

Report for NPS Flushing Remonstrance Special Resource Study

R. Scott Hanson
University of Pennsylvania

Colonial Context and Significance of the Flushing Town Charter of 1645, the Flushing Remonstrance of 1657, John Bowne, and Friends Meeting House

Local residents of Flushing have long proudly claimed it is “the birthplace of religious freedom,” which is a little misleading, but it did play a significant and often overlooked part in colonial America and in the evolution of this fundamental principle of American democracy. Flushing is actually the Anglicized form of the Dutch name Vlissingen (a town in Holland), and its town charter of 1645 was one of the first in colonial America to grant religious freedom, or “liberty of conscience” (as it was called then), which was important to many in town who became Quakers, or Friends. When this right was jeopardized by Governor Peter Stuyvesant, who was bent on persecuting anyone who was not a member of the Dutch Reformed Church, the people of Flushing came together to defend their town charter. In 1657, they drafted a document that has become known as the Flushing Remonstrance, which the American religious historian Martin E. Marty has described as a “pioneering plea for religious freedom [that] called diversity not a curse but a glory.”¹ Stuyvesant was not moved, however, and it was not until 1663, when John Bowne was banished from the colony for holding Quaker meetings in his house and then successfully appealed his case to the Dutch West India Company, that the town and the rest of the colony would more fully enjoy this liberty and Bowne and others established Friends Meeting House in 1694 (the oldest place of worship in continual use in New York City). Bowne House is the oldest house in Queens (built in 1661), and it has been operating as a historical society and museum since 1945, when it was declared “a national shrine to religious freedom” by Mayor La Guardia during celebrations for the 300th anniversary of the founding of Flushing. The pervasive communal sense of history and place at the time was obvious to all outside visitors, as the *New York Times* observed that “Flushing, which though legally assimilated as part of the Borough of Queens, City of New York, in 1898, has steadfastly maintained its identity.”² In another story, the *Times* placed the tercentenary in historical context: “The John Bowne House in Flushing, built in 1661, dedicated this week as a historical museum, recalls a time when religious liberty was not taken for granted in the New World.”³

When fifteen Englishmen applied to Governor Kieft for the privilege of settling in the Matinecc’s former land in 1645, the charter they were granted on October 10 to establish a town was one of the most liberal arrangements for any settlement in colonial America by or on behalf of any government. The patent granted seemed to offer almost complete religious freedom: “We do give and grant, unto the said Patentees . . . to have and Enjoy the Liberty of Conscience, according to the Custome and manner of Holland, without molestacon or disturbance, from any Magistrate or Magistrates, or any other Ecclesiasticall Minister, that may extend Jurisdiction over them.”⁴ The patentees were English planters who had migrated to Massachusetts and then back to Holland to escape persecution, and they named their new town Vlissingen after the Dutch town where they had found shelter.⁵ One nineteenth-century

chronicler described the first settlers as “freethinkers, who, being impatient of religious restraint in Massachusetts, sought a larger liberty under the Dutch.”⁶ The Dutch concept of “liberty of conscience” was familiar in the colonial world around this time and was used to entice prospective settlers seeking refuge from religious persecution at home, but its exact meaning was more ambiguous than is commonly supposed. The *Oxford English Dictionary* definitions for the mid-seventeenth century were “inward knowledge or consciousness; internal conviction,” but these were obsolete by the end of the nineteenth century. As Evan Haefeli states in his book *New Netherland and the Dutch Origins of American Religious Liberty*, the Dutch words *gewetensvrijheid* or *geloofsvrijheid* meant liberty of conscience or freedom of belief, but what kind of tolerance this allowed and did not allow is complicated because of “Dutch unwillingness or inability to go into much detail about what liberty of conscience was and why they permitted it.”⁷ Holland’s “Customs and manner” regarding religion was the most lenient attitude of all European nations then, but Flushing’s charter did not extend to the rest of the colony, and residents of Flushing would learn that the liberty of conscience promised in their charter was a loosely defined concept and, according to the Dutch historian Maarten Prak, “varied from place to place.”⁸ Haefeli adds: “In the eyes of Dutch authorities and Dutch law, there was a crucial and self-evident difference between an individual’s liberty to believe and a group’s freedom to worship.”⁹ The Dutch Reformed church was the official state religion, and the government had the power to forbid “assemblies or conventicles” of other faiths, which included, as the historian Jeremy Bangs explains,

a series of restrictions on vital aspects of religious life: “no preaching, no prayer meetings, no group discussions of theology, no public marriage ceremonies (except civil marriages before magistrates in remote regions where no Reformed clergy could be found), no non-Reformed baptisms or burial ceremonies, no communion outside the Reformed Church.” Inhabitants could “disagree with the Dutch Reformed, but only if they kept silence about it outside their own homes, and only if their beliefs led to no visible actions in society.” Though non-Dutch Reformed people could live there, “the reality in New Netherland was scarcely freedom of religion.”¹⁰

Governor Kieft, however, did little to enforce these limitations during his incumbency, and the presence of a diverse population speaking eighteen languages gave rise to a variety of religious groups. The laxity of the law illustrates what Haefeli refers to as

the potent plasticity of Dutch tolerance, which lay precisely in the disagreement over what it was. The willingness of individuals to push at its borders . . . was as much a part of Dutch tolerance as any official interpretation of liberty of conscience. The enforcement of liberty of conscience varied across the Dutch world, both raising and crushing hopes of tolerance depending on the local circumstances.¹¹

In 1647, when Petrus (Peter) Stuyvesant became director general, the liberty that had been enjoyed by many was jeopardized. Stuyvesant was a strict Calvinist and, in 1652, under pressure from churchmen in Holland and in the colony, he began persecuting certain groups who arrived in the colony, including Jews and Lutherans. The Dutch West India Company rebuked

Stuyvesant for his treatment of the Lutherans and also wrote to him: “Jews and Portuguese people may exercise in all quietness their religion within their houses.”¹² When several boisterous “Quakers” arrived by ship in August 1657, he thus quickly jailed them and issued a proclamation on placards throughout the colony banning all public worship except that of the Dutch Reformed.

Despite Stuyvesant’s new ban, several Quakers first visited and held meetings on Long Island in Gravesend, Jamaica, and Hempstead after their arrival in 1657. Some in Flushing had attended the nearby Quaker meetings and had already become converts by 1657, but they were now forced to meet “secretly in the woods on the bounds of Jamaica, Newtown, and Flushing.”¹³ Their plight became a town cause. Two days after Christmas in 1657, thirty freeholders of different faiths who were gathered “from the general votes of the inhabitants” banded together (including the town clerk and sheriff) to sign what came to be known as the Flushing Remonstrance and to remind Stuyvesant of the conditions in their patent and town charter.¹⁴

What is most remarkable is that none of the signers were Quakers themselves, yet they clearly believed in the fundamental goodness of other religious people and in extending “the law of love, peace and libertie in the states [of Holland]” to the Quakers seeking refuge in Flushing—in addition to anyone else, including Presbyterians, Independents, and Baptists, as well as “Jews, Turks, and Egyptians.” By appealing to the laws of Holland in the Remonstrance and in their town charter, the signers were referring to the Dutch policy of liberty of conscience in Article 13 of the 1579 Union of Utrecht, which specifically states, “each person shall remain free, especially in his religion, and that no one shall be persecuted or investigated because of their religion.” The Dutch West India Company had been set up in 1621 with orders that the Reformed Church would be the only public church in the company’s colonies, in the belief that religious conformity would help create cohesive communities, but in 1625 they were instructed to follow the laws of Holland and thus permit liberty of conscience (allowing people to practice their religion at home).¹⁵ Stuyvesant chose, however, to follow and enforce a stricter interpretation of the law. The Flushing Remonstrance did not move him in the least, and he jailed, fined, and removed from office those signers whom he suspected as leaders.¹⁶

A few years later, in 1661, John Bowne began to welcome Friends to meet in his newly built house every Sunday, or “first day.” Bowne was a merchant and farmer from Matlock, in Derbyshire, England, who had migrated first to Boston in 1651 with his father. Dissatisfied with the Puritans and the Massachusetts Bay Colony, he became a Friend in 1657 after moving to Flushing and marrying Hannah Feake, who had herself been converted during the Friends’ recent wave of evangelism in New Amsterdam.¹⁷

Magistrates in Jamaica soon learned of the meetings, and a schout came on July 1 to arrest Bowne and take him to jail. When Stuyvesant was unable to get Bowne to pay a fine and agree to refrain from holding meetings, he banished him from the colony, sending the following letter to his superiors in Amsterdam:

Honorable, right respectable Gentlemen,

We omitted in our general letter the troubles and difficulties which we and many of our good inhabitants have since sometimes met with and which daily are renewed by the sect called Quakers chiefly in the country and principally in the English villages, establishing forbidden conventicles and

frequenting those against our published placards and disturbing in this manner the public peace, in so far that several of our magistrates of our affectionate subjects remonstrated and complained to us from time to time of their insufferable obstinacy, unwilling to obey our orders on judgments—

Among others has one of their principal leaders, named John Bowne, who for his transgressions was in conformity to the placards condemned in an amount of 150 [guilders]—in who has now been under arrest for more than three months for his unwillingness to pay, obstinately persisting in his refusal, in which he still continues, so that we at last resolved, or were rather compelled, to transport him in this ship from this Province in the hope that others might by it be discouraged.

