



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph P. Addabbo Jr.

## Addabbo: Happy 130th Birthday, Ozone Park !

JOSEPH P. ADDABBO JR January 4, 2012

**Queens, NY, January 3, 2012 – NYS Senator Joseph P. Addabbo, Jr.** (D-Queens), a life-long resident of Ozone Park, a community which he represents within his 15<sup>th</sup> Senate district, today noted that the start of 2012 is appropriate to mark the 130<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its founding. Addabbo plans to highlight Ozone Park's anniversary throughout the year as he speaks before various civic groups, visits area schools, libraries, senior centers or attends observances held around the neighborhood. The Addabbo's father, the late Joseph P. Addabbo, who served the area for 26 years in Congress, raised his family there with his wife, Grace, who still lives in Tudor Village within Ozone Park.

"Ozone Park is a great community. It consists of hard working people, small businesses that serve the area and residents who truly care about the neighborhood.", said the Senator. He noted that his father moved five times throughout his life all within the confines of Ozone Park. Addabbo stated, "Ozone Park is a place where my father wanted to raise his family and that I want to raise my family." Addabbo frequently reminisces about fond childhood memories in the community such as going to the Crossbay movie theater and eating at Wetson's for a hamburger after a school day at Nativity B.V.M.

Ozone Park is an area in the southwest part of Queens, next to the border of Brooklyn. Its early history records that the western part of Long Island was settled around 1660 by Dutch

and English settlers due to a land grant by the Dutch West India Company. Settlers established themselves alongside the Rockaway and Jameco Native American tribes who were already in the area. The land around Ozone Park was dotted with farms until 1882, when developers Benjamin Hitchcock and Charles C. Denton converted farmland into tracts of land with homes that were sold to people looking to enjoy the “ozone” or the clean, fresh air of the ocean and bay that washed over the area, namely “Ozone Park”. In 1907, developer David Leahy began buying up farms in the area to build small, single-family homes. He envisioned that the idea of refreshing breezes blowing in from the Atlantic Ocean to a park-like community would lure buyers.

A planned expansion of the Long Island Railroad through the community made it accessible to the city. Early residents were the first to experience the thrill of riding the elevated train over the water to spend the day at Rockaway Beach. Hitchcock and Denton expanded the community south, east and north, doubling its size. In 1889, Ozone Park was given its own post office; 1896 saw the first library service as the Ozone Park Free Circulating Library, founded by the local Women’s Club. On January 1, 1901, the library united with the new Queens Borough Public Library. Its location moved many times, but every location remained close to its present spot on Rockaway Boulevard, near Crossbay Boulevard.

The neighborhood has traditionally been known for its affordable, working-class housing, popular because of the easy and inexpensive train commute into Manhattan. Through much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it had been known as a tight-knit, Italian-American enclave, but has since become home to immigrants from South America, South Asia and the West Indies, turning it into a multicultural melting pot.

### Fun Facts

- Ozone Park is known as the home of Aqueduct Racetrack, the largest thoroughbred racing track in the country, built with seat capacity for 80,000. Many famous horses have become champions at Aqueduct, including Man O' War and Seabiscuit, and 1973 Triple Crown winner Secretariat raced there twice. It now shares its vast acreage with the city's newest tourist attraction and first casino, Resorts World New York.
- JFK Airport has a runway where the northern end is reputed to be the ancient burial ground of the Rockaway Tribe and the repository of many of their arrowheads and spearheads.
- Wilbur E. Colyer Square, at Rockaway Blvd., 120<sup>th</sup> Ave. and 133<sup>rd</sup> St., is named for a 17-year-old volunteer in World War I. He was killed and posthumously awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for Valor at Verdun, the first and youngest Queens resident so honored.
- Byrne Place, at North Conduit Ave. between 130<sup>th</sup> Place and 134<sup>th</sup> Street, was named to honor NYPD Officer Edward R. Byrne, killed on February 26, 1988, while he sat in his patrol car protecting a drug witness.
- Besides **Congressman Joseph P. Addabbo, Sr.** and **Senator Joseph P. Addabbo Jr.**, some other notable Ozone Park residents include Beat Generation writer of *On the Road*, **Jack Kerouac**; Space Shuttle astronaut **Charles Camarda**; Broadway star **Bernadette Peters**; pop star **Cyndi Lauper**; 1950s Doo Wop group **The Capris**; *The Sopranos* actor **Ray Abruzzo**; Major League Baseball player **John Frascatore**, pitcher **Neal Heaton** and NY Mets relief pitcher **Pedro Beato**; 1960 Olympic figure-skating champion **Carol Heiss**; middleweight boxer **Jimmy Herring**; professional wrestler **Peter Polaco**, better known by his ring name "**Justin Credible**"; NYC Councilmember from the 32<sup>nd</sup> Council District and current resident, **Eric Ulrich**; former NYC Fire Commissioner **Thomas Von Essen**; former NYC Councilmember **Al Stabile**; actors **Joe Lo**

**Truglio** and *Hawaii Five-O's* **Jack Lord**, who attended John Adams High School; 1972 Nobel Prize winner in Physiology or Medicine **Gerald Edelman**.

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