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HISTORIC AND NATURAL DISTRICTS INVENTORY FORM

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Oa 17

DIVISION FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION
NEW YORK STATE PARKS AND RECREATION
ALBANY, NEW YORK (518) 474-0479

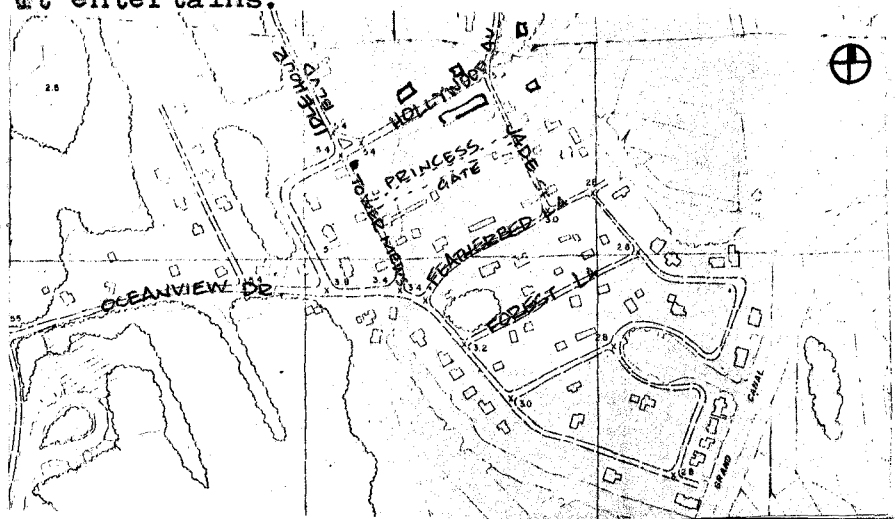
YOUR NAME: Town of Islip Town Hall DATE: 5/22/79
655 Main Street
YOUR ADDRESS: Islip, N.Y. TELEPHONE: (516) 224-5450
ORGANIZATION (if any): Department of Planning and Development

1. NAME OF DISTRICT: The Artist Colony (Vanderbilt farm)
2. COUNTY: Suffolk TOWN/CITY: Islip VILLAGE: Oakdale

3. DESCRIPTION:
The Artist Colony, formerly the farm area of the William K. Vanderbilt estate, is bound by Hollywood Avenue to the north, Tower Mews to the west, Featherbed Lane to the south, and Jade Street to the east. The entire area, fenced in to complete a square, was comprised of various farm buildings, such as the piggeries, with large wallow beyond it, the calving house, the bull pen, forge, duckhouse, creamery, kennels, etc. The major focus of the area was the clock tower, then used as a water tower for the farm area. On the right side of the tower was the stable for the finest herd of 50 Alderney cows and bulls. All the farm buildings have now been converted into private residences, while preserving the original exterior appearance of these structures.

4. SIGNIFICANCE:
The farm area was built for William K. Vanderbilt in 1890 at a cost of \$100,000. There was one and one half million bricks used, and it was built by William Bason and Sons of Sayville, in order to compete with Bayard Cuttings' establishment across the river. In 1926, the area was purchased by Lucy Sawyer Pritchard Thompson, and her son, William, and converted into an "Artist Colony," whereby New York artists were invited to live in the unique "Ateliers". At present, although many of the original artists have long since moved out of the Artist Colony, the area still maintains its quaint charm and appearance. The people who reside in the piggeries, chicken coops and the like have great respect in the area and seek to maintain the quiet sense of history at entertains.

5. MAP:
Bowe-Anderson
Composite



6. SOURCES:

Charles P. Dickerson, A History of the Sayville Community, Suffolk County News, 1975.

Paper prepared by the William K. Vanderbilt Historical Society, Oakdale, New York

Linda Williams, "Idle Hour Residents Waltz to a Reprise of Artist's Life," Newsday, October 9, 1969.

Jack Stein, "Cooped up in a Historic Community," Suffolk Life, May 25, 1977.

7. THREATS TO AREA:

BY ZONING

BY ROADS

BY DEVELOPERS

BY DETERIORATION

OTHER _____

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

The Artist Colony is A Designated Town Landmark.