If henceforth by these means, no more salutary improvement is made upon others, we shall though against our inclinations be compelled to prosecute such persons in a more severe manner, on which we previously solicit to be favored with your Honor's wise Overseeing Judgment.

With which after our cordial salutations, we remain and your Honour's to God's protection and remain Honourable and right respectable Gentlemen.

Your Honour's faithful Servants

Fort Amsterdam in New Netherlands

9th January 1663¹⁸

This was not Stuyvesant's first complaint to the Dutch West India Company. Because New Amsterdam was surrounded by other colonies that had fought to maintain homogeneity (except Rhode Island, which he regarded with particular disgust), Stuyvesant did not grasp that the different direction his colony was headed would actually prove better. He wrote in 1661 that

the *English* and *French* colonies are continued and populated by their own nation and countrymen and consequently bound together more firmly and united, while your Honor's colonies in New-Netherland are only gradually and slowly peopled by the scrapings of all sorts of nationalities (few excepted), who consequently have the least interest in the welfare and maintenance of the commonwealth.

As the historian Michael Kammen has observed, "Stuyvesant did not simply fear pluralism per se; he feared the attendant instabilities and lack of cohesion that seemed socially impolitic as well as uncongenial to the creation of political society."¹⁹ His plans, of course, backfired. Bowne made his way to Amsterdam and eventually pleaded his own case to the Dutch West India Company:

I sead libertie was promised to us in a Patent given by virtew of a commission from the prince, the stats generall and the west indea

companie: he sead who gave that patent? Governer Kieft—oh, sead he, that was before any or but few of your Judgment was harde of. I said we are known to be a peseable people. And will not be subject to the Laws and plakados [placards] which are published? we cannot sufer you in oure jurediction. I sead it is good first to consider whether that Law or plackerd, that was published, bee according to Justis and righteousnesse, or whether it bee not quite contrarie to it, and also to that libertie promised to us in oure Patent and I desier ye Company would red or heve it red. I have a copie of it by mee.²⁰

Before he even arrived there, the Dutch West India Company had already received Stuyvesant's letter and had grown concerned about his harsh measures. As David Voorhees has noted, in 1654 the States of Holland, the supreme authority, also had rejected the appeals of the Dutch Reformed Synod to impose doctrinal conformity as having 'very dangerous consequences.'²¹ They were persuaded by Bowne's appeal, let him return, and also sent a letter to rebuke Stuyvesant for his intolerance of religious dissent, effectively (albeit reluctantly) restoring liberty of conscience in Flushing, if not the entire colony:

Your last letter informed us that you had banished from the Province and sent hither a certain Quaker, John Bowne by name: although we heartily desire, that these and other sectarians remained away from there, yet as they do not, we doubt very much, whether we can proceed against them rigorously without diminishing the population and stopping immigration, which must be favored at a so tender stage of the country's existence. You may therefore shut your eyes, at least not force people's consciences, but allow every one to have his own belief, as long as he behaves quietly and legally, gives no offence to his neighbors and does not oppose the government. As the government of this city has always practised this maxim of moderation and consequently has often had a considerable influx of people, we do not doubt, that your Province too would be benefitted by it.²²

Bowne left Holland on March 30, 1663—eventually making his way back to his family on January 30, 1664.

Years before the religious controversies in Flushing, the Dutch West India Company had already learned that the town was an attractive, prosperous settlement worthy of support: one report to Amsterdam spoke of "Flushing, which is an handsome village, and tolerably stocked with cattle," and it was well known that the only tavern on Long Island was in Flushing (which was easily accessible through Flushing Bay and Flushing Creek).²³ The Dutch motto "difference makes for tolerance" derived from their understanding that growth and prosperity in a diverse area were best fostered by religious freedom, so they encouraged officials to employ *oogluiking* or *conniventie* (blinking and conniving) instead of imposing an established church order and crushing dissent.²⁴ As a result, "No other colony learned as rapidly as did New Amsterdam the lessons that circumstances imposed on their age."²⁵

On August 27, 1664, the English wrested control of New Amsterdam from the Dutch and, as the colony's name changed to New York, Vlissingen Anglicized into Flushing.²⁶ In a letter to the new Governor Nichols, the Dutch strongly advised him not "to make any alteration in their Church Government or to introduce any other form of worshipping among them than what they have chosen."²⁷ As Evan Haefeli has stated:

The result was a remarkable degree of continuity into a new colonial life no longer dominated by the Dutch, but still very influenced by what they had created. However, the English conquerors made one major change: they actively fostered the pluralism the Dutch regime had done all with its constitutional power to restrain by replacing the public church with an Erastian system in which the English governor mediated between *all* religious groups in the colony equally. No single group had privileged support as the Reformed had had under the West India Company rule.²⁸

There were limits, however, for in 1665 Nichols called an assembly that created a new set of laws called the Duke's Laws, which "divided the English towns into parishes and allowed each to choose the sort of church it wanted by a majority vote of the householders" (as long as they were not Quakers, Baptists, or Catholics—the laws clearly favored Presbyterians, Lutherans, Dutch Reformed, Congregationalists, and Anglicans, and they also "discouraged proselytizing in the colony, a blow to the Quakers who were still spreading their faith").²⁹ Despite this, in 1666, Nichols confirmed the Flushing town patent, yet he grew frustrated when a number of men refused to serve in Flushing's militia because of the new Quaker "Peace Testimony" of pacifism, which was introduced in 1660 and had reached New York Quakers by 1667.³⁰

In August 1672, George Fox (founder of the Friends in the 1640s and 1650s) rested at Bowne House after preaching outside under two oak trees to a crowd of several hundred.³¹ Bowne and his wife joined Fox and William Penn on a preaching tour of Holland and Germany in 1676, and Bowne continued to welcome Friends to worship in his house for forty years. Elected as county treasurer in 1683 and in 1691 to the General Assembly, Bowne lived until he was sixty-eight. He died on October 20, 1695 (fifty years after the founding of Flushing), leaving a long line of descendants who would continue to be influential in Flushing and New York.

In October 1683, a representative assembly (with members from Flushing and other towns of the newly established Queens County) was established under the new governor Thomas Dongan, and the Charter of Liberties was drafted. One of its provisions stated that "no person or persons, which profess faith in God by Jesus Christ, shall at any time, be any ways molested . . . who do not actually disturb the civil peace of the province."³² The Charter of Liberties effectively lasted until 1685, when King Charles II died and James II ascended the throne, revoking all charters of New York, New Jersey, and Massachusetts. Influenced by the philosopher John Locke and his "Letter Concerning Toleration," the pendulum swung back again when Parliament, under William III and Mary II, restored relative religious freedom with the Toleration Act of May 24, 1689—"An Act for Exempting their Majesties Protestant Subjects, Dissenting from the Church of England, from the Penalties of certain laws." The act permitted freedom of worship to Dissenters but excluded Roman Catholics (a policy that lasted until 1829 in England).

Nearly fifty years after Bowne's death, the implications of his defense of the town charter still seemed to reverberate in the colony: ministers of Anglican and Dutch churches in 1741 lamented the "spirit of confusion" resulting from New York's "perfect freedom of conscience."³³ The language of Flushing's town charter would also carry over into the state constitution. In postrevolutionary New York, representatives from the State of New York met on April 20, 1777, to ratify the new constitution, with Amendment XXXVIII reading:

And whereas we are required, by the benevolent principles of rational liberty, not only to expel civil tyranny, but also to guard against that spiritual oppression and intolerance wherewith the bigotry and ambition of weak and wicked priests and princes have scourged mankind, this convention doth further, in the name and by the authority of the good people of this State, ordain, determine, and declare, that the free exercise and enjoyment of religious profession and worship, without discrimination or preference, shall forever hereafter be allowed, within this State, to all mankind: Provided, That the *liberty of conscience*, hereby granted, shall not be so construed as to excuse acts of licentiousness, or justify practices inconsistent with the peace or safety of this State.³⁴

In 1791, the Congress of a new nation passed the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America.

