

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name St. James Church

other names/site number The Church of England in America, mission church at Newtowne, St. James Protestant Episcopal Church, St. James Parish Hall, St. James Community Center

2. Location

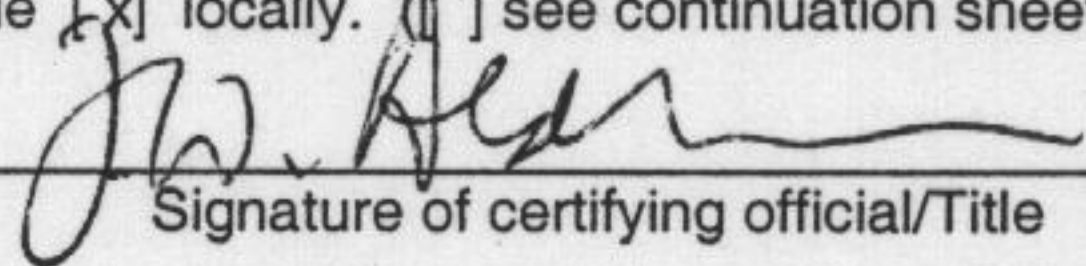
street & number 86-02 Broadway [] not for publication

city or town Elmhurst [] vicinity

state New York code NY county Queens code 081 zip code 11373

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this [x] nomination [] request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements as set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. in my opinion, the property [x] meets [] does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant [] nationally [] statewide [x] locally. ([] see continuation sheet for additional comments.)



Deputy Commissioner for Historic Preservation

7 Sept. 99
Date

New York State Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property [] meets [] does not meet the National Register criteria. ([] see continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- [] entered in the National Register
[] see continuation sheet
- [] determined eligible for the National Register
[] see continuation sheet
- [] determined not eligible for the National Register
- [] removed from the National Register
- [] other (explain) _____

Signature of the Keeper

date of action

St. James Church
Name of Property

New York County, New York
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	TOTAL

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION/church

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION/church

SOCIAL/community center

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

COLONIAL/Post-medieval English

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation stone

walls cement asbestos shingles over

wood shingles

roof asphalt shingles

other wood

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

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St. James Church

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7. Narrative Description

St. James Church (now the St. James Community Center) at the southwest corner of Broadway and 51st Avenue in the Elmhurst section of Queens was constructed in 1735-36. It is the oldest and the only remaining vernacular mission church built by the Church of England in New York City. The church constitutes an architecturally significant and rare surviving example of early-eighteenth-century ecclesiastical architecture. The immediate surroundings include twentieth-century apartment buildings, two- and three-story houses, and commercial buildings. Located at the rear of the property is the site of a former cemetery now used for church parking.¹ The boundaries coincide with the current (and historic) legal lot lines of the church.

St. James Church is an English Colonial, single-story heavy timber framed building incorporating eighteenth- and nineteenth-century changes. The church was enlarged by two bays at the east end c. 1771. Evidence of the expansion can be seen in variations in the spacing of the timber framing in the attic. The original tower at the west end of the building was replaced in 1760 which, in turn, collapsed in 1883 and precipitated major repairs to the building. While nineteenth-century decorative elements have modified the colonial tenor of the exterior appearance of the church, the original structural integrity of the building remains. St. James Church is an important visual reminder of English Colonial America.

The building consists of a rectangular-plan main block facing Broadway, built 1735-36, with a smaller rectangular-plan rear block to the west, added in 1883. The building has a clipped gable roof with flared eave overhangs. The roof is now covered with asphalt shingles but was originally wood shingled. The exterior walls of the main block are finished with cement asbestos shingles over painted cedar shingles. The exterior walls of the rear block are finished with cement asbestos shingles on the north elevation and with T-111 plywood on the west and south elevations. The rear block was originally finished with painted clapboard. The chimney is brick and the foundation is stone. The exterior face of the stone foundation has been parged with cement on all but the east wall of the main block. There is a small basement beneath the rear block, which was built upon the foundation that formerly supported the tower. Beneath the main block is a crawl space.

The original main entrance to the church was in the center bay of the south elevation where the center window opening is now located. The present front entrance faces east towards Broadway, a commercial street, which is the main thoroughfare in Elmhurst (originally Newtown). There have been several modifications to the Broadway entrance. A shed roof porch was constructed at this entrance in 1816. This porch was removed during the 1930s due to subway construction and a subsequent widening of Broadway. A secondary entrance is located on the east elevation of the rear block.

Above the Broadway Street entrance is a fixed-light, round window added in the twentieth century. The north and south walls of the main block each have three evenly spaced round-arched window openings with wood drip moldings above. Each opening consists of a pair of single-hung wood windows separated by a center

¹ The cemetery dates to the original deed of 1733. The last remaining marked graves were moved from this site to the cemetery behind the congregation's later church at 84-07 Broadway in 1892.

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mullion. The mullion splits at the top to form two pointed arches over each window unit. At the top center is a triangular fixed light with stained glass. Records indicate that the mullions were added during renovations made to the church in 1883. The west elevation of the main block has two round-arched single-hung windows with drip moldings.

The north wall of the rear block has two windows similar in style with those of the main block, though smaller. It is not known if the original windows on the south and west walls of the rear block that appear in the historic photographs are still intact behind the plywood at the exterior and drywall at the interior. A photograph from 1927 shows that the west wall had two narrow pointed arch windows with single-hung wood sash and a half-round window in the gable (still intact).

