

Aiming To Save Historic Inn

Quogue Historical Society wants to preserve former boarding house that welcomed Black travelers during segregation

BY DAN STARK

dstark@expressnewsgruop.com

The Quogue Historical Society is leading an effort to stop the proposed demolition of a historic home in Quogue that has a storied history as one of the only resorts on Long Island that was listed in The Green Book, once a handbook for African-American motorists.

The property, located at 107 Jessup Avenue, is currently under contract for sale, and the buyer's plan is to demolish the house and build a new one on the property, a plan that will be heard by the village's Design Review Board on Friday, August 21. In response, the Quogue Historical Society has been rallying support to preserve the home.

The property was purchased by Abram Enos, a U.S. Navy veteran from the Civil War and the grandson of a free enslaved man, in 1899, and he built a two-story home on the property, known as Jessup Manor. After Enos died in 1920, his daughter, Tillie, added a third floor to the home and began operating the home as the Shinnecock Arms, a boarding house and hotel that primarily housed do-

mestic helpers of summer visitors.

In 1938, the Shinnecock Arms was included in "The Negro Motorist Green Book." Along with William's Cottage, also in Quogue, and Sag Harbor's Ivy Cottage, these were the only locations included on Long Island at the time.

Enos's daughter sold the property to Sarah Rawlins Botts, who continued to keep the boarding house's doors open, initially with her first husband, Dr. E. Elliot Rawlins, a physician known as "Harlem's Health Evangelist," and Theodore S. Botts, the president of the Progressive Democratic Club and a civic activist in the National Consumers League.

Pi Gardiner, the co-chair of the historical society, called the home "the last vestige of what was a vibrant Black community in Quogue," along with the St. Paul AME Zion Church. Though the home is listed in the National Register of Historic Places as a contributing property in the Quogue Historic District, Gardiner said that there are "no legal keys" to prevent the home's demolition at the moment.

Gardiner also said that the proposed new house would be out



Jessup Manor in Quogue operated as a boarding house known as Shinnecock Arms, one of the only Long Island resorts listed in The Green Book, a resource for African-American travelers. PHOTOS COURTESY PI GARDINER

of character with the surrounding homes on Jessup Avenue. "Most of the houses are small, little farmhouses, and this is big, it's very wide, it's very tall, and it's truly not in keeping in the neighborhood," she said.

Gardiner said that she and Chester Murray, the historical society's other co-chair, met with the owner of the property last week and that she was surprised that there was more historic material in the home than she anticipated, including the original staircase and doors that still have numbers on it from its time as a boarding house.

To preserve the home, the historic society is seeking to acquire the property through the Southampton Town Community Preservation Fund and turn it into a museum to keep the story of the home alive. Gardiner said that using CPF funds would be "an ideal solution" to preserve the home.

"We would take this over, make it into a museum, and it would become our headquarters," said Murray. "In fact, it's right across the street from where we are now. That's the idea and I think a museum would attract a lot of people, because it's not just about Quogue history, it's very broad-based [and] historical."

The historic society is being



supported in this push by the Preservation League of New York State, who sent a letter to Southampton Town Supervisor Maria Moore urging the town to take the necessary steps to preserve the home.

"The QHS would be an ideal steward of the property, as they desperately need space for col-

lections storage, exhibitions, and education programs, and they are conveniently located right across the street," said League President Jay A. DiLorenzo in his letter to Moore. "Their vision is to create museum space for the incredible story of the building. The League supports this plan and, in partnership with [Preservation Long

Island], we will be glad to offer technical assistance as needed for the preservation of the building."

"This house isn't just an architectural important part of the historic district and of the era, but culturally, it is off the charts and we think it should be preserved," added Gardiner.



The house at 107 Jessup Avenue in Quogue, formerly known as Jessup Manor. DAN STARK