

LONG ISLAND / NASSAU

# Rockville Centre couple seeks protected status for 1747 home

The homeowners of what is thought to be the oldest structure in the Town of Hempstead said they will apply for town landmark designation for their 18th century property.

Stephen and Gloria Bryan are seeking historic landmark status for their pre-Revolutionary War home in Rockville Centre. (Credit: Newsday / Jesse Coburn)

**By Jesse Coburn**

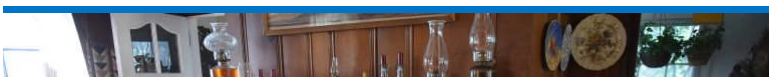
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It may be the oldest home standing in the Town of Hempstead, and Gloria and Stephen Bryan want to keep it that way.

The Rockville Centre couple is seeking town historic landmark status for the 18th century building on Hempstead Avenue where they have lived since 1975.

“It’s not only the age, because Long Island has a lot of old houses. But it’s the history attached to it,” Stephen Bryan said of the home.



Bryan, a retired art director, said



The original fireplace still stands in the 1747 house. Photo  
Credit: John Roca

records indicate that the home was built in 1747 by Anthony DeMott, a mill owner who held large swaths of land in the area.

There was little development in the area at the time, Hempstead Town historian Tom Saltzman said. "It was farmland well into the 19th century," he said. "Absolutely rural."

Saltzman said he was not aware of any existing structures in the town built before 1747.

The couple said they were spurred to seek historic protections for the house after learning of the proposed demolition of another old structure nearby to make way for new development. They voiced their ambition at a Rockville Centre Village Board of Trustees meeting in October.

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"We see what is happening in our village. We see beautiful old houses torn down and replaced with new ones," Gloria Bryan said at the meeting.

To the Bryans, who both grew up in Brooklyn, the bucolic charm of the home was apparent upon first sight.

"My feeling was we would be living in a museum, but in a good way," said Gloria Bryan, a retired teacher, noting the home's low ceilings and split Dutch doors.

The centuries-old home is not without its quirks. Few of its surfaces meet at right angles, the wall plaster is reinforced with horse hair and the creaking floorboards turned out not to be entirely charming.

"We found out that my living

The Bryans have lived in the 18th century Hempstead Avenue house since 1975. Photo Credit: John Roca

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room floor was being held up by one big boulder and a termite-ridden tree trunk,” Stephen

Bryan said.

But the building has perks too, not least its sturdypost-and-beam construction.

“When the inspector came and looked up in our attic . . . he said, ‘It’ll never fall down,’ ” Bryan said.

The village itself cannot grant historic landmark status to properties, according to Nancy Solomon, the executive director of Long Island Traditions, a Port Washington arts and architecture nonprofit. The village hired Solomon to complete a grant-funded survey of Rockville Centre’s architectural history, which is ongoing. And Mayor Francis X. Murray formed a task force last year to explore historic preservation issues.

For now, the Bryans said they will apply for landmark status from the Hempstead Town Landmarks Preservation Commission.

Murray could not be reached for comment. Village spokeswoman Julie Scully said the village is supportive of the Bryans’ efforts.

“The village is going to work with the Bryan family to have their home designated as a historic landmark,” she said.

**By Jesse Coburn**

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