The roof has broad eave overhangs. The overhang on the side walls may have been extended out in 1861. The barge boards at the gable end walls were added in 1883, as major church repairs were made in that year. The repair work was precipitated by the collapse of the bell tower and steeple located at the west wall of the main block. Historic photographs reveal that Stick Style trusswork and barge boards were also added in the gable ends but were later removed.

The interior of the main block features an elliptical barrel-vaulted ceiling dating from 1816. The sanctuary walls retain much of the original colonial-era moldings including raised panel wainscoting with chair rail on the north, south, and west walls; and fluted pilasters, dentils, and paneling at the east end gallery. There is a narrow stairway leading to the gallery. The original random width pine floor is intact but covered by fir flooring added in the twentieth century which, in turn, is covered with particle board sub-floor and vinyl tiles installed about 10 years ago.

The interior of the church was modified during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The church building was converted in the mid-nineteenth century to a parish hall after a new church was built in 1848 on a separate lot in the neighborhood at 84-07 Broadway.² The building was also modified in 1861 for use as a Sunday school and lecture hall; at that time the pulpit and pews were removed. Electricity was added to the building in 1924. The rear room has also undergone twentieth-century changes including the installation of a bathroom and kitchen.

² The 1848 church building was destroyed by fire on October 11, 1975. The current St. James Church at 84-07 Broadway was built in 1976.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property or National Register listing.)

- A** Property associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all boxes that apply.)

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location
- C** a birthplace or grave
- D** a cemetery
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F** a commemorative property
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years

Areas of Significance:

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

RELIGION

Period of Significance:

1735-1883

Significant Dates:

1735-1736, 1760, 1771, 1816, 1848, 1861,

1882-1883

Significant Person:

N/A

Cultural Affiliation:

N/A

Architect/Builder:

Joseph Moore of Newtown

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by historic American Building Survey

- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other repository: St. James Church

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8. Narrative Statement of Significance

St. James Church, constructed in 1735-36 as the Church of England in America mission church at Newtown, is the oldest remaining Church of England building in New York City.³ The social, religious and political history of Queens County and Newtown⁴, now Elmhurst, is integrally united with and inseparable from the history of this church that became known as St. James Church when it was incorporated in 1761. St. James Church is significant under Criterion A for its historical associations with colonial life in New York. With the increase in parishioners, the last church service was held here in 1848 upon the building of a larger church on a lot nearby. After that, the building served as a parish hall and as a Sunday school. St. James Church is also architecturally significant under Criterion C as a rare surviving example of an English colonial mission church. Although the church was modified at various times in its history, much of its historic building fabric has survived. The church retains its heavy timber frame, rectangular massing, and much of its interior paneling and woodwork. In the local context, St. James is a distinguished example of vernacular Colonial period architecture. The period of significance extends from the original construction of the church in 1735 to the last major renovation done in 1883.

The first record of European settlers in this area began with the Rev. Francis Doughty as the leader and founder of the community of Mespat. Rev. Doughty was an ordained Anglican minister, who arrived in the colonies in 1629 in search of religious freedom. He and his followers originally settled in Plymouth, but left after finding the Puritan settlement too restrictive. The Mespat settlement was made on a land grant to Rev. Doughty of 13,332 acres, land that was a part of the abandoned hunting grounds of the Mespatches tribe. The land was granted to Rev. Doughty by Governor Willem Kieft, a man known for his religious tolerance. This land grant permitted the establishment of the first English settlement in the western portion of Long Island.

In 1642 the first Church of England service in this part of the country was held at the Adrien Block house. The Mespat settlement soon fell apart due to Kieft's War, (1643-1644), a war with the local Lenape Indians which caused the destruction of the Mespat settlement. Small attacks by the Lenape and large-scale retaliation by Governor Keift sparked an all-out war involving virtually the entire Native American population in the lower Hudson Valley. As a result of the uprising, English and Dutch settlers from throughout the region fled to the safety of Fort Amsterdam in what is now Manhattan. When peace was declared in 1652, many of the surviving inhabitants returned to re-establish their homes. A new settlement named Middleburgh was established on the Mespat land grant, though slightly to the east of the original town, hence the local nickname of "Newtown."

The settlers of Middleburgh, in contrast with the surrounding communities, i.e. Flushing and Jamaica, had maintained a spirit of religious tolerance and cooperation despite their different religious beliefs. A community building was constructed, financed through a tax levied upon the inhabitants of the town. The building served as schoolhouse, a community hall, the home of the minister, and as a church. The four religious sects present at

³ St. James is also the only remaining vernacular Church of England building in New York City, while St. Paul's Episcopal Chapel, built 1764-66, is the oldest high style English Colonial church remaining in the city.

⁴ Newtown was originally known as Newtowne.

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the Middleburgh settlement, the Dutch Reformed Church, the Quakers, the Presbyterians and the Church of England, shared the use of the community building on alternating Sundays.

