

BEATRIX FARRAND
~~1850 ORLANDO ROAD~~ Reef Point
~~SAN MARINO, CALIFORNIA~~ Bar Harbor, Maine,

June 17, 1942.

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Mrs. Robert Woods Bliss
850 Park Avenue
New York N.Y.

My very dearest:

Of course you are interested in our home news so that you will like to know that Max is coming back with his seventh hood some time today and I hope starts off fishing tomorrow. He wires me everything has gone smoothly and easily so that my mind is at ease about him.

As for myself, it is a hard lesson to learn but I hope it will be a profitable one. To keep the balance between interested work and over-fatigue is not an easy lesson but I am trying to do it and so far with very considerable success. Leaving Dumbarton Oaks was of course a hard knock as it was the first time I had had to confess myself beaten, but probably the finger laid on my shoulder will mean counsel toward a way of living which will make an easier and happier life for us all and enough work well done to give the time ahead a sense of usefulness.

Miss Havey is here. She is working hard on what seem to me the three chief problems, the historic tablet for R street, the Museum tablet, and the north vista designs.

Miss Havey showed me the suggestion you made for putting all the historic tablet material below the coping of the wall. I don't know what she feels about it but individually it would seem to me most ill-advised to place all that rather delicately carved material so near the level of the passing walking stick and small boy with destructive implement. I hope you won't think me hasty in having rejected this scheme and in going back to the idea which Miss Havey says you have already rejected. Personally I think the solid panel of "announcement" with the two histories on either side a much better composition than the three little stones applied to the brick work. With this change the historic tablet looks to me as though it were nearly solved. It takes the whole space of the first bay west of the east "R" Street entrance, and the central part with the "announcement" is of course subject to re-wording, but will give you the idea of what seems to work out both from the point of view of appearance and appropriateness. Both Miss Havey and I are quite pleased with the way the two "histories" are working out as each one starts and finishes with a date, and the two spaces are filled completely and yet without crowding.

The sketch is sent to you and is to be returned to Miss Havey in New York so that she can work it over in time to have the dummies ready for her visit with you to Dumbarton Oaks before you go west.

On the Museum tablet there is a question in our minds whether the inscription should begin with the word "the" or whether it should begin just bluntly "Dumbarton Oaks." This is a detail which can be arranged quite easily as the "the" can be made a part of the top line. By the time the sketch reaches you it will have been worked over to a point where I think both Miss Havey and I think it fit to present to you, and it would seem to me likely to work out well, although some slight adjustment may have to be made in the top and bottom, and perhaps some of the middle, spacings. I think, however, that the cake is distinctly in the making and that Coles can be told to go ahead and cut it when he is given the proper spacings between the lines and above and below the whole statement. Do you want "Dumbarton Oaks" over the entrance door re-cut or not?

The north vista is little changed from the staking we looked at together as I think we all agreed that it had the making of a scheme that was likely to be satisfactory. Probably it will be wise to lengthen the north, stone, section as far as we possibly can; perhaps even to the north side of the big Box that now closes the north end. This is suggested because as we foresaw the proportion of the various units will inevitably be slightly altered. We agreed that the wall should be built inside the *Space* present hedge ~~line~~, *thus* perhaps widening the upper terraces by three feet or more, therefore, its lengthening in proportion seems essential.

In studying the different levels I find that there is a drop of more than four feet in the northern unit. A wall built on such a slope as this would be unfortunate but I think we can easily raise the northern end of this unit one foot, or perhaps even a little more. This re-grading could be done without being noticeable and without any very serious cost. The raising of the northern end of this unit would have one great advantage and that is that it would give an excuse for three or four steps on the north side of the north opening and therefore give an excuse also for a thickened unit in which the gate would be installed.

As we worked over the scheme both Miss Havey and I are agreed that it would be wise to eliminate the pavilion idea and I know Mr. Thacher also feels the same way about them. The sketches will be by no means entirely finished but they will have the basis of our ideas ready for your criticisms.

We have deliberately set aside the details which Miss Havey and I agree as being less immediately important than our three or four big problems. These are the Melissande allee seat, the elimination of detail in the Trefoil gate, the simplification of the beech terrace swing seat, the paint samples, and designs for the cortile benches.

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The work with Miss Havey in the last few days shows that she promises well. As you and I know she needs guidance as the experience and maturity of judgment are quite naturally lacking, but for the Dumbarton work there seems no one as immediately promising, and as she has made herself well liked by those with whom she works she would seem to me, as before suggested, the logical person provided she is willing to give the time and learn what she must learn before she can adequately replace the hands that have so long been alongside yours on the reins.

Miss Havey will be leaving tonight and wants to spend the weekend with her family in Boston. We are tentatively arranging that she should bring on to New Haven next week a group of sketches to meet me.

You may think it crazy for me to go on to New Haven before having really rested out, but our intimate friend, and so long my Chief, Mr. Thomas Farnam, has been ill and Max thinks it wise from every point of view that I go on to see him and to learn about those who are going to take the tiller in his stead. I expect to leave here on Tuesday night June 23rd and to be at the New Haven Lawn Club until the following Friday afternoon and then come home to settle down and stay "put" until September or October.

Let me know whether you have decided on an abode in Washington for next winter and how Robert and you have come through the weeks of - to say the least - strenuous engagements. If you are not at Casa Dorinda next winter there will be a great gap in our California sojourn. We hope and expect to go to the Valley Club next winter if Uncle Sam, taxes and transportation will permit, and without you Santa Barbara will be just Barbara without the "Santa".

With a fond hug to both of you I am

Your devoted

Trix

Really things go better - medico quite satisfied & wants me to go on beeh voh under super heated high pressure steam!