

**The Olde Towne of Flushing Burial Ground:  
Lesson Plan Series**

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# Introduction

The Old Towne of Flushing Burial Ground in Flushing, Queens is now home to a park and playground but was an active burial ground from 1840 to 1914. The site was used specifically as an African American and Native American burial ground as well as a public cemetery for those who could not afford a proper burial, and for victims of various pandemics. In 1936, the site was transformed into a park under the guidance of Robert Moses, but since the 1980's community advocates have been working to reclaim the space and honor those buried there.

This series of lesson plans focuses on using primary source materials to encourage students to think critically about the history and legacy of the historic Olde Towne of Flushing Burial Ground in Flushing, Queens. Each lesson incorporates a central theme, discussion questions, and archival source materials.

**Sensitivity note:** These lessons touch upon experiences with poverty and discrimination as well as the impact of pandemics in New York City history. Some of the primary sources students will analyze include historical biases. Set expectations for students to communicate with empathy and understanding when talking about these subjects.

*These lesson plans were created in Fall 2020 by Maura Johnson and Sinead Lamel, students at Queens College Graduate School for Library and Information Sciences, as part of Professor Thayer's Public History Course. Please send inquiries to the authors at [sineadlamel@gmail.com](mailto:sineadlamel@gmail.com) and [maurasobocinski@gmail.com](mailto:maurasobocinski@gmail.com)*

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# Standards

As per NYS Common Core Reading Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies<sup>1</sup>:

## *Key Ideas and Details*

- Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole
- Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships between the key details and ideas.

## *Craft and Structure*

- Determine the meanings of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including analyzing how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term over the course of a text

## *Integration of Knowledge and Ideas*

- Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, and in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem. Distinguish between fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text.
- Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies between sources.

## *Research to Build and Present Knowledge*

- Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis reflection and research.

## *Range of Writing*

- Write routinely over extended time frames (time for reflection and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) on a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

## *Comprehension and Collaboration*

- Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
- Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) in order to make informed decisions and solve problems, evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source and noting any discrepancies between the data

## *Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas*

- Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range of formal and informal tasks.

For alternative NYS educational standards, please see page 18 of the [\*Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework\*](#).

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.nysed.gov/common/nysed/files/programs/curriculum-instruction/ss-framework-9-12.pdf> p.29



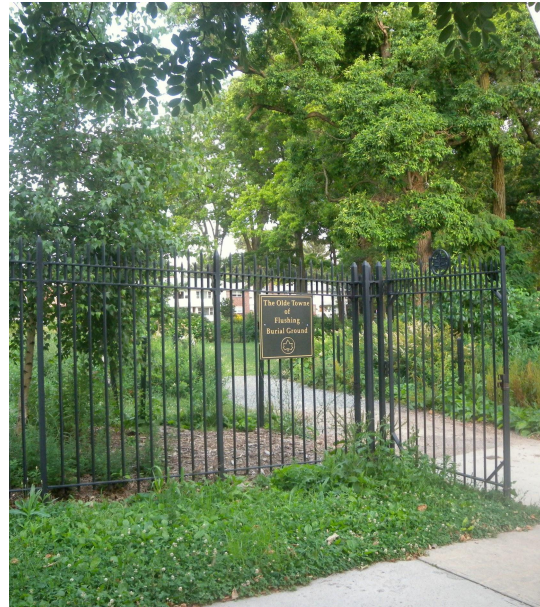
## Opportunities for Continued Engagement

If students would like to continue their involvement with the Olde Towne of Flushing Burial Ground, please encourage them to check out the following websites and volunteer opportunities, also available for students at the end of the student handout #4:

- 1) The OTFBG Conservancy website: <http://otfbgconservancy.org/index.html> where students can learn more about the OTFBG, hear updates, and find contact information for the Conservancy.
- 2) Volunteer to clean up the OTFBG site as well as other sites in NYC parks with Green Earth Urban Gardens <https://greenearthurbangardens.org/>. Those interested in volunteering should contact Maureen Reagan at [maureen@greenearthurbangardens.org](mailto:maureen@greenearthurbangardens.org).
- 3) Learn more about Weeksville at the Weeksville Heritage Center, the site of an African American community from the early 19th century. They host many events for children and teens to learn more about the fascinating history of Weeksville, and how it relates to current events in Brooklyn. <https://www.weeksvillesociety.org/>
- 4) Learn about and even help preserve Queens history through the Queens Memory Project. Students can volunteer in a few different ways, including recording oral histories. <https://queensmemory.org/>

# The Olde Towne of Flushing Burial Ground

## Lesson 1: Introduction



**Grade level:** 11th & 12th

**Standards:** NY State Grades 11th & 12th Social Studies Literacy Standards (see page 3)

**Aim:** Students will analyze sources from the 19th century as well today to draw conclusions about the history of the burial ground.

**Objectives:** Students will be able to:

- Accurately describe what primary and secondary sources are and draw conclusions about how and when they are useful in research.
- Analyze source materials to better understand the historical context of Flushing in the mid-to-late 1800's.
- Articulate why the Olde Towne of Flushing Burial Ground was created and why it is important from a historical standpoint.

**Materials:**

- Copies of primary source materials
- Student handouts
- Computer with internet access (if delivering virtually) and audio.

**Teacher Background:** [The Old Towne of Flushing Burial Ground](#) in Flushing, Queens, is now home to a park and playground but was an active burial ground from 1840 to 1914. The site was used specifically as an African American and Native American burial ground, as well as a burial site for victims of several local pandemics. In 1936 it was turned into a park under the guidance of Robert Moses, but since the 1980's community advocates have been working to reclaim the space and honor those buried there. In this lesson, students will use

primary sources from the 19th century as well today to draw conclusions about the history of this burial ground.

**Procedure:**

1. (2 min) Introduce the idea of primary sources versus secondary sources. Ask students to give an example of each. Provide the class with a full definition of each term.
  - a. Primary Sources contain first-hand information, meaning that you are reading the author's own account on a specific topic or event that s/he participated in. Primary sources can include: diaries, datasets, speeches, letters, interviews, records, newspaper or eyewitness accounts of a certain event, photos and video.
  - b. Secondary sources describe, summarize, or discuss information or details originally presented in another source; meaning the author, in most cases, did not participate in the event.<sup>2</sup>
2. (5 min) Ask students: Why would primary sources be useful when conducting historical research? When would secondary sources be helpful? When or how might either type of source be less helpful? Whose voices and perspectives might be represented or missing in these documents?
3. (10 min) Introduce the Olde Towne of Flushing Burial Ground. Explain that today's lesson will focus on using archival source materials to understand the history of this site, located in Flushing, Queens. Have students watch this documentary clip about the burial ground: <https://youtu.be/fvuJlhOmPbU>

**Ask students:**

- a. Have you been to this site before? Did you know it served as a burial ground?
  - b. What are your thoughts on cemeteries and burial grounds?
  - c. What are you most curious to learn about the site?
4. (25 min) Student Activity: Document analysis. Provide students with this lesson's handout, which includes copies of several primary source documents alongside reflection questions. These materials help provide context for when and where this cemetery was created and tell the story of Flushing in mid to late 1800's. Have students work either in small groups, pairs or independently. Students will analyze

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<sup>2</sup> Research Process: Primary and Secondary Resources. (n.d.). Retrieved November 30, 2020, from <https://ncu.libguides.com/researchprocess/primaryandsecondary>

the documents then respond to the questions in the packet. The class will come back together for a discussion following this activity.

- a. Source materials referenced in the packet:
  - i. View of Flushing, 1825<sup>3</sup>
  - ii. Beers Map from 1873<sup>4</sup>
  - iii. Description of Flushing from the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 1852<sup>5</sup>
  - iv. *Flushing's Negro Population*, *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 1896<sup>6</sup>
5. So, what happened to the burial ground?  
(10 minutes) Together as a class, listen to this [oral history interview](#)<sup>7</sup> with Mandingo Tshaka and Robbie Garrison, two local community activists and long-time Flushing residents involved with The Olde Towne of Flushing Conservancy. They explain the role of Robert Moses and the Parks department taking over the burial ground and turning it into a playground in the 1930's.

