

**PROTESTANT REFORMED DUTCH CHURCH OF FLUSHING
(BOWNE STREET COMMUNITY CHURCH)**

143-11 Roosevelt Avenue (38-01 Bowne Street), Queens

Built: 1891-92; architect, George E. Potter (attributed); builder, Edward Richardson

Landmark Site: Borough of Queens Tax Map Block 5022, Lot 01 in part, consisting of the portion of the lot bounded by a line beginning at the southwest corner of the property line of lot 01, northerly along the western property line of lot 01 to the northern property line of lot 01, easterly along the northern property line of lot 01 to a point on a line extending northerly from the western building line of the east transept of the 1892 building, southerly along said line along the exterior wall of the east transept and continuing along said line to the southern property line of lot 01, then westerly to the place of beginning, as shown on the attached map.

On October 8, 2015, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a special public hearing on the Backlog Initiative Items in the Borough of Queens, including the Bowne Street Community Church (Item III-Borough of Queens, Group E). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. At the public hearing, Dr. Kent Chin of the Governing Board of Bowne Street Community Church and representing the owner of the property spoke in favor of designation. Others who spoke in favor of designation included the following: Elaine Chung, representing New York City Council Member Peter Koo of the 20th Council District; State Senator Tony Avella of Senate District 11; the Queens Borough Historian, Jack Eichenbaum, and representatives of the Victorian Society, the Municipal Art Society, the NYC Landmarks Conservancy, the Historic Districts Council, Guides Association of New York, Four Borough Neighborhood Preservation Alliance, Queens Preservation Council, and two additional individuals. A letter from State Senator Toby Ann Stavisky in favor of designation was also read at the public hearing. The Commission additionally received letters of support from United States Congresswoman Grace Meng, the Queens Preservation League, the Aquinas Honor Society, and six individuals. No one spoke against Landmarks designation, nor were any letters received that opposed designation.

Statements about support for the designation of the Bowne Street Community Church during the backlog process reflect specific testimony given or submitted during the hearing or while the record was open. In addition, the Commission received numerous general communications about the backlog that were directed at all items on the backlog. These items were not specifically submitted while the record was open. Due to the volume and variety of these more general emails they are not tallied for individual buildings.

On November 15, 2016, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation of the Protestant Reformed Dutch Church of Flushing (Bowne Street Community Church) (Item No. 1). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Two representatives of the church, Samuel Tai, a trustee, and Aaron Chen, pastor and chair of the governing board, spoke against designation. Ten people spoke in favor of designation, including New York City Council Member Peter Koo, Jack Eichenbaum, Queens Borough Historian, and representatives of the Queens Historical Society, Historic Districts Council, Victorian Society of American, Metropolitan Chapter, New York City Landmarks Conservancy, Queens Preservation Council, the Bowne House

Historical Society, and two individuals. A letter from Paul DiBenedetto, president of the Bayside Historical Society, supporting designation was read at the public hearing.

Summary

Originally built for the Protestant Reformed Dutch Church, this building is significant as an excellent example of the Romanesque Revival style, especially notable for its prominent corner tower, decorative brickwork, and opalescent stained-glass windows. Several of the windows were designed by artist and congregant Agnes Fairchild Northrop of Tiffany Studios. It is one of downtown Flushing's most significant religious structures.

George E. Potter, an architect with a practice in Springfield, Massachusetts, and later in Hartford, Connecticut, most likely designed the church. He was responsible for approximately 25 churches in New England and Long Island. One of his commissions, the Memorial Hall in Monson, Massachusetts, is similar in design to the Flushing Reformed Dutch Church. Edward Richardson (1848-1921) of Flushing was the building contractor. As a successful businessman, he was active in both the building trades and real estate.



The Reformed Dutch Church denomination traces its roots to the founding of New Netherland as a Dutch colony, with many additional Reformed congregations established throughout New York in the 19th century. As the town of Flushing developed and prospered, a Reformed congregation was established there in 1842. It quickly outgrew its original building, and in 1873 the congregation acquired a lot at the northeast corner of today's Roosevelt Avenue and Bowne Street. Construction began in October of 1891 and the church was dedicated November of 1892. In addition to the main auditorium assembly space, the building incorporated rooms at the north end (transept-like bay) for a chapel, Sunday school, library, and upstairs kitchen.

The Romanesque Revival style, and in particular Boston architect H. H. Richardson's interpretation of the style, was popular for churches during the second half of the 19th century as a modern adaptation of a medieval aesthetic. The church features arched openings, intricate brickwork, stone details and a corner bell tower that dominates the site. One of the notable Richardsonian features of this church is the contrast of the massive bell tower with the low squat arcade along the front elevation.

In 1974 the Reformed Church merged with the First Congregational Church of Flushing and the church was renamed the Bowne Street Community Church. It is now associated with the Reformed Church in America, the United Church of Christ, and since 1988 with the Taiwanese Zion Christian Church. In addition, the New York Yeram Church, an independent Korean congregation, has its services and offices at the Bowne Street Community Church. These church congregations have continued to diligently and sensitively maintain the church building.

Over three centuries ago, the citizens of Flushing formally declared religious freedom with the Flushing Remonstrance of 1657. Today, this multi-denominational church continues this tradition of faith and tolerance and reflects the cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity of the surrounding community.

