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WM. WARD WATKIN
ARCHITECT
SCANLAN BUILDING, HOUSTON

WM. WARD WATKIN, M.A.I.A.
C. M. SANFORD
A. S. NUNN

November 13, 1923.

President Edgar Odell Lovett,
Wm. M. Rice Institute,
Houston, Texas

Dear President Lovett:

In carrying out your suggestion of the possible development of the necessary house for the president of the Institute as a Founder's House, it has occurred to me that the matter which we considered informally some years ago, namely, of securing as much as possible of the old original house of Mr. William M. Rice and incorporating it into the designs, would be a very desirable bit of tradition and local history. I have examined the woodwork in the interior of the residence of Mrs. D. B. Cherry, which was formerly the residence of Mr. Rice. The interior trim of doors and windows and the doors themselves have a great deal of character and a splendid scale. The stairway also has a fine character. The main entrance is identical in character with the woodwork of the interior and is a rather unique example. The remainder of the house has only a sentimental association, and it will be impracticable to attempt to use any portion of it economically.

Mrs. Cherry has mentioned that she had been debating moving to California permanently, but was still undecided on this point. If she would sell, as she probably would, the interior woodwork, including the items which I have named, for a profitable price to her and yet a fairly reasonable one, I should like to see the materials purchased and incorporated in the house, for their historic value.

Of course if she intended to sell the house and move out of it, these items could be taken out of the house and cheap modern millwork could be substituted and the house would probably sell for just as large a price as it would in its present shape. I have estimated that to duplicate the woodwork in question would represent about \$4,000.00, if we were to have it made in a mill at the present time, and of course this would be purely a duplication and not the original. I would hesitate even to suggest any actual basis of trying to

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secure this material, except that Mrs. Cherry has said in the past that she would be anxious to have it pass into the hands of the Institute if the house were ever demolished. I would suggest a payment of from \$6,000.00 to \$7,500.00 for the items which we would want, which would mean that from \$1,500.00 to \$2,000.00 would have to be spent by Mrs. Cherry to place even the most commonplace millwork back to take the place of the millwork which would be removed, so that she would actually receive about \$5,000.00 net for the woodwork. Of course the house would then lose all character, and is rather dilapidated in every other respect and probably would be totally undesirable to her for purposes of living, as apparently its present desirability from her point of view rests largely in its historic character. However, if she did intend to sell anyway, this would be a profitable arrangement for her and a desirable one for the Institute.

There is not enough mill work in the house to take care of your entire formal side of the house on the first floor. There will only be enough to take care of the reception hall and parlor, but as the library would be a new and different type of room from that occurring in the original house, there is no reason for continuing the same character and the dining room is so placed that it can be treated entirely different. I think that the woodwork is good enough to be very attractive in the new house, because it has a definite architectural character, and it is certainly extremely desirable because of its history, and extremely fortunate because it has a big scale which would fit well with the rooms.

If this were done, then you would be freer to consider the further memorial to the founder in connection with the residence, or adjacent to the residence, as being a definite historic center for those things most immediately connected with the founder's life.

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Of course it would be necessary to inform Mr. Cram of the fact that the interior salon would take its character from the old woodwork rather than from some new study which he might have in mind, but I can see no good reason why the treatment of this room can not perfectly well be brought in harmony with all other rooms and yet retain its historic character, and I am sure that it will in no way make any difficulties in the exterior treatment of the design.

Very sincerely yours,

Wm. Ward Watkin

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