

Revised

This is the research that I have found on the Prada house. It is the house at the corner of Katama Rd. and Clevelandtown Rd. in Edgartown, MA .

Some information was located through a 1940 newspaper article about the birthday of 80 year old Edward T. Vincent . Mr. Vincent was born in the Great Plains in 1870. There is a 1880 Edgartown Census that shows Edward at 10 years old living with his family. Mr. Vincent married his wife Lydia Vincent at her father's house in the Plains in 1892.

Edward first child was a girl named Olive. She was born in 1895. I learned this information from Cindy Enos Bonnell who was Olive's granddaughter.

To further look into the house I received 2 pictures from Cindy Bonnell and then Mary Prada Dembrowski. Both pictures were clearly the house in question. One picture had the persons in the picture labeled. One of the young girls was Olive. Olive would have been one or two years old in the picture. This clearly dates the house as having existed in 1896/97. Therefore, the house is at least 126 or 127 years old.

After writing this Report a family member found a picture I'd seen before but this one had information on the back. It stated that the house was built in 1875 by Samuel Warren Vincent. The house is 149 years old.

The newspaper article and the picture set forth that the house was built by Edward T Vincent's father. This information is found in several other sources. Edward T. Vincent's father was named Deacon Samuel Warren Vincent. The history is clear that Edward T. Vincent spent part of his childhood in this house. I had been unclear when Edward T Vincent's father built the house. It was either before 1870 and Edward T. Vincent spent his first ten years (approx.) in the house or the house was built in 1880 but before 1890 and Edward spent his years from 10 yo to 20 yo (approx.) in the house. But that is cleared up. The house was built in 1875, Edward T, Vincent indeed spend some of his childhood years in the house and it is 149 year old.

The newspaper article states Edward T. Vincent moved the house about 10 years after he was married. He was married in 1892. Ten years would be 1902. Deacon Samuel Vincent died in 1927; he appeared to reside in the house, calling it the "Homestead" in his Probate Inventory, perhaps with Edward T. Vincent and family? Deacon Samuel Vincent died a widower in 1927.

After Samuel Vincent's death the title records from the Registry of Deeds set forth Edward T. Vincent acquired the "Homestead" and at least a percent of the lot on which it now stands from his father's Estate in that his two living sisters signed a Deed to Edward T. Vincent. Edward T. Vincent may already have owned a portion of the present day lot , in the back, before his father passed.

A history narrative by Bill Smith of Edgartown at the MV Museum sets forth Edward T. Vincent's farm was at Mill Hill near the present day boatyard and his house was where it is now on the Katama Road i.e. not located at the farm.

From a narrative by Alice Cleveland, which I heard about from Van Riper of the MV Museum, she did confirm that the house in question had been moved from its original location at the Great Plains (Katama). There is no answer to whether Alice Cleveland saw it being moved or she heard the family history about it being moved to its present location. She is in the 1896/97 photograph with her mother in front of the house so she may well have had firsthand knowledge rather than simply family oral history. This continuing information the house was moved is confirmed in the Vineyard Gazette. Mary Prada-Dombowsky states the family oral history was that the home had been moved at one point in time.

Other articles/history from a Dukes County Intelligencer dated 1997 sets forth that Edward T. Vincent was a farmer who supplemented his income by gathering and selling rocks/bolders. He was a shellfishman. He was a contractor.

The boulders in front of the house, the family history states, were insisted to be placed there by Lydia Vincent, Edward T. Vincent's wife, who was Aunt Lilly to the family. She was

fearful of the cars in the intersection. In fact Mary Prada-Dombowsky who grew up in the house remembers one time a car crashed into the rocks (1979). Mary Prada-Dombowsky states Edward T. Vincent placed the boulder wall there for his wife. There are lilies planted in and around the boulder wall and are known in the community- every year blooming beautifully. Mary Prada Dombrowski states they were Lydia's (a/k/a Lilly's) favorite flower and the current lilies there today were originally planted by Lilly.

