

FOR NPS USE ONLY
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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC The William Sydney Mount House

AND/OR COMMON

The William Sydney Mount House

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER State Route 25 and Gould Road

— NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN Stony Brook

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 1

— VICINITY OF

STATE New York

CODE 36

COUNTY Suffolk

CODE 103

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME The Museums of Stony Brook, Susan Stitt, Curator

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Stony Brook

— VICINITY OF

STATE

New York

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Suffolk County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Riverhead

STATE

New York

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE None

DATE

— FEDERAL — STATE — COUNTY — LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The William Sydney Mount House, in Stony Brook, New York, is a two story clapboarded frame house, painted white, with an asbestos shingled gable roof. The original nucleus of the house was built by Eleazer Hawkins, Mount's maternal grandfather, as an ordinary in 1725. This structure, which now forms the rear (north) wing and the west half of the house was enlarged on the east either through construction or the addition of a similar, previously constructed frame building. The ordinary kitchen, which is located in the first room of the rear ell (the northerly rooms on the ell were added later) has been preserved and restored to its 19th century appearance, with the aid of one of Mount's sketches of the room. The room is naturally dominated by the large fireplace and hearth, which has recently had its brickwork repaired. The exposed beams in the ceiling and the worn floorboards all indicate the advanced age of the room. This is the only room in the house which is not utilised for the use of the current occupants.

The house contains twenty other rooms, all of which, except for the attic space, are in regular use by the resident family. The rooms still retain much of their original simplicity, and many of the original features, such as the chestnut walls, the chair rails, and the original Queen Anne knocker on the front door all indicate the lack of change which has transpired over the years. Major alterations have included the conversion of what may have been the ordinary dining room into a modern kitchen, and the conversion of small rooms and closets into the house's three bathrooms. The house has two stairways and seven fireplaces, and sits on stone foundations.

The portion of the house which bears the most distinct imprint of Mount's occupancy (he left childhood sketches and scribbles in various places) is the attic, which he used as his studio. The door to the stairway up on the second floor still bears his name, "Wm. S. Mount" rendered in gold paint on a red oval. By the eastern gable end window in the attic, is a small wooden shelf. It and the surrounding wall are covered with various admixtures of pigments, as well as weather reports, written in pencil, all products of Mount's artistry. At the western end of the attic is a loft door. Aside from these evidences, only one cabinet remains of the original Mount furnishings.

Outside the house, on the north, is the entrance to the cellar, which presently houses the modern heatingplant. In this kitchen yard there is also an underground cistern and a small stone well house (the well has been filled). To the northeast of the house are a carriage shed, corn crib and barn. All are of weathered frame construction, but none, except perhaps the two story barn, date from Mount's occupancy. Up the hill and to the east of the farm buildings, the Long Island Railroad cuts through what was formerly the Mount farm. The land to the north contains a band of woodland which isolates the Mount house from its neighbors to the north. The house is bounded on the south by Stony Brook Road, and on the west by County Route 25A.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) painting	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES 1807 to 1868, Mount's occupancy BUILDER/ARCHITECT Eleazar Hawkins

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The genre paintings of William Sydney Mount (1807-1868) reflect the artist's deep feeling for an attachment to the people and land of his birthplace. No other American artist has so faithfully and honestly painted his local environment.

Mount, born at Setauket, Long Island, manifested an early interest in painting. At 17 he began studying with his brother Henry, a painter in New York City. In 1826 he entered the art school of the National Academy of Design, but ill health forced him to drop out the next year. Realizing his need of training, Mount resumed his studies in 1829 and in 1830 produced his first genre painting, "The Rustic Dance." Favorable public reaction led him to concentrate on genre scenes, and he quickly gained recognition. He moved to Stony Brook, Long Island, in 1836 and spent the rest of his life there painting the people and scenes around him. His best known work is "Eel Spearing at Setauket," painted in 1845.

Mount's home at Stony Brook, located at Gould Road and State Route 25, is owned by the Museums of Stony Brook but used as a private residence. It is a large frame building consisting of an ordinary constructed in 1725, a front portion constructed in 1810, and a later addition. Of especial interest on the second floor is the door that leads to Mount's studio on the third floor, for on the door is Mount's name inscribed in gold on a red background. The house is open to visitors by appointment only.

BIOGRAPHY

Mount, who was born on November 26, 1807, at Setauket, Long Island, manifested an early interest in painting. An elder brother, Henry, was a painter and he probably stimulated Sydney's artistic ambition. In 1824, Mount, only seventeen, became an apprentice to Henry in New York City and under his brother's direction produced signs and ornamental work. Henry, who also painted landscapes, urged his younger brother along the same path; and the younger man's enthusiasm was further whetted when he viewed works of Benjamin West and Colonel John Trumbull. Mount entered the art school of the recently founded National Academy of Design in 1826 and studied there until 1827, when he returned to Stony Brook because of ill health. He continued painting, attempting to do some historical scenes, but his inexperience clearly showed itself in those works. His "Christ Raising the Daughter of Jarius" not only shows a poor technique, but his lack

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Bartlett Cowdrey and Herman Warner Williams, William Sydney Mount, 1807-1868 (New York, 1944).

