L**ooking at Great Neck’s Historic**

**Neighborhoods: Crampton Avenue**

In a community that has been home to many famous and wealthy people, the neighborhood of Crampton Avenue in the Village of Great Neck might easily be overlooked. Not to be confused with Crampton Lane (just off Hicks Lane which was where the Crampton Livery Stable once stood), Crampton Avenue is located between Middle Neck Road and Polo Road within easy walking distance to Great Neck North High School. Great Neck natives James E. Crampton and his brother, John Crampton, purchased the land from the former John Brewer Estate in 1928 and built 21 bungalows to serve as rental properties during a time of dramatic real estate growth and development in Great Neck.

The Crampton Avenue homes shared the same architectural style, but with a slightly different stucco design on the exterior. Each simple one-story wood-frame bungalow of 1,100 square feet had two bedrooms, one bathroom, a living room with fireplace, and attic, basement, and garage. Southern pine and Vermont slate were used for the floors an roof respectively. Most of the properties had a shared driveway. Some of the homes have since had major alterations, such as the addition of a second story.

The homeowners of 11 Crampton Avenue, both history professors at the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy, knew immediately the historical importance of the bungalows. “We had been looking at homes in Great Neck for over two years before we saw the houses on Crampton Avenue. My husband, Patrick, stopped by an open house and called me to tell me that I had to come see the house right away,” recalled Jennifer. “They are absolutely unique and constructed of quality building materials that are no longer available.” While the small space living might not appeal to all modern families, the Speelmans knew they had found the right home for them.

Curious to learn more about the history of the street, the Speelmans looked at the 1930 federal census to get a feel for the neighborhood. Crampton Avenue was a working-class neighborhood whose heads of household rented the homes for $60 a month. (Applying this figure to a Historical Currency Conversion revealed that $60 in 1930 would have the same buying power as $883 today). The heads of households worked as public school teachers, salesmen, auto mechanics, law enforcement officers, and bank tellers. They were immigrants and first generation Americans from France, Scotland, England, Ireland, Germany, and Lithuania.

`The couple then reached out to the Great Neck Historical Society and learned about their Heritage Recognition Plaque Program to identify and honor Great Neck’s most notable homes. The Great Neck Historical Society recently awarded 11 Crampton Avenue with a Heritage Recognition Plaque. “We are incredibly honored by the Historical Society’s recognition,” said Jennifer, “and proud to be a steward of one of these irreplaceable homes. The public should know that this in no way prevents the homeowner from doing work on the house.

Anyone interested in knowing the history of their home or applying for the Heritage Recognition Program should contact Great Neck Historical Society President Alice Kasten at (516) 466-8954, the Historical Society at greatneckhistoricalsociety@gmail.com or Heritage Recognition Program Committee Chair Joan Wheeler at (516) 487-9494.