Middleburgh was unable to receive a new charter from Governor Stuyvesant, although he did allow the establishment of the community. With the rise in tensions between the Dutch and the English, Stuyvesant was concerned about the establishment of a community of English sympathizers. However, the presence of more settlers helped the Dutch more fully establish the New Amsterdam colony in the new world. The town was taxed by the Dutch West India Company, and as such had to acknowledge the Dutch sovereignty through a payment or "quitrent." The payment was not due until 1662, ten years after the settlement of Middleburgh. However, when the taxes were due, Stuyvesant's concerns proved to have been valid when the colonists rebelled and the Dutch lost control of the settlement. In 1663 the town severed relations with the Dutch government and declared its allegiance to England, renaming the settlement Hastings. Long Island united with the English colony of Connecticut during this period. In 1664, the Dutch surrendered New York to the English. In March, 1665, the English Governor Richard Nicholls called for a general meeting, to be held at Hempstead, to establish the administration of colonial government in Yorkshire province, which included the territory of what is now New York and New Jersey. Long Island, then also called Nassau Island, was divided into shires and ridings, Hastings, (Newtown), was located in the west riding which included Kings County, Gravesend and Staten Island. The town of Hastings was officially renamed Newtown in that same year. In 1673 the Dutch briefly recaptured New York, however, the colony would revert to English rule 13 months later as a result of the Treaty of Westminster.

In 1669 Rev. William Leverich accepted the call from the residents of Newtown to serve as their minister. Rev. Leverich was minister at Newtown between the years 1669 until his death in 1677.⁵ On March 10, 1679, the Rev. Morgan Jones agreed to serve as minister and schoolmaster of Newtown. He accepted the call offered to him by a public vote at a town meeting. Shortly after accepting the call, a dispute arose regarding his salary which caused the Rev. Jones to resign. He brought suit against the people who had refused to pay the tax prescribed by law that supported his salary. The dispute centered around the principal of religious freedom, those of different sects, and those for whom English was not their native language, who did not wish to be compelled to support the minister of a sect in which they did not share fellowship. The people of Newtown arrived at a compromise, each person would pay a free will offering, and thus those of different beliefs would not be forced to support an Anglican minister. In 1680, at a town meeting, they unanimously voted to recall the Rev. Jones. He accepted and, in addition to his ministry, he organized Sunday School teaching in 1684, (possibly the first Sunday School in the Colonies). In 1685 he resigned to accept a call from a parish in Westchester.

⁵ Rev. Leverich graduated from Cambridge, England in 1625 and first settled in the New England colony, arriving at Salem, on October 10, 1633. He was probably the first ordained minister to preach in the province of New Hampshire at Dover. In 1635 he settled in Boston where he became an assistant to Mr. Partridge at Duxbury. He became the first Pastor at the church at Sandwich in 1638 and he resided at Plymouth during which time he was employed by the Commissioners of the United Colonies as a missionary. The Rev. Leverich worked with the Indians at Sandwich in Cape Cod and between the years 1653-1658 he worked with the Corchaug and Montauk tribes of Long Island. In 1658 he was called as Pastor of the church at Huntington, Long Island, where he labored for 11 years.

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In 1683 the English reorganized the governmental administration. Counties and towns replaced the shires and ridings. Long Island was divided into Kings, Queens and Suffolk Counties. Queens County was comprised of the Towns of Jamaica, Newtown, Hempstead and Oyster Bay. Newtown Village was the governmental, commercial, social and religious center for the surrounding town. Since the Dutch Governor, Peter Stuyvesant, had invalidated the land grant made to Francis Doughty and had refused to grant land to the English settlers at Middleburgh, they purchased their land from the Native Americans in 1656, although the Middleburgh settlers did not pay the balance of their debt until 1666. In 1667, Governor Nicholls signed the deed and granted a charter to the town. The town received its patent in 1686, which named 113 freeholders and confirmed the original deed of land purchased from the Native Americans in 1656. Newtown was officially recognized.

On September 22, 1693, Governor Benjamin Fletcher caused the Act of Assembly for the settlement of ministers, commonly called the Ministry Act, to be passed because:

Profaneness and Licentiousness had overspread the Province for want of a settled Ministry throughout the same, to the end may be removed and the Ordinances of God daily administered be it enacted that in each of the respective Cities and Counties hereafter mentioned and expressed there Shall be called inducted and established a good sufficient Protestant Minister to officiate and have the care of souls . . . in Queens County two, one to have the care of Jamaica and the adjacent Towns and farms. . . .⁶

The Act established the parish of Jamaica to include the adjoining farms and towns, thus the parish was to include the towns of Newtown and Flushing. The union of the three communities- Jamaica, Newtown and Flushing- which would last for almost a century, was now established. The act also assigned the responsibility for paying the minister's salaries to the parish. The money was to be paid by a general tax on all inhabitants of the parish. Even though most of the inhabitants of the Jamaica parish were dissenters, they would have to pay the salaries, which in 1693 was to be £60 a year, for an Anglican minister. This act created religious tensions throughout the early colonial period.

Newtown appears to have been without a minister from 1685 until April 12, 1694, when the townspeople voted to call a minister to Newtown. After a lengthy search in New England, the Rev. John Morse, also spelled as Moars and More in the town records, was selected by the inhabitants of Newtown. The Rev. Morse was born at Dedham, Massachusetts on March 31, 1674, and had graduated from Harvard College in 1692. There is uncertainty regarding the ordination of Mr. Morse, although the town records reflect that the people were satisfied with his ministry. Mr. Morse died in October, 1700.

The towns of Jamaica, Newtown and Flushing, known as Jamaica parish, which were united under the Ministry Act of 1693, were without an Anglican minister until the appointment on March 20, 1702, of the Rev. Patrick

⁶ See: *The Colonial Laws of New York from the Year 1664 to the Revolution* for the full text of the Act, pp. 328-331. The Act also established the taxation of the colonial inhabitants of New York to support the ministers.