Residents of Flushing later would proudly claim it to be "the birthplace of religious freedom in America," and, to some extent, they would be right. In a very limited, local colonial context, Flushing does appear to be the first colonial town to have and defend liberty of conscience so explicitly and consistently—especially when the charter is taken together with the Flushing Remonstrance and Bowne's defense of both. There was, of course, no nation yet in Bowne's time, and the liberty of conscience in Flushing's charter did not extend to the rest of the colony, nor was it reinstated in Flushing until 1663, when Bowne was permitted to return. Despite this constellation of significance, Flushing is often clouded over in historical tugs of war over who was first and is thus largely overlooked in the history of religious freedom in America. In Rhode Island, for instance, similar claims are made on behalf of the Portsmouth Compact of March 7, 1638.³⁵ The town of Providence was founded by Roger Williams in the summer of 1636, and though a royal charter was obtained in 1644, "the lively experiment" and "full liberty in religious concernments" for which Rhode Island became so well known was not officially granted until a second revised Charter of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations was granted on July 15, 1663 (several months after Bowne's successful case to the Dutch West India Company that same year).³⁶ Maryland's charter of 1632, as well as "An Act Concerning Religion" in 1649 (better known as Maryland's Act of Toleration), favored Catholics. The Charter for the Province of Pennsylvania and William Penn's "holy experiment" also came later, in 1681. The Puritans in the Massachusetts Bay Colony (and Connecticut) lagged further behind: many "heretics" had already escaped to found or join other colonies (if they did not first suffer a fate similar to those in the Salem witch trials of the 1690s), and the colony did not grant full religious freedom until the state constitution of 1780. Thomas Jefferson, who apparently was moved by the persecution of the "poor Quakers" and had seen how the "sister states of Pennsylvania and New York . . . have long subsisted without any establishment at all," did not

write his Statute of Virginia for Religious Freedom until 1777.³⁷ Although there is no evidence (to date) that the Flushing Remonstrance itself was later read by Jefferson or by James Madison (who is largely recognized as the principal author of the Constitution, First Amendment, and other amendments in the Bill of Rights), the evolution of liberty of conscience and sequence of events in New Amsterdam and New York does appear to have made an impression on the minds of the Founding Fathers.

At the end of his life, in 1694, Bowne and other Friends bought land to build a Meeting House on present-day Northern Boulevard. The first place of worship in Flushing, it is also the oldest place of worship in New York City in continual use. At the General Yearly meeting of Friends in Rhode Island in 1695, it was agreed that the new meeting house in Flushing would host the New York Yearly meeting—which it did until 1778, when the building was used as a hospital by British troops during the Revolutionary War.

Various records show that a guard house was used by numerous religious groups in Flushing well into the eighteenth century, but most residents in Flushing (excluding blacks, about whom little is known until later) were Quakers and came to the Meeting House. Church records and letters indicate its popularity (William Penn visited Flushing in 1700 and was the guest of John Bowne's son Samuel), and the congregation grew: in September 1703, an estimated two thousand attended the last day of Monthly Meeting (some also traveled to it from outside for Half-Yearly Meeting, as Flushing's meeting house was for several years the only place of worship in Queens for miles). By 1719, the Meeting House had to build an addition.³⁸

In 1702, under the Church of England's zealous missionary arm, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. St. George's Church of Royal Anglican Order was founded by the SPG as a mission of the Church of England, holding its first meetings in the guard house until a church was completed in 1746. The parish consisted of the three towns of Jamaica, Newtown, and Flushing and was one of the first missions of the Society. Many residents of Flushing would convert in time as St. George's established itself, but the Meeting House remained Flushing's biggest draw through most of the eighteenth century but lingered in the twilight of vitality as it moved into the nineteenth century. In 1786, a certain Elisha Kirk wrote: "We rode to John Bowne's and attended meeting; but it is much decreased in numbers from what it formerly was."³⁹ Despite lower attendance (probably causing the Yearly Meeting to move to nearby Westbury in 1778), there were still notable moments: one Friend wrote in 1797 of a monthly meeting that lasted six hours, calling it "a glorious meeting. I thought I had never been a witness to such a solemnity at any meeting for so long a time together."⁴⁰

By the end of the eighteenth century, Flushing had risen as one of the most desirable locales in New York, with many prominent families either visiting or moving there. Whitehead Hicks was serving his tenth year as mayor of New York when the American Revolution broke out. On Valentine's Day, 1776, he resigned from the mayoralty, saying he was tired and "desirous to retire from the Town." His place of retirement was Flushing, where he died in 1780. In 1775, Robert Bowne (great-grandson of John) established a stationer and printing press at South Street Seaport named Bowne & Co. Now located in TriBeCa, it was the oldest business in New York operating under the same name since its incorporation.⁴¹

The Fading and Rediscovery of Flushing's history in the 19th century

Despite its significance, the Flushing Remonstrance, Bowne, and Flushing's history in general largely faded from memory (at least, outside of Flushing) until the nineteenth century, when some of the first comprehensive histories of New York were published (including some local histories of Flushing). Consequently, some church historians took note and began to include references to the Flushing Remonstrance and Bowne in their surveys of religion in America as early as 1898. Despite these occasional references, the dominant narratives of American history and religion at least until the late twentieth century stressed the primary importance and legacy of New England Puritanism and British colonial settlements along the North Atlantic coast in general. The history of Flushing shifts attention to the Middle Atlantic region and colonial experiments in religious freedom and pluralism: Roger Williams and Rhode Island, Dutch New Netherland (New York after the British takeover in 1664), Pennsylvania and the Delaware Valley.⁴²

Scholarship on the history of Flushing is scanty at best, and there are no recent studies.⁴³ There are numerous local histories of Flushing and biographical sketches of its principal leaders from the colonial period through the nineteenth century as well as a few thorough and fairly reliable (but now outdated) histories of Flushing, of Queens, and of Long Island covering the same period.⁴⁴ The Flushing Remonstrance and John Bowne also appear in books on New York history and in a few general histories of America and American religion.⁴⁵ It was local church historians who composed the most ambitious histories of Flushing in the nineteenth century, following the lead of Rev. G. Henry Mandeville of the Dutch Reformed Church in 1860.⁴⁶ Two other histories came from rectors at St. George's: a history of the parish by Rev. Dr. John Carpenter Smith (pastor from 1847 all the way to 1897) and a substantial history of Flushing by Rev. Henry D. Waller in 1899.⁴⁷ Waller notes the strong opposition Flushing had to the proposal for consolidation in 1896 and how the members of the Village Board, supported by their fellow townsmen, appeared before the Senate Committee to oppose the consolidation. Despite the protests of the people, Flushing was annexed by the city in 1896, and the act was signed by the governor, taking effect on January 1, 1898, as Flushing became a part of the City of New York and "one of the most beautiful towns in the United States . . . became a part of a hurly-burly city."⁴⁸

Yet these histories of Flushing, New York, and even the broader histories of religion in America did not reach a wide enough audience to make Flushing's history very well known—despite a few exceptions, it was mostly overlooked. This oversight would begin to change for a period of time by the mid-twentieth century, however, when Flushing's sense of local history and civic pride would be at an all-time high.

The Post-World War II Revival and National Recognition of Flushing's Heritage During the Cold War: the 1939-40 and 1964-65 World's Fairs and the 300th Anniversaries of the Founding of Flushing in 1945 and Signing of the Flushing Remonstrance in 1957

As Flushing grew from a suburban outpost on Long Island to an urban neighborhood of New York after consolidation with the city in 1898, the old town attracted a larger and more diverse population. When immigration in the mid- to late nineteenth century started to transform the American population from its colonial mix, Flushing was already seen by new immigrants as an alternative to overcrowded neighborhoods in Manhattan like the Five Points: It became home to sizable Irish, German, and later Italian communities. Jews also chose to settle in Flushing by the turn of the twentieth century, with many more arriving during and after World War II. The extension of the IRT subway in 1928 to Flushing made it even more of a sensible place to settle down. Queens then basked in the international spotlight as the site of two very popular World's Fairs (1939–1940 and 1964–1965) held in Flushing Meadows–Corona Park, and the area was the first home of the United Nations General Assembly, from 1946 to 1951. Many more became at least somewhat familiar with Queens via Shea Stadium, the U.S. Open, and La Guardia and John F. Kennedy (previously Idlewild) airports. Numerous celebrations of local history also raised its profile. Taken together, attention to Flushing would never be higher than at mid-century.

