had arrived in Flushing by 1657. Five years later, in 1662 John Bowne allowed Quakers to assemble in his home for worship. Previously, they were forced to meet in secret in the wooded areas around Vlissingen. Reports of these gatherings reached Stuyvesant. As a result Bowne was arrested in his own home under order from Governor Stuyvesant.

After a speedy trial in which he was sentenced and ordered to pay a hefty fine and to renounce his faith, John Bowne refused and was banished to the Netherlands instead. John Bowne was eventually able to petition and appeal in front of the Dutch West India Company, arguing that the right to religious liberty was contained in the Vlissingen patent. Impressed by his resilience and dedication to his beliefs, the Dutch West India Company officials decided to allow John Bowne to return home, and Governor Stuyvesant was rebuffed for restricting the growth of the colony indirectly through his religious persecution. Bowne returned to his family in 1662. Although by 1664 the Dutch would eventually lose control of New Amsterdam to the English, the policy of religious liberty remained, and New Amsterdam was a model for other colonies to follow on that front.

For some with sensitivity to legal issues, the stories of the Flushing Remonstrance signers and John Bowne’s arrest might remind one of First Amendment of the Bill of Rights. In elementary schools, it’s often simplified to freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and freedom of the press, but the complete set of rights is actually quite substantial.

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition, the Government for a redress of grievances. (U.S. Constitution)

The First Amendment echoes the rights that John Bowne and the other settlers in Flushing fought for and won, echoing their goals in the rights to the free exercise of religion, the right for the people to peaceably assemble, and the right to petition for a redress of grievances.

Although the 1777 Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom written by Thomas Jefferson is more likely influenced by the policies of Roger Williams, the founder of Rhode Island, rather than the Remonstrance, it is also a notable document that is a precursor to the First Amendment, expanding the concept of freedom of conscience by highlighting the necessity of the separation of church and state. This concept was so important to Thomas Jefferson that it was one of just three major accomplishments, among many, that he instructed to be put in his epitaph.

The Flushing Remonstrance is perhaps the first instance of activism and advocacy for social justice in United States history. As such, it is a cornerstone of the First Amendment by virtue of its forward thinking and inherent compassion for fellow man. Indeed, quite often we forget that religious liberty really meant religious liberty, extending to all beliefs no matter how different it is to our own. The Bill of Rights protects certain liberties from possible tyranny, and as such is invaluable and instrumental in the diversity of this country, but documents like this surely would not have been possible without the efforts of people like John Bowne and the townspeople of Vlissingen.

WORKS CITED

“The Union of Utrecht.” *The Low Countries in Early Modern Times: A Documentary History*. Trans. Rowan, Herbert H. New York: Harper & Row, 1972. 69-74. Print.



Bowne Mansion-house, Flushing, L. I.

"The Constitution of the United States". Amendment I. "82. A Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom, 18 June 1779," Founders Online, National

ARCHIVES

(<http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-02-02-0132-0004-0082> [last update: 2015-06-29]).

SOURCE

The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, vol. 2, 1777–18 June 1779, ed. Julian P. Boyd. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950, pp. 545–553.

Hart, Edward. "Flushing Remonstrance." The Bowne House Historical Society. N.p., n.d. Web. 18 Aug. 2015.

O'Callaghan, Edmund Bailey, ed. Documents relative to the colonial history of the state of New York, procured by JR Brodhead, ed. by EB O'Callaghan. 1857.

Stuyvesant, Peter. "Proclamation of a Day of Prayer" n.p., 1658. Print. Voorhees, David. "The 1657 Flushing Remonstrance in Historical Perspective". New York: New York State History Conference, 2007. The Bowne House Historical Society. Web. 18 Aug. 2015.

Zwierlein, Frederick James. Religion in New Netherland: A History of the Development of the Religious Conditions in the Province of New Netherland 1623-1664... Vol. 1. John P. Smith printing Company, 1910. ■

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

From December 2nd to December 10th at the Queens Library Flushing there will be an exhibit – The Bowne House Historical Society – a Retrospective. The exhibit will feature photographs and other materials from our archives celebrating the founding and early years of the museum.

The 28th Annual Holiday Historic House Tour will take place on Sunday, December 6th at 12:30 – 4:00 PM.

Seven historic sites in Queens will be open for special tours and programs to celebrate the season. The Bowne House will be decorated for the holidays, and this year our original kitchen will be open to visitors. Tickets may be purchased online now at www.hhht2015eventbrite.com or purchased at the door. Our website will have additional details as the date approaches.

Also on December 6th, at 1 PM, we will hold a children's workshop at the Queens Library, Flushing. The title is Then and Now with the Bowne House: Exploring History with Artifacts and Children's Activities from the Past.

In March we will have another exhibit and additional children's workshops at the library, along with talks on archeology. Please check our website for further details and times as the date approaches.





THE BOWNE HOUSE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

2015 BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Morris Hylton III, President

Rosemary S. Vietor, Vice President

George Farr, Treasurer

Edie Loening, Secretary

Wellington Z. Chen

Annette L. Geddes

The Honorable Frank Padavan

Penelope Bowne Perryman

Margaret D. Sullivan

James A. Trent

Roland G. Wade

TRUSTEE EMERITUS

Franklin Regan

VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR AND RESIDENT MANAGER

Anne Perl de Pal

MUSEUM ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Donald R. Friary, Chairman

Dr. Barbaralee Diamonstein-Spielvogel

Peter Kenny

Anthony C. Wood



Imagining Our Future – The Bowne House Restoration Update



We are looking forward to the interior restoration of the Bowne House. Planning is well underway. Our historic structure report (HSR) is among a number of reports and documents which will guide the next phase of the restoration process.

Donald Friary, the Chair of our museum advisory committee, is preparing an updated interpretive plan as well as a furnishings plan. Our collections are extensive and cover a wide range of periods, reflecting the layers of occupancy of the house. There are, however, some additional items we could utilize as part of our interpretation.

Descendants of the Bowne or Parsons families who have objects which might have been in the house when it was occupied by family and who would consider donating these items to the museum please contact us. A photo and brief history of the object is helpful.

Other objects which would be useful are:

Books, on any topic, published before 1900. These do not have to be books owned by the family.

- Antique maps of Queens and Long Island
- Old post cards
- Photos of people or landmarks associated with Flushing

Objects useful for educational programming for children:

- Antique scissors
- Small blackboard
- Primers
- Antique objects which might have been used in a classroom prior to 1880.

Our visiting school groups are always fascinated by stories of the daily lives of children in earlier times. ■



2015-2016 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 - \$100.00**
- Sustaining Membership - \$100.00**
- Corporate membership - \$500.00**
- Life Membership - \$1,000.00
(one time payment)**

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

PRE-SORT STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT #95
KWIK PRINT, INC.
GT. BARRINGTON
MA 01230

The Bowne House
Circa 1661

