

BEATRIX FARRAND
~~1630 ORLANDO ROAD~~ Reef Point
~~1630 ORLANDO ROAD~~ Bar Harbor, Maine
SAN MARINO, CALIFORNIA

November 9, 1941

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Mrs. Robert Woods Bliss
Casa Dorinda
Hot Springs Road
Santa Barbara, California

Mildred my very dearest dear:

First, even before the Botanic Garden, a fond hug to tell you how glad I am that Robert is slowly but steadily getting on. My own young man gains but it is an intermittent progress and when it intermits it is very hard on him as he gets rather down and blue, and doesn't feel that he can really count on himself for any hour or effort, so that I find him shrinking from making appointments or doing anything except what he feels momentarily able to do. So, when you hear we are expecting to arrive at the Encanto on the afternoon of the 1st of December this will also tell you that my Chief has made me promise that nowhere will I let anybody come to meet him at trains, or to add any possible emotional strain. What will happen is that after we get settled at the Encanto the good Clemmy and I will probably go down to the storage house to see about our moving, and sometime that afternoon you will hear from me by telephone and a telephonic hug will replace the real one which we will have the next day. There is some little catch which is not yet working physically well with my young man, but both the doctor and he feel that it is gradually absorbing itself and that he is definitely on the road to improvement.

As you and I like to know where the other one is, an itinerary is being sent you, and you will see from it where I perch on my westward way, and that the week before we reach Santa Barbara I hope to be at Dumbarton and to bring you its freshest news. You will I know like to hear that the unemotional Bryce said that he could hardly bear to speak to you as his voice was choking and to hear your "dear voices" was almost more than he could bear. If this is not a tribute of real devotion you never have had one!

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November 9th, 1941

Mrs. Bliss, page 2 11/9/41

Now for the Botanic Garden. The following notes apply to sheet No. 1.

Your letter and the roll of plans was accompanied by a letter from good Mr. Van Rensselaer, so that I have had the advantage of his point of view to reinforce yours.

It would seem to me without question that the site tentatively agreed upon, near the present garage, is admirably suited for the new Administration Building. As I remember the land and as I try to visualize the situation, it would seem to me wise to push this Administration Building as far north as possible so that the group of horticultural activities be kept fairly compact. If it could move north some 25 or 20 feet it would seem to me to make a better unit than where it is now shown. The question of the access to it for the Trustees' cars looks as though it could be as easily solved at a more northerly site than at the one indicated. This, after all, is the integral and important decision which the Garden Trustees are now making, and it would seem to me likely that the question of the position of the utilities, such as the garage, tool house, work yards, etc., might well be decided later, after we have had a chance to canvas different sites. (25)

Your letter has been re-read several times, and I am heartily in accord with the reasons for the rejection of the site higher up on the ledge mentioned on your first page in a, b, and c. And in the second suggestions, also a, b, and c, it would seem to me wise to concur in Mr. Van Rensselaer's preference for the garage site, provided this administration unit can be moved northward to a very appreciable degree. I am by no means sure that the work buildings should not be moved elsewhere, and possibly later the tank will disappear underground, or at least become a less prominent feature of the landscape.

The reasons given for pushing the Administration Building southward on account of Trustees' parking space, etc. do not seem to me entirely valid, as the parking area near the Administration Building should be kept to a minimum, and the Trustees' cars be made to park in the general parking space on the highway. The Trustees should be allowed to drive to the building but arranging parking space for a large group will eat into ground which ought to be put to better use. This to my mind would allow the Administration Building to be pushed north so that the road approach to it would be but a turnaround, with but a bulge opposite the landing place. I feel rather strongly that this group should be kept as compact as possible for administration purposes as well as from the point of view of appearance, So much for the choice of site in which I concur entirely in principle, though with a variation in the exact position of the building. It seems to me far more important to place this Administration Building correctly

and compactly and to leave the road approach to it to be solved later after it has been possible to study the exact placing of the lath^h house and the glass house, and the future rearrangement of the various other horticultural necessity buildings.

Notes regarding Sheet No. 2. The plan of the new building seems to me admirable. The minor changes in fenestration which seem to me worth considering are small and can be adjusted later on if they are thought likely to be useful.