**Ask students:**

- a. What did you learn from this *oral history* about what happened to the burial ground in 1936? What is Martin's Field?
- b. How do you think local activists like Mandingo Tshaka and Robbie Garrison feel about the burial site being turned into a playground?
- c. Does this interview provide a different perspective on the history of the burial ground? How so?

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<sup>3</sup> View of Flushing (Long Island) North America. Mr. Bowne's house. 1825.

From The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs: Print Collection, The New York Public Library.

<sup>4</sup> Segment of the map "Part of Flushing", from the Beers Map, 1873. Courtesy of New York Public Library.

<sup>5</sup> Description of Flushing from the Brooklyn Daily Eagle newspaper, published May 15, 1852. Courtesy of Brooklyn Public Library.

<sup>6</sup> Flushing's Negro Population, The Brooklyn Daily Eagle, published February 27, 1896. Courtesy of Brooklyn Public Library.

<sup>7</sup> Orquera, C. (interviewer), Tshaka, M.O. & Garrison, R. (interviewees). "The City Takes Over the Burial Ground." *Queens Public Library General Collections*, 2016.

queenslibrary.aviaryplatform.com/collections/21/collection\_resources/4697/file/35523.

### Takeaway Assignment: (also on student handout #1)

**Read:** Two newspaper articles about the burial ground, included at the end of the student packet. [One from the New York Times](#), published in 2000<sup>8</sup>, [one from the Queens Gazette](#), published in 2010<sup>9</sup>.

**Based on these two articles, have students respond to the following questions:**

- a) What community members and groups are advocating for the site to be preserved? Why do they think the site is important to honor?
- b) How and when did the site become a park? How has the site changed since community members first started to advocate for it to be preserved?
- c) **(Extra Credit)** Who was Robert Moses and why is he a well-known figure in NYC history?

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<sup>8</sup> Lee, Denny. (April 2, 2000). "Above, an old playground; below, graves for the poor." New York Times. Retrieved from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2000/04/02/nyregion/neighborhood-report-flushing-above-an-old-playground-below-graves-for-the-poor.html>

<sup>9</sup> Santos, Jason D. (June 9, 2010). "188-Year-Old African, Native American Cemetery Established in Flushing." Queens Gazette. Retrieved from: <https://www.qgazette.com/articles/188-year-old-african-native-american-cemetery-established-in-flushing>

# The Olde Towne of Flushing Burial Ground

## Lesson 2: Poor Houses and Potter's Fields

**Grade level:** 11th & 12th



**Standards:** NY State Grades 11th & 12th Social Studies Standards (see page 3 for full list)

**Aim:** Students will analyze primary source materials in order to learn about the Olde Towne of Flushing Burial Ground within the historical context of social class and poverty in 19th century New York.

### Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Think critically about social class and poverty in mid-19th century New York
- Analyze source materials in order to draw conclusions about the experiences and treatment of people living in poverty during this era, especially in relation to institutions such as Almshouses ("Poor Houses") and Potter's fields
- Draw conclusions about historical biases in primary documents

### Materials:

- Copies of primary source materials
- Student handout
- Computer with internet access (if delivering virtually)

### Background:

The Olde Towne of Flushing Burial Ground can be considered within the historic context of social class and poverty in 19th century New York. In addition to being a burial ground for

local African American and Native American families, the site was a public cemetery for Flushing residents who could not afford a proper burial. These sites were often referred to as “Potter’s Fields.” Many of those buried at the site in its earlier years may have been residents at the local “Poor House.” Also called Almshouses, these institutions were established around New York City to house and feed residents living in poverty and were often the only option for families struggling to make ends meet and for single mothers, the elderly, and people living with disabilities.

In this lesson, we will use primary source materials to think critically about the role that social class and poverty played in shaping New York City in the 19th century. Students will also be asked to connect these lessons to today.

### Procedure:

1. (5 min) Introduce today’s lesson. Let the class know that they’ll be looking at various primary sources connected to the treatment and experiences of New Yorkers living in poverty during the 19th century. Set expectations for students to communicate with empathy and understanding when talking about this subject.
2. (5 min) Ask students if they’ve heard of the term “historical bias” and what they think it means. Explain that primary sources from the past (and present) often reveal the biases of the author/creator; the tone of the author/creator or their depiction of events may have been influenced by their bias towards or against something (an individual, community, government, etc.). Ask students if they can think of any examples of this.
3. (25 min) Student Activity: Document analysis. Provide students with this lesson’s handout, which includes copies of a series of primary source documents alongside reflection questions. Have students work in small groups, pairs, or independently. Students will analyze the documents then respond to the questions in the packet. The class will come back together for a discussion following this activity.
  - a. Source materials referenced in the packet:
    - i. *Wood engraving and description of NYC’s first Poor House*<sup>10</sup>
    - ii. *Intake card for Tom Sharkey from a Queens County Poor House*<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Wood engraving and description of the first Poor House built in New York City in 1734. From a manuscript published in 1885. Courtesy of New York Public Library.

<sup>11</sup> Queens County Poor House intake record, Tom Sharkey, aged 52. October 18, 1874. From the New York, U.S., Census of Inmates in Almshouses and Poorhouses, 1830-1920. <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/1083/>



- iii. *Intake card for Thomas Conner from a Queens County Poor House*<sup>12</sup>
- iv. *Not a Pauper*<sup>13</sup>
- v. *Summary of recent court cases*<sup>14</sup>
- vi. *Flushing Residents Object to Local Potters Field*<sup>15</sup>

**Class Discussion (10 min):**

1. As you reflect on New Yorkers from this era who were living in poverty, what is missing from the historical record? Whose voices are heard? Whose are missing?
2. What historical biases did you detect in these materials?
3. Do you see parallels to how society treats poverty today?

**Takeaway Assignment (also on student handout #2):**

Assign one or both of these activities as homework:

1. Explain to students that there is still an active “Potter’s Field” in New York City today. Have them research Hart Island for next class and write 1-2 paragraphs tying what they find into today’s lesson on Potter’s Fields.
2. Ask students to visit this interactive online map of [historic burial grounds of Queens public parks](#). As homework, students should each select one cemetery from the map (not The Olde Towne of Flushing Burial Ground) and write 2 -3 paragraphs addressing the following questions:
  - 1) *How has the site been maintained? What signs, if any, exist today to shed light on the site’s past use as a burial ground?*
  - 2) *How is the site’s current state similar or different from that of the Olde Towne of Flushing Burial Ground? Why do you think that could be?*
  - 3) *Do you think it’s important to acknowledge the history of the site and the people buried there? Why?*

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<sup>12</sup> Queens County Poor House intake record, Thomas Conner, aged 8. July 24, 1875. From the New York, U.S., Census of Inmates in Almshouses and Poorhouses, 1830-1920. <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/1083/>

<sup>13</sup> “Not a Pauper.” Published in The Newtown Register, February 7, 1884.

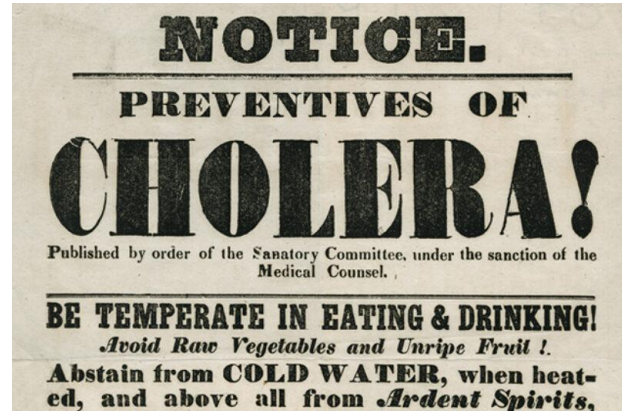
<sup>14</sup> Summary of recent court cases, published in the Buffalo Evening Post, October 11, 1862.

<sup>15</sup> “Flushing residents object to local potter’s field.” Published in the Brooklyn Daily Eagle, May 4, 1910. Courtesy of Brooklyn Public Library.



# The Olde Towne of Flushing Burial Ground

## Lesson 3: Pandemics of 19th Century New York



**Grade level:** 11th & 12th

**Standards:** NY State Grades 11th & 12th Social Studies Literacy Standards (see page 3)

**Aim:** Students will analyze primary sources in order to learn about the Olde Towne of Flushing Burial Ground within the historical context of pandemics in 19th century New York.

### Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Analyze source materials related to historic pandemics in New York
- Relate these learnings to today
- Create a primary source in the form of an oral history or written personal reflection piece (and have the option to enter it into the historical record).

### Materials:

- Copies of primary source materials and discussion questions for each student
- Computer with internet access (if delivering virtually)

### Background:

Illness and disease were common experiences in 19th century New York. In the decades leading up to the Civil War, New York City witnessed exponential population growth, a steady rise in industry, and new waves of immigration from countries and backgrounds that would have been unfamiliar to most New Yorkers at the time. All of these factors created a new industrial working class that was more vulnerable to poverty and illness.<sup>16</sup> The city experienced several major pandemics throughout the 1800's, including Yellow

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<sup>16</sup> Institute for Children, Poverty and Homelessness. (2020). "19th Century Overview, History of Poverty and Homelessness NYC" Retrieved from: <http://nychomelesshistory.org/era/nineteenth/#>

Fever, Cholera, and Smallpox. Due to fears about contagion, Potter's Fields such as the Olde Towne of Flushing Burial Ground were often used as burial sites for those who died in pandemics. In this lesson, students will consider primary source materials related to pandemics in the 19th century and tie these to learnings to today by creating a primary source of their own.

### Procedure:

1. (5 minutes) Introduce today's lesson. Explain that in addition to serving as a Potter's Field, the Olde Towne of Flushing Burial Ground was also a place to bury local residents who died during various pandemics. At the time, society was fearful that diseases such as Cholera or Smallpox could spread at cemeteries. New York City and the surrounding towns, including Flushing, saw outbreaks of these diseases throughout the 19th century.
2. (20 minutes) Student Activity: Document analysis. Provide students with this lesson's handout, which includes copies of a series of primary source documents alongside reflection questions. Have students work either in small groups, pairs or independently. Students will analyze the documents then respond to the questions in the packet. The class will come back together for a discussion following this activity.
  - a. Source materials referenced in the packet:
    - i. [Excerpt from \*Cholera Comes to New York City\* by Anne Garner](#)<sup>17</sup>
    - ii. Public Safety Announcement<sup>18</sup>
    - iii. New York Daily Tribune graph<sup>19</sup>
    - iv. *Radical measures necessary, The Evening World*<sup>20</sup>
    - v. *The Cholera Invasion*<sup>21</sup>
3. (10 minutes) Class discussion/debrief. **Ask students:**

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<sup>17</sup> Excerpt from *Cholera Comes to New York City* by Anne Garner, Curator, Center for the History of Medicine and Public Health, <https://nyamcenterforhistory.org/2015/02/03/cholera-comes-to-new-york-city/>

<sup>18</sup> Notice. Preventives of Cholera! New York Board of Health, 1849. From the National Library of Medicine archives. <http://resource.nlm.nih.gov/64730880R>

<sup>19</sup> Diagram showing the ride, progress and decline of the Cholera, New York Daily Tribune, September 29, 1849. From New York Public Library.

<sup>20</sup> Radical Measures Necessary. Published in *The Evening World*, August 30, 1892. From the New York Public Library.

<sup>21</sup> The Cholera Invasion- Removing a Cholera Suspect from a House in Second Avenue New York to the Hospital, New York, 1892. From the National Library of Medicine archives. <http://resource.nlm.nih.gov/101458096>

- a. What parallels, if any, do you see between pandemics in 19th century New York and the COVID pandemic of today?
  - b. How do you feel learning about past pandemics in New York City's history?
4. (10 minutes) Introduce takeaway assignment. Tell students about the Queens Memory Project. Queens Memory is a community archiving program coordinated by Queens Public Library and Queens College, CUNY. They work to preserve and share the history of Queens and the people who live here. Have students read through the [Queens Memory Project Informational Brochure](#) available on the Queens Memory resource page<sup>22</sup> and/or explore the Queens Memory website at <https://queensmemory.org/>
  - a. Explain to students that their homework will be to write or record a short reflection about their experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. They can also consider interviewing a friend, family member or community member.
  - b. Here are some guiding questions:
    - i. What has been your experience with the COVID-19 pandemic?
    - ii. How has your neighborhood been impacted?
    - iii. What has it been like as a student during this time?
  - c. If time permits, give students a chance to begin planning their project and answer any questions they might have. For more resources on recording and interviewing, students can visit <https://queensmemory.org/resources-for-interviewers/>

### **Takeaway Assignment:**

Students should write a short personal reflection (1-2 pages) or record a brief oral history interview about their experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic in New York City. Students can also opt to record an interview with a friend, family member or community member.

If students wish, they can submit their recording or reflection via the Queens Memory Project. The program is currently collecting stories and recordings about Queens residents' experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. Students must be at least thirteen years-old to participate and students under eighteen must get parent/guardian permission. Students can submit their reflection or recording to Queens Memory via this link:

<https://qplnyc.urbanarchive.me/cities/nyc>

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<sup>22</sup> Queens Memory Project Informational Brochure, <https://queensmemory.org/resources-for-interviewers/>

## The Olde Towne of Flushing Burial Ground

### Lesson 4: African American Communities in Post- Emancipation NYC



**Grade level:** 11th-12th

#### **Objectives:**

- Students will learn about some challenges faced by African American communities in New York City post-emancipation (1827-1860).
- Students will learn about the role of Black-led community organizations (such as churches and mutual aid societies) during this transition.
- Students will think critically about the importance of African burial grounds as sites of remembrance.

**Aim:** Students will learn about some challenges faced by African American communities in New York City post-emancipation and will think critically about the importance of African burial grounds as sites of remembrance.

#### **Materials:**

- Copies of student packets with primary and secondary source materials.
- Computer with internet access (if delivering virtually) and audio.
- [Oral History Interview](https://queenslibrary.aviaryplatform.com/collections/21/collection_resources/4697/file/35522) with Mandingo Tshaka, activist heavily involved with the preservation of the burial ground available at [https://queenslibrary.aviaryplatform.com/collections/21/collection\\_resources/4697/file/35522](https://queenslibrary.aviaryplatform.com/collections/21/collection_resources/4697/file/35522)

**Teacher Background:** The history of African Americans in New York City before the Great Migration is one that has been often been downplayed in traditional academia and education. In reality, NYC had one of the largest populations of enslaved people in the North, with much of its bustling economy relying on this forced labor. Slavery was not officially abolished in New York until 1827, and primary source material about Black people living in New York is unfortunately limited due to several factors, including discrimination in census keeping.

To overcome the hardship and poverty they faced at that time, many African Americans formed community organizations (usually churches and aid societies) where they could support each other materially and spiritually. The Olde Towne Flushing Burial Ground, resting place for many Black residents of Flushing, was actively used in the 19th and early 20th centuries and is a surviving relic of African American community and history at that time.

#### **In the Classroom:**

1. Briefly lecture on the existence of African American communities in NYC in the 19th century.
  - a. NY officially abolished slavery in 1827. There were free blacks living in the city already, forming societies and paving the way for those to come.
  - b. Flushing had a large population of African Americans and Native Americans of the Shinnecock and Matinecock people. The [Macedonia African Methodist Episcopal \(AME\) Church](#) was officially established in 1811 in Flushing and still stands today, about 1 ½ miles from the Olde Towne Flushing Burial Ground. Its congregation was composed of free Black people, Native Americans, and whites.<sup>23</sup>
  - c. Weeksville was another free Black community in Brooklyn founded in the early 1800's, and was not rediscovered until 1968. Refer students to the website for the Weeksville Heritage Center which holds workshops and events for those looking to learn more about their history:  
<https://www.weeksvillesociety.org/>



<sup>23</sup> Kearns, Betsy & Kirkorian, Cece. Phase 1A Archaeological Assessment Report for the Flushing Center Project, Queens, NY, 1988 (p.20) [http://s-media.nyc.gov/agencies/lpc/arch\\_reports/526.pdf](http://s-media.nyc.gov/agencies/lpc/arch_reports/526.pdf)

2. *SEE STUDENT PACKET for Lesson #4:* Have students independently read the founding goals of the [Phoenix Society](#)<sup>24</sup> and underline words they do not know. Have them also read the excerpt from a secondary source paper about the Phoenix Society.<sup>25</sup> Have students answer the following questions also provided on the handout:

- 3.

