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# THE EDGARTOWN STORY CONTINUES



## CHARTING A NEW FUTURE FOR THE COOKE HOUSE

The transformation of the Martha's Vineyard Museum, which includes an exciting new campus in Vineyard Haven, will be no less dramatic in Edgartown. While a portion of the Edgartown property will be sold, the remaining portion will remain home to our beloved 18th century house. The Cooke House will continue to serve as a cornerstone of the Martha's Vineyard Museum collection, allowing the Museum to reimagine and enhance the visitor experience.

No longer overshadowed by the main Museum, the Cooke House will gain new prominence as an independent historic destination. Development plans are still in the early phase, but under discussion are such approaches as a stand-alone historic recreation of early Vineyard life and a creative space where docents provide hands-on experience in basic household arts and crafts. Daily guided tours in season, along with virtual tours to meet ADA standards, could be developed to expand the educational message and audience.

The yard of the Cooke House will gain new importance as a teaching tool. An authentic recreation of a colonial kitchen garden will feature regionally- and locally-sourced plant species that were prized by 18th-century New Englanders as spices, household medicines, and decorative and fragrance purposes. Planted with unusual flowers and herbs, the space will also attract visitors as an oasis of publicly-accessible green space in the center of town.

The Cooke House project is independent from the Marine Hospital, and is not included in the current campaign. Over the years, the town of Edgartown has generously supported maintenance and improvements of the building. Although no new construction is envisioned, preserving the structural integrity of the Cooke House will entail substantial work. In 2006, a Conservation Assessment Program found that the building's shallow basement was contributing to excessive moisture in the first floor framing. The long-term solution—removal of the flooring, excavation of the basement, repairing affected lumber, damp-proofing the soil and installing a dehumidification system—will be the first step toward preserving this Edgartown landmark.