

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

56-2079  
DEC 10 2017

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Old Town of Flushing Burial Ground  
other names/site number Martin's Field, Pauper's Burial Ground  
name of related multiple property listing N/A

### Location

street & number 46 Avenue between 164<sup>th</sup> and 165<sup>th</sup> Street  not for publication  
city or town Queens  vicinity  
state NY code NY county Queens code 081 zip code 11358

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,  
I hereby certify that this X nomination \_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

\_\_\_ national \_\_\_ statewide X local

Ron Daniel Muehly Date 12/14/17  
Signature of certifying official/Title  
DSHPD  
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Title \_\_\_\_\_ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government \_\_\_\_\_

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

X entered in the National Register \_\_\_ determined eligible for the National Register  
\_\_\_ determined not eligible for the National Register \_\_\_ removed from the National Register  
\_\_\_ other (explain:)

[Signature] Date of Action 2-2-18  
Signature of the Keeper

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**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

**Category of Property**  
(Check only **one** box.)

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	<b>Total</b>

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

N/A

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

FUNERARY / Cemetery

LANDSCAPE / Park

LANDSCAPE / Park

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

N/A

foundation: N/A

walls: \_\_\_\_\_

roof: \_\_\_\_\_

other: \_\_\_\_\_

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### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

#### Summary Paragraph

The Old Town of Flushing Burial Ground is located between 164<sup>th</sup> and 165<sup>th</sup> Street on 46<sup>th</sup> Avenue in the Flushing neighborhood of the New York City borough of Queens, Queens County, New York. It was established as Flushing's first public burial ground in 1840, became New York City parkland in 1914, and had a playground installed on the site in 1936. The Old Town of Flushing Burial Ground is in a primarily residential area of Flushing; early-to-mid-twentieth century single- and multi-family residences border its edges to the north, east and west. The Flushing Cemetery, a 75-acre rural cemetery with curving paths and mature trees established in 1853, is located across 46<sup>th</sup> Avenue to the south.

The burial ground occupies a 2.64-acre parcel that is rectangular at the top and flares out at the bottom. New York City parks added several small parcels during the early twentieth century, bringing the size of the park up to 3.47 acres; burials never occurred on this land, as it was not historically part of the cemetery. Historic maps indicate that the cemetery was originally more triangular in shape. When 165<sup>th</sup> Street was paved, early twentieth-century road engineers deviated from the grid pattern to avoid as much of the cemetery as possible, but they did run the road through the eastern edge of the former cemetery. It is unconfirmed, but possible, that remains exist under this portion of the road; however, given the known heavy use and shallowness of graves at the Old Town of Flushing Burial Ground, it is reasonable to assume that this portion of the burial ground was disturbed by the road. As a result, the historic boundary of the cemetery has been drawn only to include the 2.64-acre parcel historically associated with the Old Town of Flushing Burial Ground which is known to retain intact burials.

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#### Narrative Description

The Old Town of Flushing Burial Ground parcel is parkland with gravel paths, open space, a playground, and a memorial. A black metal fence encloses the park with two entrance gates at the southeast and southwest corners along 46<sup>th</sup> Avenue, and two entrances to the east and west along 145<sup>th</sup> Street and 146<sup>th</sup> Street, respectively. Gravel paths, with rustic wood benches placed at intervals, wind along the outer edges of the park and to the memorial in the center of the southern third of the park. Mature trees and shrubs are located along the path and are located in clusters on the northern and southern ends of the park.

A memorial to the Native Americans and African Americans buried at the site was dedicated in 2006 and is located in the southern, wooded portion of the park, close to the 46<sup>th</sup> Avenue entrances. The memorial consists of a large oval gravel area, with the names of local Native American tribes inscribed in marble pavers along the edge. In the middle of the oval, a circular marble paver contains the following inscription:

Between 1840 and 1898, 500 to 1000 people, primarily African-Americans, Native Americans, and victims of four major epidemics in 1840, 1855, 1857, and 1867 were buried on this site. The park was renovated and this tablet installed to commemorate those buried here.

On the east and west edges of the memorial, wooden interpretive markers give a more detailed history of the site. Eight rustic wooden benches also border the memorial; four on the east and four on the west. To the east

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of the memorial, a reconstructed stone wall marks the location of the four graves depicted on the Queens 1919 Topographic map.

Beyond the memorial, trees and a designated grass path border a grassy field with small knolls located at the center of the park; the playground constructed in 1936 was formerly located at this part of the park. The new playground, constructed in 2006, occupies the northern portion of the site. The playground is fenced and is inaccessible from the portion of the site devoted to the memorial and green space; it has a separate entrance on 146<sup>th</sup> street. The playground, which contains three main play structures, and benches with tables, is constructed on a raised platform with a sill system foundation to prevent further disturbance of the land.

### *Integrity*

While no historic markers remain at the Old Town of Flushing Burial Ground, the site is known to retain intact and partially intact burials dating from 1840-1898. The number of burials is unknown; a partial list based on town records is included in the appendix. Given the cemetery's use as a pauper's burial ground, any markers that would have been placed during the cemetery's period of active use were likely wooden or made of other, less durable materials. While headstones remained when the land was sold to NYC Parks in 1914, no markers are known to have remained in place by the time park construction began on the site during the 1930s. However, the majority of the land associated with the historic cemetery remains undisturbed, and it strongly retains its integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association.

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**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Ethnic Heritage: Black and Native American

Social History

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1840-1914

\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1840, 1872, 1898, 1914

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

Black and Native American

\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

**Period of Significance (justification)**

The period of significance begins in 1840 when the Village of Flushing purchased this land for a public burying ground. Although the cemetery was effectively full by 1898, the period of significance ends in 1914 when the village formally stopped maintaining the land as a cemetery and sold the land to the New York City Parks Department for use as a public park.

**Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)**

While the nominated property is a historic burying ground, it is one of the few remaining sites associated with the nineteenth century history of the African- and Native-American community in Flushing.

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

The Old Town of Flushing Burial Ground, also known as Martin's Field, is locally significant under Criterion A in the areas of ethnic heritage and social history for its role as the primary burial ground that served the African American and Native American community in Flushing during the nineteenth century. Used between 1840 and 1898, the burial ground is the final resting place for approximately 1,000 individuals. Most of those buried here were Flushing's poorest citizens, with a large percentage of African American and Native American descent. The Village initially established the public burying ground for victims of contagious disease and as a potter's field; other individuals from the community may be interred at the site as well, as prior to 1881, many of the individuals buried at the site died during smallpox and cholera epidemics. By 1898, the cemetery had been filled. Over the next several decades, the site fell into disuse and the growing village struggled with what to do with the land. In 1914, after the village's proposal to reopen the cemetery for burials was rejected by local residents, the Village of Flushing sold the land to the New York City Parks Department for use as a public park. At that time, four headstones remained on the land. This history appears to have been forgotten by 1936, when the city installed a playground in the southern portion of the land, where the stones had been located, and discovered buried remains in the process. In recent years, local groups, in collaboration with New York City Parks and local politicians, have worked to reinstall the playground in a more appropriate location and recognize the history of the site as an early, and predominantly African and Native American, burial ground in Flushing.

The site is potentially significant under Criterion D; however, this nomination does not pursue this area of significance as no archaeological investigations have been completed or are planned out of respect for the dead. Should a physical archaeological investigation be conducted, the burial ground could provide information about living conditions, overall health, and burial practices of Flushing's African American and Native American communities during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Even as an undisturbed site, the burial ground is significant for its reflection and representation of the social traditions and the economic circumstances of those groups.

#### *African Americans and Native Americans in Queens County*

Flushing was initially settled in 1645 established by Dutch settlers under the charter of the Dutch West India Company after the Dutch governor purchased land from the Matinecoc Native American tribe. The English took over New Netherland in 1664, renaming it New York, and established Queens County in 1683. The area, which developed a few central villages but was predominantly agricultural for much of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, grew slowly. In 1700, the population of Queens was 3,913, including 197 black residents.<sup>1</sup>

During the eighteenth and especially the nineteenth century, many free African Americans migrated to Flushing and other areas of Queens County. African Americans faced competition for low skilled jobs from arriving immigrants in Manhattan, especially the Irish. Many employers were more likely to hire a white

<sup>1</sup> Jon A. Peterson, ed., and Vincent F. Seyfried, consultant, *A Research Guide to the History of the Borough of Queens and its Neighborhoods* (New York: Queens College Department of History and The City University of New York, 1983), 11; Linda Stone, "Report on Phase 1A Archaeological Documentary Research in Advance of the Reconstruction of the Martins Field Playground Flushing Queens," (New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, May 20, 1996), 12-13.

