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Tiffany House Art Center (1963): Memorandum 02

Claiborne Pell

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MEMORANDUM

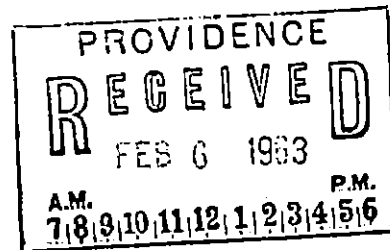
TO: Isabelle Leeds copy to Sheila
FROM: Senator Pell January 29, 1963
RE: Tiffany House

Val-8909

Please look into this. Talk with Mrs. Costa. Let me have your own frank opinion as to whether it is a worthwhile project or whether it is not.

If it is worthwhile, I hope you and Sheila will let me have your ideas as to how we can help it along.

Accordingly, please send a copy of your report to Sheila, too.



▲

January 30, 1963

Mrs. Joseph Costa
President
Valley Art Association
Electra Road
West Warwick, Rhode Island

Dear Mrs. Costa:

Thank you very much for your letter asking my help to secure funds to make Tiffany House ready for occupancy.

It sound like an excellent cause, and I'm indeed glad to enclose a little check of my own. I realize, though, that a small contribution of this sort is of no real help to you, and I'm accordingly asking Mrs. Isabelle Leeds, my Research Assistant in Rhode Island, to talk to you in greater length to see if we can come up with some sort of suggestions as to how you might apply to some other foundations.

Upon receiving a report from Mrs. Leeds, I will let you know whatever our recommendations are and what other ways I might be able to be of help.

All best wishes.

Ever sincerely,

Catherine Fell

Enclosure

Application to the Honorable Senator Chaybora Fell

for Funds to Complete the relocation of the Tiffany House at a new site in Crompton for use as an Art and Community Center for the Valley Art Association.

Dear Senator Fell,

The Valley Art Association needs financial help in order to complete the relocation and rehabilitation of the Tiffany House in Crompton which, with the support of the Heritage Foundation of Rhode Island, we have undertaken to move, restore and use as an Art and Community Center.

In 1960 the Heritage Foundation announced that Miss Jean Richmond had given money to be used to move the Tiffany House at 1733 Main Street in Crompton, built in 1810 (scheduled for demolition by the new owner, the First National Company) if a suitable use and a new site could be found for the building.

The Valley Art Association, organized in 1969 and modelled after the South County Art Association, immediately expressed great interest in acquiring the house to serve as an Art and Community Center. The newly organized Association was keenly aware of the need for a building, like Helms House in Kingston, where we could hang exhibitions, hold meetings and social functions, have a sales room and furnish studio space for members. Moreover, since the Valley area has no general meeting place, it was foreseen that the building would be a fine asset to the community. In proof of this the Association has been approached by several organizations interested in sharing in the use of the structure.

The Valley Art Association therefore agreed enthusiastically to work with the Heritage Foundation to find a new site, move the house and put it into running order. As a result of this joint effort, the building has now been relocated on new foundations on a very attractive site sold to the Heritage Foundation by Mr. Edward S. Rice. Mr Rice specifically stated that the only reason he would consider selling any part of his property was the fact that he approved of such a community use for the building and thought that the house was worth saving.

It was agreed that, to guarantee the future of the property, the Heritage Foundation should retain title to the house and land and lease to the Valley

Art Association on a long term basis at a fee of \$1.00 a year. The Association in turn contracted to maintain the house and landscape and maintain the grounds.

However, funds are still needed to finish the task of putting the building in running order. The Valley Art Association is not in a position to meet this cost and hereby appeals to the Honorable Senator Fell for funds to make the building ready for occupancy. A cost and expenditure list for the whole operation in brief; the cost of building the new foundations, of down payment of the land, title clearance, insurance, moving telephone and electric wire, and moving the building to its new foundation has come to \$12,000, which has been paid by gift made directly to the Heritage Foundation. It is estimated that the sum of \$8,000 will be needed to defray the expense of putting the building into order ready to use. The total cost of the land (\$5,000) is being underwritten by the Heritage Foundation. The expense includes installing a good heating system, water, electricity, plumbing, carpentry, repairs to the roof, joining the building and all, rebuilding the chimney tops, the necessary replastering and painting and equipment for a simple kitchen. The Valley Art Association is arranging with interested members of the community for contributions in the form of services and materials as its share towards completing the work.