Questions:

- A. Based on these documents, what were the goals and priorities of the Phoenix Society at this time? How did they think these goals could be achieved?
- B. Why were the Phoenix Society and others that sprang up in the 1830s in NYC significant at that time? What can it tell us about challenges faced in black communities?
- C. Can you think of modern-day organizations that have missions similar to that of the Phoenix Society? Explain.

Briefly go over discussion questions as a class.

4. Remind students that the Olde Towne of Flushing Burial Ground was founded during this era, when free Black communities were growing, but were still kept segregated from white communities, even after death.
5. Mandingo Tshaka was one of the leading activists who started advocating for the Olde Towne of Flushing Burial Ground. Show this 4 minute clip of an [oral history interview](#)<sup>26</sup> with Mandingo Tshaka discussing his experience learning about the burial ground.
6. Discuss as a class:
  - a. What can we learn from this oral history? Why is it so important (a “higher calling”) for Mandingo to fight to preserve this space?
  - b. Why do you think Mandingo mentions the old church chimes he remembers hearing as a kid? What is the significance of that, in your mind?

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<sup>24</sup> The Phoenix Society, “Goals of the Phoenix Society,” June 1833, *The Making of African Identity Volume 1: 1500-1865*, National Humanities Center, 2009.  
<http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/maai/index.htm>.

<sup>25</sup> Burrell, Kristopher B. “Emancipation, Elevation, and Education: Black Educational Institutions in New York City during the 1830s.” *CUNY Academic Works*, 2002.  
[https://academicworks.cuny.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1024&context=ho\\_pubs](https://academicworks.cuny.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1024&context=ho_pubs).

<sup>26</sup> Orquera, C. (interviewer), Tshaka, M.O. & Garrison, R. (interviewees) (2016). “Becoming Aware of the Burial Ground History.” *Queens Public Library General Collections*.

### **Takeaway Assignment:**

Answer the following questions (refer students to handout):

1. Do you think African American history is commonly known as a central part of Flushing, NY history? Why or why not? Do you think the paving over of this burial ground plays a part in the removal of Black history from NYC and the north in general?
2. Based on everything you've learned about this site, why do you think it is important for community activists and descendants of the deceased to preserve the Old Towne of Flushing Burial Ground? Do you have ideas about how the site could be memorialized? Be specific and creative, and feel free to include drawings if it helps to get your ideas across.



## Lesson Plan 5: Reflection and Discussion (Optional)

Teachers are invited to devote an additional class period to debrief and continue the discussion.

*If time allows, here are some additional ideas for class activities:*

- Invite the class to share the reflection papers or oral histories they created as their takeaway assignment for lesson three. Debrief with students.
- Hold a class debate using the prompt: *Is it important to preserve sites like the Olde Towne of Flushing Burial Ground? Why or why not?*
- Share students' ideas about ways to memorialize the site.
- Discuss ways in which students can become involved in the preservation of the Olde Towne of Flushing Burial Ground.



## The Olde Towne of Flushing Burial Ground

### Introduction

### Lesson 1: Student Packet



*Clip from the short documentary “Olde Towne of Flushing Burial Ground” produced in 2020 by Gabriella Lacza, Melissa Lino and Kevin O’Leary. Watch here:*

<https://youtu.be/fvuJlhOmPbU>



*View of Flushing (Long Island) North America. Mr. Bowne's house. 1825.  
From The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs: Print  
Collection, The New York Public Library.*

### Flushing.

[For the Brooklyn Daily Eagle.]

#### *A day at Flushing—A Pleasant Drive—Institutions of Learning—Military Patriotism.*

One of the most inviting and delightful drives in this vicinity, is from Brooklyn to Flushing, being as it is, through a beautiful and fertile district. The route is over an agreeably varied surface, and from its general elevation, it commands a wide horizon, with immediate and distant prospects of unrivalled beauty, the whole distance abounding in pleasing and picturesque scenery. The Village of Flushing is pleasantly situated at the head of Flushing Bay, and by land is about nine miles distant from Fulton Ferry. It is a beautiful and healthy village, and I know of no place in the neighborhood of Brooklyn or New York, that affords more attractions for a resort for our citizens during the heat of summer, or is more desirable as a place of residence—being in the midst of a rich agricultural district, cultivated farms and beautiful country residences, abounding in every luxury for which Long Island is so justly celebrated. I know of no village on Long Island or elsewhere, that presents so many attractions for a pleasant country residence. In an especial manner does it commend itself to parents, on account of the number and excellence of its public and private institutions of learning, as well as the healthfulness of its situation.

Attracted by the good roads and pleasant retreats in other directions on the Island, Brooklyn people seldom drive to Flushing, and there are not many of our people who know what a gem of a village it is. There are here some fifteen or twenty stores; there are churches and meeting-houses; and preachers for the followers of almost every faith; there are saw mills and grist mills, and factories of various kinds; it has its weekly journal (and a spunky one it is too,)—and taken altogether it is a place of considerable business and some importance. Flushing derives the most extended celebrity, however, from its extensive and beautiful nurseries; a business which has been long established and most successfully conducted by Messrs. Prince, Winter, Higgins & Others, whose gardens and grounds afford a most agreeable and interesting place to visit.

*Description of Flushing from the Brooklyn Daily Eagle newspaper, published May 15, 1852.*

*Courtesy of Brooklyn Public Library.*



### FLUSHING'S NEGRO POPULATION.

Flushing, L. I., February 27—The negroes of this village resent the publication of a communication in a local paper touching upon the number of negroes in Flushing and advising real estate men to

rent fewer shanties and houses to the colored race. The communication concludes thus: "Let us have fewer black people in Flushing. Drive them out of the shanties, and if these must stand, why, rent them to poor, but decent, white people."

Flushing village is known to have more negroes than any other place of its size in the state. According to the best obtainable data the population is 8,600 and there are over 1,500 negroes in the village now.

*Flushing's Negro Population, The Brooklyn Daily Eagle, published February 27, 1896.*



Segment of the map "Part of Flushing", from the Beers Map, 1873.

Courtesy of New York Public Library.

How do these documents portray Flushing? Would you consider Flushing rural or urban during the mid-19th century? Who do you think lived in Flushing at this time?

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Based on these materials, describe what you think life would have been like in Flushing during the mid-19th century.

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What is now known as the Olde Towne of Flushing Burial Ground has had many names. On this map from 1873, you can find it located on a small plot of land directly across the street from Flushing Cemetery. According to this map, what was the site called then?

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During the 1800's, Flushing had a significant number of African American and Native American residents, many of whom used this burial ground. Queens and Long Island have long been home (and still are) to local Native American tribes, including a large Matinecock settlement in Flushing. After New York state abolished slavery on July 4, 1827, there were growing free Black communities in the area. Do these documents mention Native American or African American communities in the area? In what ways? What narratives or perspectives are missing?

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## FOR HOMEWORK:

Read the two articles below as homework and answer the following questions:

What community members and groups are advocating for the site to be preserved? Why do they think the site is important to honor?

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How and when did the site become a park? How has the site changed since community members first started to advocate for it to be preserved?

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**(Extra Credit)** Research who Robert Moses was and why he is a well-known figure in NYC history.

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Santos, Jason D. (June 9, 2010). "188-Year-Old African, Native American Cemetery Established in Flushing." *Queens Gazette*.



## 188-Year-Old African, Native American Cemetery Established In Flushing

June 09, 2010

By Jason D. Antos



**Photos Jason D. Antos** Sachem of the Matinecock Nation Sonny Little Fox performed a traditional Native American tribute ceremony.

The former Martin's Field, a final resting place for almost 1,000 African, Native and Caucasian Americans, was officially established as The Olde Towne of Flushing Burial Ground on May 23 in a ceremony that was attended by city Comptroller John Liu, City Councilmember Dan Halloran (R-Whitestone), Assemblymember Rory Lancman (D-Fresh Meadows), Councilmember Peter Koo (R-Flushing) and representatives of Assemblymember Grace Meng (D-Flushing).

The former city Department of Parks and Recreation playground located between 164th and 165th Streets and 45th and 46th Avenues

in Flushing was originally a municipal cemetery that dates back to 1822.

On Nov. 18, 2006, with the help of Borough President Helen Marshall, the playground was reclaimed and in December 2009 it was relocated to the northern end of the three and one half acre property. A marble slab providing a brief history of the cemetery along with some of the names of those who are buried was placed in the ground.

