



Town of West Tisbury

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October 13, 2021

Jeff and Lois Meyer

Members of the West Tisbury Local Historical Commission conducted a site visit on Aug. 6th, 2021 at 371 Indian Hill Road (M12 L13) which is owned by Jeff and Lois Meyer.

The Meyers wish to tear down the existing house and replace it with a new structure. The original house was catalogued in 1986 in a town wide historic resources inventory as an historic building and is filed at the Massachusetts Historical Commission in the MACRIS database. The property is outside the town's central Historic District. Because the house is over 100 years old (built 1837-1840), the West Tisbury LHC has been asked to provide commentary.

The house was originally built for whaling Captain Edwin Luce around the time of his marriage to Celina Hillman in 1838 and sits on a hilltop with a commanding view of Vineyard Sound. The area was open pastureland during the first half of the 19th century. Captain Luce farmed as well as sailed. The house was surrounded by farm land and numerous stone walls. There is also a low stone building that was likely a creamery (storage) during Luce's farming days.

The house is of the (Local Vineyard) Greek Revival Style, common on MV between 1830 and 1870. It exhibits many of the characteristic details including a heavy, blocky effect/pedimented "temple" look, thinner chimneys in various positions, as well as larger windows and windowpanes (than houses of the 1700's). The exterior trim has wide corner pilasters with wide cornice. The front entrance is framed with a wide lintel and pilasters with sidelights. The gabled end faces the "street" and the doorway is off-center.

Captain Luce died in 1886, his wife preceding him in 1879 and his children either left the island or were no longer involved with the property after his death. In 1888, the property was sold to Albert Berry, a friend of Nathaniel Shaler of Seven Gates Farm. Albert summered there and died in 1908 and the property passed to his son Robert who does not appear to have spent time there and who died in 1933.

The estate, which included 150 acres, then passed to Robert Berry's 3 children, one of whom, Richard, bought out his siblings' shares in 1948. At that time, the house had been unoccupied for 30 years and was in very poor condition. One of our Historic Commission members was young at the time and remembers the house its' disrepair as is shown in photos already supplied to the MVC.

Richard did extensive renovations to the home in 1948 as has been documented in family records and photographs. Floors, doors, windows and interior trim were rebuilt inside and outside trim was replaced, 3 new dormers added, new chimneys and roofing. The original summer kitchen addition at the back of the house was enlarged and a modern kitchen installed. A screened porch was also added to the west side. The house was used seasonally. In 1968 Richard sold the house with 22 acres to the Parker family.

In 2018, Richard's daughter Lois and her husband Jeff Meyer re-purchased the house and the 22 acres, 18 of which now have a conservation restriction with Sheriff's Meadow.

The house has retained its original look, shape, and proportions. The several fireplaces are original with the summer kitchen having a beehive baking oven on the side. The front entryway, hall and stairway and bannisters are original. The granite foundation blocks should be preserved in some way.

If the house is to be removed, the WTLHC would like to have the house and the original features documented with measurements and photographs for our files. Presently the house is in poor condition and current building requirements would dictate further cosmetic and structural changes for renovation.

The Meyers have respect for the history and provenance of the old farm and its surroundings. Clearing has restored some of the view to Vineyard Sound and stonewalls and grazing areas have also been restored. The proposed plans for a new house, while contemporary in nature, seem to echo the location of the original with its front facing gable.

The locations of both the original and the proposed building are not visible from Indian Hill Road when trees are in leaf. Other houses along Indian Hill Road are generally older or modest in nature and the area has retained a very rural look with farmlands and properties spaced well apart.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Anne Fisher". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Anne Fisher
Chair
West Tisbury Local Historic Commission