

The Bowne House Historical Society, Inc.

AUTUMN 2014

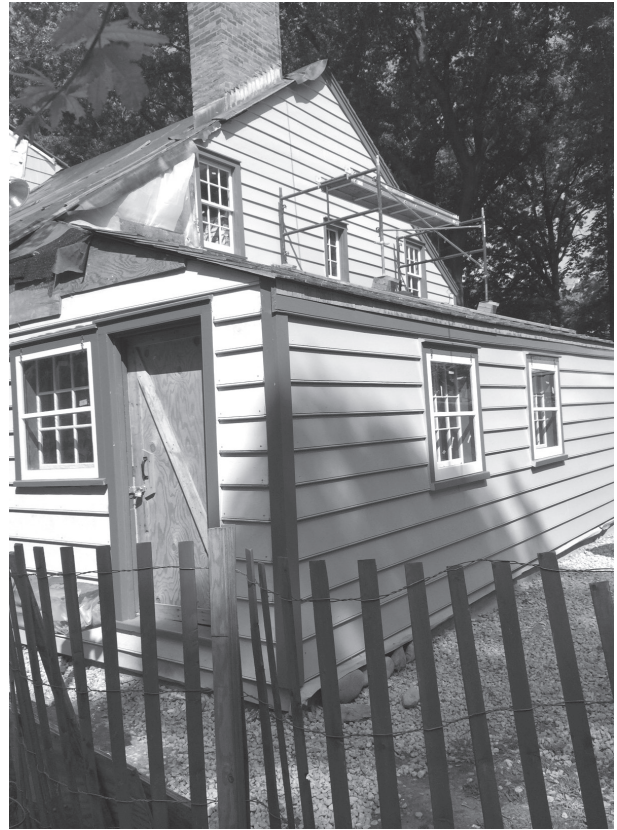
Bowne House Restoration Update – Fall, 2014

We are pleased to announce that Phase I, the Exterior Restoration, is almost complete. This phase included structural stabilization, installation of a new cedar roof, new siding, and restoration of windows and doors. A new coat of paint has freshened the appearance of the exterior.

Jan Hird Pokorny Associates, New York, was the architect for this project. They were assisted by Robert Silman, an engineering firm, and by Rudy Christian of Christian & Son, and Ron Anthony, who consulted on the project. Window restoration was done by James Hicks. We would like to thank them for helping us achieve our goal of preserving and restoring our museum.

We were assisted by NYC Department of Parks and Recreation, with the help of project managers Scott Harrison and Rob Iaropoli. And we are grateful also to our resident manager, Anne Perl de Pal.

Funding for Phase I was provided by private donations from our trustees, members and friends, and from generous allocations from The Honorable Helen M. Marshall, who retired last year as Queens Borough President; as well as from former City Council Member John Liu, former NYS Assembly Member Barry



Grodenchik, and Councilman Peter Koo. Additional funding was provided by the State of New York.

We would like to thank all of those who helped to make this project a reality. We could not have done it without your encouragement and enthusiastic support.

In a few weeks, scaffolding which had covered the exterior will come down and visitors will be able to view the results of many months of restoration work. We expect this will take place just in time for the annual Flushing Historic House Holiday Tour on Sunday, December 7th. We are looking forward to welcoming visitors to our newly restored museum. Please check the website at www.bownehouse.org for information. Tickets for the Holiday Tour, which includes 6 other local sites, may be purchased in advance from the Queens Historical Society, or on the day of the event.

“Bowne” to Please: Working with Textiles and Costume at the Bowne House Historical Society

By Kelsey Brow

Claire McRee holds a Bachelor of Arts from Wellesley College and is currently pursuing her MA at the Bard Graduate Center. She specializes in historic costume and is particularly interested in clothing and gender issues. She has even performed hearth cooking while wearing 1830s clothing at Old Sturbridge Village!

Kelsey Brow is a recent MA graduate of the Bard Graduate Center specializing in material culture with an emphasis on the fashions and foods of the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. She was previously a curatorial intern at the Molly Brown House in her native Denver, Colorado where she catalogued the museum's extensive clothing collection.

When you're interested in very early American history, there aren't too many places that fit the bill. Claire and I were lucky that the Bowne House had opportunities where we could help out. Since our academic careers at the Bard Graduate Center overlapped by a year, we had a few courses together and got to know one another through our mutual interest in the history of dress. Unlike some of our peers in the field, we both have a great deal of sewing experience and so tend to be more interested in dress construction than in the careers of dress designers or trend setters.

