

M E M O R A N D U M

To: Supervisor Petrone and Members of the Town Board

cc: Cindy Mangano-Elan, Town Attorney Jo-Ann Raia, Town Clerk
Pat DelCol, Deputy Supervisor Paul Mandelik, Planning Board
Anthony Aloisio, Planning Department Joseph Cline, Engineering Department
Stacy Basso, Building Department Craig Turner, Planning Department
Irene Moore, African American Historic Designation Council

From: The Historic Preservation Commission

Date: July 29, 2014

Re: **73 West Shore Road Historic Designation Report**
SCTM # 400-26-02-41

Pursuant to a motion made by Mr. Leek, seconded by Mr. Walker, at its July 28, 2014 meeting, the Historic Preservation Commission recommends that the Town Board designate as a Huntington historic landmark the Jupiter Hammon House at 73 West Shore Road.

Report of the Preservation Commission Under Town Code § 198-40.3

This report is submitted pursuant to Town Code § 198-40.3 in support of the Commission's recommendation that the above-referenced property be designated a Huntington historic landmark.

With 15 days prior written notification, the owner of the property, as identified on the current tax rolls in the Tax Assessor's Office, was invited to attend the Commission meeting on November 25, 2013. At the meeting, the owner expressed his support for landmark designation. The owner was also invited to the Commission's July 28, 2014 meeting at which time he repeated his support for landmark designation.

Historical Background

The Jupiter Hammon House sits along what was once the Huntington Harbor waterfront on land that had been divided and settled as early as the seventeenth century. Based on the framing and fabric, the existing house appears to have been built between 1790 and 1800. The visible floor framing indicates that the house may be framed in the Dutch manner, which would make it a rare example of the close interaction of English and Dutch settlers in the central section of Long Island.

The house was originally a story and a half structure with a saltbox profile and a chimney on the southwest gable end. A later addition resulted in a central chimney configuration.

Extensive research of census records, land deeds and other materials reveals the following history. The house was built after the 1790 census, perhaps about 1795, for Stephen Brown. According to a statement made under oath by Benjamin Hammon on January 25, 1821 (a copy of a transcription of which is attached), Brown sold the house and lot to Benjamin and Phoebe Hammon in 1799 for \$125 paid in cash. This is the earliest known record of land in Huntington purchased by an African American. The 1800 census named as head of household for the family residing in this house none other than Jupiter Hammon, America's first published African American poet and pioneer abolitionist, whose observations influenced the drafting of New York's Manumission Act of 1799. Jupiter Hammon, a former slave of the Lloyd family and the great uncle of Benjamin, lived here in the care of Benjamin and Phoebe Hammon until his death in 1805 at the age of 94. After the loss of Jupiter's steady income from an orchard on Lloyd Neck, the Hammon family sold the homestead to William Place. It was inherited in 1835 by John Place, who sold it to William Tillot before 1858. The 1873 atlas shows W.W. Brown as the owner of the property.

The house is the earliest along this section of West Shore Road, which prior to the filling of the millpond in the 1950s, was waterfront property. In the 1920s, a large dormer and front porch were added and the chimney was removed. However, significant original fabric remains. The chestnut framing and flooring on the first floor are almost completely intact and perhaps 60% intact on the second floor. The front entrance woodwork is original and several of the windows date to the 1840s.

The house, along with its neighbors, is a survivor of the area's working class origins. Early residents of this area were employed as artisans in various waterfront industries in the nineteenth century.

Town Code Criteria

Under the Town Code, a property is eligible for landmark designation if it meets one or more factors set forth in § 198-40.1. The Jupiter Hammon House qualifies because it

- Possesses special character, or historic or aesthetic interest, or value as part of the broad cultural, political, economic or social history of the Town, region, state or nation.

- Is identified with historic personages or is the site of a historic event in the Town, region, state or nation.
- Because of its unique location or singular physical characteristic, or landscape, topographical features, earthworks or streetscape represents an established and familiar visual or aesthetic feature of the neighborhood.

The house is important because of its association with Jupiter Hammon and; moreover current research indicates that it was the first house in Huntington purchased by an African American. In fact, it was the first such purchase in an area that would become an early African American enclave in the Town of Huntington.

The house is representative of the area's working class origins and is an important contributing element of the streetscape in this area that has changed little in over 100 years. The context of the street would be irretrievably altered if the house were allowed to be demolished. In 2005, several neighboring residents expressed support for landmark designation and also said they would support formation of a historic district in this area.

General Condition

The house, which is listed on the Town's 1979 Inventory of Historic Structures, was recently renovated and is currently occupied. The Commission's inspection of the building on March 11, 2005—before it was renovated—indicated that very little work was needed at that time.

A small, detached garage was a later addition and has been demolished.

Relationship to the Immediate Surrounding Area

The house sits on a hilly 1½-acre lot that lies partly in the R-10 zone and partly in the R-7 zone. Across the street to the east are the Mill Dam Park ball fields. To the north and south are mid-nineteenth century to pre-World War I residences on small lots. To the west are mid-twentieth century residences on one-acre lots.

In September 2013, the owners received variances from the Zoning Board of Appeals to allow a two lot subdivision of the property. The historic house would sit on its own 8900 square foot lot. The second lot would be a 1.1 acre flag lot. The two properties would share a common driveway. The subdivision was drawn with the intention of preserving the historic house. This recommendation is for the soon to be created lot with the historic house. The Commission does not recommend inclusion of the new vacant lot.

Extent of Hardship

Under the principles of historic preservation law, a property owner has not suffered economic hardship if he is able to realize a reasonable return on his investment. Penn Central v. New York City, 438 U.S. 104 (1978).

According to the owner, he paid \$535,000 for the property even though comparable houses in the neighborhood would sell for more than \$100,000 less. The price anticipated a successful two-lot subdivision. The owner has recently secured Zoning Board approval for a two lot subdivision. The proposed subdivision sets the Jupiter Hammon House on its own lot with the specific intention of preserving the house. Therefore, no hardship will be created by landmark designation.

Conclusion

For the reasons set forth herein, the Commission respectfully recommends that the Jupiter Hammon House at 73 West Shore Road, be designated a Huntington historic landmark.

Attachments

- Tax map with the subject property outlined
- Photographs of the house
- Copy of the 1821 Statement of Benjamin Hammon
- Affidavit of Service