Edward T. Vincent was a Deacon at the Federated Church and active in Town politics. It is stated in several articles that he was instrumental in effectuating legislation to build the Katama boat landing. The 1940 census states Edward T. Vincent was a "town official". He was member of a group calling themselves the Molly McQuires and advocated for change. This is likely how the entire extended family became involved ongoing in island matters. See List of some of the family's service to the Town attached.

Sassafras trees: There are huge beautiful sassafras along the Clevelandtown Road side. They may be so old that they were used as a crop many years ago. Mary Prada-Dombowsky who grew up in the house believes they are very very old. They should be preserved. The Town Arborist perhaps could review and determine their age.

The house was a Landmark, a Homestead and always had an open door for all for 149 years. One daughter who grew up in the home said her parents were so involved that people were dropping by constantly to talk about issues. She called it a "kitchen table" house. It headed the beginning of the trek into the Great Plains. The children of the extended family would walk daily from the Edgartown School to the house and Mrs. Prada came home every day to feed them. People were in and out of the home constantly. Talking, playing, and gathering for discussion of town politics and life. The home was at a bus stop and if it was cold or raining all the children were inside the home. The bus would beep its horn and they all filed out.

To sum up the people who are part of the history but better to describe the house itself the way it appears to have been for 149 years, I quote a woman in her mid 80s who is not a family member but who grew up on a dairy farm on the Great Plains who summed it up best:

“I would sure hate to see that old house torn down. When I was a kid and a teen, if we were in town for something after school, we would have to walk home. About a two mile walk! If it was too cold, too snowy or just too dark, that old house always had a light on, a warm stove, a working phone and welcoming people inside. We always knew it was a place of refuge if things got too bad.”

Researched and written April 2024



A glimpse of old time Main Street, but in the modern day. *Ray Ewing*

Elegant Edward

Thursday, December 14, 2023 - 2:15pm

From the Dec. 16, 1949 editions of the Vineyard Gazette:

Edward T. Vincent of Edgartown took a few minutes on Wednesday to look back over the long course of years. The day was his 80th birthday, and he was receiving congratulations and messages of esteem and friendship by mail, telegraph and telephone, some of them from a great distance.

“It’s the best birthday I ever had,” he said.

“I’m just as well as it’s possible for a man of 80 to be,” Mr. Vincent said, smiling, and his appearance bore out his words. Rugged, hearty, his eyes showing the light of an undimmed spirit, he was a portrait of contentment, but not of repose. He does not intend to be inactive.

“I have lots of friends, good friends,” he went on, “and they are nice to me. I’ve made a lot of new friends since I was brought to realize that it wasn’t good for me to stay home and mope. I enjoy myself every day of my life and I’m going to keep going as long as I possibly can. That’s all the philosophy I’ve got.”

But it wasn't all, or nearly all. Mr. Vincent is full of philosophy, whether or not it is called by that name.

He was born at Katama in the house now owned by Dr. James C. Wilson which then stood about where the road turns into the South Ocean Club restaurant. When he was still a child, his parents moved to Clevelandtown and lived in the house now owned by Major LaBell. The house where Mr. Vincent now lives was built by his father, Deacon Samuel Warren Vincent, and part of his boyhood was spent there.

Some 10 years after his marriage he bought the house that had been his birthplace and moved it to its site on Mill Hill; then, about 1916 or 1917, he and Mrs. Vincent went to be caretakers on Nashawena Island where they lived for five years, lacking a few months. Since their return, Mr. Vincent has made his home continuously in Edgartown.

Asked about the good old days as compared with the pessimistic present, he observed, "Things aren't as they used to be but the way I look at it, there's as much opportunity. I don't despair a bit. In fact the only thing that makes me despair is when I have a tinge of arthritis."

"There are an awful lot of good people in this world," Mr. Vincent added.

Among his birthday greetings was a clipping showing pictures of a man active at 100 years, and suggesting that Mr. Vincent would do as well at that age. Obviously, he'd like to. He does not now have much actual labor or responsibility because he leans on Patrick and Henry Delaney. Pat, his foreman, handles the moving and contracting business still carried on in Mr. Vincent's name.

