

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

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

Old Quaker Meeting House

AND/OR COMMON

Old Quaker Meeting House

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

137-16 Northern Blvd.

---NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Flushing

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

8th

--- VICINITY OF

STATE

New York

CODE
36

COUNTY

Queens

CODE

081

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

Flushing Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

STREET & NUMBER

137-16 Northern Boulevard

CITY, TOWN

Flushing

--- VICINITY OF

STATE

New York

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Queens County Hall of Records

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Jamaica

STATE

New York

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

---FEDERAL ---STATE ---COUNTY ---LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" 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

The Meeting House of the Religious Society of Friends in Flushing dates back to 1694. At that time a small frame structure, the easterly third of the present building, was built on land acquired two years previously by John Bowne and John Rodman, both well-known leaders of the Friends. In 1716-1719 the building was enlarged to its present size. The division between the two construction periods is proven by internal structural evidence and is apparent on the south side from the different spacing of the windows. The chimney rises on the line of the original west wall.

The edifice is a prime example of medieval survival in its proportions and framing system. It is a plain rectangular building erected on a frame of 40 foot oak timbers, each hand hewn from a single tree. The architectural interest of the building is derived chiefly from its unusually steep hip roof, which is almost as high as the two stories below it. This feature can be traced to the high steep roofs of medieval Holland, which had changed from gable roofs to the hip shape in the 17th century.

The Meeting House is well proportioned. Both walls and roof are covered with shingles. The wide spacing and small size of the windows on the second floor are distinctly English medieval in character though these windows have muntined sash and six-over-six panes. The larger windows at the ground floor have twelve-over-twelve panes. Both the entrances on the south front, one for men and one for women, have double doors. The porch added along this side in the 19th century, is supported by slender square columns, and its shingled roof echoes the hip roof of the building. Simplicity is the keynote, both outside and inside, as the Friends desired that no worldly ostentation should distract their attention from worship.

The meeting room itself is large with plain white plaster walls and unfinished wood. Simple wooden benches and fiber matting for carpeting are the only furnishings.

The screen of wooden panels, raised and lowered by ropes, was used to divide the large meeting room into two smaller ones during business sessions. Although from the beginning of Friends Meetings men and women were to be considered equal, they formerly sat on opposite sides of the room and held separate business meetings. Before the Meeting House was enlarged the men used it for their business meetings while the women met in the Bowne House.

The ceiling girders reveal where the addition of 1717 was made, for one of the girders shows notches for the studding of the outer wall of 1694. The foundation and floor timbers of the easterly third of the house also bear evidence of the earlier period of their construction.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input 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 type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES 1694

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Old Quaker Meeting House, the oldest portion of which dates from 1695, is the only surviving example in the State of New York of a typical 17th century ecclesiastical frame structure of medieval design. This structure has served continuously since 1696 as a meeting house except for the period from 1776 to 1783 when the British Army used it as a prison, hospital and stable. The oblong, two-story hipped roof building is almost entirely devoid of ornament. The interior has a beamed ceiling and handmade, unpainted benches. The simplicity of the exposed wood interior illustrates the design and skill of the late 17th-century craftsmen.

History

The Quaker Meeting House originally stood on a three acre plot in the village of Flushing which had less than 700 inhabitants. In 1676, John Bowne, one of the earliest Quakers in the area, arranged for a burial ground and in 1692 John Bowne and John Rodman brought three acres of adjoining land to used for a meeting house site. The first meeting recorded as held here was the Quarterly Meeting on November 24, 1694. The importance of the building to the Society of Friends was soon recognized. In 1695, formation of the New York Yearly Meeting for the province included agreement that it be held at the Flushing Meeting House. It continued to assemble there for 1696 to 1778.