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immigrant than a free African American. In addition, few free African Americans had training in higher-paying semi-skilled or skilled trades due to discrimination by employers, trade associations, and pressure from white workers to exclude blacks from these occupations. Skilled black workers were often pushed out of their jobs due to these same forces and threats of violence. In Queens County, free African Americans could escape some of this competition and discrimination.<sup>2</sup>

Due in part to employment discrimination and the paucity of available jobs, the colored residents of New York were often the city's poorest. Many African Americans and Native Americans were forced to live in "deplorable" housing conditions within densely packed neighborhoods. They suffered from a higher mortality rate than the white community, and often succumbed to outbreaks of smallpox, consumption and tuberculosis in higher numbers than white residents due to overcrowding, poor living conditions, general lower health levels, and inadequate medical care.<sup>3</sup>

Flushing's farmers needed workers with agricultural experience, which many ex-slaves and free African Americans had. By 1790, Flushing had an enslaved population of 340 and 123 free people of color, presumably African Americans and Native Americans.<sup>4</sup> It was common practice during this time to refer to African Americans and Native Americans both as "colored," joining these two groups together in social history and in the United States Census. After slavery was abolished in New York in 1817, Flushing's black population continued to increase. By 1830, 636 free colored people resided in Flushing.<sup>5</sup> Flushing established its first free school in 1814. Run by the Flushing Female Association, the free school admitted white and colored children.<sup>6</sup> Black, Native American and Quaker residents in Flushing organized the African Methodist Society of Flushing and established the African Macedonian Church in 1811; the Reverend Benjamin Griffin, a white, Methodist circuit preacher, helped lead the congregation during its early years. The society purchased land for a church that year, and the congregation likely established a small cemetery soon after. The congregation became formally affiliated with the African Methodist Episcopal denomination by 1821, when the Reverend Henry Heardon was appointed its first A.M.E minister and built a church on its land in 1837.<sup>7</sup>

### *Establishment of the Burial Ground*

Like much of Queens, Flushing remained a predominantly rural, agricultural community well into the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. As the community lacked a real commercial or municipal center, residents of Flushing were slow to establish a central cemetery. Many families established private family burying grounds. Flushing's Quakers established their cemetery in 1676, nearly twenty years before they built their first meeting house. More commonly, small church congregations set aside land for a cemetery adjacent to their new church buildings.

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<sup>2</sup> Rhoda Golden Freeman, *The Free Negro in New York City in the Era Before the Civil War* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1994), 163, 202.

<sup>3</sup> Freeman, *The Free Negro*, 170-171.

<sup>4</sup> New York, Federal Census, 1790.

<sup>5</sup> New York, Federal Census, 1830.

<sup>6</sup> Henry D. Walker, *History of the Town of Flushing* (Flushing: J.H. Ridenour, 1899), 175.

<sup>7</sup> Walker, *History of the Town of Flushing*, 174; Jason D. Antos, "AME Church Has Served Flushing for 200 Years," *Queens Gazette*, March 2, 2011. Available at: <[http://www.qgazette.com/news/2011-03-02/Features/AME\\_Church\\_Has\\_Served\\_Flushing\\_For\\_200\\_Years.html](http://www.qgazette.com/news/2011-03-02/Features/AME_Church_Has_Served_Flushing_For_200_Years.html)>.

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During the early nineteenth century, Flushing developed a village center and was formally incorporated in 1837; the village had a population of less than two thousand. Unfortunately, the new village faced an immediate challenge. During the mid-nineteenth century, New York City was facing a series of cholera epidemics. Officials tried to control the disease's spread from Europe by quarantining ships and completing health exams, but they were not always successful. Between 1838 and 1840, Flushing suffered from a serious cholera epidemic.<sup>8</sup>

Concern over illness inspired town officials to designate a burial ground as the final resting place for those who succumbed to these diseases. As American communities grew larger, creating public burial grounds for victims of disease as well as poor, unknown, or indigent people became a well-established cultural and an essential sanitary practice. Often called common graves or pauper's graves, these cemeteries are also referred to as potter's fields. This term is a biblical reference; when Judas returned his 30 pieces of silver to the Jewish priests, they used it to buy useless land, a field potters had used to collect clay, for a burial ground for strangers.

In 1839, New York State passed a law that permitted Flushing to tax its residents in order to purchase land for a public burial ground. Flushing paid Charles, Samuel, and John W. Bowne \$400 for land to serve as a burial ground the following year; the new cemetery was located outside of the boundary of the village, and the deed of sale restricted any future construction on the property.<sup>9</sup> At the time, the land surrounding the burial ground, like much of the town, was undeveloped farmland. At least 50 citizens were interred in the burial ground as a result of the cholera epidemic and the 1844 smallpox epidemic.<sup>10</sup> The Flushing Burial Ground's clear association with these epidemics and the common association of publically-owned cemeteries with the poor and indigent soon made it a less desirable final resting place for many residents of Flushing.

Despite the epidemics, the 1840s marked a period of growth for the Village of Flushing and its outlying areas. New churches and schools were built in the years after the village's incorporation, including Mount St. Mary and the Protestant Reformed Dutch Church, and the community's first newspaper, the *Flushing Journal*, was first published in 1841. While the population of the village remained steady, the 1845 census recorded 3,918 men and women, 600 "colored people," and 12 paupers in the town.

Although new churches continued to establish small burial grounds, a group of citizens decided a larger, nonsectarian rural cemetery was needed to serve the growing community. In 1853, they purchased 20 acres of farmland and received the charter for the Flushing Cemetery Association.<sup>11</sup> While the number of burial options were increasing for Flushing's white population, they had decreased for its Black and Native American residents. The African Methodist Church in Flushing ran out of burial space on its land during the 1850s. It is

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<sup>8</sup> Walker, *History of the Town of Flushing*, 185-86.

<sup>9</sup> Stone, "Report," 15.

<sup>10</sup> In the 1930s, the Works Progress Administration (PWA) gathered oral histories from prominent Flushing citizens. George W. Pople, former town supervisor, recalled this information about the approximate number of burials that occurred as a result of the epidemics during the 1840s. Stone, "Report," 21.

<sup>11</sup> Walker, *History of the Town of Flushing*, 187-88; "Flushing Cemetery: 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, 1853-1953" (Flushing, NY: Flushing Cemetery, 1953), 10-11.



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likely that during this time, the village burial ground became a predominantly African American and Native American cemetery.<sup>12</sup>

Although Flushing Cemetery was established directly adjacent to the existing village burial ground, the difference between the two properties is strikingly evident. Flushing Cemetery has distinct grave markers with graves placed in an orderly fashion. The village burial ground has no known remaining markers. It is possible that wood markers or less formal markers like fieldstones were used at the site; whether lost to time, vandals, or natural decay, none remain today. Graves were most likely placed haphazardly, consistent with other potter's field's burial practices.<sup>13</sup>

During the early nineteenth century, New York City passed a series of ordinances banning burials in lower Manhattan for health reasons. Passed in 1823, 1825, and 1851, they prohibited burials by any group or individual below Canal, Grand, and 86<sup>th</sup> Street, respectively.<sup>14</sup> This forced active congregations to establish new cemeteries and led to re-interment of many graves. Pushed by the ordinance, many congregations established rural cemeteries on former farmland on the border of Kings and Queens County, effectively creating a green "cemetery belt."

In 1873, the town purchased land adjoining the burial ground from Isaac Bloodgood, his wife and five other couples.<sup>15</sup> This enlarged the burial ground to its current size. The 1873 Beers' atlas labels the burial ground as the "Poor House Burying Ground," confirming the cemetery's use as a potter's field. A "poor house" was never associated with the site, so it is likely that this name was used as a generic term.<sup>16</sup>

Conditions at the cemetery deteriorated as the nineteenth century came to a close. An 1896 *Long Island Democrat* article described that a man was doing maintenance at the burial ground when the "ground gave way." He fell through two graves, which were shallow and stacked one on top of another.<sup>17</sup> An accident of this nature is consistent with the cemetery's heavy use as a potter's field throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. According to New York City Parks Department records, the last interments at the burial ground took place in 1898.<sup>18</sup>

The 1903 Sanborn map of Flushing does not label the burial ground.<sup>19</sup> Street grids were laid around the area during the early 1910s, but very little development had taken place. In 1910, the city briefly considered returning the site to use a cemetery. However, public outcry over real estate values stalled the plans. Newspaper coverage of the decision identifies the burial ground as a potter's field. The *Brooklyn Eagle* stated that those buried there "died unidentified or had no means with which to pay for regular burial."<sup>20</sup> A 1919

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<sup>12</sup> New York City Parks, "The Olde Towne of Flushing Burial Ground." Available at:  
<<https://www.nycgovparks.org/parks/the-olde-towne-of-flushing-burial-ground/history>>.