BUILDING DESCRIPTION

The Protestant Reformed Dutch Church of Flushing, (today the Bowne Street Community Church)¹ is located at the northeast corner of Roosevelt Avenue and Bowne Street on a tree-shaded lot. The building is set back from the intersection with its front facade facing south along Roosevelt Avenue. The main church building has a rectangular footprint with a tall bell tower at the southwest corner. There is a shallow transept with a gabled roof and also a two-story transept-like bay at the north end at both the east and west facades. A 1925-26 brick annex (not part of this designation) is attached to the first floor of the east facade at the north end of the building. Overall, with minor exceptions, the building retains its original design, materials and details.

All Facades

Historic: red brick cladding with brick and stone details; stone or concrete steps lead to entry doors; round-arch openings with brick dentil and serrated edging; quarry-faced stone impost blocks; a quarry-faced ashlar stone base that extends from the ground and incorporates the stone windowsills; expressed enframing of major round-arch portals with decorative brick dentil and corbel trim and with stone impost blocks and triangular roofed pediment; wood plank doors (either pairs or single) with decorative iron strapwork hinges; arched door transoms with wood rectilinear muntins; quarry-faced stone lintels and belt courses, some coupled with foliate stone units; corners terminate with brick corbels; corbel checkerboard tables at eaves; windows with leaded and/or stained (or opalescent) windows, most with geometric patterns and with wood brick mold and frames (some removed at north facade); steep hip roof.

Alterations: composition shingles replaced slate roof cladding; protective semi-translucent panels over most (not all) of the stained-glass windows; metal handrails at stairs; iron fencing at perimeter of lot along sidewalk.

Front Facade

Historic: a semi-detached squared corner tower at southwest corner of the building; a shed-roofed one-story extension with an arcade of seven windows; extension flanked on each side by a pier topped with stone cap and a parapet associated with each pier; a semi-detached entrance porch with round-arch portal and hipped roof at the southeast corner; main body of the building has a front-facing gable end with a large central round window; stone-block edging at lower half of round window that continues as a belt course across the facade; three small rectangular stone-trimmed windows above round window near gable peak.

Alterations at Front Facade: hanging light within arched entry; security light over arched entry at enclosed porch; two free-standing sign boards.

Tower

Historic: three-stages with attic; tower is engaged at first stage, semi-detached at second stage, and free-standing at the upper stages; entrance portals at the base at the south and west; at second stage, quarry-faced stone label molding atop narrow stained-glass rectangular windows; at third stage, tall arched openings for louvers; at attic stage, three short glazed round-arch windows at east and west sides; at the front facade, an oriel-like brick engaged dormer with steep roof, corbel brickwork, and a pair of narrow rectangular windows; and atop the tower, a very

steep tall hipped roof with east-west ridge; windows with leaded and/or stained (or opalescent) windows with wood brick mold and frames.

Alterations at Tower: decorative metal cresting removed from ridge of tower roof; hanging light within each of the two entry portals.

East and West Facade

Historic: basement-level rectangular windows; four round-arch stained-glass windows at each facade along nave; transept with gable roof extends approximately two feet from nave at each facade; single round-arch stained-glass window (larger than the rest of the round-arch windows in the nave) within transept at each side; secondary rectangular windows; steep gable roof over the main building oriented north to south; three corbelled brick chimneys, two along the north wall and one at the ridge.

Two-story transept-like section at the north end of building (secondary spaces, historically with a chapel, Sunday school, parlor, kitchen, etc.) with three windows at each level, rectangular at first level; round-arch flanked by quarter-round arch windows at second level; checkerboard brick spandrel panels; hipped and gabled roofline lower than main sanctuary.

West facade: enclosed entrance porch with segmental-arched portal and hipped roof and located between the transept and the transept-like north end.

East facade similar to the west facade with the exception of the attached annex (not part of this designation) at the north end; the enclosed entrance porch oriented with the round-arch portal to the south.

Alterations:

West facade: wood ramp with metal railing to entrance porch; new glass and metal entrance door; hanging light within entry; two metal pipes in brick wall; free-standing HVAC units adjacent to base of building; air conditioning unit in window.

East facade: the east wall of the first floor of the north end is attached to and incorporated into the annex (not part of this designation); brick chimney between east wall of the transept-like north end and the annex; rectangular basement windows filled in; security lights above two nave arched windows; two metal pipes in brick wall; security light at altered or added brick parapet over enclosed porch entry; large metal mailbox at porch entry; utility box at second floor at north end; air conditioning unit in window.

North Facade

Historic: configuration of central bay the same as the historical east and west transept-like sections at north end; one stained-glass window at first floor center window of central bay; several leaded or stained glass windows at several other windows; configuration of windows similar to east and west north end bays; additional tall rectangular windows.

Alterations: replacement metal window sash in most (not all) of the windows; 1925-26 brick segmental-arched entrance for the annex faces west and is attached to the north facade.

HISTORY

Flushing, Queens²

Flushing, one of the early colonial settlements of Queens County, is located immediately east of Flushing Creek. Established in 1645, most early Flushing settlers pursued farming, but in the 18th and 19th centuries, the town was better known for its plant nurseries, such as the Linnaean Gardens, the country's first commercial nursery established by the Prince family. Later, the Parsons Nursery was particularly successful, in operation during much of the 19th century.

