

Abigail Higgins
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Regarding the Luce house, Indian Hill, DRI 706:

Dear Commission members,

I wish to add my voice of dismay at your recent reported decision to permit the Luce house, Indian Hill, to be pulled down.

This simple but elegant house is emblematic of an era when island people were able to improve their housing options. The Luce house sits on its knoll off Indian Hill Road, well-sited and very much in view, an asset to that neighborhood, as it has been for over 150 years, in several iterations.

Where else on the island do we see these pleasingly designed, comfortable houses in the Greek Revival style?

Why -- in some of the most desirable areas of Edgartown and Vineyard Haven! On some highly visible and desirable properties up-island, including Music Street, Old County Road, South Road, Seven Gates Farm, and more!

One could even argue that it is the presence and essence of these gracious and dignified houses that make their locations and neighborhoods desirable.

The island building-trades workforce comprises many skilled builders and carpenters, who are from the island, and who live here. Houses such as the Luce house are eminently repairable. I know because my husband, now retired, worked to restore, renovate, or repair a number of them, as have many other skilled builders who live here.

Off the top of my head, a partial list of repaired, renovated, restored, updated (or even "re-muddled," in some cases) historic island structures includes:

Parsonage Farm house WT	ex Loines house, CH
Meinelt-Mayhew house CH	Rodegast house WT
Allen Farm house CH	Cook house NT
Howell house, Grove Ave VH	ex Douglas house, VH
Roth-Laager house, CH	Priester house NT
Baylies-Allegaert house, Edg	Humphreys house, NT
West Tisbury Town offices	ex Honey house VH
Vineyard Museum, ex Marine Hospital	
Hillman house, CH	

That the above partial list contains so many repaired historic structures not only demonstrates their appeal, but also demonstrates how avoiding wanton destruction of island material history has strong support.

During the period when many of the above structures were worked on and repaired, the Vineyard also had a reputation for superior craftsmanship in the construction of new houses, showing respect for the old, while avoiding many “uglifying” trends in mainland building.

Island history is our social landscape. To permit the destruction, one by one, of historic houses, buildings, and townscapes is to remove the picture from the frame.

We are informed that the purpose and mission of the Commission is to “Protect and enhance the island’s environment, economy, character, and social fabric.”

In other words, protection of our island community’s common-pool resource. *

The MVC mission statement directs it to preserve what might be termed our functional capital asset: our visual and historic capital. All who live here need to be assured that the work of the MVC preserves this asset’s principal, and that its actions and the actions of individuals do not undermine its preservation.

Or, are we destroying our “principles” along with our “principal” when we allow valuable assets to be destroyed?

Please do not permit the destruction of this beautiful island house. Its destruction would be an example of the wanton waste we are all counseled to avoid.

Sincerely yours,
Abigail Higgins

*A common-pool resource is a good that functions as a hybrid between a public and private good because it is shared and available to everyone but also scarce, with a finite [supply](#). These open-access resources are susceptible to overexploitation and diminished availability if each individual pursues their own self-interest.

~Investopedia