Claire had already been working at the Bowne House when I got back from my French Heritage Society Internship in France this summer and I was happy she didn't mind me joining in on the project. There was (and still is) certainly a lot to do! The costume and textile collection is quite extensive. Together Claire and I worked to catalog everything, starting with the boxes that old records claimed contained dresses. We unpacked, photographed, repacked in archival-quality tissue paper, wrote textual descriptions and condition reports, determined dates and types of fabric, as well as any alterations that had been made to the clothing over the years. We were fortunate to have the help of Jenny Ma, who acted as our photographer. She became really interested in the clothing and it was a great way for all of us to learn from each other as we answered her questions. Jenny took many photos of the collection objects and it became clear that these beautiful images shouldn't just go into a computer catalogue, but really ought to be shown to the public.

Before I started working at the Bowne House, Claire and Anne Perl de Pal, our intrepid intern coordinator (I was so surprised to see what an army of interns there were at the Bowne House this summer!) had discussed doing some sort of an exhibition about it for the Flushing Public Library. Claire and I brainstormed what this exhibition should be about. The two of us had just finished work on the Visualizing Nineteenth-Century New York exhibit at the Bard Graduate Center Gallery so with the words of one of our exhibit coordinators still fresh in our ears, we knew our exhibit had to have a “thesis.”

One of the things I often find about fashion exhibitions is that they're very glamorous, but not particularly educational. A lot of this is due to the nature of the beast: clothing must be displayed under low light levels to protect dyes from fading and aging fabric from deterioration. Unfortunately, this makes many fashion exhibitions feel more like watching a fashion show than visiting a museum. This certainly has an undeniable visual appeal, but we were interested in sharing with the public what we loved so much about this opportunity to work with the textile and costume collection at the Bowne House --getting to look at these pieces up-close, and being able to understand their construction by looking at them from the inside and at all the different layers. You certainly don't get this experience when you see clothes dressed on mannequins in an exhibit! Because of the ongoing restoration work, our exhibit is to be held at the Queens Public Library, Flushing Branch, where we will use Jenny's beautiful photographs to talk about the construction and underlying (pun intended) social history around a selection of highlights from the collection.

By August, when Claire and Jenny both returned to school and I continued the cataloguing work on my own, we had gone over 250 objects. Yet, the ten we've included in the exhibition almost seemed to have selected themselves. We wanted to represent a variety of objects, in terms of both date and function. Ranging from corsets to baby bonnets and from the hand sewn to the synthetically dyed and machine printed, our ten objects demonstrate the incredible richness and depth of the Bowne House Historical Society's collection. We wanted to limit our discussion to only ten objects, as we thought it was more important that the visitor take their time

to experience the beautiful images and learn them as well as our from our accompanying text. Too many would clutter the space and undermine the power of each object. There will be three images of each object, one complete view and two detail shots to discuss aspects of the object's construction or social history. Since you wouldn't be able to see these kinds of details in a more traditional fashion exhibition, we have decided to call the show *The Secret Lives of Dresses*.

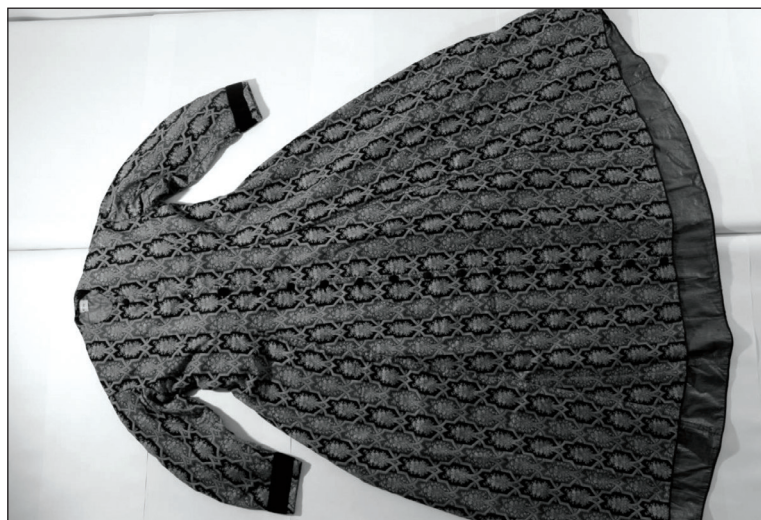
We were happy to have the opportunity to give an advance preview of our work and the upcoming exhibition at the Bowne House Historical Society's annual fundraiser on October 15. We invite members of the public to visit between December 5 and January

child will have the opportunity to create their own plate by assembling images from historic fashion images and adding their own embellishments.

