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## Akin House: Letter to Buddy Baker-Smith, Community Preservation Committee

Anne W. Baker

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September 22, 2008

Buddy Baker-Smith, Chair  
Community Preservation Committee  
Dartmouth Town Hall  
400 Slocum Road  
Dartmouth, Ma 02747

Dear Mr. Baker-Smith,

I am writing to reiterate my concerns for the future of the Akin House.,  
Located at 762 Dartmouth Street in South Dartmouth, Massachusetts.

The 243 year old House is an excellent example of the classic Cape Cod building type and as a cultural resource is representative of a local building tradition tied to the 17th and 18th century farming community of South Dartmouth.

The Akin House.is one of the oldest house remaining in the town. Its age alone would give the house importance; but in addition the Akin family was instrumental in the development of South Dartmouth.

By 2000 the entire north end of the Akin House was collapsing. Whale, renowned for taking on preservation projects that others deemed impractical, hopeless and impossible, did what it does best by deciding to save what they knew as a significantly important house from the wreaking ball.

After assessing the unique structure and its 18<sup>th</sup> century architectural features WHALE determined that a preservation approach was the best and highest use of this historically significant property. Whale understood that The Akin house was charged with a deep cultural meaning, and could speak to Dartmouth's impressive past: From the Russell's Garrison, farming,

fishing and shipbuilding to a village burned by the British. The makers and users—their behavior, identity, ritual and social changes. A property that the Massachusetts Historical Commission announced eligible for the National Registry.

Decisions were then made on how to preserve the Akin House so it could tell its two hundred and forty six year story.

This would include the structure; the Akin and Dartmouth families; and their social and economic influence in the history of Dartmouth and Southern New England. A physical record of time, place and use, properly documented for future generations — a path from the past to the future.

WHALE turned over the this important concept for the future to the present owner "The the who are committed **to** protecting the house for the public of all ages and in an agreed manner that will tell a story of mid 18<sup>th</sup> century shelter, farming, fishing, shipbuilding that existed within the present day bedroom community of Dartmouth

### **Methods:**

Tours, workshops, and exhibits

1. Historical analysis of the original and existing fabric .

Tour of the exterior and interior of the house.

2. Akin House construction.

Tours: identifying the method of timber frame construction used in the mid 18th century.

Exhibits; framing methods, models, and samples of tools used.

Workshops: hands on experience.

3. Interior and exterior alterations.

Tour: Decorative and functional elements influenced by social and economic forces; kitchen, bathroom, heating, windows, dormer, general revamping and structure neglect.

4. The lives and stories about people who lived in the house.

Exhibits: Photographs, Oral and written histories.

5. Site study.

Exhibit: Historical context of landscape in relationship to the house; roads, outbuildings, orchards, gardens, etc.

6. Archaeology.

Workshops and exhibits: How artifacts tell us about people; Outbuildings, foundations, wells, potshards, iron instruments, personal belongs, etc.

7. Genealogical workshops.

How to learn about the life of a house from deeds and wills.

8. Community history exhibit.

Farming, fishing, shipbuilding.

9. Map Exhibits.

Viewing 250 years of change to South Dartmouth's landscape.

I ask that The Community Preservation Committee to make sure that the Akin house we touch today is not forgotten, otherwise it will lose its voice. We are all responsible to make sure our history is not destroyed, but conserved for future historians.

It is even possible that somebody from your own family spent an evening in Akin House lighted by whale oil lamps.

Sincerely,

Anne W. Baker