Asked whether, if he had to do it over again, he would be as much of a rebel, Mr. Vincent chuckled and said, without hesitation, "More, I guess. I think this town could stand a lot of rebellion."

In the era from 1900 to 1910, he was a leader of the insurgent young political group in Edgartown known as the Molly Maguires. As a member of the school committee he was fighting for better schools, but the big campaign of the Moll Maguires was for a town landing place. A special act of the legislature was obtained, authorizing the town to take the Daggett property — later the summer home of Mrs. Agnes M. Jenks and now a Colonial Inn annex — for \$800.

"We had the special act," Mr. Vincent recalled, "but we couldn't get the selectmen to go ahead. Littleton C. Wimpenney was the chairman of the board — he'd been a selectman for 35 years, but the Maguires turned him out at the next election. I've always felt badly that the town didn't get that property. The house and upper part could have been sold for more than the cost, and the landing would have been free."

Mr. Vincent married the former Lydia West Vincent, a fifth or sixth cousin, at the home of her father, Elijah B. Vincent, on the Great Plain in 1892. They observed their golden wedding anniversary in 1942 with five children and nine grandchildren gathered around them. Mrs. Vincent died in 1947, and not until this past year was her husband persuaded that loneliness and grief should not continue, with the harm they were causing him. Now, at 80, he offers his philosophy of optimism.

A birthday party was given in his honor Wednesday evening at the home of one of his daughters, Mrs. Frank Prada. The family and a few friends shared the celebration, which featured a birthday cake, cards, gifts and an evening of pleasant conversation.

He intends to go off-Island soon after Christmas to visit his daughter Doris, Mrs. Richard E. Norton, who lives in Scituate, and various friends. "I don't intend to hurry back," he says.

Every Wednesday night he goes to prayer meeting at Vineyard Haven, since Edgartown does not have prayer meetings any more. For a while he was out so many nights, and out so late, that Pat Delaney was worried about him.

"Don't I look well?" Mr. Vincent asked. "Don't I look better than I did this time last year?" Pat said yes. "All right then," said Mr. Vincent. "What are you worrying about?"

Compiled by Hilary Wallcox

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ONLY SOME OF THE FAMILYS CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE TOWN and THE ISLAND

Edward T. Vincent

Farmer
Sold boulders/rocks
Fisherman
Contractor
Instrumental in obtaining the Katama boat landing
School committee
1940 census "officer, government"
Deacon at Federated Church

Ursula Prada

Secretary Building Department and Historic District

Barbara Prada

Animal Control Officer

Mother- Maurita Prada

Mother- Assessors Office
School Committees- Edgartown, High School and Union (Chairman)
Saved the football program from being extinguished
Library Trustee

Father- Richard Prada

Leader Troop 98 Boy Scouts
Planning board, instrumental in putting into in effect initial zoning regulations
Conservation Commission
Taught boating safety for the Coast Guard Auxiliary
Creating a shucking shack for scallops and welcomed others without sheds to come and use
Assistant animal control officer
Attended Town Meetings

Cindy Bonnell (Olive Vincent's granddaughter)

Assessors Office

Jo-Ann Resendes

Assessors Office (Edward T. Vincent's great granddaughter)

Mary Prada-Dembrowsky and brother (daughter of Richard Prada)

Many years summer police officer (ticketing) and taking in 1st level dispatch calls in the police office (not Comm Center)

Francis V. Resendes (Olive Vincent Prada's oldest child)

Operating Room Supervision at the Martha's Vineyard Hospital (nurse)

Commercial Quahogger

Sewing at Unity Club fundraisers

MV Sea Coast Defense Chapter DAR

Martha's Vineyard Hospital Auxiliary

Martha's Vineyard Hospital Board of Trustees

Martha's Vineyard Hospital Tree of Lights

machine and were using bottles, then they'd have you put 'em right side up so they wouldn't have to lift 'em out and turn 'em. Well, it wouldn't make too much difference if you had to take 'em from the case and put 'em in, whether they did or not.

LL: Well, one less move.

BS: Yeah, I don't really remember.