Perhaps because most photographs at the time were in black-and-white or sepia, we sometimes get the impression that the nineteenth century was full of stuffy, dull fashions. In fact, as the wild colors on this dress demonstrate, the past was a pretty colorful time. How many of us would wear such a busy mixture of pattern and colors? New dye technology using petrochemicals made it possible for the first time to have certain color dyes that wouldn't fade or run. Excitement over new, bright colors often resulted in wild fabrics, like this printed wool.

Finally, to whet your appetite for the exhibit, I'd like to share with you one of the objects that will be featured.

Princess Dress, late 1860s wool, polished cotton, bone buttons



5 at the Queens Public Library, Flushing Branch. At 4:00 PM on December 12, there will be a family workshop at the Library in conjunction with *Secret Lives*. My very first museum internship was in an Education department, and sharing the museum experience with the young public has been an important part of my career every since. In this workshop, participants will learn where the idea of fashion comes from and how the Bowne family and their eighteenth- and nineteenth-century peers would have known what as stylish or appropriate to wear. We'll learn about fashion magazine illustrations or "plates" and each

Unlike many 18th- and 19th-century dresses, this one is cut out of one long piece from shoulder to hem, with no waist seam. This cut is still known today as "princess style." It was given this name in 1861, after Agnes Sorel (1421-1450), mistress of the French King Charles VII. Revisiting historical trends in clothing was very common in the mid- to late- nineteenth century fashions and among the pages of tastemaking magazine *Godey's Ladys Book* are a number of articles of clothing named after Agnes Sorel. This dress was a challenge to photograph as the skirt is very wide. Godets, triangular pieces of fabric, are sewn at the

sides of the skirt, making it even more full, to glide elegantly around the large, circular hoop-skirts creating the classic Gone With the Wind silhouette that comes to mind when we think about fashions of the 1860s. The Bowne House Historical Society has two of these hoop-skirts in their collections, a relatively rare and extremely fragile survival.

Many of the dresses in the collection of the Bowne House Historical Society are lined with this light brown polished cotton. Cheaper than silk, but the polishing or glazing process made the cotton slippery so it would be easy to slip on over layers of underclothes. Unfortunately, this chemical treatment uses metallic salts that dry out the fibers of the fabric. We are lucky this dress is in such good condition, as many nineteenth-century linings have become flaky and brittle over the years.

HR 3222

- HR 3222, Flushing Remonstrance Study Act, passed in the U.S. House of Representatives. The Act, introduced by the Honorable Grace Meng, Member of Congress from the sixth district of New York, which includes western, central and northeast Queens, passed the House by voice vote on September 15, 2014. The bill must now go to the senate.

- HR 3222 authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a special resource study of sites associated with the 1657 Remonstrance. These sites include the John Bowne House as well as the nearby Friends Meeting House on Northern Blvd. The study is informational and could lead to linking these sites into a network recognizing their contributions to the principle of freedom on religion in America and the First Amendment.

We would like to congratulate Congresswoman Meng for shepherding this bill through the House and recognize the contributions of Adam Sackowitz, who, through his interest in American history, inspired and promoted the concept behind HR 3222.

About Adam:

Adam is a recent graduate of Hofstra University where his major was American Studies; he is now a graduate student at C. W. Post. Adam's interest in history and in national parks and historic sites inspired him to pursue the concept of the Flushing Remonstrance Study Act.

Adam's letter in support of the Act, written to the US House Subcommittee, stated: "One theme expressed in America's national parks and memorials is the importance of religious freedom in our nation. In 1965, the Roger Williams National Memorial was authorized in Providence, Rhode Island to commemorate the life of the founder of the Rhode Island Company, Roger Williams. Williams, a champion of religious freedom, was banished from the Massachusetts Colony for his beliefs. In 1636, Williams founded the Rhode Island Colony, which served as a refuge for religious worshippers of all faiths and denominations.