"We need to remember that those buried here were affected by slavery and discrimination," Liu said. "This special place serves as a reminder of our past and how far we've come as a

nation.”

Also present were community activists from the Olde Towne of Flushing Burial Ground Conservancy, including President Mandingo Tshaka, Vice President Robbie Garrison and Treasurer Eddie Abrams who fought for almost 20 years to reclaim the park from the city and return it to its original status as a cemetery.

The site was blessed by the Sachem of the Matinecock Nation, Sonny Little Fox, who performed a traditional Native American tribute ceremony.

“Today we are gathered here to remember those buried in this final resting place,” Fox said. “I do not believe in color or race, but I believe that we have to love and respect one another.”

The Conservancy feels, however, that the present memorial is not adequate because of the absence of headstones, which has confused some local residents as to the true identity of the former playground.

“This site is still referred to as a park and this has to change,” Tshaka said. “This was an active playground that has been moved to the north of where we are standing. This is now a holy site.”

Tshaka’s concern is over the constant use of the memorial site as a playground where children have been seen riding their bikes across the names of the deceased and a place where neighbors walk their dogs, who urinate on the sacred site.

“You can hear the people buried crying out to us for justice,” Garrison said. “The current monument does not respect our dead.”

The land was initially a burial site for victims of plagues such as smallpox, cholera and yellow fever. From 1822 until the 1870s neighborhoods in Queens were greatly affected by these illnesses until a centralized water system was introduced. Purchased by the Town of Flushing in 1840, the site is home to approximately 800 to 1,000 individuals buried over several decades, the majority of whom were African-Americans and Native Americans. There were also a number of poor whites who, along with wealthier residents, died during the cholera and smallpox epidemics in 1840, 1844, 1857 and 1867, buried as well. Their bodies were considered too contaminated for a proper churchyard burial. Half of those buried are children five years old or younger.

“The African Americans who worked the fields of Flushing as slaves from Francis Lewis’ farm to the farm that once stood in this spot worked hard and wanted to make a difference and want us to remember what they went through,” Halloran said.

According to Tshaka, the plots were indiscriminately arranged, often, unmarked and as shallow

as six inches below the surface. The last burial was in 1898, the year of the city's consolidation.

In 1914, the site was handed over to the city Dept. of Parks and Recreation. In 1931, it was renamed Martin's Field in honor of tree conservationist Everett P. Martin. In 1936, a playground was built on the site as a government-funded Works Progress Administration (WPA) project. In the 1940s a comfort station, wading pool and sand pit were added. According to an article from the defunct Long Island Press dated June 10, 1936, it was reported that "neighbors saw workmen pulling bones out of the ground", and that workmen from the WPA "came upon bones galore".

Pennies were also discovered inside the eye sockets of retrieved skulls. Placing pennies on the eyes of the dead is an African burial tradition, explained Abrams.

The future goal is for the city Dept. of Parks and Recreation to install an obelisk and four small headstones in the three and one half acre park that will replace the original tombstones that were removed by the WPA in the 1930s. The tombs would serve as an everlasting reminder that the land is indeed a cemetery.

"This land is a cemetery and will always be a cemetery," Garrison said.

The original tombstones were those of Willie, son of Alfred and Fanny Curry who died at four years of age in 1874 and George H. Bunn, who died Jan. 13, 1887 at the age of 17 and Alfred E. Bunn who died at three years of age on Apr. 7, 1876. The final tombstone belonged to the grave of James Bunn, who died on Aug. 3, 1890 at the age of 53. All tombstones were made of marble and listed as being in good condition in an Oct. 10, 1919 survey conducted by the Queens Topographical Bureau that listed the land as the "Colored Cemetery of Flushing".

Jay Williams a 78-year-old Flushing resident is a descendent of the Bunn Family. "My mother was a Bunn and a member of the Shinecock tribe," Williams remembered.

Williams said that he was happy that the site has finally been established as a cemetery, but feels that the headstones are necessary.

"It's a start," Williams said. "I hope any future memorial recognizes what happened here."

"We will continue with the struggle to preserve this holy site," Liu said.

Lee, Denny. (April 2, 2000). "Above, an old playground; below, graves for the poor." *New York Times*.

NEIGHBORHOOD REPORT: FLUSHING; Above, an Old Playg...

<https://www.nytimes.com/2000/04/02/nyregion/neighborhood-rep...>

**The New York Times**

NEIGHBORHOOD REPORT: FLUSHING

## ***NEIGHBORHOOD REPORT: FLUSHING; Above, an Old Playground; Below, Graves for the Poor***

By Denny Lee

April 2, 2000

See the article in its original context from April 2, 2000, Section 14, Page 11 Buy Reprints

[VIEW ON TIMESMACHINE](#)

TimesMachine is an exclusive benefit for home delivery and digital subscribers.

A long-awaited archaeological study of Martins Field, a rundown playground on 46th Avenue and 165th Street, has concluded that the site may hold the remains of more than 1,000 people from the 19th century. Many of them were poor children from minorities barred from graveyards reserved for whites.

Still, many residents want to keep the site as a playground and to refurbish it with new swings and basketball courts. "The children here have no place to play," said David Copell, who lives across the street. "The nearest playground is more than half a mile away."

Others disagree. "A cemetery is not a place to play," said Mandingo Tshaka, a local activist. "It is supposed to be respected."

In the past, the site was known as the "Colored Cemetery" or the "Paupers' Burial Ground." in city documents. Many blacks and American Indians were buried there in the second half of the 19th century, in part because Flushing Cemetery, which opened across the street in 1853, was off-limits, said James Driscoll, executive director of the Queens Historical Society.

The playground was built in 1936 by Robert Moses. News accounts of the time tell of bodies unearthed by the construction. "The city knowingly and willfully desecrated the cemetery to create a wading pool for white children," Mr. Tshaka said.

After years of neglect, the park was scheduled for a \$1.2 million renovation in the early 1990's, when Mr. Tshaka presented evidence that there were still bodies buried there. So the Parks Department suspended the project and commissioned an archaeologist, Linda Stone, to analyze historical documents and to conduct "noninvasive" radar tests to determine burial locations.

"In my original report, I estimated 500 to 1,000 bodies," Ms. Stone said. "If the anomalies on the radar are bodies, there could be more." The results were released in early March.

Parks Commissioner Henry J. Stern supports a playground, saying, "The community has legitimate recreational needs." But he added that the 3.5-acre park should have a "significant memorial," in the form of plaques or designated areas.

"There is room for the living as well as the dead," he said.

But Ralph Bunn, whose great-grandfather's burial was among the last recorded on the site, said that any playground there was an "insult to Native American people" and teaches children "to disrespect other people's ancestors."

"We are tired of having our dead disrespected," said Mr. Bunn, who is of Native American descent and lives in Wyandanch, on Long Island.

Mr. Stern said the next step was to attempt to reach a compromise among officials, residents, historical groups and descendants.

City Councilwoman Julia Harrison, who represents the area, declined to discuss her position.

DENNY LEE

A version of this article appears in print on , Section 14, Page 11 of the National edition with the headline: NEIGHBORHOOD REPORT: FLUSHING; Above, an Old Playground; Below, Graves for the Poor

## **The Olde Towne of Flushing Burial Ground Potter's Fields and Poor Houses**

### **Lesson 2: Student Packet**



In addition to being a burial ground for local African American and Native American families, The Olde Towne of Flushing Burial Ground was a public cemetery for Flushing residents who could not afford a proper burial. These included individuals living at the local “Poor House.” Also called Almshouses, Poor Houses were established around New York City to house and feed residents living in poverty and those deemed unable to support themselves, referred to at the time as “paupers.” These institutions were often the only option for families struggling to make ends meet as well as single mothers, the elderly, and people living with disabilities.

The following source documents provide some background on poor houses and potter’s fields in 19th century New York. Take time to look through them and analyze them from a historical perspective, then respond to the reflection questions.



“The building was forty-six feet long, twenty-four feet wide, and two stories high, with a cellar; and was furnished with implements of labor for the use of the inmates. The Churchwardens were appointed as Overseers of the Poor, and all paupers were required to work under penalty of receiving “moderate” correction.”