The tremendous housing and real estate boom in Flushing that had slumped during the Great Depression began to take off again in the mid-1930s as locals became excited about a huge event that was about to take place in their backyard of Flushing Meadows: the 1939–1940 New York World's Fair. More than any previous fair, the 1939–1940 New York World's Fair showcased the availability of new goods and services, combined with advances in technology and planned communities—all “streamlined” to be more efficient.⁴⁹ So that no one would miss their point, the designers of the fair structured the pathways to lead visitors to a central Theme Center inside a gigantic stark white Perisphere: “Democracity,” the perfectly planned community of Henry Dreyfuss that represented the World Fair's central ideology of the future. The planners of the World's Fair hoped to turn Flushing Meadows into such a garden city, a completely planned city, and thereby show the world that tomorrow could be achieved today. In any case, the fair attracted many visitors before the U.S. entered World War II.

At the end of war, the United States celebrated victory by touting American ideals of democracy, religious freedom, and tolerance that recalled the nation's founding principles and commitment to a pluralistic society. In Flushing, such soul searching prompted some to look back even further, since the end of the war happened to coincide with the founding of Flushing in 1645. Residents of Flushing had reason to remember and highlight their town's history, which started with perhaps the earliest defense of religious freedom and tolerance in colonial America's most diverse colony. In the years following World War II, a variety of local civic, religious, and political leaders in New York City revived this story as a timely message to the world in the wake of virulent Nazi anti-Semitism, but Flushing and its legacy of tolerance itself had been tested in the centuries following its founding in 1645 as the small town grew increasingly more pluralistic to include many new religious groups by the end of the nineteenth century.

October 10, 1945, marked the tercentenary of the founding of Flushing in 1645 and, with that, the “birthplace of religious freedom in America,” as many residents still like to claim. Months before the end of the war, members of the Tercentenary Planning Committee knew they might be able to tap into lingering patriotic sentiment and attract interest at many levels by highlighting religious freedom as a timely and important theme. Hon. Charles S. Colden, the chairman and former New York State Supreme Court justice, was a lifelong area resident with a famous last name and powerful connections in the city, and he made a strong case for the event:

“The committee feels that Flushing has contributed something of particular significance to the national life, especially at this time when religious freedom is one of the main points of the Atlantic Charter.”⁵⁰ Colden took it even further by stressing another celebrated theme in the town’s history, that of tolerance: “Flushing, by official records, is the first spot in the world where men risked imprisonment and loss of official positions in an attempt to gain the right of religious freedom, not for themselves, but for others. In planning this celebration, we are following that idea of tolerance and seeking to have persons of all races, creeds, colors, social and economic backgrounds to take a part.”⁵¹ The committee also was able to tap into the popularity, recent euphoria, and optimism of the 1939–1940 World’s Fair in nearby Flushing Meadows–Corona Park right before the war. Scholars of American and European religious history would quibble with Colden’s claims and argue that Flushing was *one* of the first spots in colonial America where men took on this risk and that others did so earlier in sixteenth-century Europe, but the attempt to look for fundamental American principles in local and community history during and immediately after the Allies’ struggle against Nazi Germany in World War II is not surprising—indeed, the celebration of this history would develop into a kind of community ideology by the 1950s that is still invoked today.

The program of events for the Tercentenary Celebration spanned an entire week: October 7–14, 1945, at various locations throughout greater Flushing. The spotlight was on Bowne House, a Dutch-English salt-box house built by John Bowne in 1661, the oldest house in Queens. The festivities began on October 7, with a live radio broadcast on WNYC from the living room of the house by Mayor Fiorello H. La Guardia, who chose the occasion for his regular Sunday broadcast. Part history lesson, part ceremony, La Guardia’s speech traced the colonial history of Flushing and set the tone for the festivities: “This is to be a shrine. It belongs to our city because it made so much history here of endurance and fortitude. It belongs to our country because it is typical of America and it belongs to the world because it is a symbol of what the world is looking for today.”⁵² Addressing religious persecution and the history of legislation involving religious freedom in the colony, he added: “We went through some bad times, and sometimes there have been recurrences of intolerance, but they are isolated.”⁵³ And, lending the moment real significance, La Guardia announced that he had been conferring with Park Commissioner Robert Moses and Queens Borough President James A. Burke about a city plan to buy the house and adjoining property to be developed as a shrine and park. With live chamber music in the background, he recited an old Dutch hymn, “The Prayer of Thanksgiving,” and later read passages from “The United Nations Fight for the Four Freedoms” (published in 1942 by the Office of War Information), concluding his broadcast with two quotations from the Bible: “In my Father’s house are many mansions” and “Love thy neighbor as thyself.” More radio attention would follow, as two national radio networks, WOR and WJZ, carried the ceremonies across the airwaves of the country, and the Army News Service also incorporated events into its broadcast to servicemen and women overseas.⁵⁴

While Protestant and Catholic churches and Jewish synagogues in greater Flushing all held special services throughout the week, and other highlights included a tour of historic spots, lectures, a “historical pageant” (a play), antique shows, and even a window display at Abramson’s department store, the focal event took place on October 10, again at Bowne House. *The New York Times* reported that “under towering oaks and elms shading tranquil Bowne Street, a thousand residents of Flushing, Queens,” gathered outside the festooned house “with leaders of every faith” for a two-hour ceremony. In New York circa 1945, “every faith” meant Christianity and Judaism, but a historic tree on Bowne Street was dedicated to each member of the United

Nations for the occasion, and Bowne Street was temporarily called “Avenue of the Allies.” Bowne House was then dedicated as a “national shrine to religious freedom” by Senator James M. Mead, who addressed the crowd and emphasized that “Charters of liberty alone cannot insure the freedoms so essential to man’s well-being and happiness. There must be a militant John Bowne in each generation to be ever watchful that the written words of the charters be held sacred.” Mead went on to state that “as the strongest nation on earth, we must use our strength to banish war and thus make possible international liberty of conscience.”⁵⁵ And, in a fitting gesture, a scroll was presented to Dr. Jacobus G. deBeus, consul of the Netherlands’ embassy, from the citizens of “Flushing, U.S.A.,” to those of “Flushing in Zeeland.” After nine generations of Bowne descendants had lived there, Colden (as president of Bowne House Historical Society) announced plans to open the house as a public museum.

Another postwar highlight came when the United Nations General Assembly was temporarily located in Flushing Meadows when it moved into the defunct New York City Building from the 1939-40 World’s Fair from 1946 to 1952. Many foreign dignitaries chose to live in Flushing because of its proximity to the United Nations, and Flushing’s prominence continued to rise.

The tercentenary celebration in 1945 of Flushing’s founding in 1645 was only one among several events in Flushing around the first half of the twentieth century that illustrate something about local tradition and memory. The sociologist David M. Hummon proposes that “conceptions of community life are fundamental elements of American culture, with a history and a life that transcends the experience of the individual.”⁵⁶ He defines “community ideologies” as “systems of belief that define a unique perspective on the landscape of urban, suburban, and small-town life” and argues that “people, in adopting such ideologies, incorporate assumptions, beliefs, and values that enable them not only to understand this or that locale but also to *make sense* of reality and their place in the everyday world.”⁵⁷ In this way, community ideologies are similar to the *mentalités*, or mental habits, that pervade people’s thoughts in a particular place. And, in Flushing, the community ideology, local tradition, or *mentalité* has revolved around memory of the “liberty of conscience,” or religious freedom, guaranteed in the town charter, upheld in the Flushing Remonstrance, and personified in the stance of John Bowne.

