

Around LI

Islip remediates houses in town

The Islip Town Board has approved demolishing a fire-damaged house and boarding up eight vacant homes across five hamlets.

The abandoned home on Gibbs Road in Central Islip is structurally unsound after a fire and will be torn down, according to a resolution approved last Tuesday.

A contractor selected through a bidding process will secure the other abandoned buildings with plywood boards, according to the resolutions. At seven of the properties, litter will be removed and overgrown vegetation and grass will be cut, officials said.

The vacant homes are in Bay Shore, Central Islip, Brentwood, Islip and Bayport.

Islip Town spokeswoman Caroline Smith said the cost of the work, which varies from house to house, will be tacked onto the property tax bill of the homeowners.

Bay Shore, Brentwood and Central Islip were among the Long Island areas with the most zombie houses in the state in 2015, according to data from RealtyTrac, a California company that analyzes real estate information.

— RACHELLE BLIDNER

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BROOKHAVEN TOWN

PORTRAITS of prominence

Newlyweds painted by Shepard Alonzo Mount return to LI

BY CARL MACGOWAN
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William Sidney Smith and his wife, Eleanor Jones Smith, are returning home to Brookhaven.

East Setauket painter Shepard Alonzo Mount's portraits of the 19th century couple — held in storage in California for more than 40 years — have been donated to the town by descendants of the Smith family, officials said.

The paintings will be loaned to the Long Island Museum in Stony Brook, where they will join the collection of hundreds of paintings and drawings by Mount and his brother William.

William Smith was a former Brookhaven town supervisor, state assemblyman and Suffolk County treasurer, and his wife is believed to have been a member of the family that owned Jones Island, which now includes Jones Beach, town historian Barbara Russell said.

The formal portraits, showing the couple sitting in red settees, appear to have been made when the Smiths were newlyweds, Long Island Museum chief curator Joshua Ruff said.

"They are excellent portraits from the early 1830s, and what makes them kind of significant and important in comparison to other works we have from Shepard Alonzo Mount, they capture a stage in his career where he's just becoming a little more proficient and a little bit more mature as an artist," Ruff said.

"They really do give us a new dimension. They're great in the sense that this is a period of time that we don't have very many portraits, and not this size, from Shepard Alonzo Mount," he said.



Paintings of William Sidney Smith and wife Eleanor Jones Smith, stored in California for about 45 years, will be loaned to the Long Island Museum.

The paintings had hung for more than a century in the Smith family home in Ridge before the last family member left in about 1970, Russell said. The home now is the town-owned Longwood Estate.

Eleanor Northrup Smith, the last family member to live there, brought the paintings and other family heirlooms with her when she moved to California, Russell said. When Smith died in 1972, the paintings were placed in a storage facility.

The paintings were rediscovered about 18 months ago by Smith's children, who donated them to the town.

Councilman Michael Loguerio said the paintings are "an amazing piece of history."

"To me, this is extra special to see something that has been around for hundreds of years," he said.

The artist's Long Island lineage

- Shepard Alonzo Mount was part of a gifted family of East Setauket artists and artisans.
- Mount and his brother, William Sidney Mount, were renowned for their depictions of rustic Long Island life in the early 1800s, including portraits of farmhands, itinerant musicians and members of high society.
- Paintings and drawings by the brothers are in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the White House and the Brooklyn Museum.
- Eldest brother Henry was a sign painter, and another brother, Nelson, was a dancer. Their sister Ruth also painted before starting a family.

Ruff said the paintings and their frames are in good condition. He said they may be displayed next year as part of a portraits exhibit that the museum is planning.

"This was a fantastically talented art family on the North

Shore of Long Island that really made their mark in the period before the Civil War," Ruff said of the Mount brothers. "It's great to have all this material here. You have a very wonderful record of what they did and how they were able to do it."