

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Conference (Billopp) House

AND/OR COMMON

Conference House

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Foot of Hylan Boulevard

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Tottenville

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

VICINITY OF

STATE

New York

CODE

36

COUNTY

Richmond

CODE

8

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

PRESENT USE

- AGRICULTURE
- MUSEUM
- COMMERCIAL
- PARK
- EDUCATIONAL
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- ENTERTAINMENT
- RELIGIOUS
- GOVERNMENT
- SCIENTIFIC
- INDUSTRIAL
- TRANSPORTATION
- MILITARY
- OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Conference House Historical Association, Mr. Alex Wilkie, President

STREET & NUMBER

45 Bebel Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Tottenville

STATE

New York

VICINITY OF

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Richmond County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

St. George

STATE

New York

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE

1940

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Library of Congress/Annex-Division of Prints and Photographs

CITY, TOWN

Washington

STATE

D.C.

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Christopher Billopp, the house's builder, first arrived in the colony of New York in 1674, and he subsequently received a total of 1,600 acres of land in two separate grants in 1676 and 1687 respectively. He named his estate "Bentley" and erected a home around 1680. Although he died in London in 1725, his heirs owned Bentley until the end of the Revolution.

Billopp's manor house is a two-story stone building that suggests Dutch rather than Georgian influence. A short flight of wooden steps leads to the front door, which has two windows on either side on the first floor. Five windows pierce the front wall on the second floor. A steeply pitched asbestos-tiled gable roof covers the house, which has a brick chimney at either end. The back of the roof has a longer, but not as steeply pitched slope as the front roof. At the present time, a rear frame extension completes the house. But that extension is of recent origin, it perhaps having been preceded by a stone or brick extension of unknown date. Mid-nineteenth-century prints also show the house with a front and back porch, neither of which exist today.

Inside, a restoration in 1932 returned the house, presumably, to the way it appeared during the Revolution. As you enter from the front, the so-called "Conference Room" is on the left. It occupies the entire left hand side of the first floor of the main building. The room overlooks Raritan Bay, has a large fireplace in the end wall, large old floorboards and exposed ceiling beams, and is plastered. The dining room across the hallway from the Conference Room has the same features. The stairway, which is in the hall, leads to the second floor, where there are two bedrooms, one over each of the first floor rooms. There is also a small room between the two bedrooms at the front of the house. All the preceding rooms are furnished with colonial, but not original, pieces.

The basement consists of a very spacious room and a vaulted chamber. In the room there is a very large fireplace, where the cooking was done when the room served as the kitchen. Large beams cross the width of the rooms' ceiling. On the north in the basement as you face the house is a brick-vaulted room. It extends from the front to the back of the house.

Historic features on the grounds include the well at the northwest corner of the house and the mulberry tree in front and the sycamore in back of the house, both of which are approximately 250 years old. The major portion of the grounds is kept as lawn and parkland.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES September 11, 1776

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Billopp House, on the shore of Raritan Bay, at Tottenville, Staten Island, was a landmark almost one hundred years old when, on September 11, 1776, it housed the abortive peace conference which earned it its title as the Conference House.

Lord Richard and General William Howe, the British commanders-in-chief in America, arranged the meeting in an effort to terminate the rebellion without further bloodshed. However, after a three hour conference with Lord Howe, the American representatives, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin and Edward Rutledge, departed, still firmly united in their support of the Declaration of Independence and the rejection of the British terms.

The failure of the meeting underscored the respective determinations of the British and American governments to attain peace on their own terms. British initiative produced the meeting, but American insistence upon independence scuttled it.

The two-story stone manorhouse, located at the foot of Hylan Boulevard, was restored in 1932 to its 18th century appearance. It is presently maintained as a museum by the city of New York.

