

July 12, 2021

**Martha's Vineyard Commission
The Stone Building
33 New York Avenue
Oak Bluffs, MA 02557**

Regarding: 371 Indian Hill Road, West Tisbury, MA (previously DRI 687)

Dear Commissioners and Staff:

We first approached the Commission in October 2018 requesting approval to demolish the existing house and build a new home keeping with the rural character of the island. At that time, the Commission asked us to donate the home and we withdrew our application given the challenges of moving an old house and lack of interest in the immediate area.

In the following 2 almost 3 years, we continued to consider ways to accommodate the old house and have been unable to find a feasible solution. Consequently, we are again seeking approval for demolition.

We have provided below my family's 80-year history with the property and the reasons behind our request. We want to thank you in advance for your consideration.

History of the House and Property

My great grandfather, Albert Berry, purchased the property in 1888 as a vacation home. He used it until his death in 1908 when it passed to the next generation who left it unoccupied for the following 40 years. The property consisted of 150 acres.

My father, Richard Berry, purchased the property in 1948 from his family's estate and built essentially a new house. He doubled the footprint, removed the front porch, added dormers, re-configured rooms, replaced floors, walls, roofs and chimney, and brought in plumbing and electricity. My father and mother sold the house in 1968 to Anne and Carleton Parker, along with 21 acres.

My husband and I purchased the property in January 2018 from the Parker estate and started to restore the land and stone walls. We worked with Sherriff's Meadow Foundation to clear a portion for grazing and have grazed sheep on the property every summer, albeit for only a few weeks as the infrastructure is limited. A significant portion of the property is under a conservation easement. We have vacationed on the Vineyard since the mid-80's and it is our intention to build a year-round home that can be used by subsequent generations.

For us, the decision to remove the house had to overcome both historical and sentimental considerations. We overcame the historical issues, given the significant alterations made in 1948, its location in the woods, its poor condition, and the cost of restoration. In short, we concluded that while

this architectural style was of historical value, this house was not given the extensive changes made in 1948.

The sentimental factors were significant given my family's 80-year history. Eventually we concluded that the sentimental value was in the land and not the house. Given the poor condition of the house, it was no longer my father, or great-grandfather's home, so to speak.

Factors for Consideration

We have based our request for demolition on the following factors, along with our extensive history of the property.

- **Alterations made in 1948** – The structure lost its historical significance in 1948. At that time, my father removed the porch running the length of the western façade and doubled the footprint with a large extension that included a living room, master bedroom and bath, kitchen and screened in porch. He also added two dormers, new flooring, re-built the chimney and added plumbing and electricity. The southern façade is most like the original structure, the other three significantly altered by extensions and dormers. It is worth noting that the MACRIS filing done in 1986 only mentions the screened porch as an addition and no consideration is given to the extension that doubled the size of the house.
- **Condition** – The house has not been restored or structurally maintained for 73 years. The last meaningful work was done in 1948. As a result, the home needs significant structural repair to the point where we are preserving only the façade, three of which have been meaningfully altered from the original.
- **Location** – This house is in the woods, in a relatively remote part of the island, and has no visual benefit or appreciation.
- **Historical Significance** – The property was in my family for 80 years from 1888 to 1968 and we are unaware of any historical significance.
- **Hazardous Materials** – We originally supplied a report detailing the significant amount of lead paint. This was to be expected, but is a concern given the health conditions that result from exposure. Doors, windows, floors, ceilings will have to be removed all together, as sanding or stripping is not an option due to the air born contamination that results.
- **Cost** – The cost of restoring is significantly greater than building new given the condition. We previously sought the advice of Hutker Architects and Scott Stearns at John G. Early.

We thank you again for your time and consideration of this matter. We greatly appreciate the role the MVC has played in the island's development, and we recognize its significant contribution to all.

With best regards,

Signed Lois B. Meyer and Jeffrey S. Meyer