Mary Bartlett Cowdrey, National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings subtheme study, "Painting and Sculpture," 1965.

James Thomas Flexner, That Wilder Image: The Painting of America's Native School From Thomas Cole to Winslow Homer (Boston, 1962).

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 2.3 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	B	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	D	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION Beginning at the intersection of the Long Island Railroad right-of-way with the northerly curb of Stony Brook, proceed west along said curb, continuing to follow the curb as the road bears to the northwest near its intersection with Route 25A, for approximately 900', to its intersection north curb of the driveway to the Mount House. Thence continue along said curb, to its intersection with the western limit of the railroad right-of-way, thence proceed south along the western limit of the right-of-way to its intersection with the northerly curb of Stony Brook Road, the point of origin. These boundaries enclose the historic features of the Mount House including the outbuildings

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE Richard Greenwood, Historian, Landmark Review Task Force

ORGANIZATION Historic Sites Survey

DATE 6/25/75

STREET & NUMBER 1100 L. Street, NW.

TELEPHONE 202-523-5464

CITY OR TOWN Washington

STATE D.C. Landmark Designated Dec. 21, 1965 date

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE

NATIONAL STATE

LOCAL Boundary Certified: *[Signature]*

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

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I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION ATTEST

DATE 12/7/77

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

((NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS))

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The Mount House was in the possession of the Mount family until 1918. After twenty years' occupancy by a single private family, the property was acquired by the Stony Brook community in the 1940's. It is now owned by the Museums of Stony Brook, but is used as a private residence.

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of general knowledge, as in the background of the painting is a colonial four-post bedstead. Realizing the need for additional training, Mount returned to New York in 1829 to resume his study of painting.

Although Mount strove to succeed in painting historical scenes and portraits in New York, a genre painting of 1830, "The Rustic Dance," marked a turning point in his career. The painting depicts a merry rural dance and the public expressed its quick admiration for the realistic and happy scene. Mount speedily discerned the public reaction and he correctly surmised that a ready market existed for the realistic portrayal of American rural life, the country still being very much a rural one. Personally deeply committed to his own community, he henceforth concentrated on local scenes and succinctly summarized his mature views on painting by writing in his journal,

Paint pictures that will take with the
public--never paint for the few, but the
many.¹

Mount's decision to paint genre scenes led to quick recognition. Such paintings as "Truant Gamblers," "Bargaining for a Horse," "Farmers Nooning," and "The Long Story" became very popular, especially when engravers and lithographers reproduced them. The artist moved back to Stony Brook in 1836, where he remained for the rest of his life, except for an occasional visit to New York. By 1850, Mount had painted about fifty genre scenes, as well as roughly fifty portraits, the latter being done to supplement his income. In his later years, his always delicate health grew worse, and in his last eight years he finished few paintings. A horse-drawn studio was built for him in 1861 and he made many sketches from it, but the sketches had led to almost no paintings by the time of his death on November 19, 1868. He died from pneumonia.

While alive, Mount continually refused requests for information about himself. Yet it is obvious that he was a warm and interesting person. His love of his own region curtailed any inclination to travel; his farthest trip west in the United States was to Athens, Pennsylvania. He never went to Europe. Mount thoroughly enjoyed life at Stony Brook, once saying that he wanted

to take all the comfort I can in this world,
believing that I shall thereby be happy in the next.²

Very strong in Mount was his love of people, including Negroes--the latter never being treated in a mocking, condescending fashion in his paintings. An inventive streak accompanied his talent for art, and Mount took pride

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in a violin that he had invented, calling it "Yankee Fiddle or Cradle of Harmony." Politically, he was a Democrat.

Perhaps Mount's most obvious characteristic as a painter is his individualism. Other artists may have had some influence on him, but he studiously followed his own inclination as he matured. Thus his statement apropos of the old masters:

I never speak highly of an Old Master
unless I see a servant advancing with
some choice wine and refreshments.³

He avoided any literary treatment of his subjects, insisting upon a realistic portrayal of the people and country that he knew so well. In his pursuit of realism, Mount painted out of doors, posing his models under the sky. Moreover, he was a meticulous worker, thoroughly planning his paintings and making certain of every detail. Today, criticism is made of his rendering of figures and of his use of color, but the overall ability and sincerity of the artist continue to please a host of admirers.

Mount's "Eel Spearing at Setauket," done in 1845, is probably his best work. Our urbanized society continues to enjoy it, and appreciate the man who mirrored bucolic pleasure so well.

¹ Quoted in Bartlett Cowdrey and Herman Warner Williams, William Sydney Mount (New York, 1944), 11.

² Quoted in James Thomas Flexner, That Wilder Image. The Painting of America's Native School from Thomas Cole to Winslow Homer (Boston, 1962), 31.

³ Quoted in Flexner, That Wilder Image. 32.

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Verbal Boundary Description

which contribute to the historic atmosphere of the form. Although the carriage shed and corn crib are included within the boundary, they are post-historic developments that do not contribute to the national significance of the landmark.