

The little schoolhouse that couldn't

Seems no one is responsible after historic structure falls into disrepair

BY CLAUDIA GRYVATZ COPQUIN

In 1857, the 150 residents of Modern Times, today's Brentwood, raised a small fortune to build themselves a schoolhouse — no small feat as the community didn't believe in money or taxes, but rather traded goods and services among its members.

Still, residents collected \$400 to erect a building as unique as their community: an octagonal, 31-foot-wide, cedar-shingled, glass-ceilinged structure that was utilized as its first school between 1857 and 1907.

Today, while the school is on the National Register of Historic Places, one would be hard-pressed to see its former charm or, frankly, its value to the community. The windows and doors are boarded up, the siding appears rotted. The roof has caved in at points, a gaping hole allowing the elements to wreak havoc inside. It's a sad testament to what it once was. Even sadder and more ironic, the little schoolhouse is decaying on the sprawling grounds

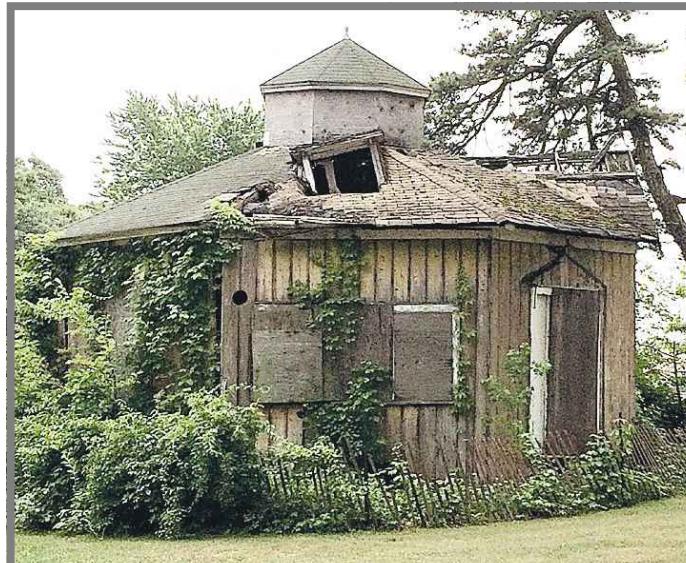
of the Anthony F. Felicio Administration Center, home of the Brentwood school district.

After serving as a private residence until the 1970s, the crumbling schoolhouse sat empty in a wooded lot until it was donated to the school district in 1988. The plan then was to restore it and turn it into a living museum. To great hoopla, the Town of Islip spent \$15,000 to relocate it to the administration building grounds in June 1989.

It had clear historic significance. "We've always had our eye on it . . . We weren't going to let it go," Frank Jones, then town supervisor, told The New York Times.

Once relocated, the building's roof and cupola were stabilized. But since then, plans for restoring the schoolhouse have fallen through the cracks. As a result, the historic structure has suffered 26 more years of decay. Who's responsible?

Tracey Krut, spokeswoman for Islip Supervisor Angie Carpenter, said the town has nothing to do with the schoolhouse



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Brentwood schoolhouse is on National Register of Historic Places.

and pointed to the Brentwood Historical Society.

Felix Adeyeye, a spokesman for the district superintendent, offered the district's law firm, Lamb & Barnosky in Melville, for answers. It didn't return repeated calls.

And Helen Moss, president of the school board, circled right back to the historical society. "The Brentwood Historical Society is seeking assistance in restoration of the historic school house," she wrote in an

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employed is commendable, it is hardhearted not to recognize the great limitations, both physical and mental, of most of the workers.

My sister is one of them. She's blind and could not possibly be on her own. Many others use wheelchairs or have severe mental limitations. To close those facilities would rob them of safe environments to do some work that does not exist in the mainstream. For most, the workshop is "the most integrated or typical setting possible."

If the Office for People With Developmental Disabilities thinks it's a civil rights issue, pay the workers minimum wage.

Robert Walderman
Levittown

There have been many logical and justified outcries against closing sheltered workshops ["Outcry over closing sheltered workshops," Letters, July 9].

Bad decisions about disabled workers

There have been many logical and justified outcries against closing sheltered workshops ["Outcry over closing sheltered workshops," Letters, July 9].

Closing all the sheltered



An artist's rendering of the proposed New York Cosmos soccer stadium, holding 25,000 seats, at Belmont Park in Elmont.

mos are considering other options. As a recent co-chairman of the Nassau County Planning Commission, a labor attorney representing many of the unions that would benefit from this type of development, and a resident feeling the constant tax burden, I'm infuriated.

This is not a Republican or Democratic issue. It's an opportunity that will soon be missed.

Marty Glennon
Sea Cliff

workshops makes no sense, and behavioral differences can be measured. Therefore, a continuum of alternative placements should be made available to people with handicapping conditions.

A one-size-fits-all policy should be unacceptable. However, this is a country where a 21-year-old person with Down syndrome is called "normal" and is the recipient of a free college education. By law, children with disabilities are entitled to a

email. "I will pass your interest to the president."

Edelstein said the historical society had been dormant between 2003 and 2012 because a number of its elderly members had died. It's unclear what led to the inaction in the 1990s.

When Edelstein re-established the historical society in 2012, she appealed to the National Association of the Remodeling Industry, asking whether the nonprofit trade group would take on the schoolhouse restoration as a community service project. She said representatives from the organization visited the site and showed interest, but then superstorm Sandy hit. That was nearly three years ago.

It remains to be seen whether any action will ever be taken to bring the little schoolhouse back to its former glory.

This much is clear: For more than two decades, the children of Brentwood have been learning a sad lesson about the importance of historic preservation.



Claudia Gryvatz
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#Chirp about it

@sophilthy

Spontaneously got my makeup done at the mall and now randomly have smokey eyes at 6 p.m. on Long Island.

@Lustache

It's 2015 and we're staring at pictures of Pluto sent from a robot launched nine years ago. I can't buy a LIRR ticket online, FYI.

@B3astoffthe3ast

Everyone knows that you aren't a true Long Islander unless you have a "Salt Life" sticker on the back of your vehicle.

free education until age 21.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act is severely flawed, and large sections of it should be rewritten.

Jane Goldblatt
East Northport

Editor's note: The writer is a retired teacher.

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