Twenty one years after the founding of the Rhode Island Colony, in 1657, thirty English citizens who were affected by the persecution of Quakers in the Dutch Colony of New Amsterdam ... signed the Flushing Remonstrance, a petition delivered to Peter Stuyvesant, the Director General... who had instituted a ban on Quaker worship".

The signers were fined and punished by Stuyvesant, but Stuyvesant's edict remained in effect until the 1662 challenge by John Bowne, who defied the ban and allowed Quakers to gather in his house in Flushing for worship. Arrested and deported, he pleaded his case before the Dutch West India Company and won. He returned home victorious in 1664, and freedom of worship was established in the colony.

Adam, as a private citizen, encouraged Congresswoman Meng "to introduce the Flushing Remonstrance Study Act, a bill which would conduct a National Park Service feasibility study of sites in Flushing, NY relating to the 1657 signing of the Flushing Remonstrance, including the John Bowne House and the Quaker (Friends) Meeting House. If agreed to, the Flushing Remonstrance Study Act would direct the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study of alternatives for commemorating the 1657 signing of the Remonstrance. I am proud to support this piece of legislation, which will inspire the next generation of New Yorkers and Americans to cherish their religious liberty, diverse heritage, and national parks and historic sites".

Yale Day of Service – 2014

On Saturday, May 10 the Bowne House participated in its second Yale Day of Service. Each spring, Yale graduates across the country gather to donate their services to a variety of community projects. According to the YDS website, “giving back to others in service is part of our culture and traditions”. Honorary chairs for the 2014 Day of Service were President George H. W. Bush, '48; President George W. Bush, '68; Ambassador Hillary R. Clinton, J.D. '73; and President William J. Clinton, J.D. '73.

This year, Bowne House was fortunate to have a number of alumni with a variety of interests and backgrounds; among them were participants from the law and divinity schools. Activities included research on our collections of bibles and 17th and 18th century documents, as well as mulching, raking and gardening work.



*Yale Day of Service at the Bowne House,
May 10, 2014*

Landmarks50 New York Alliance



Bowne House 2015 Landmarks50 Celebration – A Call for Founding Families

Bowne House will mark the 50th anniversary of New York City's landmarks law with a rededication of the museum as a site dedicated to the First Amendment and the principle of freedom of religion in America. This event will be take place on Saturday, October 10th, 2015 at the museum.

October 10 marks the anniversary of the original dedication in 1947. On that day, thousands gathered on Bowne Street to take part in the opening of the museum as "A National Shrine to Religious Freedom". The day chosen was also the tercentenary of the original charter of the Town of Flushing, which was granted in 1645.

In his address, The Honorable Charles S. Colden, a judge and first president of the Bowne House Historical Society, stated: "This nation was settled by men and women in search of freedom they could not find elsewhere. Strong in their convictions, they knew that God moved in all the affairs of man, and, therefore, they fought, from the early beginnings, to establish 'liberty of conscience.'"

While the Town Charter granted liberty of conscience, this principle was soon tested. In response, 31 settlers, Englishmen in the largely Dutch colony, drafted a document known as the Flushing Remonstrance, one of the significant documents in the struggle for religious freedom in America. They protested Governor Peter Stuyvesant's attempts to limit religious liberty.

It was not until 1662, with John Bowne's arrest, imprisonment, deportation and successful appeal to the Dutch West India Company that the principle of freedom of religion was guaranteed in the colony, a principle later enshrined in the Bill of Rights.

Bowne House is a city, state and national landmark; the museum's purpose is education. Its original charter stated that its mandate included educating the public about the important events which took place early in its history and which were associated with the "fundamental principles of freedom of conscience and religious liberty". For almost 70 years, the Bowne House Historical Society has worked to further this goal.

The founding trustees of the Society were 32 in number. They included some of the most prominent names in Queens, as well as several members of the Bowne and Parsons families.

To mark this anniversary celebration, we are calling upon descendants and relatives of the original trustees of the Society, as well as descendants of the 31 signers of the 1657 Flushing Remonstrance, to join with us on October 10, 2015 for our rededication ceremony, which will take place in the garden of the Bowne House.

