

MVMUSEUM

MARTHA'S VINEYARD MUSEUM

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October 14, 2021

Alex Elvin
Martha's Vineyard Commission
PO Box 1447
Oak Bluffs, MA 02557

Dear Alex,

The Martha's Vineyard Museum strongly and enthusiastically supports the renovation work on Oak Bluffs' historic Shearer Cottage.

There is no Island history without Oak Bluffs, and there is no Oak Bluffs history without Shearer Cottage. Opened in 1912 by Charles and Henrietta Shearer, the inn catered to African American vacationers, who at the time were not welcome at the resort hotels lining Circuit Avenue. Shearer Cottage has long been an anchor for the community, as many American visitors who first came to the Island as short-term guests at the inn returned to the Highlands to rent or buy homes of their own.

In recognition of the importance of Shearer Cottage, The Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture selected Shearer as one of only ten locations from across the nation featured as part of its permanent exhibition, *The Power of Place*.

The Martha's Vineyard Museum included Shearer Cottage and its history in our permanent exhibition, *One Island, Many Stories*. We have multiple oral histories in our collection with members of the Shearer family, and Lee Van Allen is a valued partner and friend of the Museum. Just this summer, she and her daughter Loren gave two sold out programs at the Museum on the history of the inn and the Shearer family.

We hope that Shearer Cottage is able to do the needed work on the building to ensure its operation into the future.



Heather L. Seger
Executive Director

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