<sup>13</sup> Dell Upton, *Another City* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 207.

<sup>14</sup> David de Sola Pool, *Portraits Etched in Stone: Early Jewish Settlers, 1682-1831* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1953), 126 – 127.

<sup>15</sup> Stone, "Report," 16.

<sup>16</sup> F.W. Beers, "Flushing, Map 3," in *Atlas of Long Island, New York* (New York: Beers Comstock and Cline, 1873).

<sup>17</sup> *Long Island Democrat*, September 1, 1896.

<sup>18</sup> Stone, "Report," 16.

<sup>19</sup> Stone, "Report," Figure 14.

<sup>20</sup> "Flushing Residents Object to Local Potter's Field." *Brooklyn Eagle*, May 5, 1910.

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Queens Topographical survey labeled the burial ground as “Colored Cemetery.”<sup>21</sup> The map shows a stone wall, which may have been part of the cemetery or left from farmland previously, and four marble gravestones. It is the only known record of the location of graves.

#### *African American and Native American Association with the Old Flushing Burial Ground*

In her survey of 3,084 Town of Flushing death records from 1881 to 1898, Linda Stone suggests that over one thousand individuals could have been interred in the burial ground between 1840 and 1898. In addition, Stone identified the race of those interred. Over 60 percent of those recorded as buried at the site were described as non-white. Only 4 percent are noted as white, and 10 percent have no race listed. This documentation reinforces local histories suggesting that, at least in the years after 1881, the burial ground was predominantly used as a Native American and African American cemetery. The 1919 topographical survey, which showed the location of four gravestones, identified those stones as marking the graves of the following individuals: Willie, Son of Alfred and Fannie Curry, aged 4, 1874; Geo. H. Bunn, died Jan. 13, 1887, aged 17 years; Alfred E. Bunn, died April 7, 1876, aged 3 years and 17 days; James Bunn, died Aug. 3, 1890, aged 53 years.<sup>22</sup>

The 1880 census lists Alfred and Fannie Curry, Willie’s parents, as black residents of Flushing. Alfred worked as a laborer, and both had migrated to the region from Virginia. The Curry household included two other families: the Wilsons and the Gaines. While living in multi-family households was not uncommon, it does reflect the lower economic status of these families. The Bunn family were members of the African Methodist Church in Flushing.<sup>23</sup> James Bunn, a farmer, was married to Jemmima Smith. A Civil War veteran who had fought in New York’s 42<sup>nd</sup> Infantry, James Bunn died on August 3, 1890 of consumption.<sup>24</sup> His race is not listed. It is possible that Alfred and George were James’s sons or relations, but they could not be found in any census records.

Stone’s review of the surnames listed in the Town of Flushing’s records suggests a significant number of internments of individuals with Native American ancestry. Twenty-seven of the surnames included in the list are common among the Native American communities on Long Island. These include: Bunn, Butler, Corse, Gains, Garner, Hamilton, Helms, Hewlett, Hicks, Hinckman, Hincksmann, Jackson, Jarvis, Johnson, Mitchell, Potter, Rapelyea, Sands, Seaman, Skank, Smith, Taylor, Townsend, Treadwell, Valentine, Williams, and Wood. While some of these names are common and could be associated with individuals of varied ethnic backgrounds, as a group these surnames account for 42 percent of the individuals listed in the town records.<sup>25</sup> While the Bunn family appears to have been Native American instead of African American, this case is emblematic of the lack of distinction made in official records between free African Americans and Native Americans during this period.

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<sup>21</sup> Stone, “Report,” 19.

<sup>22</sup> Stone, “Report,” 21.

<sup>23</sup> New York City Parks, “The Olde Towne of Flushing Burial Ground.” Available at:  
<<https://www.nycgovparks.org/parks/the-olde-towne-of-flushing-burial-ground/history>>.

<sup>24</sup> *New York, Civil War Muster Roll Abstracts, 1861-1900*, Ancestry.com.

<sup>25</sup> Stone, “Report,” 23-24.

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*Martin's Field*

In 1911, the New York City Department of Parks created a division specifically for Queens and named Walter Eliot its first parks commissioner. The Queens Parks Administration initially focused on open-space planning in the borough, acquiring new parkland, and establishing new recreational facilities. On December 2, 1914, during this period of expansion, the Village of Flushing transferred the burial ground to the New York City Department of Parks.<sup>26</sup>

The practice of converting burial grounds to parkland was common in the five boroughs throughout the twentieth century. Washington Square Park and Madison Square Park are both examples of New York City parks that were once cemeteries. Just as in the nineteenth century, the increasing pace of urbanization throughout the five boroughs threatened many cemeteries. Many, which were once located on the outskirts of cities were now part of the city center and under tremendous development pressure as a result. Potter's Fields, and cemeteries for those with little political influence, were often readily abandoned when the land became valuable; this pressure led, in part, to the creation of the large potter's field on Hart Island in the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>27</sup>

Even wealthier city residents could often not stop their cemeteries from being developed. St. John's Burial Ground was taken from Trinity Church in 1895 after New York passed the Small Parks Act of 1887. Much like the Flushing Burial Ground, St. John's was turned into a park for public use. Often, when a cemetery was being developed or converted to parkland, notices were placed in local newspapers so surviving relatives could re-inter the deceased in other locations. However, for the Flushing Village Burial Ground, no such notices have been found.<sup>28</sup> Given the assumed social and economic status of those buried at the site, it is unlikely that surviving relatives, if they existed, would have had the resources to fund re-interments in public cemeteries. As in the case of other African burial grounds which were paved or built over in New York City, no attempts were made to disinter the burials, which simply remained in place at the Flushing Village Burial Ground.

Development around the burial ground continued to be sporadic until 1928, when the subway arrived in Flushing. This spurred residential development to the east, west, and north of the burial ground. Although New York City Parks owned the land, it appears that the agency largely maintained it as green space for the first 17 years of its ownership. In 1931, as part of the effort to develop the land into a more formal park, the parks department changed the name of the land from "Paupers Burial Ground" to Martin's Field, in honor of local tree conservationist Everett P. Martin.<sup>29</sup> Around this time, the New York City Department of Parks purchased the triangular piece of land to the west of the former cemetery and incorporated it into the park; these five parcels had been made unusable due to the creation of Flushing's street grid during the 1910s.

In 1936, WPA workers constructed a playground at Martin's Field. A *Long Island Press* article stated that during excavations for the wading pool, workers found coins covering the eyes of the deceased and "bones

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<sup>26</sup> New York City Parks, "Queens Jewels: A History of Queens Parks." Arsenal Gallery exhibit, June 27 to September 5, 2002. Available at <<https://www.nycgovparks.org/art-and-antiquities/arsenal-gallery/2002/queens-jewels>>.

<sup>27</sup> Upton, *Another City*, 208.

<sup>28</sup> Stone, "Report," 24.

<sup>29</sup> Stone, "Report," 26.

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galore.”<sup>30</sup> Placing coins on the eyes of the dead is a known African American tradition. Similar conditions were found at the African Burial Ground in Lower Manhattan. While local newspapers noted the find at the time, public memory that the park had once been a cemetery was lost over time to many.

*Later History of the Old Town of Flushing Burial Ground*

In the early 1990s, local activist Mandigo Tshaka worked to restore Martin’s Field to a cemetery and eventually founded the Old Towne of Flushing Burial Ground Conservancy. When the New York City Parks Department proposed to repair the playground located on the burial ground, his efforts led to an archaeological documentary study. With the support of local politicians, including the conservancy, the study was able to raise greater awareness of the site. In 2004, Borough President Helen Marshall and council member John Liu were able to allocate funding for a sensitive update to the site.

