



THE ADVOCATE FOR NEW YORK CITY'S HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOODS

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Statement of the Historic Districts Council to the Subcommittee on Landmarks, Public Siting and Maritime Uses  
Regarding the Brinckerhoff Cemetery

October 23, 2012

The Historic Districts Council is the advocate for New York City's designated historic districts and neighborhoods meriting preservation.

New York City does not just designate sites for what they are, but sees landmarks for what they could be. Just as a building can be restored to its former glory, so too could the Brinckerhoff Cemetery, the last link this area of Queens has to its colonial-era past.

For those who may look at the site and think there is nothing to landmark, HDC begs to differ. There is no reason to believe that stones and the graves they mark are not still present. There are no mentions of removals in family histories or articles on the cemetery and no official records of disinterment have been produced. The complete decomposition of over six dozen bodies is unlikely. Archaeologists and cemetery experts whom HDC has consulted have agreed that bones and teeth would remain as would casket hardware, jewelry, shoe buckles, buttons or other objects buried with their owners. Similarly, there is no documentation or even mention of the removal of grave markers, and neighbors clearly remember stones until about thirty years ago when then owner reportedly told them he buried the markers to preserve them (not an uncommon practice in the 1980s). Like other designated, colonial-era cemeteries, the Brinckerhoff Cemetery is a landmark whose historic resources are waiting to be rediscovered.

HDC commends the Fresh Meadows Homeowners Civic Association and other local organizations on their work and research which went into this landmarking, and we greatly thank the elected officials including Queensborough President Helen Marshall, Council Speaker Christine Quinn, Councilmembers Elizabeth Crowley, Daniel Halloran, Mark Weprin, and Peter Valone Jr., and most importantly Councilman James Gennaro, for their support. We urge you to follow their lead and confirm the designation of the Brinckerhoff Cemetery.

**TESTIMONY OF THE LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION BEFORE  
THE CITY COUNCIL SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITING  
AND MARITIME USES ON THE DESIGNATION OF THE BRINCKERHOFF  
CEMETERY IN QUEENS.**

**October 23, 2012**

Good morning Council Members. My name is Jenny Fernández, Director of Intergovernmental and Community Relations for the Landmarks Preservation Commission. I am here today to testify on the Commission's designation of the Brinckerhoff Cemetery in Queens.

On May 15, 2012, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a landmark of the Brinckerhoff Cemetery. Thirty-one people spoke in favor of designation, including representatives of New York City Councilmembers James F. Gennaro and Mark S. Weprin, New York State Senator Tony Avella, New York Assemblywoman Grace Meng, New York Assemblyman Rory Laneman, Historic Districts Council, New York Landmarks Conservancy, Queens Community Board 11, Queens Historical Society, Queens Preservation Council, Queens County Farm Museum, Central Queens Historical Association, Queens Civic Congress, Fresh Meadows Homeowners Civic Association, Parkway Village Historical Society, Auburndale Improvement Association, Woodhaven Historical Society, Richmond Hill Historical Society, Four Borough Neighborhood Preservation Alliance, Hillcrest Estates Civic Association, West Cunningham Park Civic Association, Bayside Historical Society, and Friends of Abandoned Cemeteries. The owner of the property spoke in opposition to designation. In addition, the Commission received numerous communications in support of designation, including letters from New York City Councilmembers Peter F. Vallone, Jr., and Daniel J. Halloran III, New York State Senator Toby Ann Stavisky, New York Assemblyman Michael Simanowitz, Queens Borough President Helen M. Marshall, Netherlands Acting Consul General Yvette Daoud, Queens Community Board 8, Creedmoor Civic Association, Newtown Historical Society, Committee for the Preservation of Fresh Meadows, Bellerose Hillside Civic Association, Bayside Hills Civic Association, and Hillcrest-Jamaica Hill Neighborhood Development Association, as well as a letter from New York City Council Speaker Christine C. Quinn urging the Commission to consider the matter. On August 14, 2012, the Commission voted to designate the building an individual landmark.

What has been known since the 1930s as the Brinckerhoff Cemetery in Queens was once the burial ground of the rural Flushing township crossroads community of Black Stump (later Union Place), which developed around the intersection of the Black Stump Road, leading eastward towards Hempstead, and Fresh Meadow Road, which connected the villages of Flushing and Jamaica. The burial ground, in use by 1730 based on

the earliest dates on grave markers, was located on the border between two farms -- the Brinckerhoff-Skidmore-Schleider Farm and the NoorstrandtHendrickson-Purdy-Eiseman Farm. The first listing of visible gravestone inscriptions, compiled in 1900 by Josephine C. Frost as part of her manuscript Long Island Cemetery Inscriptions, included the names of inter-related Dutch families of many of the surrounding farms, including Adriance, Allen, Anthony, Bloodgood, Brinckerhoff, Hoogland, Montfort, Rapelye, Ryder, Ryerson, and Snedeker. The cemetery was professionally surveyed in 1919 by the Queens Topographical Bureau, which created a map of the location of the gravestones with an accompanying listing of gravestone descriptions and their inscriptions (based in part on Frost's list). This survey identified 77 gravestones and markers, the earliest (of those with legible inscriptions) dated to 1730 and the last from 1872. This burial ground remained within an agricultural community until the late 1930s, when it became surrounded by the suburban development known as Fresh Meadows. Despite virtually a century of neglect, all evidence indicates that the original gravestones, markers and graves remain, concealed by dirt and debris. The Brinckerhoff Cemetery survives as a rare, and one of the oldest, colonial-era burial grounds in the Borough of Queens, as well as one of the few tangible links to the early-18<sup>th</sup> century, and rural, history of the borough.

The Commission urges you to affirm this designation.

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

720

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 10/23/2003

(PLEASE PRINT)  
Name: YOLANDA DELA CRUZ GALLAGHER

Address: 194-15B 64TH CIR. 3B FRESH MEADOWS  
NY 11365

I represent: FRESH MEADOWS HOMEOWNERS CIVIC  
ASSOCIATION INC.

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

720

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 10-23-12

(PLEASE PRINT)  
Name: JAMES J. GALLAGHER, JR.

Address: 194-15B 64TH CIR. 3B FRESH MEADOWS  
NY 11365

I represent: FRESH MEADOWS HOMEOWNERS CIVIC ASSOC. INC.

Address: 40-JOHN HAUSMAN, FID. SEC. 69-23 181ST  
MEADOWS, NY. 11365

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

720

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 10/23/12

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jenny Fernandez

Address: 1 Centre Street, 14th Fl. N

I represent: LPC

Address: S/A

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**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. Beinkee Hoff Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 10/23/12

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Simon Bankoff

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Historic Districts Council

Address: 232 E 11 St, NY 10003

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