



# Western Queens Gazette

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## Plan To Make 351-Year-Old House Part Of Nat'l PK. System

BY JOHN TOSCANO

Congressmembers Carolyn Maloney and Joseph Crowley announced last week that the National Park Service is conducting a three-step process to determine if a 351-year-old house in Astoria, oldest house still being used as a home in New York City, might be eligible for favorable consideration as part of the National Parks System.

The house in question is the Lent-Riker-Smith Homestead, which was built around 1655 and has been the residence of Michael Smith and his wife, Marion, for the past 25 years. For all of that time, The Smiths have worked to restore it.

Maloney (D-Queens/Manhattan) stated that the house, built over 100 years before the American Revolution, offers New Yorkers a priceless opportunity to experience the nation's history.

Crowley described the house as "a great historical treasure that helps trace

back the multiethnic foundation of Queens and the United States".

Crowley added, "It was built before the birth of our nation, when so many people who had migrated to these shores in search of a new life were settling in this area. Almost four centuries later, this home remains emblematic of the founding of our nation by immigrants whose legacy is still celebrated in Queens' rich cultural and ethnic diversity.

"This house also has great significance for Irish Americans, who remain an important part of this borough's ethnic fabric, as a few early prominent Irish settlers are buried in the property's cemetery. Preserving the Lent-Riker-Smith Homestead would ensure that this magnificent historic link to our remarkable past will remain for future generations."

The first step by the National Park Service (NPS) will be a preliminary reconnaissance study, the lawmakers

explained. If the results of the preliminary study are positive, Crowley and Maloney will initiate the second step by introducing federal legislation to authorize a detailed study of the 350-year-old farm house and property.

Once that detailed study is completed, Maloney and Crowley will then begin the third and final step to bring the homestead into the National Park System by introducing an Act of Congress that would include the homestead in the Park System.

The homestead was built around 1655 by Dutch immigrant Abraham Riker, a member of a prominent family that owned property throughout the New York region and for whom Rikers Island is named.

The one-acre site includes a cemetery with 132 marked graves. Among the individuals buried there are Ann Tone, wife of Wolfe Tone, a leader of an Irish revolt in 1798. Another is exiled Irish Catholic patriot Dr. William J.



Mac Neven, who married into the Riker family. A third person interred on the site is Abraham Riker, who was killed at Valley Forge in 1778.

For more information on the study process and criteria applied by the NPS in evaluating new park proposals, visit [www.ups.gov/legacy/criteria.html](http://www.ups.gov/legacy/criteria.html).