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Gordon. He was appointed by the newly formed Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, (S.P.G.), under the direction of the Bishop of London. Unfortunately the Reverend took ill and died on July 28, 1702, shortly after arriving at Jamaica, reportedly without having held a service.

From 1703 to 1704 the Jamaica parish was served by the Rev. James Honeyman, appointed by the Governor, Edward Hyde, Viscount Cornbury. Rev. Honeyman wrote:

Governor Cornbury granted me admission to the ministerial function in this place (Jamaica), where I now am, and where I hope by the blessing of God to be of considerable service to the church.⁷

Mr. Honeyman was not well received at Jamaica because he was appointed by Gov. Cornbury in opposition to the wishes of the elected wardens and vestrymen of Jamaica. They had voted the Rev. John Hubbard, a Presbyterian, to be their minister. Upon the arrival of the new appointee, Rev. William Urquhart, Mr. Honeyman was ordered to Rhode Island by Governor Cornbury.

On February 12, 1704, the Rev. William Urquhart was licensed by the Bishop of London, to perform the ministerial function at Jamaica parish. He was inducted by the Rev. Wm. Vesey, rector of Trinity Church, into the parochial church at Jamaica the 27th of July 1704. By order of Governor Cornbury, the Rev. Urquhart occupied the church and parsonage at Jamaica and at Newtown. These were appropriated from the Rev. John Hubbard, an act that increased tension between the townspeople of Jamaica and the ministers of the Church of England.

Many of the settlers of Jamaica were dissenters from New England who had settled in America in search of religious freedom; consequently they resented and resisted the Governors intrusion upon their religious freedom. The inhabitants of Jamaica had freely elected and called the Rev. Hubbard as their minister but this was not sanctioned by Governor Cornbury. He zealously adhered to the instruction of his cousin, Queen Anne, regarding the preference for ministers of the Church of England in the American colonies. The following Royal instruction (no. 61) dictates the legal basis for this preference in the selection of a minister:

You are not to prefer any minister to any Ecclesiastical Benefice in that our Province without a certificate from the Right Reverend Father in God, the Bishop of London, of his being conformable to the doctrine and discipline of the Church of England, and of good life and conversation.⁸

⁷ Henry Onderdonk, Jr. *Antiquities of the Parish Church at Jamaica*. (Jamaica, NY: Charles Welling, 1880) p. 16

⁸ C.F. Pascoe, *Two Hundred Years of the S.P.G. An Historical Account*. (London: Published by the Society's Office, 1901) Vol. 1 p. 60.

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Governor Cornbury also enforced the provision of the Ministry Act of 1693 that required a tax to be levied on the townsfolk to support the minister, although at Cornbury's insistence this could only be an ordained minister of the Church of England. This further alienated those settlers with different religious beliefs, as they were forced to pay for the support of an Anglican ministry appointed in opposition to their elected ministers. Since many of the early colonial settlers had sailed to America precisely for the freedom to worship, this hegemonic religious intrusion under instruction of the Queen would become an important issue cited in the call for American independence from England.

By the early 1700s there were four religious groups in the Newtown community. The earliest Congregationalists had gradually died out or left the community. The Quakers were also one of the earlier groups, having come to Newtown in the 1680s. The Dutch Reformed church members had been established since the seventeenth century in Newtown, but did not build their own church until 1731. The money for the construction of their church came from many residents in the community, including some Anglicans. In the minds of many Newtown citizens religion in general was more important than the specific denomination. The Presbyterians were the largest congregation throughout the colonial period. They were established in the town with a church by 1715. Unfortunately their church did not survive the British occupation during the Revolutionary War.

Rev. Urquhart served in Newtown one Sunday per month until his death in 1709. Regarding the Newtown parish he wrote:

At Newtown, in the same parish, is a church and a house for a minister. The inhabitants are desirous to have a minister to themselves settled there, and are willing to contribute largely to support him.⁹

During the years 1710-1731 the parishioners at Jamaica, Newtown and Flushing were served by the Rev. Thomas Poyer, appointed by the S.P.G. on September 29, 1709. He was inducted into the parish on July 18, 1710. From the onset, the Reverend suffered in his relations with the people of Jamaica and Flushing where the dissenters refused to pay his salary.¹⁰ A more congenial spirit of ecumenicalism prevailed at Newtown where his new congregation was made up of approximately 20 communicants. In 1712, an important Newtown family, the Halletts, had their son baptized by Rev. Poyer. This began a larger acceptance of the Anglican presence in Newtown. By 1717 Rev. Poyer estimated that of the 409 families in the parish, 80 came to the Anglican church.

In 1711 the town itself was thriving with 1003 citizens. Of this number, 164 were slaves. Most freedmen in the town were both farmers and artisans. By the 1720s most of the land in the area had been sold, forcing the subdivision of land among families. With smaller fields most people were unable to make a living without turning to another occupation such as cordwainer or wheelwright.

Henry Onderdonk, Jr. *Antiquities of the Parish Church at Jamaica*. (Jamaica, NY: Charles Welling, 1880) p. 20

¹⁰ An example of the ill will of the settlers of Jamaica may be found in the following anecdote. The miller refused to grind the Reverend's corn saying he should eat it whole as the hogs do.