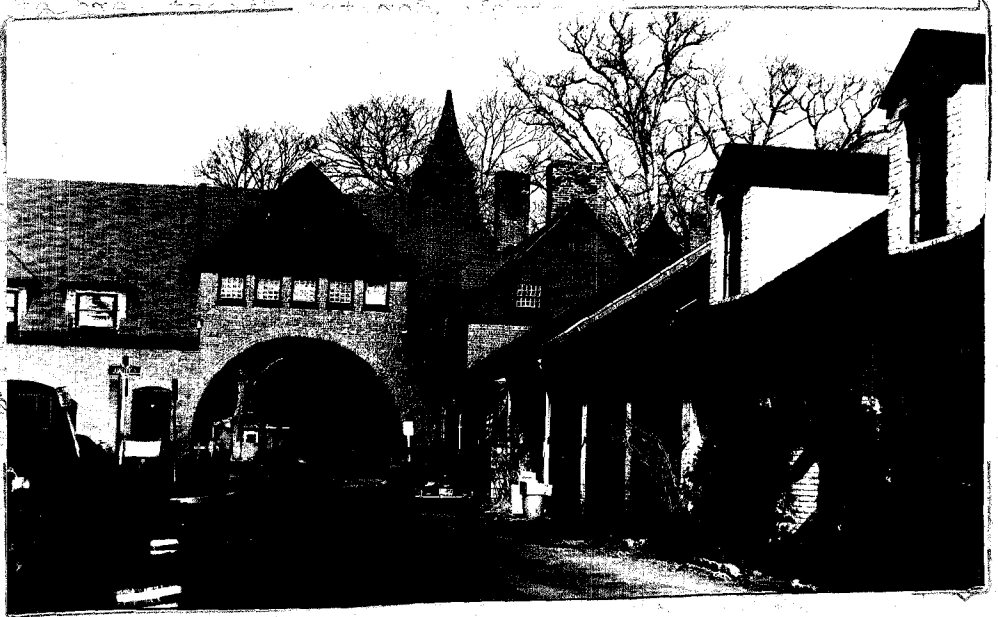
Also the Artist Colont is an Islip Planned Landmark Preservation District.

8. LOCAL ATTITUDES TOWARD THE AREA:

The pride and honest respect of the area's residents is most commendable. The owners of the former barnyard buildings take great pride in the area and are very concerned with maintaining the historical importance and physical significance of the Artist Colony.

9. PHOTOS:

Jade Street
looking north
toward East Barn.



Prepared by: Society for the Preservation of Long Island Antiquities
Setauket, New York 11733
Nina Monastero, Research Assistant
May, 1979

ARTIST COLONY

THE "CLOCK TOWER" FARM AREA

This farm area was built in 1890 at a cost of \$100,000. There was one million and one half bricks used. It was built by Wm. Bason and Sons in order to compete with Mr. Cuttings establishment across the river.

Mr. Everett Terry came from Islip once a week to wind the clocks on the estate. The large clock in the clock tower was restored by a previous owner, Mr. Claude Gonvierre. This building is now the home of Mr. Gary Townlen, noted concert pianist.

On the right side of the tower was the stable for the finest herd of 50 Alderney cows and bulls. The farm horses were kept in the buildings on the east end. Other buildings here were the forge, the duckhouse, the calving house, the piggery, with the large pond or wallow beyond it, the bull pen, creamery, kennels, etc. The farm area itself, ended with Featherbed Lane, which was all fenced off into a complete square. In 1926 this area was purchased by Lucy Sawyer Pritchard Thompson and her son, William, who created the "Artist Colony".

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Town Ponders Historical Dist. For Unique Oakdale Colony

By MARY LOU COHALAN

Outsiders have nicknamed the colony "Midgetville."

Beyond the brick arches and the huge, five-story fortress called the Clock Tower are rows of dollhouse-like attached cottages which line narrow streets and nestle under 200-year-old maple trees. Since some of the cottages are barely seven feet high, it is no wonder that curious visitors to Long Island's Artists Colony are convinced this diminutive, historic mews located in the Idle Hour section of

Oakdale is populated by the undersized of Suffolk County.

