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Photographer Marion Duckworth Smith resides in the oldest house in the city, which has been a source of inspiration for her.

LIVING HER FAIRYTALE

Photographer is devoted to oldest house in city

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Living in the oldest house in New York City has filled Jackson Heights resident Marion Duckworth Smith with so much inspiration that it has spilled over into her career as a photographer.

While on a second date with her current husband, Michael, Smith first saw the Lent Riker Smith Dutch Colonial Homestead, which is now on the National Register of Historic Places. As soon as she saw the house, which dates back to the 1600s, Smith immediately fell in love with it.

Over the years, Smith has put a great deal of time and effort into transforming the house from a rundown, haunted mansion-looking structure to a place of beauty and history.

The love of the house is the subject of Smith's book, "The Romantic Garden." It features photographs of the house's interior as well as the exterior, which includes the Riker family burial ground and several gardens.

Smith was first introduced to the world of photography while married to her first husband, Paul Duckworth. The two owned a studio in Manhattan where Smith

helped with just about everything, although she had never taken any pictures herself.

After marrying her second husband, Smith developed a desire to become a photographer. Michael surprised her one day with a camera as a gift, even though she had never told him about wanting to take pictures.

"The first time I looked through the lens of the Canon AE1, it opened up a whole new world to me," said Smith, who still uses that same camera today. "I really had a desire to do pretty pictures and I wanted to do greeting cards."

Smith's photography has

now been on greeting cards, posters, calendars, address labels and wrapping paper. She said that she considers the release of her book as being "the icing on the cake."

In "The Romantic Garden," Smith talks about how she transformed the Lent Riker Smith Homestead, saying that all of the work was part of a labor of love.

"I'm living my fairytale. I'm a romanticist and I live my romance every day," said Smith, who is a strong supporter of Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS. "Dreams do come true and mine have. I feel like I'm the luckiest girl in the world."