In 1800, the first bridge across Flushing Creek created the primary east-west land route known then as Broadway (now Northern Boulevard). Consequently, most of the village's downtown commercial and business development occurred nearby to the south, including the first church building (1843) of the Reformed Dutch Church of Flushing at Prince and Washington Streets. Rail service was introduced in 1854 and trolley lines opened in 1888-99. With better transportation links to the New York area, the population of Flushing increased as the town developed and spread eastward. The success of the town's development is evident in the historic 1864 Flushing Town Hall, a New York City Landmark, notable as a handsome brick Romanesque Revival style building that stands today on Northern Boulevard, across the street from the Quaker Meeting House (1694), also a New York City Landmark. Also notable was the establishment of prominent 19th-century institutions such as the Flushing Institute of 1843, a secondary school for boys, and the mid-19th-century Academy of Saint Joseph, a Roman Catholic boarding school (neither extant).

The blocks east and southeast of the downtown area became the location for single family homes that lined the streets, many of them for wealthy New Yorkers. Along Amity Street (now Roosevelt Avenue), many houses on large lots were built in the 1870s in the popular Second Empire style with mansard roofs. This was the period when the lot for the current Reformed Church building was purchased in what was then a residential neighborhood near the edge of downtown.

The Protestant Reformed Dutch Church³

The official church of New Netherland was the Reformed Dutch Church, one of a number of Calvinistic denominations that were aligned with the teachings of John Calvin and other theologians who separated from the Roman Catholic Church in the 16th century. During the English Colonial period the Anglican denomination became the official church of New York,⁴ but the Reformed Dutch Church was allowed to continue and remained under Dutch authority until after the American Revolution. After 1800, the Reformed Dutch Church in the United States organized its own synods separate from the Netherlands, one in New York and the other in Albany. The synods were umbrella organizations that included smaller administrative groupings known as classes. The Flushing church belonged to a grouping of Reformed Dutch churches in the Northern Long Island Classis that in turn came under the Synod of New York.

When Flushing established its Reformed congregation in 1842, there were other Reformed Dutch churches in Queens County: the Jamaica Reformed Church, founded in 1715; the Reformed Church of Newtown, founded in 1735; and Astoria's Reformed Dutch Church, organized in 1839. Manhasset (1732) and Oyster Bay (1734) in what was then Queens County, also had established Reformed Dutch churches in the 18th century. In some instances, the Reformed Dutch churches maintained the Dutch language well into the 19th century. In 1867 the

Protestant Reformed Dutch Church denomination's name was officially changed to the Reformed Church of America, but the individual congregations often retained the word 'Dutch' to distinguish themselves from other 'Reformed' religious bodies, such as the German Reformed churches.

History of the Flushing Reformed Dutch Church Congregation⁵

On May 20, 1842, three Presbyterians and four members from other nearby Reformed Dutch Churches organized the Flushing congregation.⁶ The *Brooklyn Eagle* recalled:

Up to about forty years ago what little Dutch element there was in the community was either associated with the churches at Jamaica or Newtown, or with the Presbyterian element worshipped at Saint George's...At this juncture the Reverend William Gordon, then pastor of the Reformed Dutch Church of Manhasset, began a preaching service in a small room on Bridge Street...⁷

The church was incorporated the following year in 1843 as the "Protestant Reformed Dutch Church of Flushing." The congregation decided to erect a modest church on a slight rise in a densely populated area in the downtown area at the corner of Prince and Washington (now 37th Avenue) streets. The cornerstone of the first church building was laid in August of 1843. It was built of stone quarried from Blackwell (now Roosevelt) Island, and some of that stone was later salvaged and used for a fireplace in the present church building.

By the 1870s, the Reformed Dutch Church had increased dramatically in membership and plans were made to relocate farther away from the commercial district. In 1873 a large undeveloped site (186 feet by 193 feet) was acquired from Mary B. Parsons.⁸ Located at the northeast corner of Bowne and Amity streets (now Roosevelt Avenue), the lot was described as "perhaps the best site in Flushing for a church."⁹ Although the immediate area was dotted with single family homes, most of the blocks farther east were still open land. In 1877, a parsonage was built to serve the church on the southeast part of the lot, but it would take almost 20 years to finance construction of the church itself. An 1882 history of the congregation noted:

...the new church is still a "castle in the air" but the beautiful and commodious parsonage erected nearly five years ago-as commodious and beautiful as any within the bounds of the denomination-stands...¹⁰

Reverend James Demarest (1832-1913), a prominent cleric within the Reformed Church of America Synod of New York, became pastor in December 1890 and served until 1897. He graduated from the New Brunswick, New Jersey, Seminary (Reformed Church) in 1856, was ordained the same year, and later received his Doctor of Divinity degree in 1877. After serving in a number of New Jersey and New York congregations, he became the pastor of the Flushing church. In addition to his parish assignments and the publication of sermons and articles related to the Reformed Church, he was the financial secretary of the Special Committee on Finances of the New Brunswick Seminary in the late 1890s.¹¹

Design and Construction of the Reformed Dutch Church of Flushing

Reverend Demarest noted "If you build a new house of worship, it will be for God and God will provide the means."¹² In contrast to his immediate predecessor, he succeeded in raising

the necessary funds, including donations totaling \$7,000 from the congregation as well as securing a loan of \$5,000 from the Collegiate Reformed Dutch Church of New York.¹³ Newspaper accounts reported that “G. E. Potter” had been hired to design the church and in separate articles that Edward Richardson was identified as the builder. The cornerstone was laid on October 10, 1891. Clad in red brick, the church featured arched openings, intricate brickwork, stone details and a prominent corner bell tower. The bell was cast at the Meneely Bell Foundry of Troy, New York.