In 2006, the original playground was moved from the southern portion of the site to the northern section, where it was installed on a raised platform to prevent further disturbance of the cemetery. At the same time, the southern portion of the park became a small memorial which recognizes the park’s historic use as a burial ground. In 2016, the conservancy, Matinecock Nation, and a group of dedicated volunteers celebrated the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their efforts to recognize, maintain, and honor the cemetery. They are currently working to install a more substantial memorial that provides more information about the known individuals who were buried at the site.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> “Coins From Dead Man’s Eyes Are Sold By WPA Workers,” *Long Island Daily Press*, June 10, 1936.

<sup>31</sup> James Farrell, “Residents, Officials Celebrate Burial Ground,” *Queens Tribune*, November 17, 2016; New York City Parks, “The Olde Towne of Flushing Burial Ground.” Available at: <<https://www.nycgovparks.org/parks/the-olde-towne-of-flushing-burial-ground/history>>.

Old Town of Flushing Burial Ground  
Name of Property

Queens County, NY  
County and State

9. Major Bibliographical References

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

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[02/Features/AME\\_Church\\_Has\\_Served\\_Flushing\\_For\\_200\\_Years.html](http://www.qgazette.com/news/2011-03-02/Features/AME_Church_Has_Served_Flushing_For_200_Years.html)>.

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F.W. Beers. "Flushing, Map 3," in *Atlas of Long Island, New York*. New York: Beers Comstock and Cline, 1873.

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"Flushing Residents Object to Local Potter's Field." *Brooklyn Eagle*, May 5, 1910.

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New York, Federal Census, 1790, 1830.

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<<https://www.nycgovparks.org/parks/the-olde-towne-of-flushing-burial-ground/history>>.

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Stone, Linda. "Report on Phase 1A Archaeological Documentary Research in Advance of the Reconstruction of the Martins Field Playground Flushing Queens." New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, May 20, 1996.

Upton, Dell. *Another City*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008.

Walker, Henry D. *History of the Town of Flushing*. Flushing: J.H. Ridenour, 1899.

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)  
 previously listed in the National Register  
 previously determined eligible by the National Register

**Primary location of additional data:**

State Historic Preservation Office  
 Other State agency  
 Federal agency  
 Local government

Old Town of Flushing Burial Ground  
Name of Property

Queens County, NY  
County and State

designated a National Historic Landmark  
 recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_  
 recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_  
 recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

University  
 Other  
Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Old Town of Flushing Burial Ground  
Name of Property

Queens County, NY  
County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** 2.46 acres  
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 18 601093 4512223  
Zone Easting Northing

3                                   
Zone Easting Northing

2                                   
Zone Easting Northing

4                                   
Zone Easting Northing

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary is indicated by a heavy line on the enclosed map with scale.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

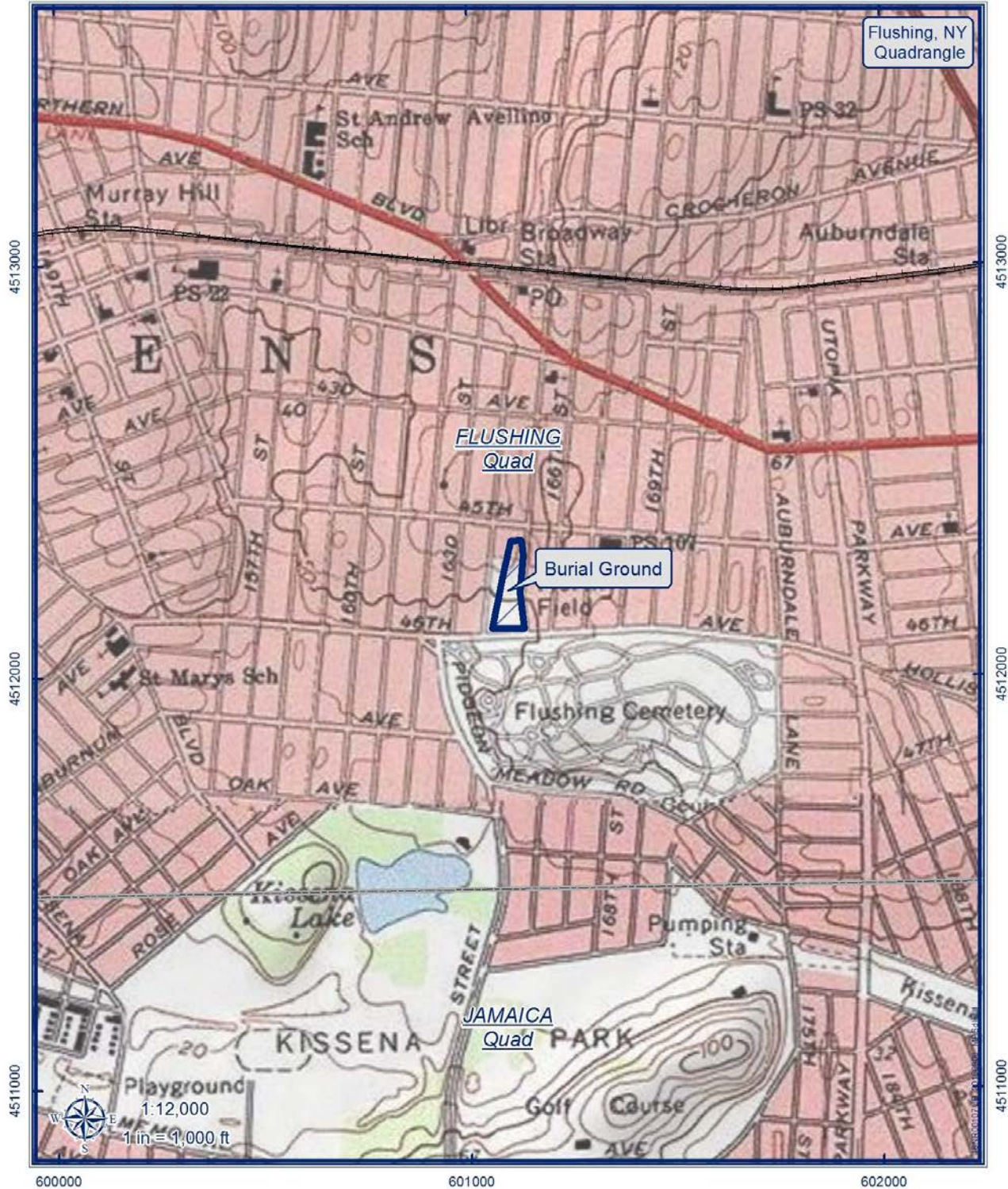
The property boundary incorporates most of the land associated with the cemetery during its historic period. The cemetery historically had a trapezoidal shape (see 1919 Topo map), but was slightly altered in size when the street grid was laid out during the 1910s. The land which was taken for the street has not been included, as it is likely that burials no longer remain intact in this area. While it was incorporated into the park during the twentieth century, the narrow triangular parcel on 164<sup>th</sup> Street (east of the cemetery) has not been included in the boundary as it was never used for burials and was not associated with the cemetery during its historic period.

Old Town of Flushing Burial Ground  
Name of Property

Queens County, NY  
County and State

Old Town of Flushing Burial Ground  
Flushing, Queens Co., NY

46th Avenue & 164th Street  
Flushing, NY 12601



Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N  
Projection: Transverse Mercator  
Datum: North American 1983  
Units: Meter