LL: It sounds like it was pretty high-tech. I mean—

BS: It was, fairly, for a kid, especially, from here, where farmers would get their milk and then they'd have like a milk house if they had a good-sized farm. And I guess they did have, refrigeration had started, they had, you know, back in the old days, of course, they had brooks and ways to cool things. Ah, then refrigeration came along and of course my time, growing up in the late '30s and stuff like that, most of 'em did have some refrigeration. And we used to go get milk every morning. We'd walk from here down to the corner of Clevelandtown and South Water Street, where the Prada girls live? That was, their grandfather, Ed T. Vincent, had a farm. The farm was further out, where the barn and everything, where Mill Hill Boatyard is. That was all cow barns, stuff like that. And we'd walk up there to get our milk.

LL: Hmm. And what would you, would you just bring back bottles or—

BS: Bottles, yeah, yeah.

LL: Did you have a milk—

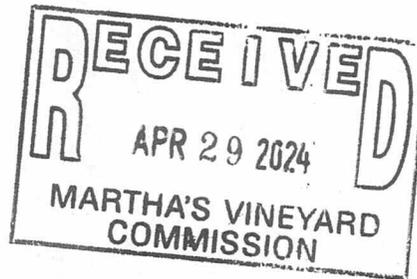
BS: We had, yeah, we had carrier, one of those things would hold about six. Everything was in quarts in those days, they only did quarts of milk. I don't think they had half gallons. And then they would sometimes give us, 'cause it was low value, they'd give us skim milk. And, of course, you took advantage of any kind of food you could get. We had, I never remember, we always had plenty to eat, stuff like that. Ah, and I, I visualize it nowadays as comfort food. My grandmother was a good cook. I don't know, my mother, whether she ever had time to develop culinary—

MV MUSEUM

INC. 1923

23 April 2024

Edgartown Historical Commission
c/o Sharon Brainard, Chair



Dear Members of the Commission:

When James Cisek came to the Museum last week to do research, he asked if I would write a letter commenting on the agricultural history of the area around Clevelandtown and Katama Road. What follows is my attempt to sum up that history, and integrate it into the broader history of the town.

The history of Edgartown is indelibly linked, in the minds of Islanders and off-Islanders alike, with the history of whaling. When the town set out, in the late nineteenth century, to reinvent itself as a summer resort community, it used its whaling heritage as a focal point. Even today, tourist guides seeking to sum up each of the Island's towns in a single sentence apiece invariably reach for "whaling port" to describe Edgartown.

The popular view of Edgartown's history is not *wrong*, so much as it is incomplete. Whaling was a significant economic and cultural force in Edgartown for about 50 years (1820-1870), but fishing and farming – inextricably linked, as they were elsewhere on the Island, in the lives of towns, villages, and individuals – were the backbone of Edgartown's economy for 300 years. From the beginnings of English colonization in the 1640s until the end of World War II, agriculture was absolutely central to the lives of Edgartonians.

Well into the twentieth century, the Edgartown landscape – no less than that of Chilmark or West Tisbury – was a quilt of small farms: homesteads surrounded by fields and outbuildings filled with row crops and livestock. Edgartown farmers, like their counterparts elsewhere on the Vineyard, pivoted from sheep to dairy cows and vegetables in the late nineteenth century, catering to their fellow residents and providing the big resort hotels with the "fresh, healthful food" that they touted as one of the benefits of a summer spent on the Vineyard.

Like Chappaquiddick, the land south of Edgartown village – from just above Clevelandtown Road all the way to Norton Point – remained heavily agricultural until the middle of the century. Dozens of oral histories from the Museum's collections, interviews with men and women who came of age between the World Wars, recount the presence of multiple farms along Clevelandtown Road and the roads leading to Katama and recall what it was like to work on them and grow up among them.

151 LAGOON POND ROAD, VINEYARD HAVEN, MA

508.627.4441 | MVMUSEUM.ORG

MV MUSEUM

INC. 1923

Edgartown's farms and fishing boats provided immigrants – Portuguese and Cape Verdeans especially – with an essential foothold on the Island: steady employment that built on skills they had brought with them from the old country, often bed and board, and a chance to save the money needed for a house, a farm, a boat, or a business of their own. The road to the American dream began, for countless newcomers to the Island in the decades bracketing 1900, on the farms along Katama and Clevelandtown Roads.