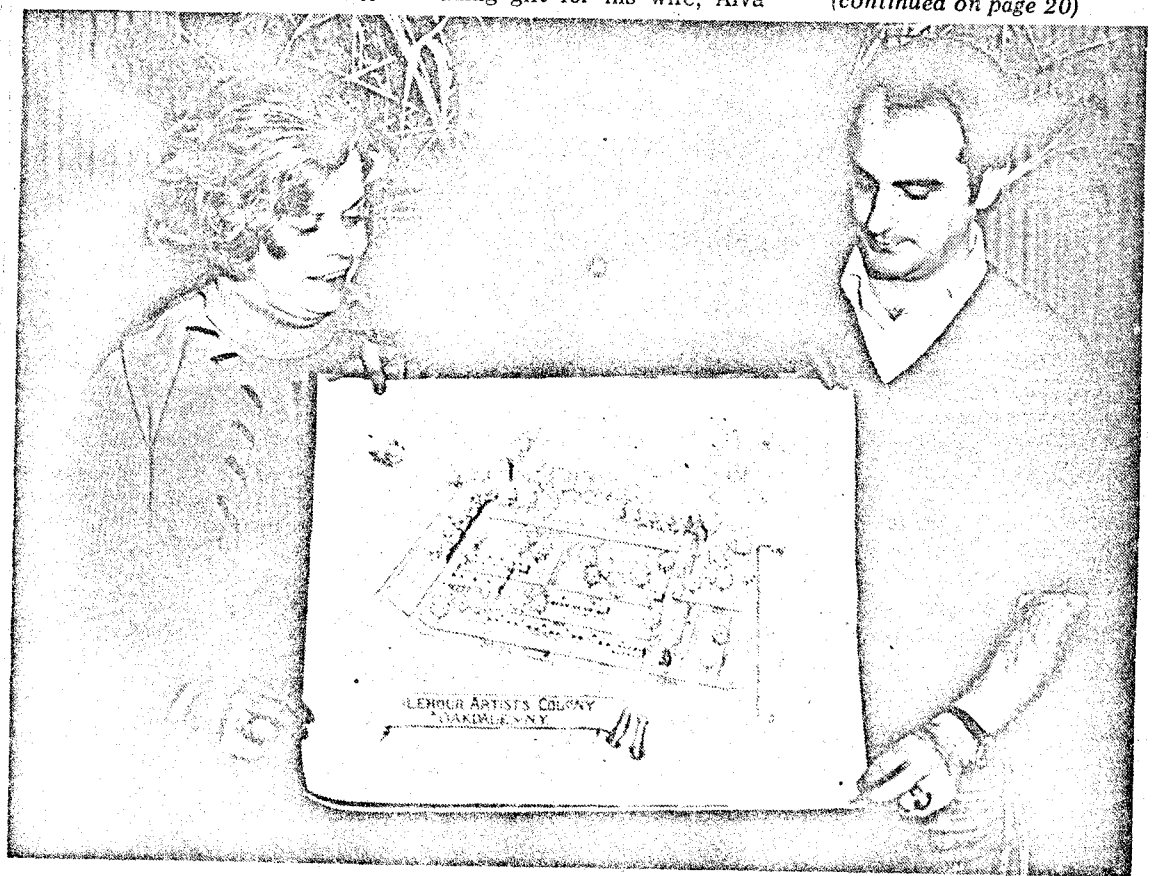
The residents of the Artists Colony are unusual. But not because of size.

They are people who delight in inhabiting former pigsties, chicken coops, duck sheds and grain houses. Each lives in what was once the farm and barnyard area of William K. Vanderbilt's opulent, 23-acre estate, Idle Hour, which the American millionaire built in 1876 as a wedding gift for his wife, Alva

Smith Vanderbilt.