 Burial Ground



Parks, Recreation  
and Historic Preservation

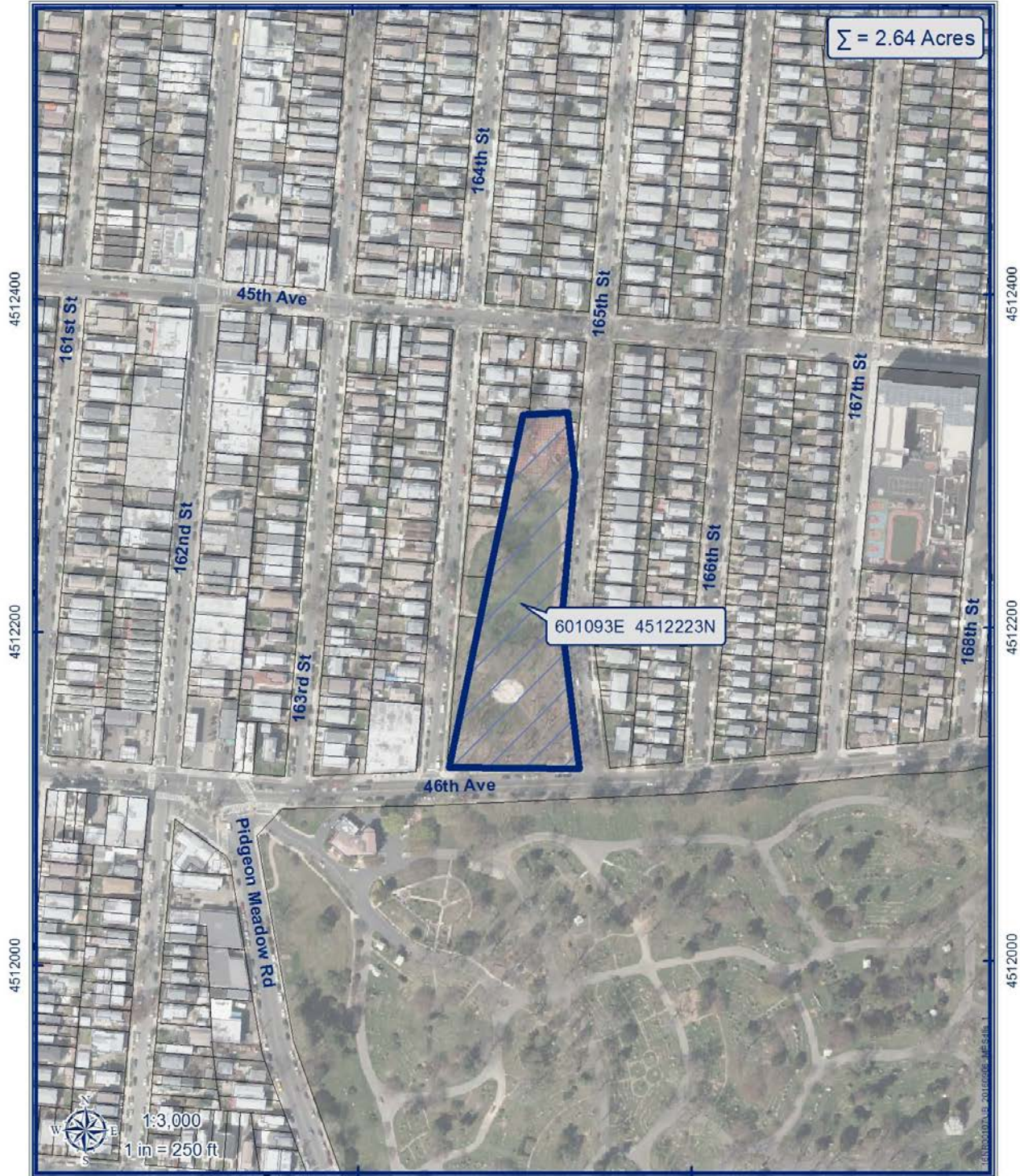


Old Town of Flushing Burial Ground  
Name of Property

Queens County, NY  
County and State

Old Town of Flushing Burial Ground  
Flushing, Queens Co., NY

46th Avenue & 164th Street  
Flushing, NY 12601



Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N  
Projection: Transverse Mercator  
Datum: North American 1983  
Units: Meter



Parks, Recreation  
and Historic Preservation

Old Town of Flushing Burial Ground  
Name of Property

Queens County, NY  
County and State

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Rebecca Kinsley (edited by Jennifer Betsworth, NY SHPO)  
organization \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_  
street & number 6338 Glatfelter Station Road telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
city or town Seven Valleys state PA zip code 17360  
e-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.  
A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: Old Town of Flushing Burial Ground

City or Vicinity: Queens

County: Queens State: NY

Photographer: Rebecca Kinsley

Date Photographed: January 2013

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

NY\_Queens Co\_Old Town of Flushing Burial Ground\_0001  
Burial Ground section, facing south

NY\_Queens Co\_Old Town of Flushing Burial Ground\_0002  
Burial Ground section, facing south

NY\_Queens Co\_Old Town of Flushing Burial Ground\_0003  
Burial Ground section, facing northeast

Old Town of Flushing Burial Ground

Queens County, NY

Name of Property

County and State

NY\_Queens Co\_Old Town of Flushing Burial Ground\_0004  
Burial Ground section, facing southeast

NY\_Queens Co\_Old Town of Flushing Burial Ground\_0005  
Burial Ground section, facing northwest

NY\_Queens Co\_Old Town of Flushing Burial Ground\_0006  
Memorial, detail

NY\_Queens Co\_Old Town of Flushing Burial Ground\_0007  
Memorial, detail

NY\_Queens Co\_Old Town of Flushing Burial Ground\_0008  
Memorial signage, detail.

NY\_Queens Co\_Old Town of Flushing Burial Ground\_0009  
Burial Ground section, facing northeast

NY\_Queens Co\_Old Town of Flushing Burial Ground\_0010  
Burial Ground section, facing southeast

NY\_Queens Co\_Old Town of Flushing Burial Ground\_0011  
Burial Ground section, facing north

NY\_Queens Co\_Old Town of Flushing Burial Ground\_0012  
Burial Ground section, facing south

NY\_Queens Co\_Old Town of Flushing Burial Ground\_0013  
Burial Ground section, facing south

NY\_Queens Co\_Old Town of Flushing Burial Ground\_0014  
Burial Ground section and playground, facing north

NY\_Queens Co\_Old Town of Flushing Burial Ground\_0015  
Playground section, facing north

NY\_Queens Co\_Old Town of Flushing Burial Ground\_0016  
Playground section, facing northwest

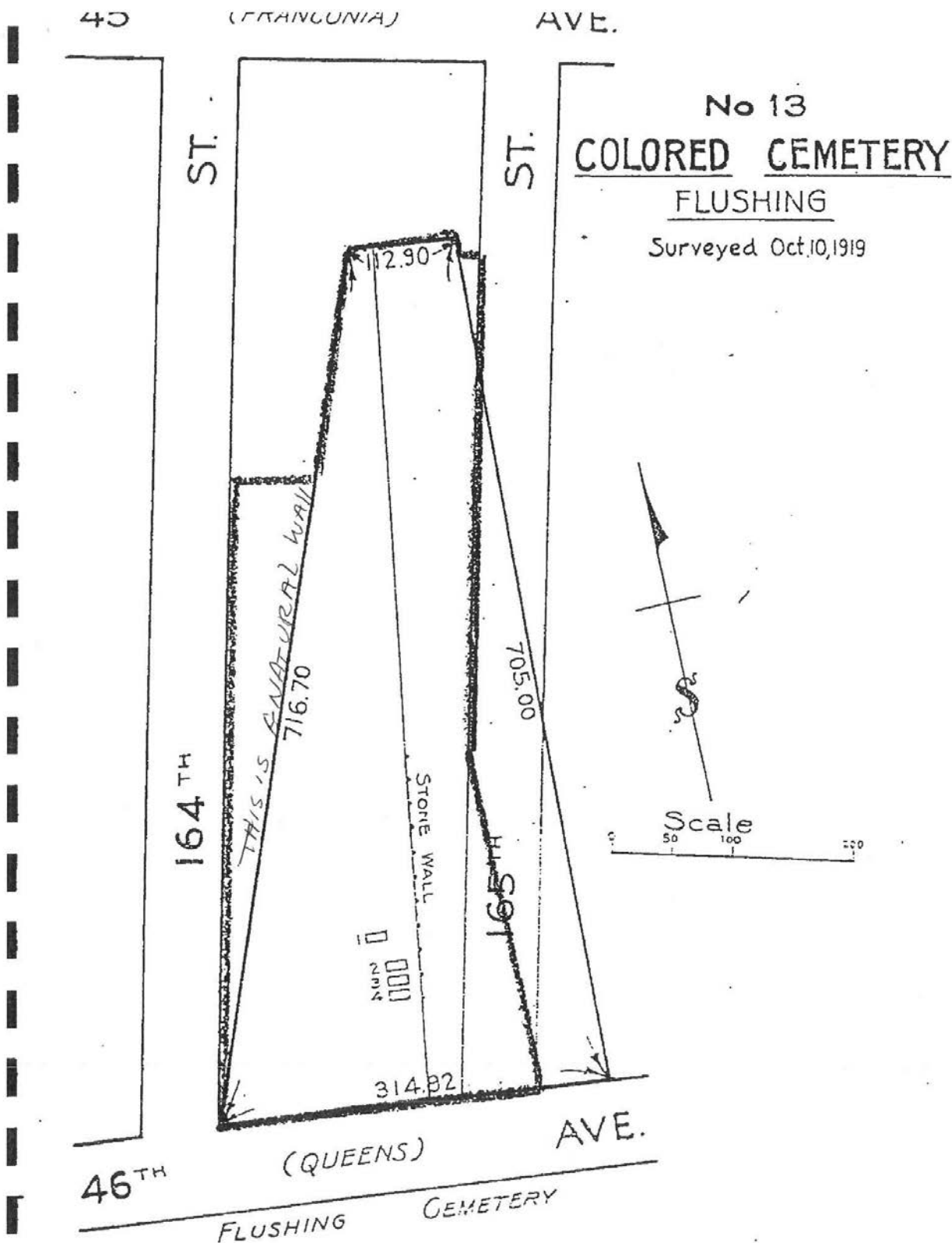
NY\_Queens Co\_Old Town of Flushing Burial Ground\_0017  
Playground section, facing north