Promoters of Edgartown as a summer resort community focused on whaling because it was distinctive, and easily romanticized. Farming was neither, and the farmhouses south of the village were far less impressive, architecturally, than the captains' and shipowners' mansions downtown. Those mansions have been meticulously preserved, and a proposal to tear one down would (rightly so) bring a public outcry.

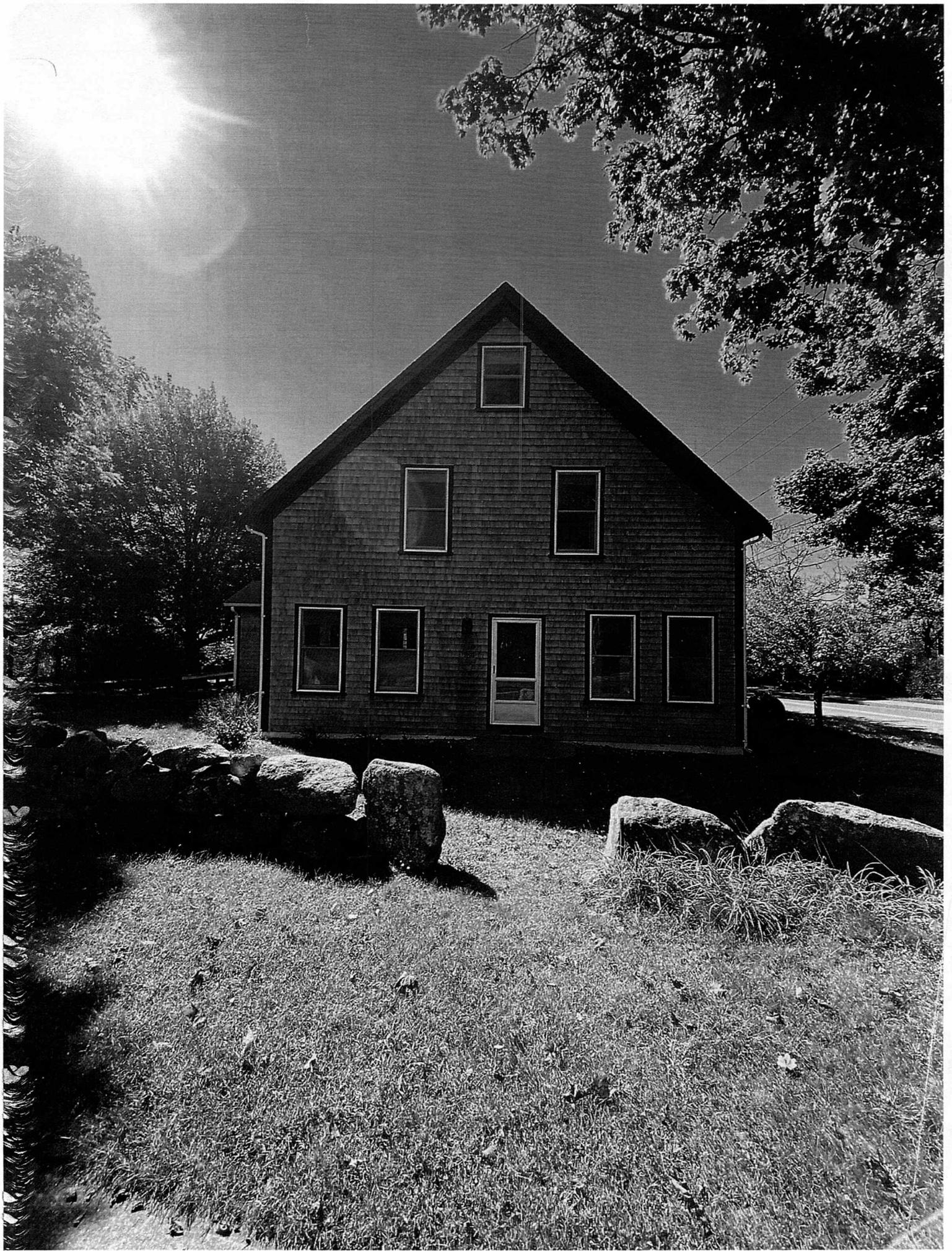
The farmhouses south of the village, outside the historic district, have historically flown "under the radar" of most of the public. Yet, they are just as much a part of Edgartown's history as the captains' houses that line Water and Summer Streets. They, and the history they represent, are equally deserving of consideration from those with the power to make decisions about them.