HISTORY

After General William Howe's evacuation of Boston in the spring of 1776, Great Britain resolved to end the war as quickly as possible. The main effort was to be military. Nevertheless, the possible conciliation of the colonies received some attention. Not because the British government felt hopeful about persuading the colonists to accept peace, but because the new commanders in chief in America, Lord Richard and General Howe, insisted upon attempting conciliation. The government's reluctant approval of the Howes' plan appeared in the tightly restricted authority granted the brothers apropos of conciliation. In brief, the Americans had to renounce rebellion and lay down their arms before they would be eligible for slight concessions.

The Howes attempted to apply their limited authority concerning conciliation during the summer of 1776. That was especially true of the admiral, Lord Richard. Even as he approached America in June, he penned a declaration announcing his and his brother's powers as peace commissioners. Similar announcements followed as the summer wore on.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Charles Francis Adams, The Works of John Adams, 10 vols. (Boston, 1851-6), vol. III.
 Troyer S. Anderson, The Command of the Howe Brothers During the American Revolution
 (New York, 1936).

S. Sydney Bradford, "Billopp (Conference) House" National Survey of Historic Sites and
 Buildings form 10-317, February, 1966.

William T. Davis, A Short History of the Conference House (6th ed., n.d.).

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 2.75

UTM REFERENCES

A	1 8	5 6 3 2 3 0	4 4 8 3 1 6 3 0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundaries of the landmark are coterminus with those of the Conference House City Park. Beginning at the intersection of the northern curb of Hylan Boulevard and the western curb of Satterlee Street (the westernmost through street to cross Hylan Boulevard) proceed north along Satterlee Street for 270' to the northern boundary of the park thence west in a straight line paralleling Hylan Boulevard to the mean high water mark on Raritan Bay, thence south along the shore line to its junction with the extension

(cont'd)

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Richard Greenwood, Historian, Landmark Review Task Force

ORGANIZATION

Historic Sites Survey

DATE

11/20/75

STREET & NUMBER

1100 L Street

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Washington.

STATE

D.C.

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION
 ATTEST: *[Signature]*

DATE

3/9/77

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

((NATIONAL HISTORIC
 LANDMARKS))

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CONTINUATION SHEET Conference House ITEM NUMBER #8 PAGE #2

Furthermore, Lord Howe wrote to Benjamin Franklin and other prominent Americans about reconciliation. All to no effect.

By the end of August, 1776, Britain's up-till-then largest expeditionary force floated in part in New York harbor and camped in other part on Staten Island. Between August 22-25 General Howe landed his army on Long Island, on August 27 attacked and defeated the American army at Brooklyn, by the morning of August 30 had forced George Washington to retreat to Manhattan, and by the middle of September was about to attempt to land on Manhattan.

Just before the new attack, Lord Richard initiated another attempt to end the war. The opportunity seemed most propitious, the Americans having suffered a devastating defeat and the British ready to launch a new stroke. Admiral Howe chose a captured American General, John Sullivan, to be his emissary to the Second Continental Congress in Philadelphia. That body, after hearing Sullivan's perhaps exaggerated explanation of the Howe's authority, on September 5th resolved that a commission of three be sent to discover just what Lord Howe's powers were. When Sullivan returned on September 9th and informed the admiral of Congress's action, Howe voiced dissatisfaction at the restricted authority of the American delegation.

Two days after Sullivan's return from Philadelphia, the confrontation occurred. Lord Howe's barge met the Americans, Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, and Edward Rutledge, at Perth Amboy on September 11 and carried them to the Billopp House on Staten Island. There, after some pleasant conversation and refreshments, it quickly became apparent that the Howes could not recognize American independence and that the Americans adhered to the Declaration of Independence. Lord Howe and the rebel trio thus soon parted.

Four days later General Howe landed on Manhattan. But neither that victory nor any of the following triumphs made the Americans more amenable to conciliation with independence.

The Billopp House continued to be occupied by the British throughout the war, after which time it returned to its service as a private house. In 1926, the house, in a dilapidated condition, was acquired by the City of New York. Since 1929, it has been maintained as a museum by the Conference House Historical Society.

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of the north curb of Hylan Boulevard, thence east to the point of origin.

These boundaries enclose the Conference House and its immediate grounds, while excluding the post-historic structures and features which adjoin the property.