Services were first held in May of 1892, and six months later the church was formally dedicated on November 6, 1892. The new Romanesque Revival style church, with a seating capacity of about 600-700 people, was taller, larger, and more impressive than the previous building.

The new church is Romanesque in architecture. It is built of red brick on a heavy foundation of rough stone...It has a frontage of 138 feet on Bowne...and of 75 feet on Amity Street. In the rear (north), the length of the chapel is 80 feet. The interior of the auditorium is 60 x 75 feet, except at the side gables, where a transept projects two feet on each side.¹⁴

In addition to the main auditorium assembly space, the building incorporates support spaces at the north end of the building.

The chapel is under the same roof with the church and is connected with the auditorium by two doors. On the lower floor is the main Sunday school room and adjoining it are several classrooms and the library. On the floor above is a social room with its kitchen, a parlor for the ladies’ societies, a cloak room and the pastor’s study...In the Sunday school room is a stained glass memorial window placed there by Mrs. A. P. Bird [sic] for her daughter.¹⁵

Romanesque Revival Style¹⁶

Throughout the 19th century, a great number of ecclesiastical structures were built in New York City and across the United States. In general, as the century progressed, the styles gradually moved away from Georgian or Classical models, popular in the early decades, to Romanesque and Gothic Revival styles, both taking their inspiration from medieval sources. As a broad generalization, many Episcopal (and other denominations such as Roman Catholic) churches utilized the Gothic Revival styles for their churches to complement the liturgical traditions that emphasized ceremony, ritual, and richly-decorated furnishings. Some Protestant denominations, like the Reformed Dutch Church, often distanced themselves from the Gothic-inspired approach, and instead preferred more modest designs, more consistent with the Protestant Reformation’s emphasis on simplicity within their style of worship. These denominations often chose the Romanesque Revival with its bold shapes and restrained details. This preference at times also extended to the choice of stained-glass windows where congregations installed geometric, rather than figural designs.¹⁷

The Romanesque Revival style had its beginnings in Germany around 1820 and was known there as *Rundbogenstil*, the round-arched style. This design approach was utilized by American architects during the first half of the 19th century, adapting it to whatever conditions and requirements a building might have. It was used for a variety of building types well into the

early 20th century. Sometimes labeled Lombard, Norman or Roman, the Romanesque Revival style is readily identified by its round-arched openings; its incorporation of towers and steeply pitched roofs; brick or stone cladding; and medieval-style masonry trim and ornamentation. All of these characteristics are well executed and exhibited at the Flushing Reformed Church.

The Romanesque Revival style for churches has a particularly noteworthy history in New York City. Richard Upjohn's Church of the Pilgrims (built 1844-46 and within the Brooklyn Heights Historic District) is often cited as the first mature example of this style for a church in the United States.¹⁸ Within a short time, many congregations adopted this revival style, including those in Flushing. The Flushing Congregational Church of 1850 (burned 1970) that stood at the corner of Bowne and Lincoln, was an early example of the Romanesque Revival style. In addition, a smaller and pared-down example is the nearby Macedonian Methodist Episcopal Church on Union Street, built around the same time as the Reformed Dutch Church.

During the later decades of the 19th century, the Romanesque Revival style was often influenced by the designs of the gifted and celebrated Boston architect, Henry Hobson Richardson (1838-1886). Sometimes known as Richardsonian Romanesque, this variation is known for its clear, strong, picturesque massing; varied and contrasting features; blank stretches of wall surfaces accented with rough-cut masonry or fenestration; and other characteristics, some of which are incorporated into the Flushing Reformed Church. For example, the church's design contrasts the height and mass of the dominant bell tower with the diminutive arcade on the front elevation. It also incorporates a variety of shapes and sizes of fenestration, a picturesque roofline, and a rusticated base and trim that contrasts with the smooth brick surfaces. Richardson's variation of the Romanesque Revival style was widely imitated, particularly in the 1880s through the 1890s, throughout the Northeastern United States before spreading westward. Although Richardson designed a wide variety of building types, many of his civic and institutional buildings were often church-like in design and massing.¹⁹

According to the *AIA Guide, to New York City*, the church's "...serrated brickwork at the arches and gables adds a level of elegance to the stolid volumes."²⁰ As a focal point for the surrounding community, its bold Romanesque Revival massing and dominant tower continue to enhance the streetscape along Roosevelt Avenue, contributing to the architectural diversity of the neighborhood.

Decorative Windows²¹

At the time of dedication in 1892, it was noted that "The windows are all the work of the Tiffany Glass Company of New York."²² One of these original installations is within the west wall transept and is a memorial window honoring Reverend Oliver Ellsworth Cobb. Another is a rectangular stained-glass window located on the north facade in the Sunday school room. This second window with a floral and geometric design was dedicated to Lizzie Byrd in 1891. The rest of the original Tiffany windows, including the large round window at the front facade, are geometric opalescent designs, many with variations of blue as the dominant color.