*Wood engraving and description of the first Poor House built in New York City in 1734.  
From a manuscript published in 1885. Courtesy of New York Public Library.*

**POLICE COURT.—BEFORE JUSTICE  
TANNER.**

Oct. 10.

William Daniels and John Nolan, arraigned for assault and battery on John A. Goose. Nolan was acquitted and Danie's fined \$3.

John A. Goose made a goose of himself by getting into a scrape and was fined \$5 for assaulting William Daniels.

David Clapp, assault and battery on Tirzah Clapp, his wife, fined \$3.

John Geeharty, Sarah Geeharty and Sarah Geeharty, Jr., who constituted an entire family, were arraigned on charge of having no visible means of support. They were all sent to the Poor House for 6 months.

Eliza Wain and her little girl Letitia Wain were also found with no means of support, and were sent to the Poor House for 6 months.

*Summary of recent court cases, published in the Buffalo Evening Post, October 11, 1862.*

**Not a Pauper.**

Mrs. Eliza Thompson, an aged colored woman, well known to many of the residents of Newtown, died on Jan. 13 at Black Stump, in the town of Flushing. At the time of her death she was the owner of a house and some land on the Dry Harbor road, near Middle Village, this town; but notwithstanding this fact she was laid out in a pauper's coffin, and buried in a pauper's grave in the Potter's Field, Flushing. The deceased was a very worthy woman, and had served as nurse in many families in Newtown, and it is probable that if her numerous friends in this town had known of her death they would have provided a decent burial for her remains. —*Safeguard.*

*"Not a Pauper." Published in The Newtown Register, February 7, 1884*



Record of Inmates Queens County Poor House, under Act Chap. 140, Laws of 1875.

Name, Tom Sharky Sex, Male Age, 52 Color, White Single, Married, Widow, Widower, Single Birth Place, State or Country, Ireland  
County, Longford Town or City, Longford (If Foreign Born, how long in the U.S.? 16 years long in this State? 26 years) At what Port landed? Longford Was Head Money Paid? Yes Is the Person Naturalized? Yes  
Date of Admission Oct 18 1874 Birth Place of Father, Ireland State or Country, Longford Town or City, Longford Birth Place of Mother, Ireland State or Country, Longford Town or City, Longford Education, Common school  
Re-Admitted 18 \_\_\_\_\_ Habits, Sober Habits of Father, Temperate Habits of Mother, Temperate Occupation, Farmer  
18 \_\_\_\_\_ Occupation of Father, Laborer Condition of Ancestors and other Relatives (living or dead), as to whether  
18 \_\_\_\_\_ Pauper or Self-Supporting — Grand Parents Paternal Side, Dead Grand Parents Maternal Side, Dead  
18 \_\_\_\_\_ Father, Dead Mother, Dead Brothers, \_\_\_\_\_ Sisters, \_\_\_\_\_ Other  
18 \_\_\_\_\_ Relatives, SS (If a Parent, how many Children Living? \_\_\_\_\_ State their Condition — whether in Poor  
18 \_\_\_\_\_ Houses, Asylums, Hospitals, other Institutions, or Self-Supporting, \_\_\_\_\_)  
18 \_\_\_\_\_ Existing Cause of Dependence, Not able to find work  
18 \_\_\_\_\_ What kind of Labor is the Person able to pursue, and to what extent? Any labor worth  
Discharged 18 \_\_\_\_\_ Has the Person received Public or Private Out-Door Relief? If so, how long? No  
18 \_\_\_\_\_ Have the Parents or other relatives been thus aided? If so, state the fact. No  
18 \_\_\_\_\_ Has the Person been, heretofore, an Inmate of Poor Houses? If so, how long? 16 Flatbush 1 Month  
18 \_\_\_\_\_ Has the Person been an Inmate of any other Charitable Institution? If so, note the fact. No  
18 \_\_\_\_\_ What is the probable destiny of the Person as respects recovery from the cause of Dependence? same is doubtful  
18 \_\_\_\_\_ Remarks: Not very ambitious, appears to be contented to work for his board and clothing  
18 \_\_\_\_\_  
18 \_\_\_\_\_

(COPY)

Queens County Poor House intake record, Tom Sharky, aged 52. October 18, 1874. Under remarks it reads: "Not very ambitious. Appears to be contented to work for his board and clothing."

Record of Inmates Queen County Poor House, under Act Chap. 140, Laws of 1875.

Name, Thomas Conner Sex, Male Age, 8 Color, White Single, Married, Widow, Widower, Single Birth Place, State or Country, Kentucky  
County, Success Town or City, Perrinsville (If Foreign Born, how long in the U.S.? \_\_\_\_\_ How long in this State? \_\_\_\_\_) At what Port landed? \_\_\_\_\_ Was Head Money Paid? \_\_\_\_\_ Is the Person Naturalized? \_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Admission July 24 1875 Birth Place of Father, Perrinsville State or Country, Kentucky Town or City, Perrinsville Birth Place of Mother, Perrinsville State or Country, Kentucky Town or City, Perrinsville Education, attending school  
Re-Admitted 18 \_\_\_\_\_ Habits, not known Habits of Father, temperate Habits of Mother, temperate Occupation, \_\_\_\_\_  
18 \_\_\_\_\_ Occupation of Father, Laborer Condition of Ancestors and other Relatives (living or dead), as to whether  
18 \_\_\_\_\_ Pauper or Self-Supporting — Grand Parents Paternal Side, Unknown Grand Parents Maternal Side, Unknown  
18 \_\_\_\_\_ Father, Pauper Mother, Pauper Brothers, \_\_\_\_\_ Sisters, \_\_\_\_\_ Other  
18 \_\_\_\_\_ Relatives, \_\_\_\_\_ (If a Parent, how many Children Living? \_\_\_\_\_ State their Condition — whether in Poor  
18 \_\_\_\_\_ Houses, Asylums, Hospitals, other Institutions, or Self-Supporting, \_\_\_\_\_)  
18 \_\_\_\_\_ Existing Cause of Dependence, pauper parents  
Discharged 18 \_\_\_\_\_ What kind of Labor is the Person able to pursue, and to what extent? \_\_\_\_\_  
18 \_\_\_\_\_ Has the Person received Public or Private Out-Door Relief? If so, how long? \_\_\_\_\_  
18 \_\_\_\_\_ Have the Parents or other relatives been thus aided? If so, state the fact. \_\_\_\_\_  
18 \_\_\_\_\_ Has the Person been, heretofore, an Inmate of Poor Houses? If so, how long? \_\_\_\_\_  
18 \_\_\_\_\_ Has the Person been an Inmate of any other Charitable Institution? If so, note the fact. \_\_\_\_\_  
18 \_\_\_\_\_ What is the probable destiny of the Person as respects recovery from the cause of Dependence? \_\_\_\_\_  
18 \_\_\_\_\_ Remarks: \_\_\_\_\_  
18 \_\_\_\_\_  
18 \_\_\_\_\_

Queens County Poor House intake record, Thomas Conner, aged 8. July 24, 1875.

What term do these records use when referring to the individuals being admitted to the Poor House? What does that word make you think of in today's context?

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What reasons do these records list as the "cause of dependence" for each person?

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## FLUSHING RESIDENTS OBJECT TO LOCAL POTTERS FIELD.

**R**ESIDENTS of Flushing are greatly disturbed at having their sacred precincts invaded by a potters field. The City of New York intends to use the old paupers cemetery of the former village of Flushing, located on Queens avenue and just opposite the Flushing burying ground, to inter its pauper dead. That the city intends to make use of the old cemetery became known when a gang of laborers came to Flushing last week from Brooklyn and started the work of clearing the plot of rubbish which has accumulated during the past ten years. Unclaimed bodies of persons who die in Brooklyn and Queens are to be buried in the Flushing cemetery, according to the information brought by the men who came to inspect the site. The abandoned cemetery contains four and twenty-one hundredths acres, and is in the immediate vicinity of several large tracts which have recently been developed by real estate syndicates. Before Flushing became a part of Greater New York, the village trustees ordered a local undertaker to bury in the cemetery those who died unidentified or who had no means with which to pay for regular burial, but such cases were few, and there are not more than a dozen bodies buried there now altogether. The graves are in no way recognizable. Interments in the old cemetery will be very different from what they were under the old village government, for the city undertakers hold bodies until they get a truck load and then bury them one upon another five feet deep. Each body is numbered and all records pertaining to it are kept for the purpose of further identification whenever necessary.



