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**Vincent House: Letter from Baker to Paul Anderson, MVHPS,  
October 15, 1979**

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October 15, 1979

Mr. Paul Anderson  
Martha's Vineyard Historical  
Preservation Society  
Edgartown, MA 02539

Dear Paul:

I am writing to you in response to your request for my thoughts on the future use of the Vincent House. The Vincent House, as you know, is a magnificent early Cape, purchased by the Martha's Vineyard Historical Preservation Society for use as an architectural museum.

As restoration nears completion, it is now time to organize a program. The Vincent House should be opened to the public as a museum on a regular daily basis in the tourist season and opened by appointment the remainder of the year. In addition to this overall use as an architectural museum, "A" room can serve as a revolving exhibit area. Such a program would serve to bring people back again and again to the museum, to broaden knowledge of the island and to generate archival materials for the resource center.

In addition, with the advent of the ARC, the Vincent House should become an essential part of conservation and preservation training, so inadequate in its present state.

Other uses of the Vincent House include meeting room space for the MVHPS board meetings. It has also been suggested that one of the smaller rooms be set aside as an office for the secretary. This would then eliminate the need for a museum staff. The secretary could handle admissions as well as regular society business, especially if the present interpretive programs and brochure were to be expanded.

To put this proposal into motion requires attention to the following items:

\* "A" room refers to identification of room by floor plan.

### Stairways

The interior painting and carpentry should be finished, including an easy access stairway to the 2nd floor.

As an architectural museum, the 2nd floor has many important features to be observed. There are 2 rooms on the 2nd floor. The small room could be used for storage and the larger room for a permanent display of the artifacts. The McKentey bed in this room should be removed. The location of the stairway would be best in the front hall closet, where we strongly suspect it was originally. However, the existing opening on the 2nd floor is only a few inches deeper than the present stairway and little steepness would be eliminated. A curved stairway could be built by eliminating the cupboard in "A" room and ascending through this doorway. There is an earlier plastered ceiling above this cupboard and may be that was what I was talking about before, Paul, as part of a possible original curved stairway. Another thought is to do this through the matching closet in "F" room (left of front door). It is a bigger area but the closet door is only 1' 10" wide and we certainly don't want to change that. After much thought I have enclosed a possible solution. (Joe should check it out.)

In any case it should be noted that in the stairwell, the stairway is not a reproduction of an original in design or location, but is a 20th c. means installed for safe access to the 2nd floor.

\$800.00

(There has been some talk about stairs to the cellar. They could be installed in the small room next to the pantry. However, the loss of the floor space to a stairway doesn't warrant it. Bulkhead entrance is sufficient.)

### Lighting

I feel it is critical to install electric lighting as follows:

- Front room-spot lighting and 2 floor plugs for exhibits and to focus on details
- Kitchen keeping room - spot lighting and 2 floor plugs
- Sufficient plugs in the room to be used as an office typewriter, lights, adding machine,

- coffee maker ( 3 double plugs)
- Pantry - (and other small room) - 1 plug each
- Stairwell - light
- 2nd floor - 2 flood lights for the general space and 2 double plugs
- Small storage room - 1 pull chain light
- Bedroom - 3 double plugs

This would take care of the exhibits, high-lighting features, projectors, secretary, board meetings, etc.

\$ 850.00

Heating

It is necessary to introduce a heating system designed to keep the building heated not exceeding 40°. This will help to dry out the dampness of the house and its contents. It will also preserve the new paint. A house of this type always had some heat in the winter.

\$

*Warranty for Joe*

Plumbing

I do not recommend plumbing in the house. I think it would be most desirable to acquire a small "out-building" which could be used for plumbing needs in addition to other needs. A chemical toilet might be a good solution.

Walkway

A path in keeping with the house should be installed to the front door.

*Grant's*

Museum Committee

This committee would serve as the liason between the museum and the public. Its responsibility would include organizing a promotions and advertising program and would require a line item in the budget for adequate coverage, posters, publications, etc. Attractive signs should be painted informing the public of the museum, the entrance and the hours.

I also recommend that 2 additional sub-committees be organized dto coordinate exhibits and acquisitions by the museum.

Exhibit Committee

The exhibit committee would organize the exhibits to be displayed in "A" room; these would pertain to island culture, history and crafts. I am most interested in supervising this committee in order to coordinate exhibit content with elements of the Vincent House. Such exhibits would ultimately contribute to the ARC, in the form of collections of photographs, and other materials related to architecture, folk art and design on the island.

Acquisitions Committee

The 2nd sub-committee would oversee acquisitions, especially furniture, which may be used in the Vincent House. May I suggest that the standard of application to use in the Vincent House be pre-Revolutionary period. If donations are offered which do not date to that period, perhaps they may be considered for use in other MVHPS properties. Furnishings in the VH should be kept to a minimum; in fact, one piece in a room is sufficient to establish the scale of the structure and its details.

Museum Interpretation Aids

The existing labeling of details should be expanded in number and size of labels, size of labels and information content. Other visual aids could include a map indicating original location of the VH and tracing the route of the move. Artifact display on the 2nd floor also requires amplification with labels, etc.

Estimate \$300.00

Museum Interpretation

Interpretation aspects of

Existing labeling of details should be expanded - in # of labels, size of label, and info content.

total

estimate 300

less 640.00 -  
Grant + Joe