In 1937, Flushing celebrated the centennial anniversary of the incorporation of the village of Flushing in 1837 with a parade and “The Pageant of Flushing Town” at the State Armory before a crowd of 1,500. This was just a dress rehearsal compared to the bigger celebration of the tercentenary in 1945. The biggest celebration, however, came in 1957, with the tercentenary of the signing of the Flushing Remonstrance. Local leaders were able to line up the highest-profile event committee ever, and New York State officially lent its support with the Joint Legislative Committee for the Celebration of the 300th Anniversary of the Signing of the Flushing Remonstrance.⁵⁸ The festivities culminated in a celebration on October 10 at Bowne House, with an impressive guest list that included Mayor Robert F. Wagner, Governor W. Averell Harriman, Senator Jacob K. Javits, Parks Commissioner Robert Moses, and a host of other local, city, and state leaders. Even President Eisenhower sent a wire: “It is a privilege to join in the observance of the 300th anniversary of the signing of the Flushing Remonstrance. This historical document states a basic premise in the American way of life—our freedom of religion. The individual liberties of our people begin with the free conscience of each citizen.”⁵⁹ Will Herberg, the prophet of consensus himself, could not have said it any better. Several weeks later, the Friends

Meeting House sponsored a series of forums on “What Does Freedom of Religion Mean in 1957?” Bowne House made the cover of the 1957 Queens telephone directory, and the Flushing Remonstrance was featured on a special commemorative three-cent stamp. The penultimate hurrah came in 1962, when Flushing Federal Bank opened the 1862 time capsule that had been deposited in Flushing Town Hall. Taken together as a measure of memory, the celebrations seem to show how conscious Flushing residents were of their local history by midcentury.

Another explanation for all of this pride of place and shared sense of history at the time might have come from the prevailing mood of the 1950s: the Cold War and climate of anticommunism led to an era of consensus and pressure to conform because of the fear of being labeled a communist. Since atheism was associated with communism, there was an increase in church and temple attendance during the decade, though not because a religious revival was sweeping the nation like the Great Awakening of the 1740s or early 1800s. As mentioned earlier, President Eisenhower also had said: “Our government makes no sense unless it is founded on a deeply felt religious faith—and I don’t care what it is”; Congress added “under God” to the Pledge of Allegiance in 1954 and “In God We Trust” to U.S. currency in 1955. Jews were more welcome in the United States by this time too, and it became increasingly common to hear the expression “Judeo-Christian America.” But perhaps it was just easier for everyone to come together when religious pluralism circa 1955 meant you were either Protestant, Catholic, or Jewish (when the sociologist Will Herberg wrote a book with a similar title). The population of Flushing was also still relatively small compared to the densely populated area it is today (really only half of what it is now), so it was possible to know more of one’s neighbors. In any case, it was a time of cohesion and a shared story, and there was a definite sense of neighborhood and community.

Flushing actually had one more occasion to celebrate in the 1960s, when the New York World’s Fair returned to Flushing Meadows in 1964–1965, again focusing international attention again on the area. Then, building on the attention of the fair, New York acquired a new baseball stadium that would also draw more people to Flushing in the years to come. Dedicated on April 17, 1964, Shea Stadium (named after William A. Shea, an attorney who was instrumental in acquiring a new team for New York following the city’s abandonment by the Giants and the Dodgers in the 1950s) became the home of the New York Mets.

But the greatest pull exerted by the two New York World’s Fairs would be symbolized in the iconic giant globe called the Unisphere that was built for the 1964–1965 fair: over the next thirty-five years, Queens would attract the most diverse population in the country of immigrants from around the world after the Immigration Act of 1965—and Flushing, thanks to its location near the two fairs and enjoying greater accessibility because of changes in transportation, truly would become the World of Tomorrow. At the same time, the community ideology of religious freedom and tolerance that peaked and was shared by the mainly Protestant-Catholic-Jewish residents of Flushing in the post–World War II era would be tested in the years to come by the introduction of the religions of new immigrant groups.

Urban Decline in 1960s-80s: Flushing’s History Fades Again

After the fanfare from the 1964-65 World's Fair died down, leaving the Unisphere and remnants from the 1939-40 Fair (including the building that temporarily housed the U.N. General Assembly which would later become the Queens Museum of Art), Flushing and the rest of New York City were on a slow path of deindustrialization, white flight to the suburbs, rising crime, and decline like other cities of the "Rust Belt" in the post-World War II era.

Despite its mid-century popularity, Flushing and Queens in general began to evoke less flattering associations in the popular imagination in the following decades: "to Hollywood, Queens is a place of big hair, nasal accents, and gum-snapping."⁶⁰ To millions of Americans watching television from the 1970s to the present, this representation of Queens would stay with them. While those old enough would have remembered Queens as the recent host of the World's Fair that ended in 1965 (some would also remember the earlier one), new national pop-culture fame came in 1971 with *All in the Family*—the popular television sitcom set on a quiet street of rowhouses in nearby Astoria (although the house shown at the end of the opening credits, implicitly the Bunkers', is actually in Rego Park). The show featured the loud-mouthed but lovable bigot Archie Bunker, whose traditional views of society were often challenged by his daughter, son-in-law, neighbors, and the turmoil of the late 1960s and 1970s.⁶¹

By the 1960s and 1970s, Flushing's older ethnic mix began to diminish. Many moved out to the suburbs or passed away, and their children chose not to stay. Reflecting a post-World War II decline in cities across America, the downtown central business district (which had been the principal commercial area for the North Shore of Long Island) began to suffer as more property went up for sale, with nearly every third storefront empty. New York City had plunged into a fiscal crisis by 1975, and those effects were felt everywhere. Compounding this were new welfare reform and housing policies in the 1970s that changed many areas in the city, including Flushing. As the city branch of the government serving residents throughout the five boroughs, the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) provided thousands of vouchers to people (mostly African Americans and Hispanic immigrants, but also low-income European Americans and other immigrants) who came to Flushing seeking apartments. At the same time, Flushing was also being transformed by a national trend among city planners of the 1950s and 1960s, who favored slum clearance policies of urban renewal.⁶² The demolition of houses belonging to an old black neighborhood around Macedonia AME church to build a parking lot already had displaced an entire community and led to the construction of a monstrous city-owned housing project named Bland Houses. As crime rose and downtown was viewed as unsafe for the first time since the 1850s (a sentiment that did not wholly disappear until the 1990s), many whites blamed blacks and fled Flushing. Although a number of these whites were upwardly mobile and would have moved away anyway, most did so to escape a deepening sense of urban decay. Years later, longtime residents would reflect upon the time and say that "the 1970s almost destroyed Flushing."⁶³

While the period of Flushing's decline in the 1960s and 1970s was troubling to longtime residents unable to reverse the downward spiral on their own, it presented opportunities to new immigrants, who would help revitalize the community and also transform it in ways more familiar to them.

Immigration, Revitalization, and the Recent Rediscovery of Flushing's History

By the 1960s, a mixture of economic confidence, foreign policy, ethnic lobbying, and a new tolerance brought about by the civil rights movement helped galvanize support for greater changes in immigration policy. The Immigration (Hart–Celler) Act of 1965 threw open the door again—especially to people from parts of the world not represented before in large numbers in America, and another massive movement of people began.⁶⁴ In the last quarter of the twentieth century, Queens became the most diverse large county in the country, according to studies of 1990, 2000, and 2010 U.S. Census data, with perhaps the most striking changes taking place in Flushing.⁶⁵ The dramatic demographic changes again brought new attention to Queens and to Flushing in the form of news and scholarly work which coincided with another wave of local history celebrations, yet Queens and Flushing have had to contend with continued lowbrow associations in popular culture and a persistent Manhattan-centric view of New York City history that make it difficult for the area’s remarkable history and diversity to become more widely known.

After 1965, immigrants to New York rarely arrived by boat; most now flew into John F. Kennedy International Airport (formerly New York International Airport but frequently called Idlewild), and many began to settle in the borough where the airport is located; others arrived in Queens via domestic flights to La Guardia Airport. But whereas most immigrants to the Lower East Side started out poor, many of the first post-1965 wave of immigrants were educated and skilled professionals who sought and could afford a more middle-class area to live and raise a family.

Flushing and other neighborhoods in Queens had already become a destination for many Jews and other “white ethnics” after World War II looking to escape the Bronx and a crowded inner city, and it remained one of the top destinations for many upwardly mobile New Yorkers and new immigrants arriving after 1965 who were looking to escape overcrowding in Manhattan and have more space and perhaps a yard. The international attention from the two World’s Fairs and temporary home of the United Nations General Assembly in nearby Flushing Meadows also began to attract many new residents. In addition, Flushing was (and still is) centrally located, with the largest intermodal transportation point in the city—bus and subway routes terminate in Flushing, La Guardia Airport is five minutes away and JFK about fifteen to twenty minutes, and it is a major nexus of highways and roads. Desirable for its convenience as the transportation hub of Queens, Flushing was often the first and last stop for many new immigrants. Also, by the 1960s, many older upwardly mobile Jewish families began to move out, and many others left too as the community suffered with the city’s fiscal crisis in the mid-1970s. This exodus left a lot of vacant property and commercial space. Finally, a very flexible zoning law from 1961 allowed many different immigrant groups to build so-called community facilities (which includes religious institutions) in residential neighborhoods as long as they met building and fire department codes.⁶⁶ The Department of City Planning could not have imagined then what the implications of this law would mean for a diverse and thriving immigrant neighborhood like Flushing several decades later, but it gradually led to a dramatically different architectural landscape by the end of the century.

