

October 31, 1958

Mrs. George A. Ellis
Old Bennington
Vermont

Dear Peg,

When we last talked you suggested I write you a letter about the Arts Building and enclose a copy for Ann and Mr. Raynolds. I'm sorry not to have written before this, but as you know I had to take up the matter in a preliminary way with the Trustees, find whether the Brick Garden wall was sound, and secure an architect's opinion of whether an appropriate building could be constructed for \$200,000 to \$250,000.

The Trustees were naturally overjoyed to hear that someone was interested in providing an Arts Building (and splitting to know who!). They would approve of its being a memorial, and of its being named in honor of the person whose memory it would serve. They would also be prepared to assure its proper maintenance.

I am informed that the Brick Garden wall is sound, but, as we agreed when we talked about this, the building should not at this stage be tied to the wall or even to the Brick Garden site. The wall does present possibilities of savings and the site is attractive and convenient to the New Gallery, to parking, etc., but savings from the wall may prove illusory, and careful study may show that another site would be more economical, more attractive or more useful. What we all want, I am sure, is the best possible site and this will require study.

Architects, I've discovered, are chary of making horseback estimates, but the architect who assured us that the new library could be built within a certain figure and then proceeded to do it tells me that our art work could be brought together in one building for \$200,000 to \$250,000. For rough comparison, the new library, which will perhaps be twice as large, had a contract cost of about \$400,000 and will have an overall cost of just under \$500,000.

I will review the need for an Arts Building, more for the Raynolds' information than for yours, since you know it so well (and, indeed, keep pointing it out to me). The Art Division of seven teachers offers painting, sculpture, ceramics, architecture, graphic arts, "design and materials," and art history and criticism. From

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the beginning of the College the Division has done distinguished work, both in art and art teaching, and has influenced art teaching in colleges and schools throughout the country. Also from the beginning it has been hampered by inadequate facilities. There are three satisfactory studios in the Commons Building, but these are not large enough for the number of students or for their increasingly large canvasses. Sculpture is carried on in a converted chicken house, ceramics in a brooder, and graphics, and "design and materials" in the basements of two dormitories. Art history classes share a science lecture room with the Science Division. The teachers' studios and offices are separated, and it is difficult to maintain a unified Division.

The College is now over twenty-five years old. It is well established in reputation and sound financially. It is embarked on a major program of maintenance, bringing its plant into first-rate condition. It is moving out of the chicken-coop and brooder era into a more substantial future. The new library is tangible evidence of this.

If Ann or Mr. Reynolds has any question about the project, I should be glad to try to answer it.

Please let me know if there is anything further I can do-- and may I say again how wonderfully heartening to me your interest has been.

Cordially,

William C. Fels
President