Continuing with Tiffany Studios, in 1899 the church installed another richly detailed opalescent stained-glass window in the east wall transept opposite the Cobb window. It was designed by Flushing native and member of the congregation, Agnes Fairchild Northrop (1857-1953) as a memorial to Robert Baker. Baker was associated with two of Flushing's largest nurseries and the window appropriately features an elaborate floral design. In 1904 she designed another memorial window, paying tribute to her father, Allen Parkhill Northrop who served the church as a deacon for 43 years from 1860-1903. Known as the "Vision of Saint John" or the

“Tree of Life,” this beautifully detailed stained-glass window is adjacent to the Cobb window along the west wall.

Agnes Northrop joined Tiffany Studios in 1884 and remained associated with the renowned designer, Louis Comfort Tiffany, until his death in 1936.²³ Although she moved out of the Queens community, she continued to attend holiday services at the Flushing Reformed Dutch Church throughout her life. A specialist in floral designs and landscape scenes, she was one of a select group of Tiffany artists who often signed their designs. Known for her artistic skill with opalescent glass, she was also responsible for the Mackenzie Memorial Window along the east wall and executed by the Westminster Studios after 1938.

George E. Potter²⁴

George E. Potter (?1846-1918) most likely designed the church. A newspaper article noted that regarding the “...Reformed Dutch Church, Flushing...The architect is G. E. Potter, also of this city (Astoria).”²⁵

Potter was born in Rhode Island and advertised himself as an architect with a practice in Springfield, Massachusetts and in Hartford, Connecticut. An 1894 newspaper article noted he was responsible for approximately 25 churches in New England and Long Island.²⁶ Although many of the churches that Potter designed are no longer standing, two examples of extant churches are the 1886 Gothic Revival style First Church of Christ (Congregational) in Unionville, Connecticut and the Congregational Church of West Hartford, Connecticut. He also designed the Memorial Town Hall in Monson, Massachusetts, similar in many ways to the Reformed Dutch Church in Flushing with a prominent tower and a church-like appearance. Built in 1884-85, it is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.²⁷ Of note too is that one of Potter’s house designs was included in *Bicknell’s Cottage and Villa Architecture*, an 1881 book of architectural drawings.²⁸ Potter is buried in Moshassuck Cemetery in Central Falls, Rhode Island.

Edward Richardson²⁹

Edward Richardson (1848-1921) of Flushing was the building contractor for the church. According to an item in the Brooklyn Eagle, “The contract for building the new \$20,000 Reformed church in Flushing has been awarded to Edward Richardson.”³⁰

He was born in Wales, worked as a carpenter’s apprentice, and then moved to Flushing in 1871 where he became a successful contractor and businessman. He was regarded as one of the “Pioneer Builders” who contributed to intensified development of Flushing during the last few decades of the 19th century and the period preceding World War I. During that time, streets were extended and many blocks of former farmsteads and undeveloped land were transformed into single-family residences. In fact, Richardson was credited with building over 500 houses in the Murray Hill and Broadway (now Northern Boulevard) sections of Flushing, an armory on Amity Street, and a school in Newtown. He and other Flushing businessmen were instrumental in organizing the Flushing Building and Loan Association. In addition, he was an active member of the Flushing Methodist Episcopal Church, and once ran for a local political office. One of his two sons, Rodman, became a lawyer, and ultimately a judge, and the other, Albert Edward, became an architect with a practice in Flushing.

Recent History

After World War I Flushing began to experience increased development with the construction of its first apartment buildings. The subway terminated in Flushing in 1928, a major

factor in future changes in the downtown area and the residential streets. The trend continued as many blocks of houses were displaced by large apartment buildings after World War II. Capitalizing on the Whitestone Bridge and the newly constructed highways, real estate developers transformed Flushing from a “small town” into a densely packed urban area with large apartment buildings and extensive commercial and retail development.

The demographics also changed. Beginning in the 1960s, Flushing became home to many new residents from Asia, particularly Taiwan and Korea. Today, the downtown area represents one of the largest Asian communities in the United States. This is also expressed in the religious institutions of the area. “R. Scott Hanson... who has been studying religious diversity in Flushing and particularly on Bowne Street, calls it ‘one of the most extreme cases, if not the most extreme case, of religious plurality’ anywhere...[with] about 40 houses of worship in a square mile around Bowne Street.”³¹

In 1974 the Reformed Church of Flushing formally merged with the First Congregational Church of Flushing, later known as the United Church of Christ. At that time, it became the Bowne Street Community Church. The building became associated with the Reformed Church in America, the United Church of Christ, and in 1988 with the Taiwanese Zion Christian Church. In addition, the New York Yeram Church, an independent Korean congregation not affiliated with a particular denomination, has its services and offices at the Bowne Street Community Church. Over three centuries ago, the citizens of Flushing formally declared religious freedom with the Flushing Remonstrance of 1657. Today, this multi-denominational church continues this tradition of faith and tolerance and reflects the cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity of the surrounding community.

Although a brick annex was added to the rear of the east facade in 1925-26 (not part of this designation), the property retains remarkable integrity of both materials and design, and continues to give the neighborhood a strong sense of the 19th-century streetscape along Roosevelt Avenue and Bowne Street. Along with the Friends Meeting House and Saint George Episcopal Church, the Bowne Street Community Church is one of downtown Flushing’s most prominent and historically significant structures.

Report prepared by
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NOTES

¹ The church has also been identified as the Dutch Reformed Church of Flushing and sometimes shortened to simply the Reformed Church of Flushing.