In addition to Charles Colden, the trustees included:

Max Abramson
Dr. Charles H. Campbell
Margaret I. Carman
Harry I. Dayton
Sherman S. Ely
Mrs. Paul B. Findley
W. Flemer Foulk
Reverend B. A. Galloway

Arthur H. Greeley
Rev. Dr. Norman A. Hall
John J. Halleran
Laurence B. Halleran
Douglas G. Hardgrove
Gale Hunter
Samuel D. Jones
Dr. George J. Lawrence

continued next page

**LANDMARKS50
NYC 1965-2015**



trustees con't from previous page

Mary Mac Leod
Rabbi Max Meyer
Anna M. O'Connor
Harold G. Parker
William Bowne Parsons
Charles U. Powell
Franklin F. Regan

LeRoy T. Stratton
Mrs. Edward J. Streator
Mrs. John H. Tennant
Haynes Trebor
William H. Waechter
Mrs. Charles B. Williams
Very Reverend Monsignor John D. Wynne

The 31 signers of the Flushing Remonstrance were, in order of their signatures:

Tobias Feake	Antonie Field	Michael Milner
William Noble	Richard Stockton	Henry Townsend
William Thorne, Jr.	Edward Griffin	George Wright
Edward Tarne	Nathaniel Tue	John Foard
John Store	Nicholas Blackford	Henry Semtell
Nathaniel Hefferd	Micah Tue	Edward Hart
Benjamin Hubbard	Phillip Ud	John Mastine
William Pidgion	Robert Field, Sr.	John Townsend
George Clere	Robert Field Jr.	Edward Farrington
Elais Doughtie	Nickholas Parsell	

Descendants and relatives of these signers, and descendants and relatives of the Societies founders, may contact the Bowne House for further information. We are planning a festive reunion to commemorate those whose courage and sacrifices helped secure the freedoms we enjoy in America today.

office@bownehouse.org – attention Landmarks50 celebration 2015 - descendants

**THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE
BOWNE HOUSE HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

Morris Hylton III, President
Rosemary S. Vietor, Vice President

Wellington Z. Chen
George Farr
Annette L. Geddes
Edith T. Loening
Hon. Frank Padavan
Penelope B. Perryman
Margaret D. Sullivan
Roland Wade

TRUSTEES EMERITUS

Franklin Regan, Esq.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Donald R. Friary, Chairman
Jeanne AdairDean
F. Failey
Peter Kenny
Anthony C. Wood

Ann Perl de Pal, Resident Manager
and Volunteer Coordinator

Forgotten Cistern is an Archaeological Gold Mine

Preservation Notes Newsletter vol. XLIX Nos. 1 and 2 Fall 2014, Society for the Preservation of Long Island Antiquities

The circa 1661 Bowne House in Flushing, Queens (maintained by the Historic House Trust of New York City and operated by the Bowne House Historical Society) is regarded as one of the best preserved examples of Anglo-Dutch vernacular architecture in the country. Last year the Bowne House began a substantial exterior preservation project based on the findings and recommendations from a 2007 Historic Structures Report (HSR).

The HSR utilized materials from the Bowne House Historical Society's extensive archives associated with the lives of the nine generations of Bowne and Parsons family inhabiting the house until 1946. This invaluable documentation was coupled by dendrochronology performed on the building's frame and ongoing archaeological excavations at the site.

Additionally, archaeological investigations provided a wealth of information. In particular, a cistern found under the floor of the c.1815 laundry addition presented an opportunity for archaeologists to venture back in time

to the eighteenth century. When the large cistern was decommissioned, it became the Bowne family's refuse receptacle before eventually being filled and forgotten. Thousands of artifacts, including Chinese export porcelain and apothecary bottles were unearthed and are now being documented and catalogued. The Historical Society plans to curate a special exhibit of the recent discoveries from the cistern. There are also plans to incorporate the cistern into the visitor's experience.

The ongoing preservation of the exterior, and eventually the interior, as well as the recent archaeological excavations provide an incredible opportunity to learn more about the Bowne and Parsons family who inhabited the Bowne House for approximately 285 years. The project allows the Historical Society to reassess and expand their current interpretation, incorporating new stories about nine generations of Quakers, abolitionists, nurserymen, and the women who resided in one of New York City's great seventeenth century Anglo-Dutch farmhouses.

2014 Intern and Volunteer Activities at the Museum

Bowne House has continued to reach out to the local community and beyond while undergoing restoration. Some of the volunteer and intern driven projects were:

The museum, in collaboration with Beautify Historic Flushing sponsor spring and fall projects directed at improving the appearance of downtown Flushing areas which were part of the 19th century Parsons Nursery and the 17th and 18th century Bowne Farm. Education, planting, maintenance and redesign activities have driven each volunteer day.

