

Felicity Tuttle

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Dear Commission Members,

1) My Connection:

In January 2021, we sold all of our West Chop property in order to pursue a vacation home closer to Boston given my age and that of my husband. However, prior to that time, my family had lived seasonally on the dirt road portion of Main Street since approximately 1936 when my father built a four-bedroom Cape-style home on the Vineyard Sound side. Born in 1950, I was brought to the Island at 30 days old for my first summer. From there until 1974, with my parents I vacationed in West Chop all of every summer. Once our shore Guest House was winterized, I spent a full year living on the Vineyard in 1971-1972.

Thereafter, we moved across the street to my mother's property at 1182 Main Street, known locally as "Summertime." I spent part of every summer thereafter at Summertime, as did my daughters after they were born and my husband. also spent one entire year on the Vineyard in 1971-1972. My half-sister Marcia Tuttle Knowles inherited our shore house after my father's death. One of her closest lifelong friends was Helen Downer Tallman, a longstanding owner and close relative of Susannah (Wooley) Bristol and her mother Stue Froelicher.

2) 1133 House:

In my view, the Downer-Tallman-Froehlicher-Bristol house is one of the gems of West Chop and of the Town of Tisbury. I strongly doubt that it was ever intended as a year-round home, and such heat as was installed was either to enhance "shoulder" seasons or short family visits over holidays such as Thanksgiving.

Its primary use as a seasonal home has been known to every owner who has loved and cared for it over some 130 years and multiple generations. Standing as it does on a rise of land, the house is a significant example of its Shingle Victorian style and size, not only so from the dirt road side but also from the short and "ferry" side as well. The house is unique and iconic. I feel, regardless of what might "replace" it, its demolition would be an very sad loss to the community and the Island.

3) West Chop Examples of Retrofitting:

I have no issue with whatever has been or will be changed in the interior of this or any other house. While the woodwork in the existing Bristol living room is very handsome, this is not what "makes" this house historic.

And I have no issue with the demolition and replacement of those houses with truly no historic value of which I can easily think of two: the former Reed Bungalow and Olive Badger's 1960's one story ranch, both of which have been replaced with homes much more in keeping with an earlier, more substantial era.

Renovations within historic exteriors:

~ All of the West Chop Trust structures, (the Inn, Cedars, Casino and Post Office), have been extensively renovated on the interiors, and what changes have occurred on those exteriors have maintained the original exteriors save extensions of porches totally in keeping with the original 1890's styles.

~ Middleground, the Beim House opposite the Cedars, whatever has occurred on the interior has entirely maintained its original exterior including its second floor sleeping porches facing the Sound.

~ The Munn-Chase-Todd-Hager House opposite the Bristols has been maintained as it was built save the addition of one second floor deck and otherwise minimal accommodations added for John Hager who required the use of a wheelchair for some 40 years prior to his passing.

~ Although it has very few of the unique qualities of the Bristol house, the Greenough-Dunn-Lloyd house next to the Bristols - toward Big Pier - likewise has been maintained on its exterior just as it was some hundred years ago. Similarly the Downer-Righter-Cummins house on the other side of the Bristol house has been significantly updated on its interior but otherwise has maintained its original Shingle Victorian facade. Just beyond the Cummins house, the Badger-Morrison-Kuhe house has come into use far longer seasonally than originally intended, but has been adapted on its interior while maintaining its classic Shingle Victorian exterior and handsome white-railed deck.

~ Across the dirt road from the Kuhe house, May Wall and Walter Lynch have fully adapted that once Badger-Gillette-Lynch "stick" Victorian to full-time, year round living, extending it and adding to its deck but with 90% of its original exterior intact and all additions in keeping with its era.

~ The Cruikshank-Palmer-Little House was extensively renovated and updated about a decade before Mary V. Palmer sold the house and property to the Litles. With all that was done on its interior, the exterior of the house remains 90-95% identical on its outside, including its extensive, deep wraparound porch.

~ Other "shore" properties, which typically were the ones built first and thus tend to be the more historic here and elsewhere on the Island, I believe three of the Bluff houses have been extensively reworked on their interiors so that at least two of the three could be used in all four seasons; and this has been done, no doubt at great expense, while maintaining their original exteriors.

~ Four 100-plus year old homes on the non-shore side that I can think of have been extensively renovated on the inside to accommodate four season use:

~ The Andresen-Goodman-Sargent house which fronts on Iroquois but its grassy lawn extends down to Main Street just before the West Chop Lighthouse;

~ The "Folly" the former Fuller House;

~ The foursquare Trotter House (moved to West Chop from Vineyard Haven after the VH Fire), and

~ The huge, also iconic, former Howland House with its extensive deck ranging the length of the house and on the rise of Main Street so it looks out to the Sound over Middle Pier. While the latter property has had many additions (garage, Guest House) given its significant land size, the exterior of this home still maintains its original exterior and style.

4) Cost and Renovation Design:

I have no idea of what cost factors are actually involved here, but I find it hard to believe that some further year-round accommodations cannot be made within the envelope of this very large home without going to the extent of demolishing it.

Similarly, structural reinforcement should be feasible beginning in the basement area and rising through various interior supporting walls. It may not be possible to install HVAC with what I am suggesting, but what other alternatives can be considered: the house has a significant area of roofing exposed to the sun and there are now solar shingles which look like actual shingles. It might even be feasible to run a series of high-velocity solar panels at a minimal angle off the basement level of the western basement outside walls, and thus use electric heat in many of the bedrooms, feasible to turn on and off depending upon family occupancy.

4) Replacement:

Considering the care that the Bristols have given this house over nearly two decades, I am somewhat take aback that they would even consider demolition. Given the care and subtlety they used in adding a year-round guest unit to the existing six car garage, I believe that - if given permission to demolish - they would replace the existing home with one which emulates the style of the original.

But does the lower cost and convenience of replacing this house validate its destruction? I believe, and I think Marcia Tuttle Knowles and Helen Downer Tallman - both gone some ten or fifteen years ago - would vote no.

Thank you for your consideration of this lengthy email,
Respectfully submitted,

Felicity
Felicity Tuttle