



Great-granddaughter and memorial design chairperson Teresa Smith-DeHesus points out design features of the Annie Moore monument.

A Celtic Cross for Annie Moore

Annie Moore, the first immigrant to arrive at Ellis Island, has finally found a final resting place after years of uncertainty. On October 11, Moore's grave was memorialized at Calvary Cemetery in Woodside, Queens, after years of going unmarked. A statue of Annie Moore commemorates the teenager's January 1, 1892 arrival at Ellis Island when she became the first recorded immigrant to set foot on the island. Up until recently it was thought that Annie had moved from New York and ended up out West. By tracing birth and death certificates and other records, genealogist Megan Smolenyak Smolenyak and New York Commissioner of Records Brian Anderson established that Moore did not leave the city at all but lived a humble life on the Lower East Side. The paper trail led to Calvary Cemetery where records confirmed the plot where Annie Moore was interred along with relatives.

The monument marking Annie's final resting place also comes with a story of its own. Carved from Irish Blue Limestone by Irish master carver Francis McCormack, the monument was created in County Clare and granted special waiver for the use of limestone by Cardinal Egan. It was imported by Irish Natural Stone Inc. in Boston, not without a few difficulties.

The week before the ceremony was to take place, U.S. customs officers impounded Annie Moore's monument at the port of Elizabeth in New Jersey. It was released thanks to a series of calls and emails from the Irish Consulate in New York and New York Commissioner of Records Brian Anderson.

Despite the scare, the ceremony took place in Calvary Cemetery as scheduled. Megan Smolenyak Smolenyak shared a letter sent to her by fellow Irish-American Barack Obama. Megan is responsible not only for uncovering the fate of Annie Moore but also for establishing Obama's more obscure Irish roots. The surprised reaction in the audience was audible.

Smolenyak Smolenyak called the hard work it took to locate Moore "like searching for a needle in a haystack." But all the work paid off. Megan told *Irish America* that the project made her wonder what other parts of American history might be inaccurate. Of the real Annie Moore, Megan said, "I'm glad that her story is common. She's much more representative of the true immigrant who struggled through life so that the next generation would have it better."

Musical performances at the ceremony included Ronan Tynan singing a song about Annie's journey to Ellis Island entitled "Isle of Hope, Isle of Tears" by Irish composer and lyricist Brendan Graham. In a fitting tribute to Annie Moore and her hometown of County Cork, New York's County Cork Pipe and Drum Band performed at the ceremony and the County Cork Association provided logistical support. —*Bridget English*