

County of Los Angeles
Board of Supervisors
Los Angeles

May 29, 1939

Noted
[Signature]
MEMBERS OF BOARD
ROGER W. JESSUP
CHAIRMAN
WILLIAM A. SMITH
GORDON L. McDONOUGH
JOHN ANSON FORD
OSCAR HAUGE

INTERIOR DEPT.
RECEIVED
MAY 5 - 1939
OFFICE OF
THE SECRETARY.

Mr. Harold L. Ickes,
Secretary of the Interior
Washington, D. C.

My dear Mr. Ickes:

Knowing your interest in public parks as maintained by the Federal government and trans-Pacific commerce, it has occurred to me that your office might be interested in a possibility that has been brought to my attention of recent weeks and which I should like to take this opportunity to bring to yours.

There is located in the center of Hollywood, atop a knoll with a commanding view of the Pacific Ocean, an estate known as the Bernheimer Estate, which has been owned for something over four years now by the Pacific Mutual Life Insurance Company, which acquired it as a result of foreclosure proceedings against the former owners. This estate has been photographed and pictured throughout the United States in magazines for many years, and is internationally known for its collection of imported Japanese art. The main building on the premises is of Japanese design and is surrounded by eight acres of authentic Japanese gardens laid out in miniature.

For some time I have been interested in the possibility of making some public use of this area, which I believe it may be possible for a public body or some other group to acquire at this time for less than its normal value. I have been particularly intrigued with the idea that it might be used either as a center dedicated to the cementing of peaceful Pan-Pacific relations, to the development of trade between the United States and the Orient, with the possible installation of trade display rooms, or as a cultural center. Located as it is in world-famous Hollywood, and being most unique in lay-out, it has occurred to me that the Federal government, and possibly indirectly, the Japanese government might be interested in the project. In this connection, I wonder if there is any possibility that the Federal government might consider the establishment of a national park of this type?

If you should be interested, I shall be glad to forward photographs, valuations of art objects, assessed valuation figures, and other pertinent facts.

I would appreciate hearing from you concerning this matter which, I believe, is an unusual opportunity to do an unusual piece of work.

Sincerely,

[Signature]
JOHN ANSON FORD

JAF/r
Enc: 1

cc: Mr. Harry L. Hopkins,
Secretary of Commerce

*Thompson
June 15
H.R.*

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
WASHINGTON

ADDRESS ONLY
DIRECTOR, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

June 15, 1939

*0-32
California*

Mr. John Angus Ford,
Board of Supervisors,
Los Angeles, California.

Dear Mr. Ford:

By reference from Secretary Ickes, we have received your letter of May 29 regarding the possible opportunity for use of the Bernheimer Estate, and the objects of art located there for public purposes as a national park.

While your suggestion is exceedingly interesting to us, and there may well be far reaching implications for national and even international benefit involved, it is very doubtful that the property is suitable for use as a part of the national park system.

If the estate is something of national importance, the justification for acquisition and administration by the Federal Government might properly be developed by the Commission of Fine Arts. Although the activities of the Commission of Fine Arts appear to be confined largely to the affairs of the District of Columbia, it is our understanding, however, that it advises upon general questions of art whenever requested to do so by the President or any committee of Congress.

The interest which prompted your letters to Secretary Ickes and Secretary Hopkins is appreciated, and we will be glad to hear further from you at any time with reference to your suggestion.

Sincerely yours,

A. E. Demaray,
Acting Director.

cc: BRLPSC-Room 5214

GLC:nrs

P. S.

With reference to the fourth paragraph of your letter, we would be glad to have any data you would care to send, including an inventory of the objects of art on the estate, photographs, valuations and other pertinent facts.

OFFICIAL BUSINESS
OF THE
COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS

June 20, 1939.

MEMORANDUM FOR Mr. Demaray:

I have read the attached reply and consider it to be satisfactory, with the understanding that it will not involve a personal inspection by a member of the Commission of Fine Arts until the matter has been taken up with Congress, or unless the Pacific Mutual Life Insurance Company offers to pay for the expenses of such an inspection.

If they have an inventory of the objects of art on the Estate, together with photographs, that they could send it would simplify matters.


Secretary.

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RECEIVED
JUN 25 - 1939
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