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BEATRIX FARRAND
THE VALLEY CLUB OF MONTECITO
P. O. BOX 1140
SANTA BARBARA, CALIFORNIA

February 5, 1943

Mrs. Robert Woods Bliss
The Shoreham Hotel
Washington, D. C.

Dearest Mildred:

Is it only two months--or is it two years since you left this lovely part of the land? We have been bereft, and our dreary evening meals seem devoid of seasoning since you no longer come sweeping in to chase the cobwebs out of our sky. Occasionally there is word of you from some neighbor or friend who has had a line of instruction or greeting, and as everyone who knows us both realizes how eager the one is to hear from the other, the news is relayed to us and we gloat over it.

So much has happened since you left, and in so many different directions that one feels like an epistolary Catherine Wheel, and one doesn't quite know on which particular twirl to start -- so various and sundry letters, with their different title headings, will go to you as they are finished. Perhaps, the first one will be the one as to the Botanic Garden, as you will want to know of its progress, as well as of its loveliness.

This is the Botanic Garden letter, and packed with news and gossip as it is, - it still will be incomplete!

The January meeting, without you, seemed strangely dull and commonplace. Doubtless, the clear-eyed Van Rensselaer will have sent you his agenda, so that you will have caught the main points touched upon. The regular reports were, as usual, well done and dull, but a necessary part of any meeting.

The lecture program is already underway, as Van Rensselaer has already given his Guayule lecture, and it is to be followed tomorrow by another Guayule lecture by George Stebbins' son, who is one of the University of California professors delegated to this work. Young Stebbins lectures at the High School, and previously gives a sort of modified "old ladies' talk" at his mother's house this afternoon, to which the family friends are invited.

Poor Van Rensselaer gets terribly tied up on the subject of the accounting methods, which have been worked out with the utmost care and minute detail by Mr. Kellam and the General. He got himself into quite an emotional fuss because he thought the new regulations implied distrust of his financial honesty! (Bless his heart!). I tried to tell him that while the method seemed unnecessarily cumbersome, that I thought he would have to make up his

mind to get along with it until you came out again and put in your oar as voting trustee toward getting some sort of account started which could be looked after by a paid bookkeeper in town, under the competent Mr. Lancaster's eye. Mr. Lancaster thinks this work could be done (check drawing and regular book-keeping) for a sum of not over \$15.00 a month. The Garden really ought to do it, even though it does mean the addition of \$180.00 to its annual budget costs. This sum would be well spent in freeing Van Rensselaer's time for the kind of work for which he has been made director -- botany, writing, care of the herbarium, and general Garden administration.

In a way I find some of the Board rather feeling that possibly a group of Van Rensselaer's friends is exaggerating his importance to the Garden. As you know, the General has some question of his being essential, and I think also Mr. McCoy and Mr. Kellam both think he could be more easily replaced than is actually the case, so that I think it would be difficult to have this separate accounting system started unless by you and certain Board members who know the whole position.

One of the real accomplishments is that good Mr. Miller, the engineer who has been working at Lompoc for the Government, is giving more of his time than he is being paid for in making a record outline survey of the Garden boundaries, roads and principal and unchanged marks, such as the main group of buildings, the boulder, the Mission Dam, the highways surrounding and in the Garden, and all its various boundary marks. The survey is not likely to look at all interesting to the Board, as they will not realize what an essential backbone for further construction is given us in these accurate records. A part of the survey will be a main north and south "base line", which will run through the center of the library and be projected north and south to the north and south boundaries. There will also be an east and west base line running at right angles to the other and through the boulder. It happens that the exact right angle taken through the center of the boulder comes out at a most opportune spot on the high road, and one likely to make a most attractive main entrance. This is a piece of good luck which none of us could have foreseen. So send along your twenty-five promised dollars toward the survey as, counting your subscription, we have \$80.00 in hand, and I see twenty more in the offing!

The town planner, Mr. Penfield, and his assistant, Mr. Ingram (a Harvard graduate of the School of Landscape Architecture) have met me once at the Garden and meet me there again today as they seem willing to contribute their time and help toward at least formulating a part of the design for the parking space. They have made an excellent suggestion, which is that the parking space be placed before the level of the high road, in which is now the extended fringe of the Garden, between the high road and the

highest level foot-path. This would allow the approach to the parking space to be made from the present entrance and would keep the main crowd of motors off the high road and out of sight from the Garden. The plan seems to be reasonable and likely to work out well, but I fancy I hear screams on the part of the Board of Managers at sacrificing some of the already planted area! It will take some persuasion to make them see the wisdom of this use of the land for the ultimate development of the main entrance and control of traffic.

The regular service entrance to the Garden will, as you know, spiral off from the present entrance and wind under the Oak trees and so to the entrance of the library and the lower working of the Garden. It seems to work out smoothly.

Your playmate is giving the talk on Reef Point Gardens for the members of the Botanic Garden on Sunday, February 7th, and in order to make it akin to this part of the world, it is being called "A Gardener's Garden." We have all agreed that it is to be open only to the membership, and Anne and I hope that if other lectures can be given (more attractive than the first one) that it may stimulate an increase in the membership, as we all know how dearly people love to get "something for nothing"! The talk is to be given in the library building, and you will know, without my under-lining it, that it is going to be a great satisfaction to be the first one to speak in the building that you have given, and over which we both have worked.

The group of trustees would greatly appreciate your permitting them to place some sort of a record of your gift in the library, - and a few of us have drafted an inscription which is sent on to you in the hope that you may be willing, at least, to have a part of it put on a tablet which might well be placed over the north door on the inside of the library. Our good friend Coles could make the letters in lead and they could be fixed to the tablet and set in place here -- incidentally, the tablet he made for Reef Point Gardens is a great success and perhaps could serve as a rough model for this one, in scale, size, and placing. Would you think the inscription suggested would meet with your approval:

The Blaksley Library
given in memory of the
founder of the Garden
Anna Dorinda Blaksley Bliss
by her daughter
Mildred Bliss
? 1942

*by not sure
about this date
D.R.*

Mrs. Robert Woods Bliss - p. 4 - 2-5-43.

Individually, I felt that your acceptance of the elimination of your mother's name in the title of the Garden was taken as wisely and impersonally as always. It cannot have been easy (although you knew it to be right) to have erased the family record from the title of the Garden, so the Trustees would like to keep your mother's name as a part of your library gift. The Trustee's meeting comes next Thursday, and if you should be willing to have some form of inscription approximately of this sort put into the library, will you send a night-letter to say that we may go ahead. You have not yet been "committed" as the inscription has only been discussed with our good Anne and the director.

The ceanothus is beginning to come out and after 16 inches of rain it is not surprising that the mountain sides are beginning to be veiled in a lilac grey mist of the first ones to bloom.

Yours, my very dear,

Beatrice

In order to save time and catch the air-mail, Mrs. Farrand has asked me to post this letter without her having read it.

Doris Ross

Secretary to Mrs. Farrand