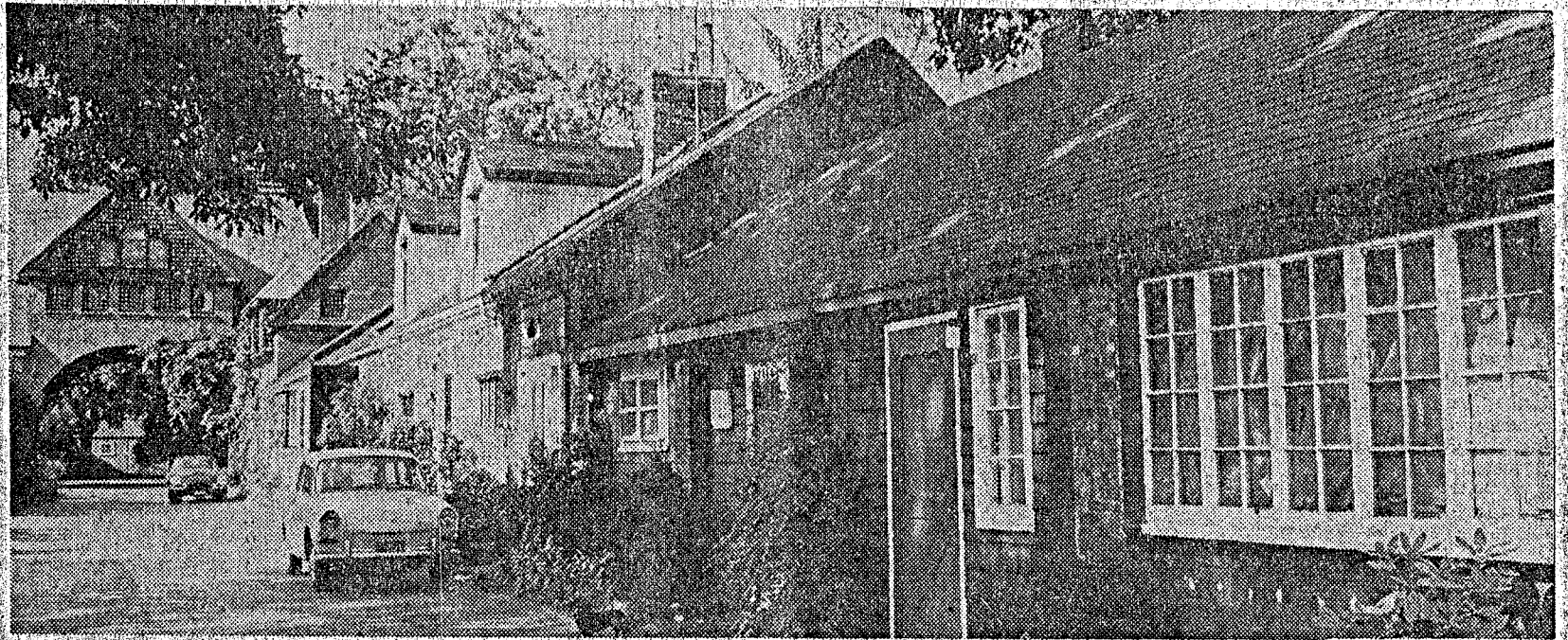
When Vanderbilt died, his legendary estate went through a period of neglect and unpaid taxes until it was finally sold to real estate developers by Vanderbilt's son, Harold, in the early 1920's.

At the sale of Idle Hour, Mrs. William Thompson, the wealthy widow of the president of the Texas Shipping and Texas Oil companies, bought sections of the estate, which included the farm
(continued on page 20)



MAPPING OUT THE PLAN for the Artists Colony in Oakdale are Mary Ann Morrison and Vincent Adone of Princess Gate, who are pictured holding an artists' rendering of the original survey of the Colony made in the 1920's. The Colony is a unique landmark, made from the renovated farm and barn buildings of the William K. Vanderbilt estate, Idle Hour. The Town of Islip is in the process of outlining a new zoning classification, historical district, which is designed to preserve the English mews ambiance of the area.

X on the Swan River



The New York Times/Iris Schneider

Renovated barnyard buildings on the former William K. Vanderbilt estate in Oakdale, some of which are now artists' residences

Islip Artists' Colony Seeks Historic Designation

Special to The New York Times

OAKDALE — When Mrs. Mary Ann Morrison tells people, "We live in a chicken coop," she isn't complaining about tight quarters. She is speaking literally—and with some pride about the unusual type of dwellings she and more than 150 other residents occupy in the barnyard section of the former William K. Vanderbilt estate, Idle Hour.

Since the nineteen-twenties, when an artists' colony was founded on the site, residents have lived in converted duck sheds, pigsties, tool sheds, a bullpen, pony stables and other farm buildings. In the last 20 years, more well-to-do owners have taken care to make the attached cottages charming as well as habitable.

The rows of coops and sheds, barely seven feet tall outside, line narrow streets

bearing such names as Princess Gate and Frog Lane. "It's like Disneyland," said one visitor.

"It reminds me of a hill town in Europe," said Michael LoGrande, planning director of the town of Islip, in which the village is situated.