² Information in this section is based on the following sources: Peter Ross, *A History of Long Island: From Its Earliest Settlement to the Present Time*, Volume III, (New York: Lewis Publishing Company, 1902), 528-537; August Kupka, *History of Flushing, New York* (pamphlet on file at the Flushing Historical Society, reprinted 1983 by the Queens Historical Society); Kenneth T. Jackson, ed., *The Encyclopedia of New York City*, 2nd Ed, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010); New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC), *Flushing High School* (LP-1798), (New York: City of New York, 1991), prepared by James T. Dillon; LPC, *St. George's (Episcopal) Church, Old Parish House and Graveyard*, (LP-2053), (New York: City of New York, 2000), prepared by Gail Harris.

³ Peter W. Williams, *America's Religions: Traditions and Cultures* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998), "Calvinism and the Reformed Tradition," 82-86 and "Presbyterians and Other Reformed Churches," 107-114; Russell L. Gasero, *Historical Directory of the Reformed Church in America: 1628-2000* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2000).

⁴ During that time, the first Saint George (Anglican) Church was built in Flushing in 1746. Anglicans had a formal presence in Flushing from 1702, and as such, was the second denomination established in Flushing after the Quakers.

⁵ Information in this section is based on the following sources: Elsie D. Shipman and Catherine Rothwell, *A Century of Service: 1842-1942* (Flushing, New York: Reformed Church of Flushing, 1942); Historical Records Survey, Work Projects Administration, *Inventory of the Church Archives in New York City: Reformed Church in America* (New York: City of New York, 1941); LPC, *Reformed Church of Flushing*, Preliminary Draft Report, 2003; prepared by Matthew Postal. The author wishes to acknowledge Richard Hourahan, Queens Historical Society, for his research assistance with the history of Flushing.

⁶ The formation of the Reformed Dutch Church was the sixth denomination established in Flushing after the Religious Society of Friends (1665, known as Quakers), Episcopal (1702 as Anglicans); the Macedonia African Methodist Episcopal Church (1811), Methodist (1822), and the Roman Catholic Church (1826). These denominations continue to have a presence in the immediate neighborhood.

⁷ "Flushing's Old Church," *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, August 2, 1891, 14.

⁸ Today's lot size is 243 feet along Roosevelt Avenue and 186 feet along Bowne Street. "Mary B. Parsons, unmarried of the village of Flushing, County of Queens and State of New York ...and the Minister, Elders, and Deacons of the Protestant Reformed Dutch Church of Flushing..." New York City Office of Register, Deeds, Liber 421, page 268, dated September 24, 1873. Mary B. Parsons (1813-1878) owned many parcels throughout the village, including the historic Bowne House. She was the daughter of Samuel and Mary Bowne. Her father established the Parsons Nursery in 1838 and her mother was a descendent of the celebrated 17th-century Bowne family. A notation on the 1873 map (Beers, Comstock & Co.) of Flushing reads: "Miss M. B. Parsons 'The Old Bowne House' the Oldest House in Flushing, Built in 1661."

⁹ *Brooklyn Eagle*, August 2, 1891. This location is a couple of blocks south of the Bowne House (1661).

¹⁰ *Historic Sketch of the Reformed Church of Flushing, Long Island*, 1882, 13. Despite such enthusiasm, the parsonage was sold in 1899, perhaps to meet debts incurred during construction of the church itself. A new parsonage was acquired in 1907 at 37-16 Parsons Boulevard.

¹¹ Edward T. Corwin, *A Manual of the Reformed Church in America: 1628-1902*, 4th ed., (New York: Board of Publication of the Reformed Church in America, 1902), 413.

¹² "News of the Churches," *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, May 3, 1891, 2.

¹³ LPC Bowne Street Community Church File: Correspondence with Rita Hollenga, at the Collegiate Church, September 30, 2003.

¹⁴ “To Open the Church: The New Reformed Edifice Will be Dedicated Sunday,” *The Flushing Journal*, October 29, 1892.

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ Information on the Romanesque Revival style is based on the following sources: Kathleen Curran, *The Romanesque Revival: Religion, Politics, and Transnational Exchange*, (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003); Leland Roth, *American Architecture: A History* (Cambridge, MA: Perseus Books, 2001), 252-260; LPC, *St. Paul’s Evangelical Lutheran Church, Sunday School, and Parsonage* (LP-2418), (New York: City of New York, 2011), prepared by Virginia Kurshan.

¹⁷ A number of Flushing’s Reformed congregation were conflicted about replacing any of the original geometric stained-glass windows with windows with ornamental and/or floral designs.

¹⁸ Located at Hicks and Remsen streets, Brooklyn, Church of the Pilgrims was built for a Congregational Church. It is now serving Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Rite Roman Catholic Church.

¹⁹ One of H. H. Richardson’s early church designs exhibits a feature that is similar to the Flushing Reformed Church. His First Baptist Church of Boston of 1869 incorporates a tall semi-detached corner tower that dwarfs the rest of the building.

²⁰ Norval White and Elliot Willensky, *AIA Guide to New York City*, Fourth Edition (New York: Random House, 2000), 849.

²¹ Alastair Duncan, *Tiffany Windows* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982); *Long Island Farmer*, November 11, 1892.

²² *Flushing Journal*, August 13, 1892.

