



BOWNE HOUSE

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**NEW YORK'S BOWNE HOUSE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
ADMITTED TO THE NATIONAL UNDERGROUND RAILROAD
NETWORK TO FREEDOM**

*****Oldest house in Queens was the home of abolitionists and prominent New York Quaker activists***

*****Bowne House's extensive archival holdings recognized for manuscripts documenting Bowne House residents' aid to freedom seekers fleeing slavery and the family's connections to the anti-slavery movement.***

The National Park Service's National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom has announced the selection of the Bowne House Historical Society in Flushing, Queens as one of its newest members. The only Network to Freedom designation in the Borough of Queens, and one of only a few in Greater New York, Bowne House is one of 18 new admissions made during the 42nd round of Network applications. Recognized for the strength of its extensive archival holdings, Bowne House has been designated as a facility for the research of Underground Railroad history in New York. It joins more than 695 other Network admissions made since the program's founding in 1998.

As part of the Network to Freedom, Bowne House is expected to draw visitors to Queens from throughout the United States and abroad to research the history of one of New York City's earliest houses whose association with the Underground Railroad is well documented. The museum will also develop programs around the story of Bowne family members' role during the Abolition movement.

Commenting on admission to the Network to Freedom, Rosemary Vietor, Vice-President of the Bowne House Historical Society's Board of Trustees said, "Bowne House is thrilled to join the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom. We are looking forward to sharing our history with local, regional and national

visitors to the Borough of Queens as we continue to research and develop new and inspiring educational programs for the public and students of all ages."

For further information about Bowne House Historical Society, please visit www.bownehouse.org

Bowne House, built c. 1661, is the oldest house in Queens. It is listed as a New York City landmark and is on the National Register of Historic Places. The House's archives span nearly 350 years of Bowne family material, including manuscripts discussing the Abolition movement and the Underground Railroad in New York. Preserved by nine generations of Bowne family members, the archives tell the story of one prominent New York family that included horticulturists, political and religious leaders, captains of industry, artists and writers, and Walter Bowne, 59th Mayor of New York City, serving from 1829-1833.

The family's role helping freedom seekers escape from slavery is evidenced through pre-Civil War letters dating between 1842 and 1850 revealing three Bowne House residents - Samuel, Robert, and William Bowne Parsons - were active in a network assisting multiple freedom seekers. These brothers fundraised for the New York Vigilance Committee and served as Underground Railroad operatives. Their letters document contact with prominent anti-slavery activists throughout New York State, including Rev. Simeon Jocelyn, Rev. Henry Ward Beecher and the philanthropist, Lewis Tappan.

Twice per calendar year, the Network to Freedom reviews applications from sites, research facilities, and programs with verified connections to the Underground Railroad. Diane Miller, the Network's National Program Manager, commented, "We are eager to work alongside our new members sharing Underground Railroad history with the public. Each time we accept a site into the Network we are inspired by the power of the Underground Railroad and the stories of those brave women and men who sought their freedom."

Aside from Bowne House, among new admissions to the Network are Pensicola Pass, an Underground Railroad shipping channel in Florida; the Henry Massey Escape Site in Maryland from which a 14 year old boy fled to freedom; Alabama's Fort Gaines from which numbers of freedom seekers escaped throughout the Civil War; the historic Wilson Bruce Evan site in the abolitionist stronghold of Oberlin, Ohio; and the Freedom's Frontier National Heritage Area in Kansas.

Bowne House Historical Society

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