Once this investment is made the Association will be able to maintain the building and has agreed to landscape and maintain the grounds. We already are raising funds by giving a series of whist parties, dances, holding exhibitions etc, so that when the time has come to furnish the building and begin landscaping we will be able to do so.

The Association is most anxious to have the building for our home and is grateful to the generous donors who have done so much to secure this important facility for the Valley. If the Honorable Senator Fell is able to make this grant, the Association will fulfil its commitment to the Heritage Foundation to create and maintain a much wanted Art and Community Center in the Valley.

Very truly yours,

Mrs. Joseph Costa, President
Valley Art Association

The Tiffany House
Background information supplied by the
Heritage Foundation of Rhode Island concerning
the Project of Relocation of the Building

In 1960 Miss Jean Richmond came to the Heritage Foundation of Rhode Island to ask for help in an effort to save and find a use for the Tiffany House, the Mill Owner's House for the Crompton Company, built in about 1815 at what is now 1733 Main Street in Crompton. The house is a simple gable roofed two story structure with an old ell, an excellently detailed staircase, decorated chair rails and cornices and several very attractive mantels in the carpenter Adam style in fashion at this date. For the past years the structure has served as the office of the Crompton Company, of which the Richmond family are the chief stockholders. In 1959 the Company sold the property to the First National Stores for a shopping center and they arranged to have the house demolished. To save the house would necessitate moving it to another site which would involve,

1. Finding the money needed
2. Finding a suitable use for the building, if moved
3. Finding a site
4. Getting permission from the First National Stores to acquire the house
5. Finding someone to oversee the practical matters of building a new foundation, and moving the building, etc.

Miss Richmond offered an initial gift of \$5,000, later increased to \$10,000, to the Heritage Foundation to be used for the relocation of the building. Mr. Gale Richmond gave \$1,000. The First National Company gave the building with the understanding that it would be removed within a reasonable period of time.

Upon receipt of Miss Richmond's offer, the Heritage Foundation voted to ask Mrs. Richmond to see if a suitable use for the building could be found, and if a site for its relocation was available and if so, to get estimates for the cost of moving, etc.

The Valley Art Association, organized in 1959, expressed their eagerness to take the building for an Art Center, and Mr. Louis Samson, architect and member of the Valley Art Association, offered to oversee the process of building the new foundation, finding a mover and relocating the building. Mr. Howard B. Rice a resident of Crompton, agreed to sell the Heritage Foundation a half acre of prime land, for the new site.

The Heritage Foundation and the Valley Art Association then agreed to move the building. After some unforeseen difficulties, the house is now on its new foundation. The two groups have agreed that since the responsibility for the future security of the building should rest with the Heritage Foundation, that Organisation should

1. Hold title to the property
2. Purchase the land from Mr. Rice
3. Apply all of Miss Richmond's gift, Mr. Gale Richmond's gift and any other gifts received to defray the costs of moving and as much as possible pay for putting the house into running order.

It was also agreed that the Valley Art Association should for a dollar a year rental on a long term basis

1. Assume the upkeep of house and grounds
2. Furnish the building for their own use
3. Oversee the landscaping

The total sum contributed to date has been \$12,000, including contributed architectural fees and it had been expected that for this sum the house could be made ready for bare occupancy. However, the operation, due to some unforeseen difficulties, has proven more costly than anticipated. The money in hand has covered the cost of building the new foundation, moving the building, and the telephons and electric wires (totalling over \$2500) a down payment on the land, insurance title search etc. The Heritage Foundation has arranged to pay for the land at the rate of \$5,000 a year (a total of \$5,000) Mr. Samson, for the Valley Art Association, has contributed \$1,000 in architect and other services in connection with the relocation of the building.

As stated in the application for funds being made by the Valley Art Association, it is now estimated that an additional \$8,000 will be needed to make the building ready for occupancy, and the Association is asking for \$6,000 of this sum from the Rhode Island Foundation.

The Heritage Foundation has been pleased with the kind of cooperation and effort the Valley Art Association has made in order to make the removal of the Tiffany House possible. Without their practical help in overseeing the process of moving the building the Foundation would have been unable to undertake the responsibility of this project.