- enlarge* 1. The Directors' Room approached only from an outside south door is doubtless as Mr. Van Rensselaer would wish to have it. The room looks extremely well planned, perhaps it would be wise to sacrifice some of the window space in order to give additional file or book space.
- enlarge* 2. Is Mr. Van Rensselaer satisfied that the herbarium room is likely to be large enough for the immediate present, and can be added to if it becomes too small?
- ✓ 3. The library should be an attractive and useful room, and doubtless the wall space has been studied as to whether or not it will house a sufficient number of present and likely future books.
- ✓ 4. The control office facing north and east seems excellently planned; and the "bindery" on the southeast will also doubtless be of much use.
5. The wisdom of adding the kitchenette is unquestioned. I should doubt its being large enough. Could not a little be added to this and taken off the herbarium passageway, as there will be little space for cooking, dish washing and storage of utensils.
- 9 6. Has the question of an outside staircase to the mezzanine and the basement been considered and rejected? It would seem to me rather wiser if this can be arranged, than to sacrifice extra space for a circular staircase.
- ✓ 7. The basement plan undoubtedly will work well, and the mezzanine prove equally useful.
8. Has the question of placing the plumbing more closely together been considered, as it always seems to add expense to spread the fixtures instead of keeping them close together.

yes To my way of thinking the flat roof elevation is infinitely superior to the sloping roof one, but a flat roof unit presents difficulties as to guttering, and the question of leaks should be borne in mind. These questions are, however, possible to solve but should be carefully considered. If the flat roofs can be guaranteed against leaking it would seem to me to definitely decide the question in their favor.

8 arrows
On the north I hesitate to approve the glass bricks on either side of the door, as this seems to me likely to give a less agreeable light than clear glass, and also likely to change the color of the light in the office room. Personally I should prefer glazed doors and small side windows rather than the glass brick as I am not sure that either from the outside or inside the glass brick construction would be attractive.

The fenestration of the north elevation seems excellent. On the south side the lavatory window could perhaps be better placed. On the east side I fancy the position of the lavatory window is inescapable, and on the west side the elevation seems very agreeable.

✓
As to the outside finish of the building, I more or less see it in a wood-float finished deep brownish-cream colored stucco, with either soft grey-green trim, somewhat the color of the pine and olive trees, or a greyish-brown trim somewhat bark color. My own feeling also is that a building as large as the future Administration Building has got to be considered as a building, since it can't be hidden like a small shack, therefore its appearance as a building has to be considered from a different angle than if it were a small cabin-like structure which could be dissimulated or hidden. The size and shape of the new building cannot be hidden and it should therefore be harmonious as an architectural unit in the landscape. The new Administration Building must, from its size, be a dominant feature of this part of the garden.

It would seem to me quite advisable to pull down the present garage if it is possible to get along for two or three weeks without re-erecting it. I should dearly love to study this possible new position before giving a decided answer, but if it is necessary at once to re-build it on the hill, and Mr. Van Rensselaer is sure he has chosen a wise and spacious area for it, go ahead without waiting for my arrival.

The following remarks apply to sheet No. 3. The questions with regard to the placing of the buildings shown on this sheet have been spoken of in the comments on sheet No. 1. The more sheets Nos. 1 and 3 are studied the more desirable it seems to force the Administration Building up into the rocks and closer to the caretaker's house, provided light and privacy are not interfered with. I should hope eventually the Administration Building group could be a somewhat long rectangle with the buildings (at present skewed,) later arranged in orderly alignment. The Garden has passed from its first experimental, and somewhat haphazard stage, into an important unit which should be treated with dignity of design.

Mrs. Bliss 11/9/41 page 5

Your letter is a model of clearness and good dictation in comparison with mine, More thought has gone into the consideration of the plans than into the literary composition of the letter. I hope, however, that the points are made clear and that you do not feel me an obstructionist in differing from the exact placement of the Administration Building, and the doubt as to making a final pronouncement on the exact position of the work group.

omit
[A carbon of the part of this letter that applies to the Botanic Garden is going to Mr. Van Rensselaer in order to save time and transcribing. Please forgive clumsinesses of wording or expression, and possible unclearnesses.

omit
[It is the greatest joy to know that you are taking hold of the Botanic Garden in just the way you are doing. It is so entirely worth while an enterprise, and Mr. Van Rensselaer himself so unusually and valuable a being, that it makes one the more eager to help it as wisely and intelligently as possible.

Probably the very questions you want answered have been omitted, if so, the itinerary will tell you where to reach me.

Yours in eager anticipation of three weeks hence.

Your fond and devoted,

Trix