General View of Flushing Potters Field.

*"Flushing residents object to local potter's field."  
Published in the Brooklyn Daily Eagle, May 4, 1910.*

**Reflection Questions:**

Based on these materials, what was the role of the Almshouse or “Poor House” in New York during the 19th century? What do you imagine it was like to live in one of these institutions?

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The 1910 article from *The Brooklyn Eagle* says that “there are no more than a dozen bodies” buried at the site, but later research has shown that at least 1,000 people were buried there. Many of the names of people buried at the site were never officially recorded. Why do you think this was?

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Whose perspectives are represented in these documents? What do you notice about the language and tone of these documents? How is poverty portrayed?

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Why do you think the burial site fell into disrepair? What does its condition say about how society viewed the people buried there?

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## FOR HOMEWORK:

There is still a “Potter’s Field” in use by New York City today. Research Hart Island for next class and write 1-2 paragraphs tying your findings into today’s lesson on Potter’s Fields.

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Visit this interactive online map of [historic burial grounds of Queens public parks](#). Select one cemetery from the map (not The Olde Towne of Flushing Burial Ground) and write 2 -3 paragraphs addressing the following questions:

- 1) How has the site been maintained? What signs, if any, exist today to shed light on the site’s past use as a burial ground?*
- 2) How is the site’s current state similar or different from that of the Olde Towne of Flushing Burial Ground? Why do you think that could be?*
- 3) Do you think it’s important to acknowledge the history of the site and the people buried there? Why?*

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## **The Olde Towne of Flushing Burial Ground**

### **Pandemics of 19th Century New York**

#### **Lesson 3: Student Packet**



*Cholera first reached New York City in June of 1832. Three thousand New Yorkers died within weeks, while an estimated one third of the city's 250,000 inhabitants fled. The disease hit the working-class neighborhoods of lower Manhattan the hardest. Many city officials implicated the residents of the poorest neighborhoods for contracting cholera, blaming their weak character instead of viewing the epidemic as a public health problem. Competing notions of the cause of the disease's spread impeded effective response to this initial outbreak. John Snow's research, tracing the spread of cholera to contaminated water in London, was made public in 1855. Snow's work, combined with the establishment of the New York Metropolitan Board of Health in 1866, did much to curb the last significant outbreaks in the city in 1866 and 1892.*

- Excerpt from *Cholera Comes to New York City* by Anne Garner, Curator, Center for the History of Medicine and Public Health, <https://nyamcenterforhistory.org/2015/02/03/cholera-comes-to-new-york-city/>

### **Radical Measures Necessary.**

Public sentiment is becoming stronger every day in favor of adopting radical measures to prevent infection, even if it comes to prohibiting foreign immigration entirely. Now that the scourge has broken out in England the situation has assumed a much more serious aspect than ever, and it is the general opinion among medical experts that unless we can be assured of a thorough European quarantine for all vessels bringing passengers of that class to this country the entire traffic should be suspended.

In addition to this it is demanded that a close watch should be kept upon Canada, where the quarantine regulations are notoriously lax and inefficient, and that every point along the border should be patrolled by quarantine officials, who should be required to scrutinize every passenger coming over the line as carefully as this is done at the port of entry.

Dr. Edson, Dr. Bryant and President Wilson, of the Health Department, are all in favor of the prohibition of immigration even under the present circumstances, for they believe that the introduction of Asiatic cholera here would be the most deplorable event which could possibly happen to the people of this country.

Disease germs are invariably carried about by immigrants whenever an epidemic is prevalent, and if the scourge reaches this country it will undoubtedly be transmitted in this way. Every precaution, therefore, which will tend to avert this danger is justifiable, and the question of prohibiting immigration here now becomes one of such importance that within a very few days it is probable that some decisive steps will be taken in this direction by the Federal authorities.

The cholera will find a very formidable antagonist when it reaches this city, if the indications of activity at the headquarters of the Health Board go for anything.

*Radical Measures Necessary. Published in The Evening World, August 30, 1892. From the New York Public Library.*

# **NOTICE.**

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## **PREVENTIVES OF**

# **CHOLERA!**

Published by order of the Sanatory Committee, under the sanction of the Medical Counsel.

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**BE TEMPERATE IN EATING & DRINKING!**

*Avoid Raw Vegetables and Unripe Fruit !.*

**Abstain from COLD WATER**, when heated, and above all from *Ardent Spirits*, and if habit have rendered them indispensable, take much less than usual.

**SLEEP AND CLOTHE WARM !**

 **DO NOT SLEEP OR SIT IN A DRAUGHT OF AIR,**  
**Avoid getting Wet !**

**Attend immediately to all disorders of the Bowels.**

**TAKE NO MEDICINE WITHOUT ADVICE.**

Medicine and Medical Advice can be had by the poor, at all hours of the day and night, by applying at the Station House in each Ward.

**CALEB S. WOODHULL, Mayor.**  
**JAMES KELLY, Chairman of Sanatory Committee.**

*Notice. Preventives of Cholera! New York Board of Health, 1849.*

*From the National Library of Medicine archives. <http://resource.nlm.nih.gov/64730880R>*



PRICE TWO CENTS.

WHOLE NO. 2639

IN NEW-YORK IN 1849.



If the average temperature, moisture, electrical state, &c. during these weeks were represented in the same manner, and added to this diagram, their comparison would

45

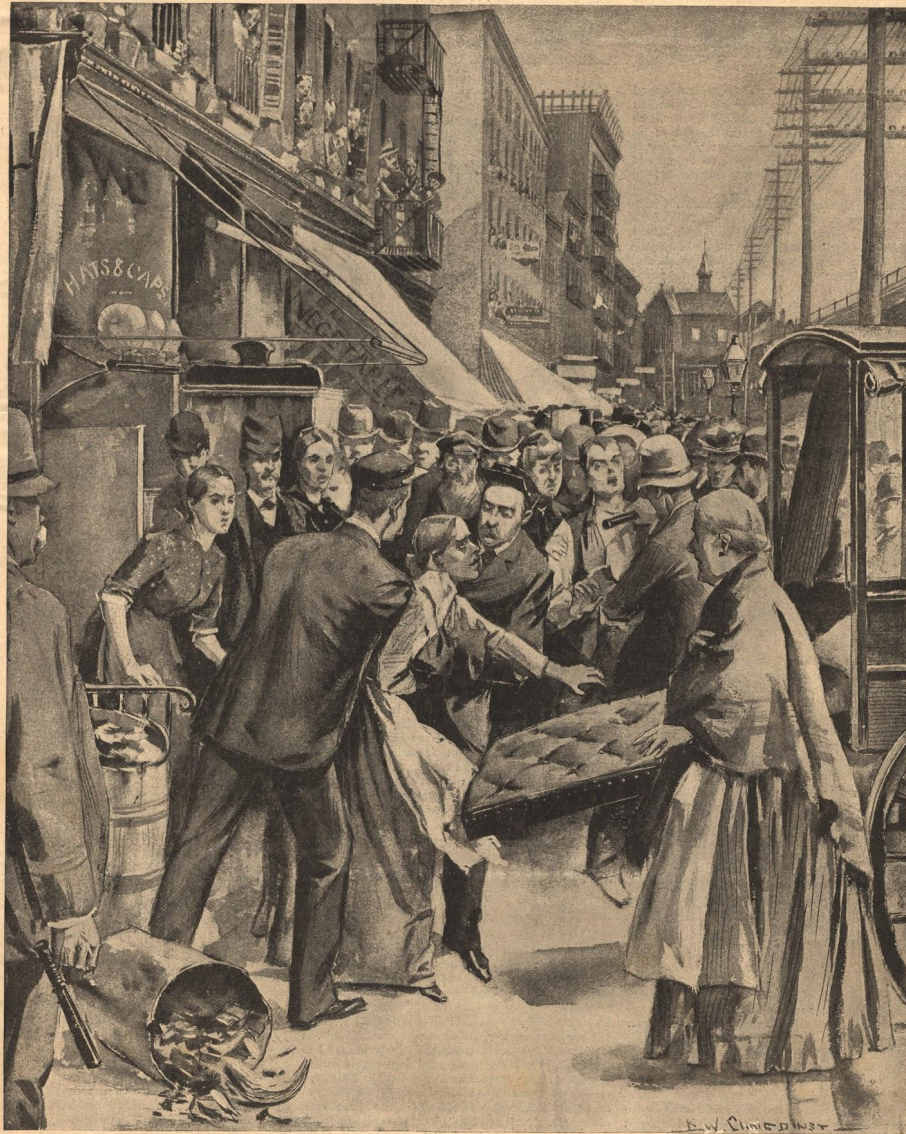


# FRANK LESLIE'S ILLUSTRATED WEEKLY

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NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 29, 1892.