I hope this information will be of some use to you.

With best regards,

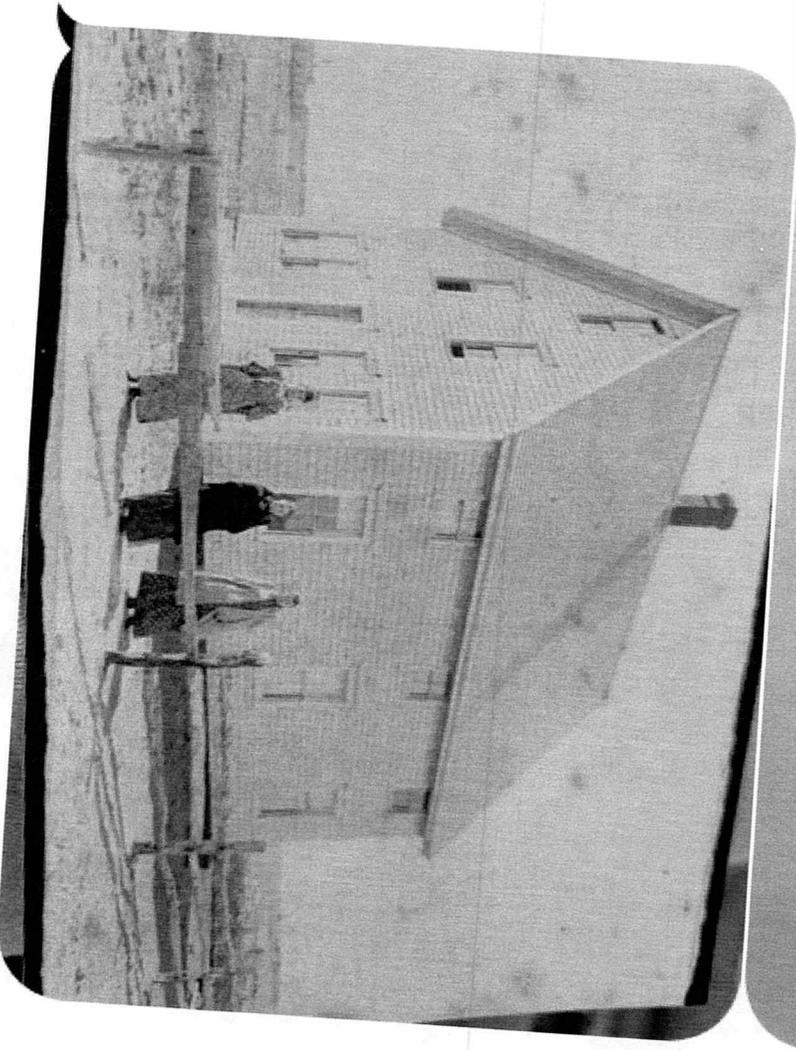


A. Bowdoin Van Riper
Research Librarian, Martha's Vineyard Museum



House @ SW corner Kathana; Clevelandtown Road.
Built ca 1875 by Samuel Warren Vincent, then
owned by his son Edward T Vincent, then his great
daughters Richard Prada then his great-great
daughters Barbara; Ursula Prada.

Photo c. 1897 Believed to be:
- R - Lillian Vincent Vincent, Catherine Cleveland Vincent,
Hannah _____ Cleveland



Lydia (A.K.A. LHM)



Alice Cleveland

Olive born 1895
* Dates have to be before 1896/97

↑
Olive
1892
40

Doris and Olive Vincent at the Prada house, 1910-1915.