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Upon the death of Rev. Poyer in 1732, the Rev. Thomas Colgan was appointed as minister of the Jamaica parish by Governor Col. Cosby.¹¹ He was not welcomed by some members of the parish, particularly residents of Jamaica. His salary, like those before him, would be paid by the S.P.G., not the residents of the parish. He would remain with the parish until his death in December of 1755.

Under Rev. Colgan relations with the townspeople of Newtown prospered and the number of church members increased. It was decided to build a church and a request was made to the Town Board for a deed of land, which was granted. The land came from part of the town lot "... in consideration of said request and good intention being willing the worship of God should be promoted."¹² The deed, dated April 19, 1733, was signed by the freeholders of Newtown of all denominations. Construction of the Church of England in America mission church (later to become known as St. James) was begun in the Spring of 1735 and was completed in 1736. The building was constructed by Joseph Moore, described in town Records as a Yeoman. His notes name one carpenter, James Renne Jr. The pews and simple furniture were installed and parceled out in 1740. Rev. Colgan also supervised the construction of the churches at Jamaica and at Flushing. Regarding the construction of the church at Newtown, in a report to the S.P.G., dated 1735, he wrote:

But what may give the venerable society some further assurance of the success of my ministry here, through the blessing of God, is the account I can now give them of another church erected last April at a place called Newtown about 5 miles from Jamaica where there were a considerable body of people belonging to the Church of England. They are a people who by their lives and conversation admire their religion and profession and I have hopes that others seeing their good works will be induced to follow their example.¹³

After a lapse of two years the Rev. Dr. Samuel Seabury Jr., the first American born rector, was appointed to serve as minister at Jamaica, Newtown and Flushing. Rev. Seabury served the parishes from January 23, 1757, until December 3, 1766.¹⁴

¹¹ Rev. Colgan had previously served at Trinity Church in New York county, as Catechist to the approximately 1400 Negro and Indian slaves who inhabited the county.

¹² Jessica Kross Ehrlich, *A Town Study in Colonial New York: Newtown, Queens County (1642-1790)*. University of Michigan Phd. Dissertation, 1974, page 260.

¹³ See: James Riker, Jr. *Historical Notes of Newtown*. (Jamaica, NY: Long Island Collection, The Queens County Public Library, 1941) Vol. 3 p. 467

The Rev. Dr. Samuel Seabury, Jr. was the son of the Rev. Samuel Seabury who was minister at New London, Connecticut and at Hempstead, Long Island. Dr. Seabury was a graduate of Yale University, and was ordained by the Bishop of London, deacon on December 21, 1753 and priest on December 23, 1753. He was a missionary at New Brunswick, New Jersey prior to his appointment at Jamaica. His appointment, by Governor Sir Charles Hardy, occurred on the 12th of January, 1757.

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During the tenure of Rev. Seabury, the parishioners of Newtown petitioned the Governor for autonomy. By this time the Newtown church was probably the fastest growing of the three Church of England churches in the parish. The result was a Royal Charter, the Patent constituting a body corporate and politic in the form of a parchment with greeting in the name of King George III and sealed in wax with the symbol of the Province of New York. The Charter was granted by Lt. Gov. and Commander in Chief of the Province of New York, Cadwallader Colden on September 9, 1761. Saint James was incorporated under the name of "The Rector and Inhabitants of the Township of Newtown in Queens County in Communion of the Church of England", although the Newtown church would remain under the care of Jamaica until 1797. The first meeting of the vestry of St. James was held on Nov. 7, 1761. The charter of St. James Church mentions the acquisition of an additional ¼ acre of land behind the church for use as the church cemetery. This cemetery was later expanded on November 12, 1826, when the church swapped some adjacent land with the town.

Regarding the church building at Newtown, Rev. Seabury wrote on March 28, 1760, in a letter to the Secretary of the S.P.G.:

At Newtown also they are repairing the Church and have rebuilt the steeple from the ground at a considerable expense, and I had the pleasure the last time I administered the Communion at the Parish Church to find three added to the number of communicants.¹⁵

The original ledger denoting the cost for materials and labor, as well as many receipts from those who had labored in the construction of the tower and steeple, have survived.

On September 29, 1761, Dr. Jacob Ogden deeded to the church a house and about 12 acres of land that provided additional income to the parish. The present church and parish hall now stand upon this parcel at present-day 84-07 Broadway.

In 1762 Flushing and Newtown petitioned the S.P.G. for a separate minister, claiming that the interests of the parishioners had suffered due to want of a full-time minister. Their request was denied because of the financial burden it would have placed upon Rev. Seabury and his large family. Regarding the inhabitants of Newtown Rev. Seabury wrote on October 10, 1759:

Preaching once in three weeks at a place, I find by experience, will do little more than keep up the present languid sense of religion, and was it not for the steady tho [sic] slow increase of the congregation at Newtown, I should be almost discouraged.¹⁶

¹⁵ Ibid. p.466

¹⁶ See: James Riker, Jr. *The Annals of Newtown in Queens County, New York*. (New York: D. Fanshaw, 1852) p.249

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On December 3, 1766, Rev. Seabury, with the consent of the Society, became the rector of St. Peters Church in Westchester. The parishioners of Newtown presented Rev. Seabury with a parting gift of 20 pounds. Upon conclusion of the War for Independence Rev. Seabury became the first Protestant Episcopal Bishop of the United States. He was consecrated as Bishop of Connecticut, in Aberdeen, Scotland, on November 14, 1784. Rev. Seabury resided for the rest of his days in New London, Connecticut, until his death at age 68, on February 25, 1796.