[PRICE, 10 CENTS. \$4.00 YEARLY.  
12 WEEKS, \$1.00.]



THE CHOLERA INVASION—REMOVING A CHOLERA SUSPECT FROM A HOUSE IN SECOND AVENUE, NEW YORK, TO THE HOSPITAL.  
DRAWN BY B. WEST CLINEDINST.—[SEE PAGE 227.]

*The Cholera Invasion- Removing a Cholera Suspect from a House in Second Avenue New York to the Hospital, New York, 1892. From the National Library of Medicine archives.*

<http://resource.nlm.nih.gov/101458096>

How were diseases like Cholera portrayed in the media and public service announcements during this era? Who was often blamed for outbreaks of these diseases?

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Who was most impacted by Cholera and other contagious diseases in New York during the 19th century? Why?

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# **The Olde Towne of Flushing Burial Ground**

## **African American Communities in Post-Emancipation NYC**

### **Lesson 4: Student Packet**

- 1) Read the following document written by the Phoenix Society in 1833.<sup>27</sup> Underline any words you do not know.



National Humanities Center Resource Toolbox  
The Making of African American Identity: Vol. I, 1500-1865

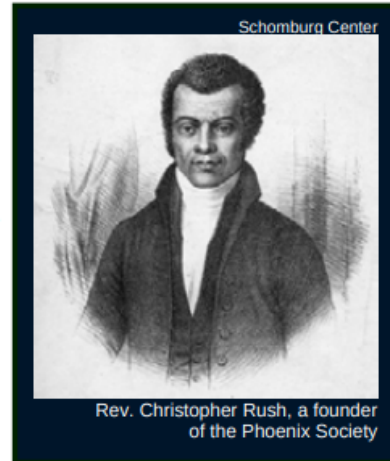
## *Goals of* **THE PHOENIX SOCIETY of New York**

*The Liberator*, 29 June 1833

In 1833 several black leaders in New York City formed the Phoenix Society to promote the education of the city's African Americans — children and adults alike — through classes, lectures, lending libraries, job centers, and the mutual support needed to pursue these goals. The Society began several programs yet folded later in the decade for lack of funds. Other black mutual aid and literary societies in the city continued to pursue the goals envisioned by the Phoenix Society.

### **THIS SOCIETY WILL AIM TO ACCOMPLISH THE FOLLOWING OBJECTS:**

- T**o visit every family in the ward [city district], and make a register of every colored person in it — their name, sex, age, occupation, if they read, write and cypher [do arithmetic];
- T**o induce them, old and young, and of both sexes, to become members of this Society, and make quarterly payments according to their ability;
- T**o get the children out to infant, Sabbath, and week schools and induce the adults also to attend school and church on the Sabbath;
- T**o ascertain those persons who are able to subscribe for a newspaper that advocates the cause of immediate abolition of slavery and the elevation of the colored population to equal rights with the whites;
- T**o encourage the females to form Dorcas Societies [groups, usually church-based, formed to collect clothing for the poor];
- T**o help to clothe poor children of color, if they will attend school — the clothes to be loaned, and taken away from them if they neglect their schools, and to impress on the parents the importance of having the children punctual and regular in their attendance at school;
- T**o establish circulating libraries, formed in each ward, for the use of people of color, on very moderate pay;
- T**o establish mental feasts [meetings for “intellectual cultivation and improvement” (*The Liberator*)<sup>1</sup>], and also lyceums for speaking and for lectures on the sciences; and to form moral societies [groups promoting members’ ethical conduct, often including temperance and church attendance];
- T**o seek out young men of talents and good moral character, that they may be assisted to obtain a liberal education;
- T**o report to the Board all mechanics who are skillful and capable of conducting their trades to procure places at trades, and with respectable farmers, for lads of good moral character — giving preference to those who have learned to read, write and cypher;
- A**nd in every other way to endeavor to promote the happiness of the people of color, by encouraging them to improve their minds and to abstain from every vicious and demoralizing practice.



<sup>27</sup> The Phoenix Society, “Goals of the Phoenix Society,” June 1833, *The Making of African Identity Volume 1: 1500-1865*, National Humanities Center, 2009.  
<http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/maai/index.htm>.

2) Read the following excerpt from a paper written in 2002 about black education and societies in the 1830s.

“Though educational societies struggled to maintain their individuality, they often worked together in order for them all to survive. The Philomatheans, for example, soon after they were established, organized a benefit for the Female Dorcas Society and on another occasion sponsored an exhibition for the benefit of the Amistad captives in conjunction with the Phoenix Society. [xxiii]

The Phoenix Society of New York, founded in 1833, was the largest of the African American educational societies. It also had several very prominent members, both black and white. Among the officers were reverends, leaders of abolitionist groups, and publishers. Arthur Tappan, the wealthy white abolitionist, served as the Society’s first treasurer and the trustee board also included three other white men....

What the Phoenix Society was actually able to accomplish, although significant, was severely limited by a lack of funds. In 1831 Rev. Peter Williams, Jr., started his own private high school. While the African Free Schools had made primary education for black children acceptable, the idea of secondary education for blacks, especially in the classical tradition, was alien and considered wholly useless to the majority of whites. [xxv] Williams nevertheless placed a tremendous amount of faith in the elevating power of education. It is significant that in an era when few whites questioned the notion that blacks were ill suited for higher mental pursuits, African American leaders were saying just the opposite. Black leaders all over the North, were pushing not only for high schools, but for colleges for African American youth.”<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Burrell, Kristopher B. “Emancipation, Elevation, and Education: Black Educational Institutions in New York City during the 1830s.” *CUNY Academic Works*, 2002. [https://academicworks.cuny.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1024&context=ho\\_pubs](https://academicworks.cuny.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1024&context=ho_pubs).

**3) Answer the following questions:**

Based on these documents, what were the goals and priorities of the Phoenix Society at this time? How did they think this could be achieved?

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What significance did the Phoenix Society and other similar groups that were established in the 1830's in NYC have for Black communities? What can these groups tell us about the challenges that Black communities in NYC faced during the 19th century?

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Can you think of modern-day organizations that have missions similar to that of the Phoenix Society? Explain.

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## FOR HOMEWORK:

Answer the following questions in paragraph form. Use details from source materials to support your answers:

Do you think African American history is commonly known to be a central part of Flushing, NY history? Why or why not? Do you think the paving over of this burial ground plays a part in the removal of Black history from NYC and the North in general?

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Based on everything you've learned about this site, why do you think it is important for community activists and descendants of the deceased to preserve the Old Towne of Flushing Burial Ground? Do you have ideas about how the site could be memorialized? Be specific and creative, and feel free to include drawings if it helps to get your ideas across.

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## Opportunities for Continued Engagement:

If you would like to stay involved with the Olde Towne of Flushing Burial Ground, please check out the following websites and volunteer opportunities:

- 1) The OTFBG Conservancy: Students can learn more about the burial ground, hear updates about its preservation, and find contact information for the Conservancy. <http://otfbgconservancy.org/index.html>
- 2) Volunteer to clean up the OTFBG site, as well as other sites in NYC parks with Green Earth Urban Gardens <https://greenearthurbangardens.org/>. Those interested in volunteering should contact Maureen Reagan at [maureen@greenearthurbangardens.org](mailto:maureen@greenearthurbangardens.org).
- 3) Learn more about Weeksville at the Weeksville Heritage Center, the site of an African American community from the early 19th century. They host many events for children and teens to learn more about the fascinating history of Weeksville, and how it relates to current events in Brooklyn. <https://www.weeksvillesociety.org/>
- 4) Learn about and even help preserve Queens history through the Queens Memory Project. Students can volunteer in a few different ways, including recording oral histories. <https://queensmemory.org/>