²³ Martin Eidelberg, Nina Gray, and Margaret K. Hofer, *A New Light on Tiffany: Clara Driscoll and the Tiffany Girls* (New York: New York Historical Society, 2007), 184.

²⁴ Information on George E. Potter is based on the following sources: Ancestry.com, United States Census, 1850, 1860, 1870, and 1880; Business and City Directories, 1875 through 1880; *Springfield Republican*, August 16, 1875; *Newtown Register*, November 1, 1888; “Back 50 Years—October 27, 1888,” *The Long-Islander*, October 20, 1938; Ancestry.com “Find a Grave,” George E. Potter, March 20, 1918, buried in Moshassuck Cemetery, Central, Rhode Island. Section D, Avenue I, Lot No. 95.

²⁵ *Long Island City Daily Star*, August 7, 1891.

²⁶ *Springfield Republican*, January 13, 1894.

²⁷ National Register of Historic Places, *Memorial Town Hall, Monson, MA*, (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1984), prepared by Massachusetts Historical Commission.

²⁸ Amos Jackson Bicknell, *Bicknell’s Cottage and Villa Architecture* (New York: William T. Comstock, 1881), Design 10, Plate 13.

²⁹ Information on Edward Richardson is based on the following sources: “Edward Richardson,” *Portrait and Biographical Record of Queens County (Long Island) New York* (New York: Chapman Publishing Co., 1896) 1134-35; Ancestry.com, *U.S., Passport Applications, 1795-1925* [database on-line] Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, 2007; U.S. Census records, 1900, 1910, 1920; “New York, New York City Municipal Deaths, 1795-1949,” database, *Family Search* (familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:2WPK-67T : 20 March 2015); LPC, “Pioneer Builder of Murray Hill Is Dead at Age of 72,” *Flushing Evening Journal*, October 18, 1921, 1.

³⁰ “Some Flushing Items,” *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, July 26, 1891, 7.

³¹ Somini Sengupta, “A Snapshot of World Faith; On One Queens Block, Many Prayers Are Spoken,” *New York Times*, November 7, 1999; 37

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture, and other features of the buildings and site, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the Protestant Reformed Dutch Church of Flushing (Bowne Street Community Church) has a special character, special historical and aesthetic interest, and value as part of the development, heritage, and cultural characteristics of New York City.

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, the Protestant Reformed Dutch Church of Flushing is significant as an excellent example of the Romanesque Revival style, notable for its exceptional corner tower, decorative brickwork, and opalescent stained-glass windows, at least three of which were designed by Agnes Fairchild Northrop of Tiffany Studios; that the Reformed Dutch Church denomination traces its roots to the founding of New Netherland, with Reformed congregations established throughout New York; that the Flushing Reformed Dutch Church congregation was established in 1842; that thirty years later the church outgrew its first building and bought a lot at the intersection of Roosevelt Avenue and Bowne Street; that in the 1890s an ambitious building campaign was directed by Reverend James Demarest, a distinguished local cleric and administrator; that the church's architectural design is attributed to George E. Potter, a noted New England architect who designed many churches, houses, and public buildings during the 1870s to 1890s; that the church was constructed in 1891-92 under the supervision of Edward Richardson, a local contractor and successful businessman; that the building's design includes well-executed Romanesque Revival features such as round-arch openings, smooth brick walls, a quarry-faced rusticated stone base, masonry trim, and medieval-style ornamentation; that the Flushing church also exhibits design features that were influenced by the distinguished Boston architect H. H. Richardson's interpretation of the style such as clear, strong massing, a picturesque roofline, and a variety of contrasting features such as the dramatic juxtaposition of the dominant bell tower with the diminutive arcade at the front facade; that in addition to the main auditorium assembly space, the building incorporates rooms at the north end that were originally used for a chapel, Sunday school, library, and upstairs kitchen; that the Reformed Church and the Congregational Church merged in 1974 and formed the Bowne Street Community Church; that over three centuries ago, the citizens of Flushing formally declared religious freedom with the Flushing Remonstrance of 1657 and that this multi-denominational church continues this tradition of faith and tolerance and reflects the cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity of the surrounding community; that the building today serves multiple congregations and has served the larger Flushing community since its construction in 1892; that today, the building has had few alterations and retains a remarkably high level of integrity of both its historic design and materials; and that it continues to give the neighborhood a strong sense of the 19th-century streetscape along Roosevelt Avenue and Bowne Street. Along with the Friends Meeting House, Saint George Episcopal Church, and the Free Synagogue of Flushing, the Bowne Street Community Church is one of downtown Flushing's most prominent and historically significant structures.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 74, Section 3020 of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 3 of Title 25 of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as a Landmark the Protestant Reformed Dutch Church of Flushing, (now the Bowne Street Community Church) and designates Borough of Queens, Tax Map Block 5022, Lot 1 in part, including the church building and the steps and the land upon which these improvements are sited, excluding the annex and parking lot, described by the portion of the lot area bounded by a line beginning at the southwest corner of the property line of lot 1, northerly along the western property line of lot 1 to the northern property line of lot 01, easterly along the northern property line of lot 1 to a point on a line extending northerly from the western building line of the east transept of the 1892 building, southerly along said line along the exterior wall of the east transept and continuing along said line to the southern property line of lot 1, then westerly to the place of beginning, as shown on the attached map.