For nearly a year, Mr. LoGrande has worked with residents on a plan to declare the six-and-a-half-acre section a "historical district,"

the town's first such designation.

The result would be to control further development and exterior building changes, which are currently kept in check only by peer-group pressure and recommendations of the town boards.

Some residents oppose the plan's strict regulation of land use and alterations. Others suggest that the area is too young to be historic and is clearly not a restoration.

The proposal is still being debated, but Mr. LoGrande expects the town board to approve it within two months.

Some artists continue to live in what is still called the Artists' Colony—Jim Dine, the painter, and Andy Warhol are former residents—though most homeowners have other occupations.

A group exhibit, featuring works of several neighborhood artists, opens at 2 P.M. today at the Brookwood Hall East Art Gallery, at 50 Irish Lane in East Islip. Among the contributors is Lynn T. Mor-

Into a community of artists with a reputation for high quality work. The group show, "I didn't even know it was in an..."

Qa. 17

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655 Main Street
YOUR ADDRESS: Islip, N.Y. TELEPHONE: (516) 224-5450
ORGANIZATION (if any): Department of Planning and Development

1. NAME OF DISTRICT: Lopped Trees in the Artist Colony

2. COUNTY: Suffolk TOWN/CITY: Islip VILLAGE: Oakdale

3. DESCRIPTION:

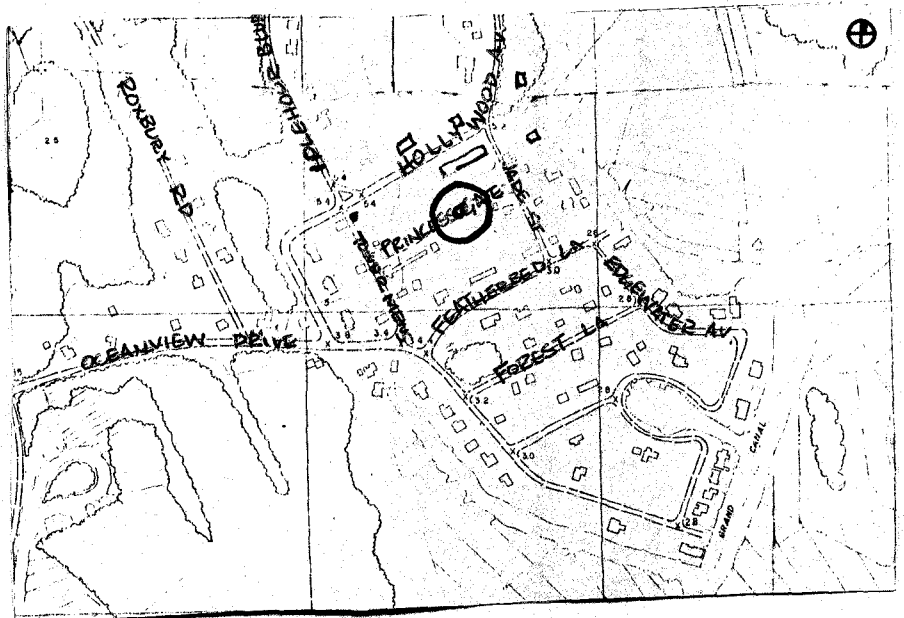
Two pairs of Lopped Trees grow amidst Princess Gate. In both pairs, each individual tree grows from a base tree that is common to the other. Bend that appears near the base is evidence of this lopping.

4. SIGNIFICANCE:

In the 19th Century, trees were slashed and their limbs anchored low to form a natural fence. As the young trees grew, the fence became more and more and more dense. However, as the trees also grew, they became too strong to be held down in so unnatural a position. The two pairs of trees on Princess Gate survive as the outcome of this occurrence.

5. MAP:

Bowe-Anderson
Composite



6. SOURCES:

7. THREATS TO AREA:

BY ZONING BY ROADS BY DEVELOPERS BY DETERIORATION

OTHER _____

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

8. LOCAL ATTITUDES TOWARD THE AREA:

Very healthy. The community is concerned with keeping intact the historical presence of the area.

9 PHOTOS: Neg. 22
NJM-1

Prepared by: Society for the
Preservation of Long Island
Antiquities, Setauket, N.Y.
11733

Nina Monastero, Research Assist-
ant, May 1979