Today, Flushing, Queens is perhaps the most extreme case of religious pluralism in the world. In a residential neighborhood and commercial district about 2.5 square miles, there are half a dozen Hindu temples, two Sikh gurdwaras, several mosques, Japanese, Chinese, and Korean Buddhist temples, a Taoist temple, over 100 Korean churches, Latin American

evangelical churches, Falun Gong practitioners, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons... as well as some of the oldest churches and synagogues in the city—overall, nearly 200 different places of worship densely concentrated in a heavily populated and busy urban neighborhood. Flushing has become what the director of the population division in the New York City Department of City Planning Joseph J. Salvo calls a “melting-pot tract,” in which no single group dominates and where there are similar percentages of Hispanic, white, Asian, and black populations in the community. Salvo believes what's happening in Queens is “probably the greatest social experiment in history.”⁶⁷

Despite this transformation which has been noted by New Yorkers, local newspapers, and scholars, Queens still appears to be depicted and known outside New York in its now outdated *All in the Family* association, as it has a similar look even in very recent shows like *The Nanny* (starring Fran Drescher as “the flashy girl from Flushing”) or *The King of Queens*. Such programs have not accurately represented Queens and how it began to change dramatically after the Immigration Act of 1965, so television viewers who have never visited (even those who have only passed through quickly on their way directly to the U.S. Open or a Mets game) typically know very little about Queens today and even less about the colonial history of Flushing. Occasional newspaper articles since the mid- to late 1970s began to document the changes in immigration and ethnic diversity in Queens, and by the new millennium reporters had begun referring to it as the most ethnically diverse county in the country. But Queens and the other “outer” boroughs remain in relative obscurity compared with Manhattan.

Surprisingly, not much has been written about Flushing, or even Queens, for that matter—its colonial history is not widely known, and there are very few studies of Queens or its neighborhoods.⁶⁸ More is known about Brooklyn, but not the other outer boroughs. When people think of or say New York City (or just “The City”), they usually mean Manhattan. What can we possibly learn from Flushing or Queens? The name “Flushing” itself inevitably elicits bathroom humor until one learns of its Dutch origins and subsequent Anglicization. And just as many Flushing residents took a while to associate the former Flushing, Long Island, with New York City after consolidation, most residents of Manhattan probably took a while to associate Flushing (or any part of Queens, for that matter) with the city—many still do not, and it is common to hear some New Yorkers use the pejorative phrase “bridge and tunnel” to refer to anyone commuting to Manhattan. It is a part of New York City that many tourists and New Yorkers do not know, rarely visit, and most often ridicule.⁶⁹ To many people, perhaps, Flushing, Queens, may seem an unlikely place to warrant much attention, but this is because of an outdated image of it in popular culture. There are some signs, however, that this may be slowly changing: the popular *Lonely Planet* tour guide company recently named Queens the number one tourist destination for 2015.⁷⁰

Pre-1965 Flushing may have had a stronger sense of community and Flushing's heritage, but it has taken time to translate this effectively for new immigrant neighbors: Asian immigrants outnumbered whites by 2000, but many knew little about local history. Efforts to revive Flushing's heritage began in the 1980s when local history-minded folk persuaded City Planning officials to affix several little red “Flushing Freedom Trail” markers to street signs at various historic sites throughout Flushing. The Queens Historical Society elaborated upon this in 1999 by printing and distributing a map called “The Flushing Freedom Mile Historic Tour” and also published a book on the history of the Underground Railroad in Flushing and Long Island.⁷¹ A newly revamped Flushing Town Hall also opened with great fanfare, featuring regular music and cultural programs, exhibits, and a map of the Queens Jazz Trail.⁷² And while the two time capsules from the 1939–1940 and 1964–1965 World's Fairs remain buried in Flushing

Meadows–Corona Park for five thousand years, Town Hall decided to unveil its own time capsule, which had been deposited in a cornerstone of the building in 1862 and had not surfaced since a 1962 centennial.⁷³ In 1999, the Flushing Remonstrance returned to Flushing from the New York State Archives in Albany for an exhibit at the popular new multilingual Flushing library (the busiest branch in the nation’s busiest library system, thanks to the large immigrant population that obviously believes in education for success), where it was seen by a fairly wide swath of residents.⁷⁴ Some local history buffs actually wanted to fight to keep the Flushing Remonstrance in Flushing, where they argued it would resonate more than in the State Archives in Albany, but the archives refused for fear of the document’s care and preservation.⁷⁵ Despite this struggle, the occasional loan of the Flushing Remonstrance for anniversaries and exhibits helps it live on and may also help create some larger sense of community in Flushing. The Flushing Remonstrance returned to Queens again in 2007 for its 350th anniversary, and the State Archives organized a year’s worth of festivities around the city and state to mark the occasion.⁷⁶ Not since the 300th anniversaries of Flushing in 1945 and the Flushing Remonstrance in 1957 had this level of attention been focused on Flushing’s history. Bowne House also has been a fairly active part of the community since it opened as a museum in 1945, featuring tours, student volunteer programs, an annual July 4 celebration where the Flushing Remonstrance is read and local religious leaders, politicians, or scholars give speeches.

My own research grew out of work I did in New York for the Pluralism Project at Harvard University in 1994 to study how the religious landscape of the city had changed in the wake of this legislation and ultimately led me to study Flushing. I also was drawn to its remarkable but largely overlooked colonial history at a time when new work on the history of the Middle Atlantic region was beginning based on the transcription of early documents from the period.⁷⁷ Such work is beginning to shift attention away from the standard New England Puritan narrative of British colonial America. My book has generated significant publicity and notable positive reviews, and such attention has helped generate further interest in Flushing’s history. Another Consulting Historian, Evan Haefeli, has focused on religious liberty during the colonial history of New Netherland (whereas my work focuses more on the 19th and 20th century and Flushing in particular), lending even greater credibility. The NPS Flushing Remonstrance Special Resource Study thus comes at a time when scholarship and attention to Flushing’s history has achieved indisputable importance.

¹ Martin E. Marty, *Pilgrims in Their Own Land: Five Hundred Years of Religion in America* (New York: Little, Brown, 1984), 71.

² “Tercentenary to Be Celebrated by Flushing in Week of Oct. 7: Ceremonies Marking Signing of Charter in 1645 Will Include Concerts, Costume Ball, and Parade,” *New York Times* (July 22, 1945). Local history and fiction also flourished around this time in Flushing. See Haynes Trebor, *Colonial Flushing* (Flushing, N.Y., 1945); Cornelia Mitchell Parsons, *The Quaker Cross: A Tale of Old Bowne House* (Flushing, N.Y., 1911); and Stella E. Asling-Riis, *Star Over Flushing* (Flushing, N.Y., 1939).

³ “Tolerance in Flushing,” *New York Times* (October 12, 1945).

⁴ Frederick Van Wyck, *Select Patents of New York Towns* (New York, 1938), 5–6. Also see Jerrold Seymann, *Colonial Charters, Patents, and Grants to the Communities Comprising the City of New York* (New York, 1939).

⁵ Haynes Trebor, *The Flushing Remonstrance (The Origin of Religious Freedom in America)* (Flushing, N.Y., 1957), 6–8.

