

2013-J5761

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION commemorating the 300th Anniversary of the Gomez Mill House in Marlboro, New York, June 19-22, 2014

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to commend the efforts of those who seek to bring recognition to historical places within the State of New York, and in doing so, help to ensure that the complete history of our State and Nation is preserved and shared with present generations of citizens; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to commemorate the 300th Anniversary of the Gomez Mill House in Marlboro, New York, to be celebrated June 19-22, 2014, at ceremonies in both New York City and Marlboro; and

WHEREAS, Built in 1714, the Gomez Mill House in Marlboro, New York, is one of the oldest continuously lived in residences in the United States; a home to numerous historic families of traders, artists, and patriots, this institution also holds the distinction of being the oldest surviving Jewish dwelling in North America; and

WHEREAS, This remarkable landmark was founded by Luis Moses Gomez, a prominent Sephardic Jewish businessman who with his family fled from Spain to escape persecution; this leader of the early New York City Jewish community helped finance and construct America's first synagogue, the Mill Street Synagogue in New York City for Shearith Israel, the oldest congregation in America, and also served as its first parnas (president); and

WHEREAS, At the age of 60, Luis Moses Gomez purchased the 4,000 acre property in Marlboro, New York, to build the Gomez Mill House; he erected a single-story fieldstone trading post and dwelling for his sons to trade European and Caribbean goods with travelers, settlers, and

Native Americans; it remains the foundation and first floor of the house to the present day; and

WHEREAS, In 1772, ownership of the Gomez Mill House passed to Wolfert Ecker, a local Revolutionary War hero and post-colonial leader; the site served as center of patriotic activism against the British and hosted numerous secret intelligence meetings to further the cause of the War for Independence; and

WHEREAS, After the war, Wolfert Ecker expanded his timber business and started the Ecker Ferry, while also becoming the first elected official in Orange County; he added a second story level to the Gomez Mill House in the classic colonial-Dutch style; and

WHEREAS, In 1835, the historic grounds were purchased by Edward Armstrong, a Scotsman and military officer who planted orchards, added mills for grain, and built one of the first plank roads; and

WHEREAS, A renaissance family of diplomats, artists, authors, and entrepreneurs, the Armstrongs contributed greatly to the quality of life of the people of Newburgh and New York State; their relatives include former New York Governor Hamilton Fish and former members of the United States House of Representatives; and

WHEREAS, The Gomez Mill House was then purchased in 1912, by renowned Arts and Crafts artisan Dard Hunter, who built his iconic paper mill on the site; it was here he produced America's first completely handmade book; visitors from around the world have come to visit this place where Hunter worked and to study his papermaking, typography, and book binding methods; and

WHEREAS, This property's final owner of historical significance was the extraordinary human rights activist, Martha Gruening; a white founder of the NAACP and confidant of W.E.B. Du Bois, she was a noted poet

and muckraking journalist, as well as an advocate for civil, women's, workers, and children's rights; and

WHEREAS, Martha Gruening established a Libertarian school at the Gomez

Mill House modeled on the Modern School of Will and Ariel Durant in New York City; at this school, children of all races, creeds and economic backgrounds would receive an education without prejudice; and

WHEREAS, In 1979, the Gomez Foundation for Mill House was founded by the descendants of its former owners and other dedicated community members; its mission was to preserve this unique historic house, and to educate the public about the contributions of its former owners to the multicultural history of the Hudson River Valley; six years later, the foundation purchased the site and established a public museum chartered by the State of New York; and

WHEREAS, Today, this important touchstone of the American experience hosts over 4,000 local, national and international visitors each year, offering regularly scheduled informative and interactive public programs and tours; a popular program offered in the Newburgh Educational School District has brought third graders to the site for the past 19 years; and

WHEREAS, The Gomez Mill House with its remarkable history, is a testament to the tenacity, entrepreneurial spirit, and diversity of all New Yorkers; and

WHEREAS, This Legislative Body is pleased to have this opportunity to express its highest admiration for the Gomez Mill House, and for all of the individuals who have worked to bring proper attention to a place and time which merits recognition in the grand panorama of the history of our State and Nation; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commemorate the 300th Anniversary of the Gomez Mill House in Marlboro, New York; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the Gomez Foundation for Mill House.