Meenakshi Srinivasan, Chair
Frederick Bland, Diana Chapin,
Wellington Chen, Michael Devonshire,
Michael Goldblum, John Gustafsson,
Jeanne Lutfy, Adi Shamir-Baron,
and Kim Vauss, Commissioners



**Protestant Reformed Dutch Church of Flushing
(Bowne Street Community Church)**

Borough of Queens

Tax Map Block: 5022, Lot 1 in part

143-11 Roosevelt Avenue

Roosevelt Avenue (South) Facade

(Photograph: Sarah Moses 2016)



**Protestant Reformed Dutch Church of Flushing
(Bowne Street Community Church)**
Roosevelt Avenue (South) and Bowne Street (West) Facades
(Photograph: Sarah Moses 2016)



**Protestant Reformed Dutch Church of Flushing
(Bowne Street Community Church)
Roosevelt Avenue (South) and East Facades**
(Photograph: Sarah Moses 2016)



Northwest Corner
Transept-like bay at north end
(Photograph: Sarah Moses, 2016)



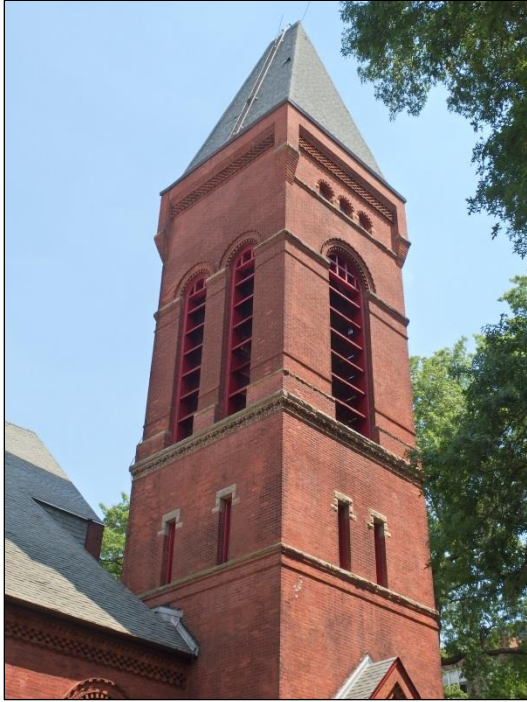
North Facade (details)
Transept-like bay at north end
(Photograph: Marianne Hurley, 2016)



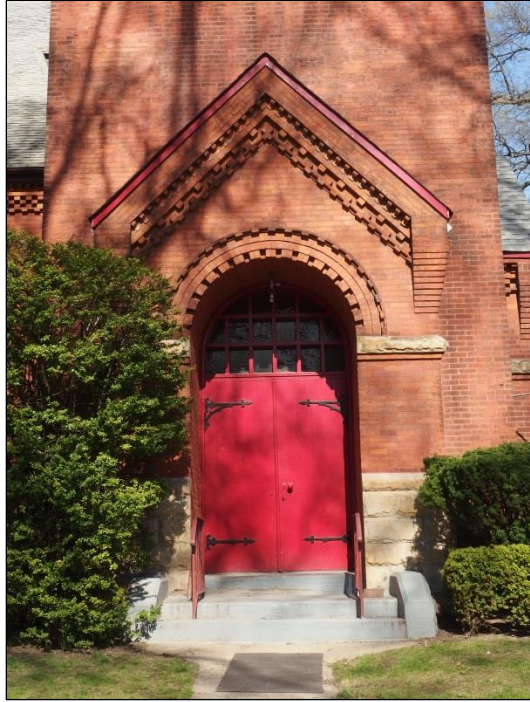
**Protestant Reformed Dutch Church of Flushing
(Bowne Street Community Church)
Bowne Street (West) Facade**
(Photograph: Marianne Hurley, 2016)



East Facade
(Photograph: Marianne Hurley, 2016)



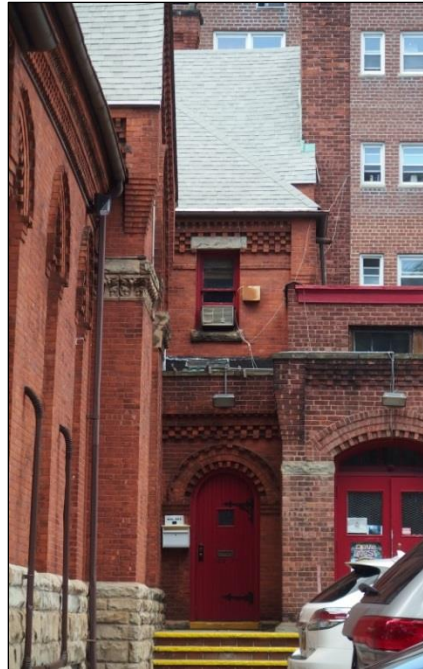
Northwest Corner of Tower
(Photograph: Marianne Hurley, 2016)



West Entry Portal at Tower
(Photograph: Marianne Hurley, 2016)



Roosevelt Avenue (South) Facade
Tower detail at roof
(Photograph: Marianne Hurley, 2016)



Looking North along East Facade
Enclosed porch and upper floor of transept-like bay
(Photograph: Marianne Hurley, 2016)



Protestant Reformed Dutch Church of Flushing, L. I.
Historic Photograph, c. 1905-10
Post Card (New York: Long Island News Company)



Roosevelt Avenue (South) and Bowne Street (West) Facades
(Photograph: Marianne Hurley 2016)