⁶ Henry Onderdonk Jr., “The Rise of the Society of Friends in Flushing,” in *Original Journal of John Bowne of Flushing, L.I. (1627–1695), containing entries of Births, Marriages and Deaths in the family from 1649–1676 with Vol. Of Extracts from Journal and Newspaper cuttings of contributions to Flushing’s Centennial*, by Henry Onderdonk Jr., 2 vols., 12 mo., manuscripts collection, the Library of the New-York Historical Society. Library note: “Vol. of newspaper cuttings being extracts from Journal of JB edited by Onderdonk, a chronicler who lived in the nineteenth century and worked as headmaster at Union Hall academy in nearby Jamaica, Queens. Journal entries span 1656–1702 (JB and Samuel Bowne, son); articles span 1700–1801 and may be a combination of Bowne material, Onderdonk articles for the original Flushing Times (a Civil War era paper that preceded the current eponymous one), and church records from the Friends Meeting House. The ‘Centennial’ referred to is most likely Flushing’s Bi-Centennial in 1845, as Onderdonk lived 1804–1886. Onderdonk notes that ‘in 1789 the records of Flushing were burnt. This loss . . . is mitigated by the preservation of an old account book of John Bowne and his son Samuel, extending from 1656–1702.’<HS>”

⁷ Evan Haefeli, *New Netherland and the Dutch Origins of American Religious Liberty* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 21, 10. Also see Carla Gardina Pestana, *Liberty of Conscience and the Growth of Religious Diversity in Early America, 1636–1786* (Providence, R.I., 1986). Pestana’s book was a catalogue derived from an exhibition of the same name at the John Carter Brown Library, Brown University, May 1–September 30, 1986, in honor of the 350th anniversary of the founding of the state of Rhode Island.

⁸ Maarten Prak, *The Dutch Republic in the Seventeenth Century*, trans. Diane Webb (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 219–220; cited in Haefeli, *New Netherland and the Dutch Origins of American Religious Liberty*, 13.

⁹ Haefeli, *New Netherland and the Dutch Origins of American Religious Liberty*, 4.

¹⁰ Jeremy Dupertuis Bangs, “Dutch Contributions to Religious Toleration,” *Church History* 79, no. 3 (2010): 585–613; cited in Haefeli, *New Netherland and the Dutch Origins of American Religious Liberty*, 12–13.

¹¹ Haefeli, *New Netherland and the Dutch Origins of American Religious Liberty*, 13.

¹² Hugh Hastings, *Ecclesiastical Records of the State of New York* (New York, 1901), 1:352.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Please refer to the reproduction of *The Flushing Remonstrance*.

¹⁵ David William Voorhees, “The 1657 Flushing Remonstrance in Historical Perspective,” paper given at the New York State History Conference, June 2007.

¹⁶ See Evan Haefeli, “The Text of the Flushing Remonstrance,” paper presented to the Center for Ethical Culture, November 15, 2007. Haefeli argues that Stuyvesant was simply following orders by cracking down on anyone practicing any religion but Dutch Reformed in public until he was rebuked by the Dutch West India Company after Bowne’s appeal.

¹⁷ Edith King Wilson, *Bowne Family of Flushing, Long Island* (New York, 1987). Hannah was the cousin of the third town sheriff of Flushing, Tobias Feake (who delivered the

Flushing Remonstrance to Stuyvesant), a daughter of Elizabeth Fones Winthrop Feake (cofounder of Greenwich, Connecticut), and daughter-in-law through her first marriage of John Winthrop (first governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony).

¹⁸ Onderdonk, Extracts from the State's Office, Albany, in "The Rise of the Society of Friends in Flushing."

¹⁹ Michael Kammen, *Colonial New York: A History* (New York: Scribners, 1975), 63.

²⁰ John Bowne of Flushing, L.I. (1627–1695), from the *Original Journal of 1649–1676*, manuscripts collection, the Library of the New-York Historical Society. See note 15.

²¹ Voorhees, "The 1657 Flushing Remonstrance in Historical Perspective."

²² Hastings, *Ecclesiastical Records*, 1:530. Dispatch from The Directors of the W I Company—Amsterdam addressed to the Governor and Council of New Netherland dated 16 of April 1663.

²³ *Historical Documents I*, 425, cited by Waller, *History of the Town of Flushing Long Island*, 28.

²⁴ George L. Smith has addressed the conflicting interests of the Dutch West India Company by focusing on the Dutch understanding of "connivance" in *Religion and Trade in New Netherland: Dutch Origins and American Development* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1973).

²⁵ Martin E. Marty, *Pilgrims in Their Own Land: Five Hundred Years of Religion in America* (New York: Little, Brown, 1984), 71–72.

²⁶ Bowne already had begun to anglicize Vlissingen by writing "Vlissing" in his journal. "Flushing" is used in later records at least as early as 1664.

²⁷ Hastings, *Ecclesiastical Records*, 1:545.

²⁸ Haefeli, *New Netherland and the Dutch Origins of American Religious Liberty*, 254.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 256–257, 260.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 261.

³¹ The spot is now marked by a large slab of inscribed rock on Bowne Street where the "Fox Oaks" used to stand. Fox later recalled: "We had a very large meeting, many hundreds of people being there, some of whom came 30 miles to it. A glorious and heavenly meeting it was and the people were much satisfied." Onderdonk, "The Rise of the Religious Society of Friends in Flushing."

³² Hastings, *Ecclesiastical Records of the State of New York*, 2:864. Queens County itself was made one of the counties of the Province of New York on November 1, 1683, and named after Queen Catherine of Braganza (Queen of Charles II of England, r. 1660–1685). Governor Dongan also approved a new treaty in 1684 with the local native Americans that was drawn up by Bowne and eight others and signed by Takapousha, sachem of the Matinecoc tribe.

³³ Rev. G. Du Bois to the Classis of Amsterdam, May 14, 1741, in *Ecclesiastical Records*, 4:2756; cited by Milton M. Klein, "New York in the American Colonies: A New Look," *New York History* 53, no. 2 (April 1972): 146.

³⁴ Constitution of the State of New York, 1777. Italics added.

³⁵ There is no doubt that the social contexts surrounding the Portsmouth Compact make it an important document of early colonial America, but it is brief, and any religious freedom is

vague: “We whose names are underwritten do hereby solemnly in the presence of Jehovah incorporate ourselves into a Bodie Politick and as He shall help, will submit our persons, lives and estates unto our Lord Jesus Christ, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, and to all those perfect and most absolute laws of His given in His Holy Word of truth, to be guided and judged thereby.”

³⁶ Pestana, *Liberty of Conscience and the Growth of Religious Diversity in Early America*, 45–46.

³⁷ Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, ed. William Peden (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1954), 157–161. Also see Charles B. Sanford, *The Religious Life of Thomas Jefferson* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1984).

³⁸ Onderdonk, “The Rise of the Society of Friends in Flushing.” The Meeting House kept records of sufferings of Friends throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which these clippings reflect.

³⁹ Onderdonk, “The Rise of the Society of Friends in Flushing.”

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ See Edmund A. Stanley Jr., *Of Men and Dreams: The Story of the People of Bowne & Co. and the Fulfillment of Their Dreams in the Company’s Two Hundred Years from 1775 to 1975* (New York, 1975).

⁴² See Russell Shorto, *The Island at the Center of the World: The Epic Story of Dutch Manhattan and the Forgotten Colony That Shaped America* (New York: Vintage, 2004); Randall Balmer and Mark Silk, eds., *Religion and Public Life in the Middle Atlantic Region: The Fount of Diversity* (Lanham, Md.: AltaMira, 2006).

⁴³ A review of indices to *American Historical Review*, *Journal of American History*, and *New York History* turned up only one reference to Bowne or Flushing: an article in the latter journal by Milton M. Klein, “New York in the American Colonies: A New Look,” *New York History* 53, no. 2 (April 1972). The only recent scholarship on Flushing is a sociological study of its demographic and economic changes in the 1990s. See Christopher J. Smith, “Asian New York: The Geography and Politics of Diversity,” in *International Migration Review* 29, no. 1 (Spring 1995); and Christopher J. Smith and John R. Logan, “Flushing 2000,” in *From Urban Enclave to Ethnic Suburb: New Asian Communities in Pacific Rim Countries*, ed. Wei Li (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2006).

⁴⁴ In particular, see Henry D. Waller, *History of the Town of Flushing, Long Island* (Flushing, 1899); and Rev. G. Henry Mandeville, *Flushing, Past and Present: A Historical Sketch* (Flushing, 1860). Also see W. W. Munsell & Co., *History of Queens County, New York with Illustrations, Portraits, & Sketches of Prominent Families and Individuals* (New York, 1882); and Benjamin F. Thompson, *History of Long Island: From Its Discovery and Settlement to the Present Time* (1839; New York, 1918). There is also a wealth of information in the Queens Historical Society, *Angels of Deliverance: The Underground Railroad in Queens, Long Island, and Beyond* (Flushing, 1999). Finally, also see Vincent F. Seyfried, *The Civil War Era in Flushing* (Garden City, N.Y., 2002).

