

The Valley Club of Montecito
Santa Barbara, California
March 9, 1943

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

Dearest Mildred:

You will want to hear about the christening party at the Blaksley Library, so let us begin from the beginning and tell you the whole story. The day was miraculously gloomy, as both Mr. Van Rensselaer and I were worried lest there be too large an audience for the number of chairs which they found convenient to put into the room. It was pleasantly filled with about sixty people without any crowding, and with little vacant space -- I think one could safely count on seating seventy to seventy-five, but not more. Dear Anne Fithian and Mrs. Hoffman contributed two lovely copper pots full of golden yellow ranunculus and bronze young oak sprouts, slender white gladiolus and young twigs of yellow flowering bloom. These two old copper pots were set on the side of the screen and gave just a good note of color.

The audience was prompt in arriving, and at about 3:40 the General got up to read the telegram which you had so graciously sent to Mr. Van Rensselaer, and as soon as he had finished it there was a spontaneous clapping from the whole group of listeners. The General then went on to explain your gift of the buildings and their rearrangement and spoke of our collaboration in the redesigning of the grouping and of our many whirlwind changes of mind last autumn before the definite plan was started. He also spoke of the plan for the part which is to be submitted to the trustees on Thursday (incidentally, it seems likely that the trustees will accept the new plan as the General, Mrs. Fithian and Mrs. Gould have already seen and approved the draft, and Mr. Kellam beamed pleasantly and said he was sure it would be all right. The General said I may take a copy of the plan to show you as he is most anxious to go ahead "as and when" labor or funds are available).

At the end of the discussion, the victim gave the Reef Point Gardens talk, and it seemed to go reasonably well, - particularly the pictures, which give even strangers an idea of the different plant groupings. The whole talk and its pictures did not last over an hour-- so only two or three people had a valid excuse for a nap, which they apparently greatly enjoyed!

At the end of the talk, there was a further message of thanks and gratitude to you for having given a place where the Botanic Garden could have its little meetings in such charming surroundings.

Today our good Van Rensselaer is going to try and see Mr. Penfield, the "town planner-commissioner" and get his informal approval of the plan as designed so that the trustees may be told that the plan carries his visa and goodwill.

The scheme is a very simple one, since it eliminates a good many of the small walks that now make vermicelli lines around the strawberry meadow, and ^{W. P. R.} ~~ties~~ off the vermicelli into one smoothly running ^{sidewalk} sidewalk which can also be used for truck service and consequent minimizing of wheelbarrow and hand work. The parking space will lie on an intermediate shelf between the upper Mission Canyon Road and the meadow, with its length parallel to both, and entrance and exit easily contrived so that the parking traffic will be entirely a "one-way" stream.

The entrance to the building will more or less follow the lines you and I worked over last spring, and this ^{working road} ~~working road~~ from the front of Stewart's house up the east side of the stream east of the library is one which I wish we could build fairly soon, as it will mean a very distinct aid in the working of the Garden and bringing the whole design into line.

Apparently, the General is pleased with the suggested lines and is eager to go ahead -- not only with the construction when this is possible, but to finish the plan which is now only definite for the central region.

It occurred to me that the givers of certain individual trails, such as Mrs. Campbell and Mrs. Pritchett, might be willing to give a sufficient fund to have their own paths added to the definite map. Tomorrow I am going to see Mrs. Pritchett with the map and will sound her out on the idea of adding her trail to the general scheme. If she rises to the fly, I may try Mrs. Campbell before I start eastward.

As the General seemed so keen to have the rest of the Garden added to the definite plan, Mr. Van Rensselaer and I are going to study the plans -- the work yard on top of the hill, the Canyon Road, and the Pritchett and Campbell trails, so as to see whether there is likely to be very much variation in their general lines. It is agreed between Mr. Van Rensselaer and me that the ceanothus section should not as yet be placed on the map as some of these trails will probably have to be re-modeled and re-placed.

So much for the Botanic Garden plans. The enterprise really seems to be starting on its long career with wisely given and usefully placed equipment.

There are many vistas for the future which we must discuss in Washington. For example, if the land on the west side of the Tunnel Road is ever available, Mr. Van Rensselaer and I think that an extremely

interesting planting could be made ^{with} ~~on~~ the alien plants which have become a part of the California landscape. These would include the Spanish olives, some of the Australian eucalyptus and acacias, and some of the other beautiful broad-leaved Australian evergreens, like the pittosporum and a representative group of the plants which have shown their fitness to this part of California after they have reached their adult size. Mr. Van Rensselaer seemed to think this plantation would be of real value, as it would teach visitors which plants had been found trustworthy after years of trial. It is an interesting suggestion and to my surprise was eagerly accepted by the enthusiastic director. The subject was lightly touched upon with Ann~~e~~ who also seemed deeply interested. No one else has been spoken to as I want to know what you think of the scheme before even allowing myself to think too seriously about it.

You will also like to know that the obliging and nice Mr. Miller, the surveyor, has done a good deal more work than he expected to, but he has told me, with such a good humored look, that he hoped to squeeze all the extra work into the original \$100.00 estimate. General Lassiter is going to write him an appreciative note as I think Mr. Van Rensselaer now has the full fund in hand.

Casa Dorinda

It is incredible how slowly things seem to be moving in this direction. In fact, so slowly that I am frequently asked whether the Navy has returned the property to you as no one sees any sign of life on the premises. Of course, these silly rumors are promptly contradicted, but apparently no Commanding Officer has as yet been appointed and the preliminary work is not yet finished. I am also told that my one sheet-anchor, Mr. Harold Vaile, is likely to go into the Navy and that the contractors are eager to finish as quickly as possible as they too find the delays both irksome and expensive. It is too bad not to be able to give you any more definite information, but apparently the aquatic part of Uncle Sam's naval arrangements moves slowly.

Three weeks from today we start eastward and it is nice to think that in hardly more than a month you and I ought to be at work at Dumbarton for at least four or five days. A long letter came from Bryce, telling of the fortunate accident which saved the box walk from almost irreparable destruction, and also reported the removal of the horse-chestnut trees in the north court; some of the scraggy crab-apples on the crab hill, and the two ungainly big poplars near the

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frame yard. Bryce's letter was accompanied by one from nice Mr. Thacher, saying my "sky parlor" would be ready for me on the 10th and that you seemed quite inclined to plant the magnolias in the green garden and possibly the holly and magnolia on the north side of the east lawn.

Max continues his daily work with "Benjamin Franklin" and although it is a slow job he finds it interesting and tells me he sees the method of presentation and that a good many problems are ironing themselves out in his mind as he works with the triple manuscript. He is now beginning to strain at his leash and wants to get back home to his library at Reef Point, where he is happier and therefore finds he can work better than anywhere else. Isn't it nice that he does feel just this way?

The winter here has been a success and we hope we may be able to get back to the pleasant little cottage again next year if it can be managed, and we owe this to you as well as many another happiness.

Robert would have been pleased if he had heard the General speak of you and heard the little ripple of clapping with which your name was greeted yesterday, as our "Two" are very proud of their partners.

More rain today. We are having a soaking that even Californians find exaggerated in proportion.

Yours, my very dear,

Your own
Trix