Smithtown celebrated its 350th anniversary Saturday morning with the unveiling of a new statue – this time of the town’s legendary founder – Richard Smith. Commissioned by the Smithtown-based Damianos Realty Group, the bronze sculpture joins the emblematic “Whisper the Bull” as the latest figure to immortalize the town’s history. The $300,000 statue stands outside of a Damianos-owned office building at the intersection of Main Street and Route 111.

“Here was a person who laid eyes on this land and said this is a great, great place,” Christopher Damianos said. “It’s still true 350 years later.”

Local officials praised the Damianos’ efforts at a jam-packed ceremony on the building’s lawn.

U.S. Rep. Lee Zeldin (R-Shirley) said he was impressed with the attention that was drawn to the event.

“As you look at this crowd, you are reminded with every glance how great of a town this is – that you all would be here on what is a beautiful Saturday morning” he said. “This is Smithtown.”

Town Supervisor Patrick Vecchio (R) added that he hoped Smith would approve of how the town has evolved over the last three centuries.

“I don’t know if [Richard] ‘Bull’ Smith could ever have imagined Smithtown as it is today,” he said. “I don’t imagine he would think some guy with an ‘O’ on the end of his name would be making a speech about him,” he said, to laughs from the crowd. “But I hope Mr. Smith would be pleased with our stewardship of Smithtown.”

According to legend, Smith was an English colonist setting in the New World when he made a pact with a group of Native Americans. He could keep whatever land he managed to circle in a day while riding his now-famous bull, Whisper. As the story goes, Smith set out on the longest day of the year in 1665 and covered the borders of modern day Smithtown.

Historians have since debunked the story, but the myth is still an important part of the town’s culture.

Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone (D) referenced it in his remarks at the ceremony.

“It’s nice to see the man who rode the bull getting his own statue, right here in Smithtown,” he said. Bellone added the event was “an incredible occasion for the community to come together and celebrate the founding of this great town.”

The real story behind Smithtown’s founding is more complicated.

According to Smithtown historian Brad Harris, the land that would become the town’s 350th anniversary is more complicated.

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at Theatre Three
Also: St. Charles Hospital Moviethon,
Women’s EXPO in Centerbrook,
Grateful Fest in Centerport
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Smithtown becomes Smith’s town
Above, Smithtown celebrates its 350th anniversary with the unveiling of a new statue of founder Richard Smith. Below, Smithtown Supervisor Patrick Vecchio speaks at the unveiling of the new statue in the heart of town on Saturday morning.

BY ERIC SANTIAGO

Smithtown became the Smith’s town...
The new statue honors a Smithtown legend, founder Richard Smith.

**STATUE**  
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town was originally owned by the Nissequogue Native Americans. Grand Sachem Wyandanch awarded the land to Englishman Lion Gardiner in 1659. Gardiner had helped return Wyandanch’s daughter, the princess, after she was kidnapped by the Narragansett Native Americans.

Meanwhile Smith was living with his family in nearby Setauket. According to Harris, Gardiner and Smith were friends, and when the Narragansett finally released the princess to Wyandanch, it was actually done at Smith’s house in Setauket. Then, in 1663, Gardiner sold the Nissequogue lands to Smith.

Two years after this, Smith had his claim to the land ratified by New York Governor Richard Nicoll. Nicoll then awarded Smith “The Nicoll Patent of 1665,” which solidified the claim. This is the document displayed in the statue’s left hand.

“So now you know the real story,” said Harris. “And I would just like to point out, it had nothing to do with bulls.”

Photos by Eric Santiago