⁴⁵ For instance, there is an entry for John Bowne in the *Dictionary of American Biography*. As for histories of New York, Bowne and Flushing appear in such works as Michael Kammen’s *Colonial New York* in 1975, Kenneth T. Jackson’s *Encyclopedia of New York City* in 1995, and Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace’s *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898* in 1999. In American religious history, Bowne and Flushing appear in such works as Leonard Woolsey Bacon’s *A History of American Christianity* in 1898, Frederick J. Zwierlein’s *Religion*

in *New Netherland* in 1910, William Warren Sweet's *The Story of Religions in America* in 1930, and Martin E. Marty's *Pilgrims in Their Own Land* in 1984.

⁴⁶ Mandeville, *Flushing, Past and Present*.

⁴⁷ J. Carpenter Smith, *History of Saint George's Parish, Flushing Long Island* (Flushing, N.Y., 1897); Henry D. Waller, *History of the Town of Flushing Long Island, New York* (Flushing, N.Y., 1899).

⁴⁸ Rev. Hubert S. Wood, sermon at St. George's Episcopal Church on the occasion of Flushing's Centennial celebration as an incorporated village in 1837; cited in the *Long Island Daily Star* (November 8, 1937).

⁴⁹ Warren I. Susman, "The People's Fair: Cultural Contradictions of a Consumer Society," in *Dawn of a New Day: The New York World's Fair, 1939/40*, ed. Helen A. Harrison (New York: NYU Press, 1980), 19; Warren I. Susman, ed., *Culture and Commitment, 1929–1945* (New York: Braziller, 1973).

⁵⁰ "Tercentenary Keynote to Be Free Worship: Plans for Flushing Fete to Be Drafted on National Scope," *Long Island Star Journal* (April 9, 1945). Colden was a descendant of Lieut. Gov. Cadwallader Colden (1688–1776) who retired in Flushing.

⁵¹ "Oaks of Flushing to Form Symbols: 300th Anniversary Celebration of Charter to Name Trees for United Nations," *New York Times* (May 27, 1945).

⁵² "Flushing Gets New Park and Mayor's Salute: On 300th Anniversary, He Broadcasts from Bowne House, Tolerance Shrine," *New York Herald Tribune* (October 8, 1945).

⁵³ "Mayor Opens Flushing Tercentenary Celebration," *Press* (October 8, 1945).

⁵⁴ "Flushing Tercentenary to Be Carried to Nation," *Long Island Star-Journal* (September 11, 1945); "Army to Send Out News of Tercentenary," *Long Island Star-Journal* (July 30, 1945).

⁵⁵ "Old Flushing Home Becomes a Shrine: Bowne House Is Dedicated to Religious Freedom on 300th Anniversary of Community," *New York Times* (October 11, 1945).

⁵⁶ David M. Hummon, *Commonplaces: Community Ideology and Identity in American Culture* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1990), 5.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Final Report of the New York State Joint Legislative Committee for the Celebration of the 300th Anniversary of the Signing of the Flushing Remonstrance, State of New York, Legislative Document (1958), no. 37.

⁵⁹ "President Joins in Tribute to Remonstrance: 3,000 Hear Message at Bowne House," *Long Island Star-Journal* (October 11, 1957).

⁶⁰ Marcia Biederman, "Library Thrives with a Common Touch: Queens Stresses Popular Taste, Not Scholarship," *New York Times* (September 12, 1999).

⁶¹ Produced by Norman Lear, the CBS show ran from January 1971 to April 1979 and became one of the most influential programs in the history of American television.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 10.

⁶³ Evangeline Egglezos, executive director of Bowne House Historical Society, interview with author, June 29, 2001.

⁶⁴ For more on this period, see David M. Reimers, *Unwelcome Strangers: American Identity and the Turn Against Immigration* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 25–26;

and Thomas Alexander Aleinikoff, David A. Martin, and Hiroshi Motomura, eds., *Immigration and Citizenship: Process and Policy*, 4th ed., American Casebook Series (St. Paul, Minn.: West Group, 1998), 168–171.

⁶⁵ See note 14 in the Introduction for sources and explanation of these studies.

⁶⁶ For more on community facilities, see the “Growing Pains” section of Chapter 4.

⁶⁷ Suketu Mehta, “The Meltingist Pot,” *New York Times* (October 5, 2003).

⁶⁸ Two exceptions, both about Corona-Elmhurst, are: Roger Sanjek, *The Future of Us All: Race and Neighborhood Politics in New York City* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1998); and Steven Gregory, *Black Corona: Race and the Politics of Place in an Urban Community* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998). Corona-Elmhurst, although similarly diverse (11373 is actually *the* most diverse zip code in the country), does not have as many different places of worship densely concentrated in its neighborhoods as Flushing—religion is not as striking a factor there as is race and ethnicity, and its religious history is not particularly significant. A majority of immigrants in Corona-Elmhurst are from the many countries of Latin America (this is what accounts for the diverse zip code), with comparatively fewer Asian immigrants, and they are either Catholics or evangelical Protestants with many who also regularly frequent the numerous botanicas.

⁶⁹ New Yorkers, perhaps to a greater degree than residents of many other cities, often form strong opinions about one another based on the five boroughs of the city and its many neighborhoods. One of the first questions at a party or social event in Manhattan might be: “So, where do you live?” The answer to this question can reveal something about one’s class, status, and position in New York society, and it drives a kind of Manhattan snobbery that has given rise to epithets like “bridge and tunnel,” which refers to anyone commuting to Manhattan—essentially lumping the outer boroughs together with people from New Jersey and Connecticut. But even the outer boroughs themselves have a kind of hierarchy: Brooklyn is probably number one (or two, after Manhattan) with its brownstones, hipster neighborhoods, memories of Ebbets Field and the Dodgers; Queens is second; the Bronx has Yankee Stadium; and Staten Island comes in last because it is connected to the city only by the Staten Island Ferry and Verrazano–Narrows Bridge—and because much of Manhattan’s trash has been dumped in the massive Fresh Kills landfill there for years (not surprisingly, Staten Islanders have wanted to secede). Yet a clothing store in Brooklyn has been selling T-shirts emblazoned with the number 718—a trend that may (or may not) be a sign of an emerging outer borough solidarity tied to the 718 telephone area code, which residents of Brooklyn, Queens, the Bronx, and Staten Island all share.

⁷⁰ Kirk Semple, “Tourists Have Landed in Queens. They’re Staying.” *The New York Times*, August 25, 2015.

⁷¹ Queens Historical Society, “The Flushing Freedom Mile Historic Tour” (1999); Queens Historical Society, *Angels of Deliverance: The Underground Railroad in Queens, Long Island, and Beyond* (Flushing, N.Y., 1999).

⁷² Flushing Council of the Arts, Flushing Town Hall, “The Queens Jazz Trail: A Full-Color Illustrated Map,” 2nd ed. (1998).

⁷³ Flushing Council of the Arts, Flushing Town Hall, “Remembrances of Civil War Flushing: Unveiling the 1862 Town Hall Time Capsule” (2001).

⁷⁴ Vivian S. Toy, “Bustling Queens Library Speaks in Many Tongues,” *New York Times* (May 31, 1998). Also see Marcia Biederman, “Making It Work: Library Thrives with a Common Touch,” *New York Times* (September 12, 1999); Dean E. Murphy, “Queens Library Moves Past ‘Shh’ (and Books),” *New York Times* (March 7, 2001).

⁷⁵ Glenn Collins, “In Flushing, a Return to History: Seeking Permanent Custody of a Declaration of Its Own,” *New York Times* (January 28, 2000).

⁷⁶ <http://www.flushingremonstrance.info>. Among the other events for the celebration, I gave talks at the Museum of the City of New York and the Queens Museum of Art, and the historian Kenneth T. Jackson wrote an op-ed piece about the significance of the Flushing Remonstrance for the *New York Times* on the actual day of the remonstrance’s 350th anniversary: Kenneth T. Jackson, “A Colony with a Conscience,” *New York Times* (December 27, 2007).

⁷⁷ See Russell Shorto, *The Island at the Center of the World: The Epic Story of Dutch Manhattan and The Forgotten Colony That Shaped America* (New York: Vintage, 2004). Shorto’s book is based on the transcription work of the historian Charles Gehring at the New York State Archives in Albany. For more on Gehring’s work, see Danny Hakim, “His Specialty? Making Old New York Talk in Dutch,” *New York Times* (December 26, 2009). Also see Evan Haefeli, *New Netherland and the Dutch Origins of American Religious Liberty* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).