The Rev. Joshua Bloomer was the last rector of the Jamaica, Newtown, and Flushing parishes to be appointed by the S.P.G. He served as minister of the parish throughout the difficult period of the Revolutionary War, having served from 1769, until his death in 1790.¹⁷ Regarding the churches of his parish the Rev. Bloomer wrote on February 15, 1770:

...the churches are neat well-furnished buildings, but those of Newtown and Flushing are rather small for the Congregations, the former of which the people propose to enlarge in the Spring of the year....¹⁸

The original ledger of 1772, denoting the cost for materials and labor as well as many receipts from those who had labored in the construction of the enlargement of the church have survived. The following are a list of people for whom receipts exist and/or are named on the ledger: Abraham Rappelye, John Leverich, (mason), Vernon Moore, (carpenter), Nathaniel Hunt, Abraham Morrell, (shaved the shingles), Gabriel Smith, Garret Remsen, William Leverich, (smith), and Samuel Moore Sr.

During the War for Independence the inhabitants of Newtown were divided between patriots and loyalists although Rev. Bloomer, as with many Church of England clergy, remained a loyalist. In a letter to the Secretary of the S.P.G., dated April 9, 1777, Rev. Bloomer wrote:

The arrival of the King's troops and their success on this Island has rendered every loyal subject of which there are a great number here happy.....The service of the Church also gave great offence, the prayers for the King and Royal Family being directly repugnant to their independent scheme, they bitterly weighed and frequently buy threats endeavored to intimidate the ministers and cause them to omit those parts of the liturgy. When independence was declared by the Congress they grew more violent and I received a letter from one of the committee of New York informing me that my persisting in praying for the King gave great offence and conjuring me as I regarded my personal safety, to omit it for the future. Upon consulting my Church wardens and vestry what measure it was most prudent for me to pursue at this critical juncture, they

¹⁷ He was born in Westchester, graduated Kings College, (now Columbia University), and served as a Captain of the Provincial Forces where he attained the rank of Major. Mr. Bloomer later studied divinity and was ordained in England in 1765.

¹⁸ D.D. Corwin, D. Litt, and Rev. E.T. *Ecclesiastical Records: State of New York*. (Albany, NY: The University of the State of New York, 1916) p. 4180

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unanimously advised me that as the King's Army lay at Staten Island and was daily expected to march into my parish from whom I should obtain relief to shut up my Church. I agreed with them in opinion as if I did not take that measure, I was persuaded that I should be sent to some remote part of New England from whence perhaps it would be a long time before I could be relieved. My Church was accordingly shut up for five Sundays when the King's troops landed, whose success has restored us to those religious principles of which we were deprived by Tyranny and persecution¹⁹

It is reported that after the Battle of Long Island many of England's officers and troops were communicants at St. James, including Sir Henry Clinton, Sir William Howe, Earl Cornwallis and King George III's son William, later King William IV. Fortunately, St. James Church was saved from desecration and from destruction by the occupying British forces because it was an Anglican church.

One person of importance who was a member of St. James during this turbulent period was the Rt. Rev. Dr. Benjamin Moore. Moore, born at Newtown on October 5, 1748, became Rector of Trinity Church and later was consecrated the second Bishop of New York in 1801. He was also appointed president of Columbia College on December 31, 1801. He was the son of Samuel and Sarah Moore. Samuel Moore was the first clerk of the newly chartered St. James Church under Rev. Colgan and the Rt. Rev. Dr. Seabury.²⁰

Upon the conclusion of the War for Independence the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States was established. New York State Conventions for the newly organized church were held yearly beginning on June 22, 1785. The Rev. Bloomer was a participant at the State Conventions from 1785-1789, where the early policies of an American Episcopate were established and ratified. The Constitution and the Canons of the church were also written and ratified. St. James, Newtown, was represented at the first Convention by Richard Alsop and by the Rev. Bloomer. The corporate name of St. James church was changed, pursuant to an Act of the Legislature of the State of New York, on March 12, 1793, to "The Rector and Inhabitants of the Town of Newtown in Queens County in Communion of the Protestant Episcopal Church of the State of New York."

Following Mr. Bloomer's death in 1790, the Rev. William Hammel was appointed as rector for Jamaica parish. He was the first rector to have been ordained in the United States to serve the three parishes. He resigned due to ill health on August 17, 1795.

The Rev. Henry Van Dyke was the first rector to serve solely at Newtown, although his tenure was brief. He served from 1797 until he was removed in 1802. St. James Church had separated from Jamaica in 1797,

¹⁹ James, Riker, Jr. *Historical Notes of Newtown*. (Jamaica, NY: Long Island Collection, The Queens County Public Library, 1941) vol. 3 p. 468

²⁰ Rev. Moore was the father of Dr. Clement Clarke Moore, remembered as the author of "A Visit from St. Nicholas," aka "Twas the Night Before Christmas."

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following a dispute between the parishes regarding the glebe²¹ at Jamaica. During this period St. James Church donated land and a subscription was undertaken for the construction of a new school. The school was built behind what is now the Public Library on 51st Street and continued to operate until the 1870s. The supervision of the educational program was shared by the clergy of St. James Church and the Presbyterian Church.

