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Wednesday, November 28, 2007

## Fire at former pub still being investigated

### Officials looking for arsonist

By Jean Laquidara Hill TELEGRAM & GAZETTE STAFF

**HOLDEN**— Joanne Vuong, an owner of the fire-damaged building on Main Street that housed the former Shamrock's Pub & Eatery, said yesterday that because investigators are trying to determine who set the fire late Saturday night, she cannot answer questions about it.

Mrs. Vuong owns the building with her husband, Thomas P. Vuong. The couple also owns Wong Dynasty on Reservoir Road, a Chinese restaurant that has been closed for renovations since early summer.

Mrs. Vuong, who was at the building yesterday afternoon, said the fire and smoke damage are substantial. Area firefighters extinguished the smoky blaze at the mustard-yellow building at 700 Main St. after it was spotted about 10 p.m. Saturday night.

Mr. and Mrs. Vuong own the former restaurant building under the name T&H Investment Corp., according to the town assessor's office records. The building has been unoccupied and for lease since the last tenant, Shamrock's Pub & Eatery, closed in March. Shamrock's Pub had been managed by Robert Hannah, who has since moved out of state, according to a spokeswoman for the town clerk's office.

Ms. Vuong said yesterday that she and her husband had never run it as a restaurant and had no intention of operating a restaurant in that building. She said they had always leased it to others and that at the time of the fire, they were looking for a new tenant to

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lease the building.

Under the name Vuong Real Estate Inc., the Vuongs operate Wong Dynasty. Mrs. Vuong acknowledged yesterday that Wong Dynasty has been closed for more than six months, and said she expects it to reopen in early 2008. She said family complications have drawn out the renovations. While neither business has been bringing in money in recent months, the property taxes on both buildings are paid up to date, according to a spokeswoman for the town assessor's office.

A Fire Department spokesman said yesterday that there was nothing new to report in the investigation of the fire, which officials have determined was purposely started.

The fire was first seen along the foundation in the back of the building, according to fire personnel, who said an accelerant-sniffing dog detected accelerant. Fire damage was limited to the building's basement, but heat and smoke damage occurred throughout the building, according to a written statement released by the Fire Department.

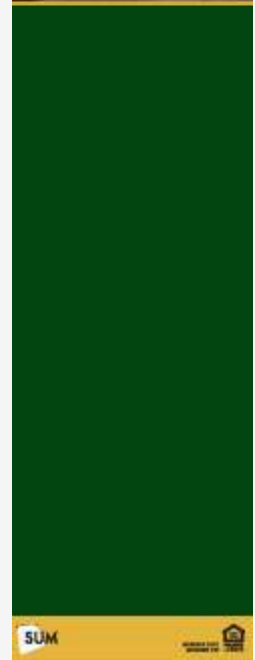
The state fire marshal's office is offering a \$5,000 reward for information leading to an arson conviction in this case. Anyone with information is asked to contact the state arson hotline at (800) 682-9229 or Holden Fire Chief John Chandler III at (508) 829-0226.

The fire is not the first complication the Vuongs have experienced at their businesses in this town. A credit card scam was perpetrated by a short-term employee at Wong Dynasty for three weeks in late 2005, resulting in some customers' credit cards and debit cards being copied and used to buy merchandise in New York and Michigan.



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