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Old Town of Flushing Burial Ground  
Name of Property

Queens County, NY  
County and State



PAGE FORTY-SIX  
Figure 1

Queens Topographic Bureau 1919 survey showing boundaries, four headstones and stone

Old Town of Flushing Burial Ground  
 Name of Property

Queens County, NY  
 County and State

PARTIAL LIST OF BURIALS AT FLUSHING IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER BY LAST NAME

NAME	RACE/ COLOR	DATE OF DEATH	AGE AT DEATH	DEATH RECORDED AT	BURIAL PLACE
Aldridge, Sarah R.	Black	Jul 3, 1882	47	Town of Flushing	Town Ground
Ames, George	Colored	June 19, 1893	68	Town of Flushing	Town Cemetery
Ampy, James	Black	Aug 2, 1882	10 months	Town of Flushing	Town Ground
Andrews, infant		Jun 4, 1897	1 day	Village of Flushing	Town Ground
Beddeau, William E.	Colored	Jan 10, 1897	15	Town of Flushing	Town Ground
Bediau, Margaret Ann	Black	Jul 7, 1881	7 days	Town of Flushing	Public Ground
Beveridge (?), Anne		Jul 28, 1882	80	Town of Flushing	Town Ground
Briggs, Peter		Nov 18, 1881	50	Town of Flushing	Town Ground
Bunn, James		Aug 9, 1890	54	Town of Flushing	Town Ground
Butler, Jesse	Black	Jul 17, 1890	4 months	Village of Flushing	Town Ground
Chambers, Thomas	Black	May 15, 1882	46	Town of Flushing	Town Ground
Cornell, James	Colored	Nov 21, 1896	57	Village of Flushing	Town Ground
Cornell, James H.		Mar 4, 1890	28	Village of Flushing	Town Ground
Corse, Sarah Anne	Black	Jan 22, 1882	6 days	Town of Flushing	Town Ground
Cougdown, Flora	Black	May 2, 1881	1	Town of Flushing	Town Ground
Day, Benjamin Jr.	Colored	Mar 24, 1897	14 days	Town of Flushing	Town Ground
Evaitis (?), Richard		Sep 20, 1893	55	Town of Flushing	Town Ground
Forrester, Alfred M.	Black	Dec 24, 1881	5	Town of Flushing	Town Ground
Forrester, John R.	Black	Dec 19, 1881	1	Town of Flushing	Town Ground
Forrester, Mary L.	Black	Dec 11, 1881	4	Town of Flushing	Town Ground

Old Town of Flushing Burial Ground  
 Name of Property

Queens County, NY  
 County and State

PARTIAL LIST OF BURIALS AT FLUSHING IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER BY LAST NAME

NAME	RACE/ COLOR	DATE OF DEATH	AGE AT DEATH	DEATH RECORDED AT	BURIAL PLACE
Jenkins, infant daughter of Thomas & Roseanna		Aug 14, 1890	8 months	Town of Flushing	Town Cemetery
Jenkins, John		Mar 26, 1894		Town of Flushing	Town Ground
Jenkins, Mary L.	Colored(?)	Sep 24, 1890	1	Town of Flushing	Town Cemetery
Johnson, David	Colored	Sep 9, 1896	6 months	Village of Flushing	Town Cemetery
Johnson, Emma	Black	Mar 7, 1881	12	Town of Flushing	Town Ground
Johnson, Lulu Arene	Black	Oct 11, 1882	9 days	Town of Flushing	Town Ground
Jonston, infant	Black	Nov 9, 1881	1/2 day	Town of Flushing	Town Ground
Kelly, (?)		Nov 3, 1890		Village of Flushing	Town Ground
Metzger, Mary	White	Mar 25, 1882	9	Town of Flushing	Town Ground
Mitchell, infant	Colored	Oct 26, 1897	1 day	Village of Flushing	Town Ground
Murelam, Arnold		Mar 19, 1890	3 months	Village of Flushing	Town Ground
Murelam, Walter		Mar 26, 1890	3 months	Village of Flushing	Town Ground
Nelson, Fred		Oct 26, 1896	33	Village of Flushing	Town Cemetery
Nettling, William		Nov 31, 1897		Village of Flushing	Town Ground
Potter, Israel	Black	Feb 5, 1882	80	Town of Flushing	Town Ground Cemetery
Rapelya, Margaretta		Jan 10, 1896	1	Town of Flushing	Town Ground
Reilly, Hugh		Aug 21, 1897	1 month	Village of Flushing	Town Cemetery
Sands, David		Feb 24, 1890	69	Village of Flushing	Town Ground
Saunton, William	Black	Sep 18, 1881	2 days	Town of Flushing	Town Ground
Scheonfeld, Henry	White	Dec 27, 1882	4 days	Town of Flushing	Town Ground

Old Town of Flushing Burial Ground  
 Name of Property

Queens County, NY  
 County and State

PARTIAL LIST OF BURIALS AT FLUSHING IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER BY LAST NAME

NAME	RACE/ COLOR	DATE OF DEATH	AGE AT DEATH	DEATH RECORDED AT	BURIAL PLACE
Schrum, Valentine		Mar 25, 1897	54	Village of Flushing	Town Ground
Schumaker, George		Apr 19, 1897	21	Village of Flushing	Town Ground
Seabury, Josephine		May 10, 1890	70	Town of Flushing	Town Cemetery
Seaman, Hezekiah	Black	Aug 26, 1881	30	Town of Flushing	Town Ground
Seymore, Nancy (?) Jane	Black	July 14, 1881	8 months	Town of Flushing	Town Ground
Sherman, Josephine Wilson	Black	Dec 2, 1882	20	Town of Flushing	Town Ground
Shuges (?), Sophia		Oct, 14, 1897	4 months	Town of Flushing	Town Ground
Simpson, Walter S.		Aug 2, 1882	6	Town of Flushing	Town Ground
Skank, Caroline	Black	Jul 16, 1882	2	Town of Flushing	Town Ground
Smith, Charles		Apr 16, 1896	40	Town of Flushing	Town Ground
Smith, Dasie	White	Feb 2, 1882	1	Town of Flushing	Town Ground
Smith, John J.	Black	Oct 11, 1890	30	Village of Flushing	Town Cemetery
Smith, Ruth Ellen	Black	Sep 8, 1881	11 months	Town of Flushing	Town Ground
Stanford, Lulu Adelaide		Jan 19, 1881	5 months	Town of Flushing	Town Ground
Taylor, Sarah	Black	Nov 14, 1882	22 months	Town of Flushing	Town Ground
Townsend, Anton		Sep 26, 1894	9 days	Town of Flushing	Town Ground
Townsend, Caroline	Black	Jan 9, 1883	112	Town of Flushing	Town Ground
Townsend, Elizabeth		Sep 10, 1893	1	Town of Flushing	Town Ground
Treadwell, Charlotte	Black	Apr 10, 1882	2	Town of Flushing	Town Ground
Treadwell, Kenneth	Black	Apr 14, 1882	1	Town of Flushing	Town Ground

