

Owner of historic home dies

by **Elizabeth Daley**
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Michael Smith, owner of the historic Lent-Riker-Smith Homestead in Jackson Heights, died on Nov. 21 from complications due to prostate cancer. His wife, Marion Duckworth Smith, was by his side.

Born July 22, 1935 in Paris, Smith expired on the anniversary of his mother's death.

Smith was educated in the United States at the Millbrook School and worked in publishing. He purchased the Lent-Riker Homestead in 1975, after being a tenant there.

The house was originally constructed by Abraham Lent, grandson of Abraham Riker, in 1654. The property included

extensive farmland.

The Smiths' early courtship included a tour of the then-neglected home. He asked her if she wanted to see his cemetery and she was intrigued. One hundred and thirty-two members of the Riker family are buried on the grounds.

During their 27-years of marriage, the Smiths lovingly restored the farmhouse and decided to open it home for tours through historical societies. School children were also invited to visit the property, which is now on the National Register of Historic Places.

Smith was a founder of Larimi Communications, founded in 1970, publisher of Contacts Newsletter, Radio Contacts, Cable Contacts and T.V. News. Larimi was later sold to Billboard Publications.

He also founded the National Media Conference, an event featuring such motivational speakers as Oprah Winfrey, Barbara Walters, Ralph Nader and countless others.

Smith is survived by his wife, a photographer, daughter, Laurel Vouvray of Austin, Texas, and step-daughter, Leslie Granger of San Jose, Calif.

A wake was held at Quinn Funeral Home in Astoria on Monday.

"He always wore a smile and was the consummate gentleman to the very end," wrote Marion Duckworth Smith of her late husband.

Smith will be buried at the homestead's private cemetery which he and Marion Duckworth Smith visited on their second date, so many years ago.



The Lent-Riker-Smith estate then, and now. Michael Smith, top.