In April, 1803, St. George's, Flushing, and St. James, Newtown, again united and called the Rev. Abraham L. Clarke, who had graduated from Yale College in 1785. He served both of the congregations until 1809, when the vestries again decided to again have separate ministers for their respective parishes. The Rev. Clarke continued as minister at St. James until his death on December 31, 1810.

During the years of 1812-1814, the Rev. William E. Wyatt ministered at Newtown. He graduated from Columbia College in 1809. He was called to the rectorship at St. Paul's Church in Baltimore and resigned from St. James in 1814.

The Rev. Evan Melborne Johnson, accepted a call to be rector of the parish on June 17, 1814. He resigned in 1827, to establish and erect St. John's Church in Brooklyn. During his tenure, in 1816, the church building was given needed repairs and the parish seal, a bell surrounded by the words "Saint James Church, Newtown, Long Island, was adopted.

St. James was without a rector until The Rev. George A. Shelton accepted a call from the vestry in 1830. Rev. Shelton served Newtown for 33 years until his death in 1863. Most notable during the tenure of Mr. Shelton was the construction of a new church in 1848 on a separate parcel at 84-07 Broadway. The new edifice built on the site of the present church was designed in the Gothic Revival style by Minard Lafever. The last service for regular Sunday worship at the old church was held July 16, 1848. The text of Rev. Shelton's service was appropriately: "one generation passeth away and another cometh."

The rear portion of the church lot was a cemetery until 1851, when the new cemetery behind the "new" church, (84-07 Broadway), was consecrated. The majority of the graves were transferred to the new yard in 1851. The remaining bodies were disinterred in 1882 and transferred to the new cemetery. The church and the town continued to evolve together. In 1896, Newtown was renamed Elmhurst to avoid any association with the foul smells of the polluted Newtown Creek.²² Newtown as part of Queens County became a borough of New York City in 1898, leading once again to a change in leadership and authority. In the 1930s the City of New York made a claim that the rear lot was the site of a public, (town), cemetery, not a church cemetery, and attempted to seize the parcel in order to build a playground. There is an easement noted on the tax map that pertains to the subway, which passes under the rear property. The easement was granted to the Board of Transportation of the City of New York by the Wardens and Vestryman of St. James Church at a meeting held June 13, 1929. The rear of the property was converted for parking in 1957.

²¹ The glebe refers to the land or property owned by the church which is bringing in revenue.

²² Kenneth T. Jackson, *The Encyclopedia of New York City* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995) 373.

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The old church has been used since that date until 1941 as a parish hall and for Sunday School. A new parish hall was built adjacent to the new church in 1941. The St. James Troop of the Boy Scouts met at the old church from 1928 until 1953. The Boy Scouts, the Girl Scouts and Brownies continued to use the building into the 1980s. An inquiry was made to adapt the building for Civilian Defense in the 1950s. This was rejected by the vestry. The United States Post Office made an inquiry, on September 9, 1963, to purchase the land, (and presumably to demolish the building), to build a larger Elmhurst Post Office. The vestry declined to sell the property noting, in their letter, dated September 25, 1963, the historic significance of the old church. Today the church serves as a community center where regular meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous, The Chinese Friendly Society and The Vietnam Veterans Chapter #32 are held. On Sundays, the Indonesian Bethel Gospel Church uses the building for worship.

St. James Church is a distinguished landmark of English Colonial America. This simple vernacular building is architecturally significant as a rare surviving example of an eighteenth-century English Colonial mission church. The building tradition of the area was brought by settlers with a largely English heritage and was generally characterized by small-scale utilitarian buildings with simple ornamentation and the use of readily available materials. In contrast to the Dutch building tradition of the Hudson Valley, which used masonry, the most distinguishing feature of Colonial architecture in this area was the use of heavy timber framing and wood shingle siding. St. James exemplifies the regional vernacular building tradition in its form, materials, and construction methods.

Skilled craftsmanship can be found in the classical inspired woodwork at the interior. At the east end of the church is a gallery with intricate woodwork including dentils, wood paneling, fluted pilasters, and a curved balustrade. Of special interest in the center of the west wall is an arch defined by elaborately carved pilasters and a keystone. The church features an elliptical barrel vaulted ceiling with a crown molding at its base.

Reflecting the late-nineteenth-century growth of Elmhurst, a remodeling campaign was undertaken by the church in 1883. It was in that year that the steeple collapsed and the rear block was built on the foundation of the former tower. Gothic and Stick Style ornamentation was added to the church during this remodeling including eave brackets, trusswork, bargeboards, drip moldings, and pointed arch window mullions. The doors at the wall below the gallery are from the late nineteenth century remodeling and feature panels with cusped arches. These changes illustrate the cultural change within the community as residents moved away from the regional vernacular and began to assimilate elements of nationally popular styles into local architecture.

St. James Church is historically significant for its association with the colonial beginning and the subsequent growth of Newtown (later Elmhurst), Queens County, New York. This simple vernacular church survives as a rare example of a Colonial English mission church. Despite alterations throughout its over two and one-half century history, the edifice retains significant features and architectural integrity from its original construction and later embellishments to satisfy the National Register criteria. St. James Church stands today as a viable and venerable institution and continues to contribute to the welfare of the surrounding community as it has for over 260 years.

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10. Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary coincides with legal block #1549 and lot #1, the lines of which are identified on the attached Queens County tax map.