Old Town of Flushing Burial Ground  
 Name of Property

Queens County, NY  
 County and State

PARTIAL LIST OF BURIALS AT FLUSHING IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER BY LAST NAME

NAME	RACE/ COLOR	DATE OF DEATH	AGE AT DEATH	DEATH RECORDED AT	BURIAL PLACE
Treadwell, Mary		July 17, 1881	3	Town of Flushing	Town Ground
Tripp, Robert A.	Black	Oct 8, 1881	69	Town of Flushing	Town Ground
unknown		Sep 23, 1896		Village of Flushing	Town Cemetery
unknown		Dec 1, 1895		Town of Flushing	Town Ground
unknown female		Aug 10, 1882	45	Town of Flushing	Town Cemetery
unknown infant		May 27, 1890	10 days	Village of Flushing	Town Ground
unknown man	White	Sep 25, 1882	45	Town of Flushing	Town Cemetery
Valentine, George H.	Colored	Oct 12, 1897	2	Town of Flushing	Town Ground
Virmer, August		Jul 27, 1897	63	Village of Flushing	Town Ground
Willetts, Henry	Colored	Jun 14, 1893	75	Town of Flushing	Potters Field
Williams, Andrew	Black	Aug 18, 1882	3 days	Town of Flushing	Town Ground
Wilson, Fannie	Black	Mar 26, 1882	1	Town of Flushing	Town Ground
Wilson, Samuel	Colored	June 22, 1893	18	Town of Flushing	Town Cemetery
Wofleth, Gerard		Jul 17, 1896	1 month	Town of Flushing	Town Ground
Wood, Sarah	Black	Mar 31, 1882	1	Town of Flushing	Town Ground
Wright, Josephine	Colored	Nov 1, 1896	4 months	Village of Flushing	Town Ground
Wynn, Bertha	Colored	Aug 21, 1895	1	Town of Flushing	Town Ground

(?) signifies interpretation of illegible handwriting





Olde Towne of Flushing Burial Ground, Queens, NY. Photo 1 of 17



Olde Towne of Flushing Burial Ground, Queens, NY. Photo 2 of 17



Olde Towne of Flushing Burial Ground, Queens, NY. Photo 3 of 17



Olde Towne of Flushing Burial Ground, Queens, NY. Photo 4 of 17



Olde Towne of Flushing Burial Ground, Queens, NY. Photo 5 of 17



Wunnanameant

*Between 1840 and 1898 ,  
500 to 1000 people, primarily  
African Americans, Native Americans,  
and victims of four major epidemics in  
1840, 1844, 1857, and 1867 were buried  
on this site. The park was renovated  
and this tablet installed to  
commemorate those  
buried here.*

## MARTIN'S FIELD 3.474 acres.

Once known as the "Paupers' Burial Ground," this site's name was changed to Martin's Field on May 5, 1931 in honor of tree conservationist Everett P. Martin.

The Queens parks department acquired this property on December 2, 1914; however, it remained undeveloped until 1936. At that time, citywide Parks Commissioner Robert Moses (1888-1981), who commanded thousands of Works Progress Administration (WPA) workers, built a modern playground here. During the excavation, WPA workers came upon evidence of this site's previous use as a burial ground, including out-of-date pennies, which traditionally were placed on the eyes of the dead.

By 1938, the new playground, complete with a wading pool, baseball field, and swing sets, opened to the public. Meanwhile the WPA's historical division interviewed local citizens about the site's days as a burial ground. George W. Pople, who was 80 at the time, explained that the town of Flushing suffered an epidemic of cholera from 1838 to 1840, and one of smallpox in 1844. A "fear of 'contaminating' church burial grounds, the town opened this public field in 1840. The last burials here occurred in 1898.

Like many cities around the world New York has buildings and parks standing on former burial grounds. Not until the 1990s, when Parks & Recreation had begun a renovation of Martin's Field, did anyone stop to question this park's history. Responding to the actions of community activist Mandingo Tshaka, in 1996 a \$50,000 archeological study was performed. Archeologist Linda Stone concluded that Martin's Field served as the final resting place for between 500 to 1,000 individuals, 62 percent of whom were black or Native-Americans, 34 percent were unidentified, and more than half were children under the age of five. A second study in 1999 used ground-penetrating radar to pin point the remaining burial sites, so that they would be avoided in planning construction.

In 2004, Parks & Recreation commenced reconstruction of this park after Council Member John Liu achieved consensus on the plan recognizing the site's important history and secured, along with Borough President Helen Marshall, \$2.67 million in funding. This capital project was the largest improvement since the WPA first built Martin's Field. A paved area bears a central stone inscribed with the site's history, and a historic wall was recreated and engraved with the names from the only four headstones remaining here in 1919. Tall, old, oaks, as well as new trees and shrubs, arrive as the natural link between past and present while providing shade for the newly installed toddler's playground.

City of New York  
Parks & Recreation



Michael R. Bloomberg, Mayor  
Veronica M. White, Commissioner

[www.nyc.gov/parks](http://www.nyc.gov/parks)

December 2006





Olde Towne of Flushing Burial Ground, Queens, NY. Photo 9 of 17



Olde Towne of Flushing Burial Ground, Queens, NY. Photo 10 of 17



Olde Towne of Flushing Burial Ground, Queens, NY. Photo 11 of 17



Olde Towne of Flushing Burial Ground, Queens, NY. Photo 12 of 17



Olde Towne of Flushing Burial Ground, Queens, NY. Photo 13 of 17



Olde Towne of Flushing Burial Ground, Queens, NY. Photo 14 of 17





Olde Towne of Flushing Burial Ground, Queens, NY. Photo 16 of 17





Olde Towne of Flushing Burial Ground, Queens, NY. Photo 17 of 17

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action:

Property Name:

Multiple Name:

State & County:

Date Received: 12/19/2017      Date of Pending List: 1/29/2018      Date of 16th Day: 2/13/2018      Date of 45th Day: 2/2/2018      Date of Weekly List: 2/2/2018

Reference number:

Nominator:

Reason For Review:

- |                                       |  |   |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Appeal       | <input type="checkbox"/> PDIL            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Text/Data Issue |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SHPO Request | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape       | <input type="checkbox"/> Photo                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Waiver       | <input type="checkbox"/> National        | <input type="checkbox"/> Map/Boundary               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Resubmission | <input type="checkbox"/> Mobile Resource | <input type="checkbox"/> Period                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other        | <input type="checkbox"/> TCP             | <input type="checkbox"/> Less than 50 years         |
|                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> CLG             |   |

Accept       Return       Reject      2/2/2018 Date

Abstract/Summary Comments:

Recommendation/ Criteria

Reviewer Alexis Abernathy      Discipline Historian

Telephone (202)354-2236      Date \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENTATION:    see attached comments : No    see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.

THE SENATE  
STATE OF NEW YORK



**TONY AVELLA**  
SENATOR, 11TH DISTRICT

ASSISTANT CONFERENCE LEADER  
FOR POLICY AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE  
INDEPENDENT DEMOCRATIC CONFERENCE

**CHAIR**

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES  
TASK FORCE ON THE  
DELIVERY OF SOCIAL SERVICES IN NYC

**COMMITTEES**

CITIES  
CULTURAL AFFAIRS, TOURISM,  
PARKS AND RECREATION  
EDUCATION  
ELECTIONS  
ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION  
FINANCE  
HOUSING  
JUDICIARY  
TRANSPORTATION  
LIBRARIES SELECT COMMITTEE

**ALBANY OFFICE:** ☐

ROOM 902, LOB  
ALBANY, NEW YORK 12247  
(518) 455-2210 OFFICE  
(518) 426-6736 FAX

**DISTRICT OFFICE:** ☑

38-50 BELL BOULEVARD  
SUITE C  
BAYSIDE, NEW YORK 11361  
(718) 357-3094 OFFICE  
(718) 357-3491 FAX

**INTERNET ADDRESS:**

AVELLA@NYSENATE.GOV

December 5, 2017

Hon. Rose Harvey  
Commissioner  
New York State Historic Preservation Office  
Peebles Island State Park  
P.O. Box 189  
Waterford, NY 12188-0189



**Fax & Mail**

**Immediate Attention Required**

Dear Commissioner Harvey:

I am writing to you in support of the Old Town of Flushing Burial Ground, located on 46<sup>th</sup> Avenue, between 164<sup>th</sup> and 165<sup>th</sup> Streets, to be considered for the National and State Registers of Historic Places.

I have worked tirelessly for years with community members to ensure this New York City historic property receives the respect it deserves. I successfully assisted the Old Town of Flushing Burial Ground Conservancy with their requests to improve the grounds in 2013, and continue to support their efforts.

I whole-heartedly encourage you to place this irreplaceable site on the registry so future generations can appreciate its historical importance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Tony Avella'.