During the summer, interns are mentored, focusing on historical research, photographic documentation and botanical illustration as well as learning preservation and architectural observation. Several interns majoring in technology and computer science honed their skills focusing on social media outreach and data analysis.

Relationships with local schools, colleges, universities, other community non-profits and neighbors have been fostered. This year the community groups included volunteers and interns from the following high schools: Flushing International, John Bowne, East West High, Townsend Harris, Bayside, and Bronx Science. Colleges and universities included: Queens, La Guardia, CUNY, NYS Binghamton, Columbia, and Yale. The Chinese Community Planning Council participated as well.

Summer 2014 was busy despite ongoing construction work. This year, we hosted two interns from the Bard Graduate Program. Kelsey and Clair chose to focus on our textile collections; the results may be seen in the very informative article in this edition of the newsletter; the community will have an opportunity to learn more about these collections in the forthcoming exhibit at the library, opening next month.

The Bowne House Annual Cocktail Party and Historic Preservation Award Ceremony

This year's fourth annual cocktail party and award ceremony was held on October 15 in New York. It was a festive event, bringing together members and friends as we look to the completion of the first step in the restoration of the museum. Our honoree was Michael Devonshire of Jan Hird Pokorny Associates, the architect of record for Phase I of the Bowne House restoration. A second award was given to Michael by Barry Grodenchik, representing Queens Borough President Melinda Katz, making this a two-award event.



Photo, above: Michael Devonshire, left, Barry Grodenchik, right

Michael Devonshire is a partner and Senior Architectural Conservator at JHP, with over 35 years' experience in the field of historic preservation. He has a particular interest in colonial Dutch and English wood frame buildings. Michael has been involved with a number of projects internationally, nationally, and around the New York area.

Michael studied at the Rhode Island School of Design, the Agean School of Art in Patmos, Greece, Roger Williams University in Bristol, R.I., and the Attingham School in England. He serves on the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission and the New York State Preservation Board.

We were pleased to have Michael Devonshire and JHP partner with us for this project.



Photo, right: Michael Devonshire left, Marty Hylton, president of the Bowne House Historical Society, right.

UPCOMING EVENTS AT THE BOWNE HOUSE

December 5th, 2014 through January 5th, 2015:

“The Secret Lives of Dresses”

See article in this newsletter for detailed information on this exhibit, which will be held at the Queens Public Library, Flushing Branch, on Main Street in Flushing. There will be a Family Workshop at the library at 4 PM on December 12th, in conjunction with the exhibit.

December 7th, 2014:

The 27th Annual Holiday Historic House Tour will be held from 1-5 PM.

The tour includes 7 sites:

The Bowne House
39-01 Bowne Street, Flushing

Voelker Orth Museum
149-19 38th Avenue, Flushing

Lewis Latimer House
34-41 137th Street, Flushing

Flushing Town Hall
137-55 Northern Blvd., Flushing

The Friends Meeting House
137-16 Northern Blvd., Flushing

Louis Armstrong House Museum
34-56 107th Street, Corona

Tickets are \$20 for adults and \$10 for children 12 and under. Group rates upon request. Tickets may be purchased online by going to: www.QueensHistoricalSociety.org.

**2014 - 2015 MEMBERSHIP DUES RENEWAL
THE BOWNE HOUSE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
37-01 Bowne Street, Flushing, NY 11354
789-359-0528**

Individual	\$25.00
Student (non-voting)	\$15.00
Family	\$50.00
Sustaining Membership	\$100.00
Corporate Membership	\$500.00
Life Membership (one time payment)	\$1,000.00

In addition to my dues, I would like to make a contribution in the amount
of \$ _____ .00

Signature _____

* Life Members may receive, if they wish, a complimentary framed hand painted Life Member Certificate, personalized with calligraphy. Please list your name as you wish to have it appear on the certificate.

Please print your name and address below as you would like them to appear on our mailing list, as well as email, fax and phone so that we can better communicate with you.

Referral names and contact information:

We welcome your suggestions of friends and family who like to hear about the Society. Please list names and contact information below.

The Bowne House
37-01 Bowne Street
Flushing, NY 11354

PRSR STD
US Postage
PAID
Permit #2643
Newburgh, NY

The Bowne House
Circa 1661