Boundary Justification

The boundary incorporates the parcel historically associated with the church building. The property boundaries of St. James Church were established by deed of land of the "hereunder written . . . freeholders of and in the Township of Newtown in Queens County on Nassau Island in the Colony of New York." The deed was ordered by James Hazard, 3rd Judge of the Court of Common Pleas in Queens County and is dated 20th February 1734. Recorded by Jacob Reeder, Town Clerk, 27 February 1734. The land was surveyed by Peter Berrien on 17 December 1733. The survey was recorded with the Town Clerk in January 1734.

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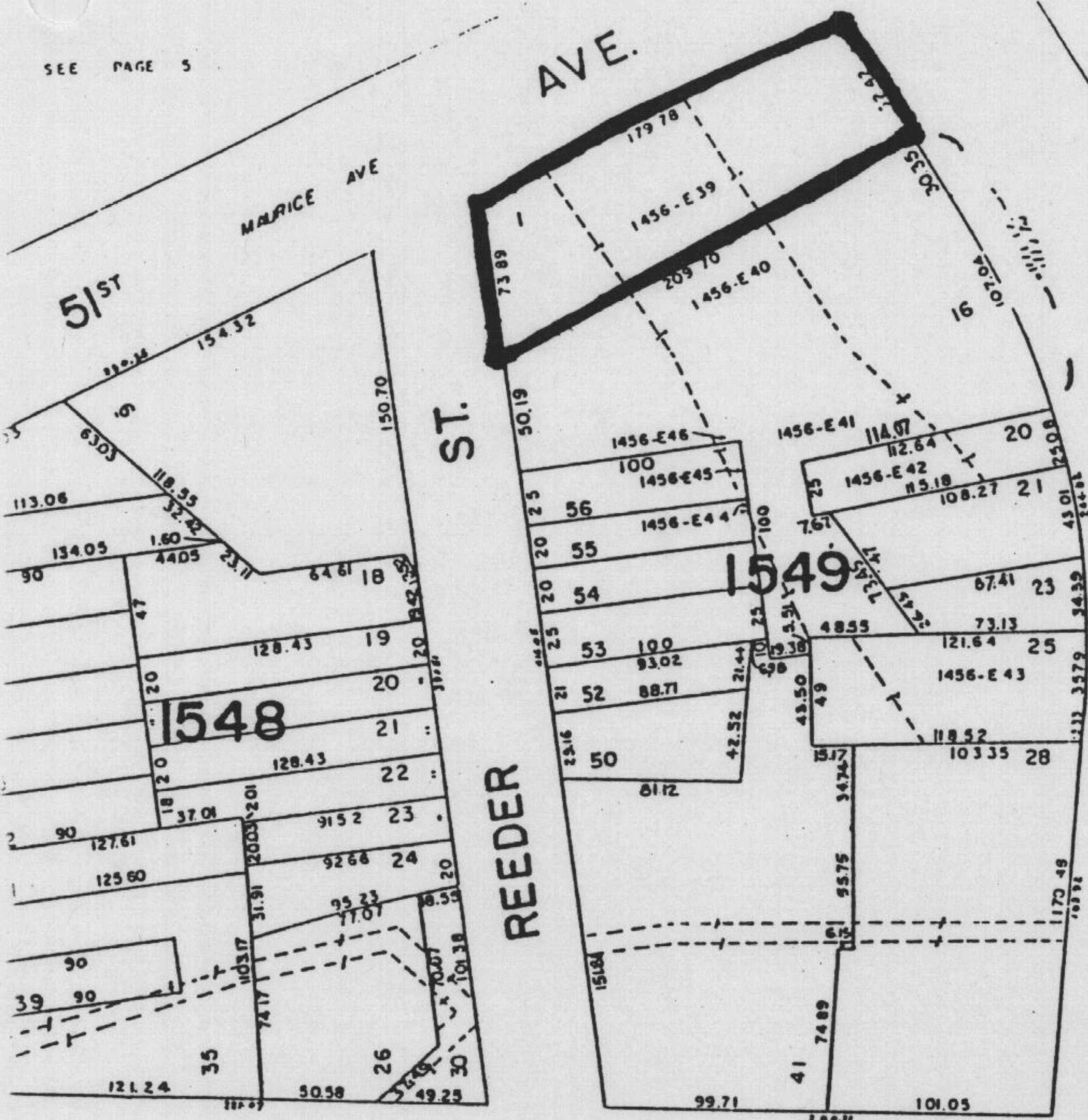
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Research and writing by:

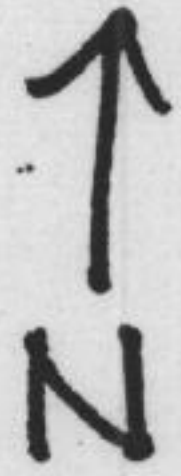
G. Brian Hutchinson
St. James Church
84-07 Broadway
Elmhurst, New York 11373

SEE PAGE 5



Block
1549
AFFECT LOT 16
0900
LOT 12

SEE SEC 11



St. James Church
Elmhurst, Queens County, NY

Source: Queens County Tax Map
Approx. scale: 1" = 100'

QUEENS THOMSON AVE. BOUL'D.

6



PARK 590000m. E.

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594

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BROOKLYN QUADRANGLE
NEW YORK
7.5 MINUTE SERIES PLANIMETRIC
NW/4 BROOKLYN 15' QUADRANGLE

FLUSHING

405737 DP



St. James Church
Elmhurst, Queens Co,
NY
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