Tony Avella  
State Senator  
11<sup>th</sup> Senatorial District

TA: kl



Meenakshi Srinivasan  
Chair

November 30, 2017

Sarah Carroll  
Executive Director  
SCarroll@lpc.nyc.gov

Mr. Michael F. Lynch, P.E., AIA  
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer  
Director, Division for Historic Preservation  
New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation  
P.O. Box 189  
Peebles Island Resource Center  
Waterford, NY 12188-0189

1 Centre Street  
9<sup>th</sup> Floor North  
New York, NY 10007

212 669 7902 tel  
212 669 7797 fax

Re: Old Town of Flushing Burial Ground (also known as Martin's Field; Pauper's Burial Ground; Colored Cemetery), located at 46 Avenue between 164<sup>th</sup> and 165<sup>th</sup> Street, Queens, NY

Dear Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer Lynch:

I am writing on behalf of Chair Meenakshi Srinivasan in response to your request for comment on the eligibility of the **Old Town of Flushing Burial Ground**, located at 46 Avenue between 164<sup>th</sup> and 165<sup>th</sup> Street in Queens, for the State and National Registers of Historic Places.

The New York Landmarks Preservation Commission's Director of Archaeology Amanda Sutphin has reviewed the materials you submitted and has determined that the Old Town of Flushing Burial Ground **appears to meet the criteria** for inclusion on the State and National Registers of Historic Places. Therefore, based on this review, the Commission **supports the nomination** of the Old Town of Flushing Burial Ground. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Sarah Carroll

cc: Meenakshi Srinivasan, Chair, Landmarks Preservation Commission  
Amanda Sutphin, Director of Archaeology, Landmarks Preservation Commission

36155

*Olde Towne of Flushing Burial Ground Conservancy*

*c/o 67-11A 136<sup>th</sup> Street, Flushing, NY 11367*

November 11, 2017

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo  
Governor of New York State  
NYS State Capitol Building  
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo,

The Olde Towne of Flushing Burial Ground Conservancy was established to advocate for the 19<sup>th</sup> century cemetery located on 46<sup>th</sup> Avenue between 164<sup>th</sup> and 165<sup>th</sup> Streets in Flushing, Queens.

The cemetery was excavated in the 1930s by the City of New York to construct a playground and a wading pool. The graves were disturbed and desecrated, and many bones and other artifacts were uncovered in a callous and disrespectful display of insensitivity to the dead buried there. Four known burial stones were destroyed as well.

During the last three decades, the site was recognized as a burial ground after it was discovered that approximately one thousand people are still interred there. Most of the deceased are African American and indigenous Americans of the Matinecock nation. Many are children who passed away due to the epidemics of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The site was refurbished some ten years ago with the removal of the playground and the wading pool. The Conservancy was formed and many goals were set. We have been in negotiations with the NYC Parks Department, the NYC Design Commission and Queens Borough President Melinda Katz to erect an appropriate memorial stone listing the names of the known dead and honoring the unknown dead as well. The late Helen Marshall set aside \$100,000 to pay for the stone and the engraving of names. Many of the names were discovered by a graduate class at Queens College that worked on a comprehensive study of the cemetery as a term project.

We are requesting a meeting with you to discuss the issues that confront this site. The Conservancy has met with much resistance from the NYC Parks Department, who oversees the site, in trying to address our goals. We need your support and assistance so that those buried at the cemetery can be remembered and treated with dignity and respect, as the dead are in other cemeteries.

Please have one of your assistants contact us so that we can set up the appointment. The Conservancy can meet you at your Manhattan office. We are also planning on traveling to Albany on December 7<sup>th</sup> to attend a hearing and to lobby for support from our elected representatives. Perhaps we can meet with you on that date in Albany.

We look forward to hearing from you and meeting with you.

Sincerely,

*Mandingo Osceola Tshaka*

*Robbie Garrison*

Mr. Mandingo Osceola Tshaka, Co-Chair  
Olde Towne of Flushing Burial Ground Conservancy  
718-261-6784  
CC: Governor Cuomo's Manhattan Office

Ms. Robbie Garrison, Co-Chair  
  
bookstreet@aol.com



NYC Parks

Dorothy Lewandowski  
Borough Commissioner  
Queens

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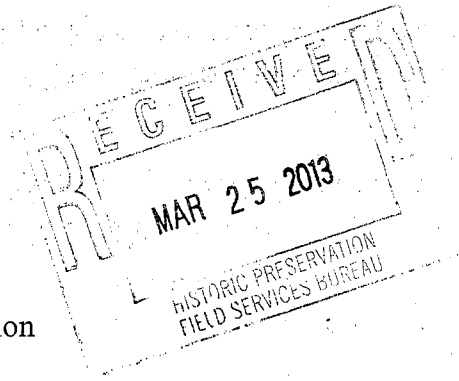
Edlewandowski@parks.nyc.gov

City of New York  
Parks & Recreation

The Overlook  
80-30 Park Lane  
Kew Gardens, NY 11415  
www.nyc.gov/parks

March 19, 2013

Ms. Ruth Pierpont  
Deputy Commissioner  
NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation  
Peebles Island, PO Box 189  
Waterford, NY 12188-0189



Re: Owner Consent Letter for Nomination of Olde Flushing Burial Ground to the National Register of Historic Places

Dear Commissioner Pierpont:

I am writing to confirm that the proposed site, Olde Flushing Burial Ground, for the above-named application is owned by the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation (DPR) and that DPR authorizes the applicant, Rebecca Kinsley, to nominate the site for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Olde Flushing Burial Ground, also called Martin's Field, was first used as a burial ground for victims of epidemics in the mid-nineteenth century. As epidemics became less common, the burial ground came to be used primarily by African Americans and Native Americans living in Flushing and the surrounding area. Between 1840 and 1898, it is possible that between 500 to 1,000 people were buried at the site. Those interred are mostly of African American and Native American descent, however, underprivileged Flushing residents and victims of epidemics from all races were also buried here. The New York City Department of Parks & Recreation acquired the property in 1914. In the 1930's, the site was converted to a playground. In 2006, the playground was renovated and a memorial was placed at the site to commemorate those buried there.

The property is significant for its association with the African American and Native American communities in nineteenth century Flushing, as well as for the archeological resources present at the site.

Sincerely,

Dorothy Lewandowski



Ms. Jennifer Betsworth, Historic Preservation Specialist  
New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation  
Waterford, NY

December 5, 2017

Dear Ms. Betsworth,

We would like to express our support for the Olde Towne of Flushing Burial Ground Conservancy's efforts to have the Burial Ground registered as a national and state landmark.

The Flushing Burial Ground bears witness to an important and often overlooked segment of the early population of Queens – the African Americans and Native Americans who were generally among the poorest residents of this agricultural community. The site's history as a final resting place for these populations is well-documented, but its conversion into parkland in the 1930s nearly erased all evidence of its original purpose. Indeed, without the research and persistence of the Conservancy, it is unlikely that current or future generations of Queens residents would have any awareness of the Burial Ground's significance.

When we collaborated with Ms. Garrison, Mr. Tshaka and the rest of the Conservancy on a research project concerning the Burial Ground in spring 2016, we were impressed with their dedication and the achievements they had won thus far in restoring the dignity of this important site. We believe that landmark registration is an appropriate and necessary step in its full reclamation.

Sincerely,

Natalie Milbrodt  
Queens Memory Director

Lori Wallach  
Queens Memory Outreach Coordinator

Technical Services Department  
89-11 Merrick Blvd, Jamaica, NY 11432  
T 718.990.0837 [queenslibrary.org](http://queenslibrary.org)



**Parks, Recreation  
and Historic Preservation**

DEC 19 2017

ANDREW M. CUOMO  
Governor

ROSE HARVEY  
Commissioner

14 December 2017

Alexis Abernathy  
National Park Service  
National Register of Historic Places

Mail Stop 7228

1849 C Street NW  
Washington DC 20240

Re: National Register Nominations

Dear Ms. Abernathy:

I am pleased to submit the following twelve nominations, all on disc, to be considered for listing by the Keeper of the National Register:

John and Sarah Trumbull House, Dutchess County  
New Guinea Community Site, Dutchess County  
George W. Bellows House, Ulster County  
Wampsville Presbyterian Church, Madison County [not owned by religious]  
Lipe -Rollaway Corporation Building, Onondaga County  
Ridgewood Reservoir, Kings and Queens Counties  
Greenacre Park, New York County  
*Lanai*, New York County  
Smith-Ransome Japanese Bridge, Suffolk County  
Old Town of Flushing Burial Ground, Queens County  
Saxe Embroidery Company Building, Bronx County  
Kingston City Almshouse, Ulster County

Please feel free to call me at 518.268.2165 if you have any questions.

Sincerely:

Kathleen LaFrank  
National Register Coordinator  
New York State Historic Preservation Office