The Long Island Quakers achieved prominence from their very earliest years. In 1657, when Director General Stuyvesant forbade their worship, Flushing officials and citizens signed the "Flushing Remonstrance". This was perhaps the earliest demand for religious liberty made by American colonists. A few years later, when John Bowne was banished, he argued their case in Holland. As a result, the "Liberty of Conscience, according to the Custome and Manner of Holland," granted to Flushing in its charter of 1645, was extended in 1663 to establish religious liberty throughout the Province of New Netherland. After the English conquest, the Quakers of New York were given permission to hold meetings for worship.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Burnham, Alan, New York City Landmarks, Middletown, Connecticut, 1963.
 Morrison, Hugh, Early American Architecture, New York, 1952.
 "Old Quaker Meeting House File," New York City Landmarks Commission, New York City, New York.
 Lowry, Ann Gidley, "The Story of Flushing Meeting House," New York, 1969

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY c. 1

UTM REFERENCES

A 18 598690 4512910
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING
 C

B
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING
 D

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The Quaker Meeting House sits on about an acre of land on Northern Boulevard in what is now downtown Flushing. The property, which contains the Meeting House and its cemetery is defined by a fence, and is bounded by the south curb of Northern Boulevard on the north, an office building and apartment building on the east, a parking lot on the south and a parking lot and store on the west.

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

Patricia Heintzelmah, Architectural Historian, Landmark Review Project

ORGANIZATION

Historic Sites Survey

DATE

10/11/75

STREET & NUMBER

1100 L Street NW.

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. (NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

Designated: Dec 22, 1967
 date
 Boundary Certified:
Gregory F. Emery
 DATE: Nov. 22, 1977
 date

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION
 ATTEST: [Signature]
 KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 12/7/77
 DATE

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When the building was enlarged, a gallery was built around three sides of the room. Later this was considered unnecessary and the gallery floor was extended to make a complete second story room that was used for a school. Notches still indicate where the railings had been. Recently, to better support the weight of the floor above, three modern iron posts and two short cross beams have been installed. The benches date from after the Revolutionary War when the original ones were burned by the British.

In 1760 two new cast-iron Franklin stoves were brought and connected by long pipes to a short chimney resting on a beam on the second floor. This chimney is still in use. After one hundred and ninety-five winters these stoves were replaced in 1956 by a modern heating system. One of the stoves is kept on display at the Meeting House; the other has been given to the Nassau County Historical Society. The opening of a small door in the wooden sheathing upstairs reveals the original wall construction, hand split laths of oak and hand wrought nails. Exposed beams of white oak forty feet long were so carefully seasoned and so well cut and fitted that today they are as strong as when first put in place. The hand-wrought iron door hinges, latches and locks are still in use in most places but some had to be replaced with carefully done replicas.

The pleasant landscaped setting of the Meeting House was formerly set apart from Northern Boulevard by a picket fence. This has now been replaced by a stone wall. The building still faces south with its back to the street overlooking its quiet yard, sheltered from the noise of the major thoroughfare.

The structure is in the midst of restoration work which is correcting a number of previous problems. A new roof was put on 2 years ago and replacement of exterior shingles is now in progress.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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As early as 1716 the Flushing Meeting House was the scene of preaching against slavery by William Burling and John Farmer. They were followed by John Woolman, Matthew Franklin and Elias Hicks, all of whom attacked the slavery problem during the colonial period. John Murray, Jr., one of their members was the founder in 1785 and first treasurer of the New York Society for the Manumission of Slaves. In his role as founder also of the New York Public School Society, Murray is considered the father of public education in New York City.

After the battle of Long Island in 1776, the Flushing Meeting House was briefly used by the British army as a prison. During the remainder of the British occupation to 1783, the building served as a storehouse for hay and as a hospital. In 1785, it was reopened for services and is still used for this purpose.

The cemetery is part of the original three acres. Although it is no longer used for interments, the burial ground is the final resting place for many who were prominent in Long Island history such as Bowne, Hicks and Wright. The cemetery is of definite historical significance in its relationship with the meeting house.