

Chouinard Art Institute

743 South Grand View Street, Los Angeles 57, California : Dunkirk 9-4138

Monday Morning

Dear Laura:

Your message arrived last evening and to say that I was bowled over is to put it mildly. I cannot believe that Stanley is gone. It just isn't right.

What happened at the Regents meeting on the 19th. Did their action precipitate anything which might have given Stanley a serious emotional upset? I recall the terrible ordeal that Dr. Bradburg gave him--for no reason at all--and can guess that something similar might have transpired. I hope that the Regents and the powers that be will someday realize that this man has literally given his life to a cause in which he had conviction and faith. They, on the other hand, have shown a monumental lack of courage and purpose in failing to live up to the ideals which were instrumental in bringing the best elements of the Museum into being. I am disgusted--furious--and very sad.

Better let this outburst be something between ourselves. Thanks a thousand times for letting me know promptly. I have written to Flo and will advise Horace Albright. I had a letter from him in reply to my long communication of earlier date, a copy of which I sent to you. He says that he feels he must withdraw from all such activity. I can hardly say I blame him. Were it not that I feel so damned frustrated by this mess, I too would say to hell with it. However, if I can be of any help, just holler. I still have faith and trust in some of the New Mexicans--and it is too fine a project to see it collapse.

Let me hear all the news--and fondest to you two.

Hitch

GILBERT BOND

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November 9, 1959

Mr. Horace M. Albright
100 Rockefeller Plaza
New York 20, New York

Dear Mr. Albright:

Two motives prompt me to write you at this time, and I should first say that despite the fact that I have not written, I have often thought of you and wondered if you were in the Los Angeles region. If so, I hope you will give me a call as I am still performing my chores at Chouinard Art Institute, and would be delighted to see you again.

Congratulations upon the establishment of the HMA lectureship at Cal. This is a fine tribute to your contributions and devotion to the cause of conservation. I only wish that I might be present at the dinner in Washington next month, but this cannot be; however, it will be my pleasure to be identified even in a small way with the program which will be going forward at Berkeley.

The next item on the agenda is the situation in Santa Fe, which seems to have deteriorated to a dog fight between the political appointees and the private agencies, which make up the real strength and fibre of the Museum. It is a tragic dilemma, and one which seems to have no solution.

Early this week I received a special delivery letter from Laura Gilpin, who is the President of the Indian Arts Fund. As you know, the Fund enjoys a special status in the Museum table-of-organization by virtue of the contract between the Laboratory of Anthropology and the Fund. This was later reaffirmed by the Museum of New Mexico when they took over the Laboratory. Under this contract, the collections of the Fund reside in the Laboratory building, are available for laboratory and/or Museum of New Mexico study, exhibition, research, et al., but are subject at all times to the rules and regulations of the Indian Arts Fund. The control

of the Indian Arts Fund is vested in a Board of approximately 25 to 30 directors, among them, Jesse Nusbaum, Miss White, John Meem, Kenneth Chapman, and Mrs. Elizabeth D. Davisson. I know Mrs. Davisson to be a friend of yours, so assume that you may be able to check some of these matters with her if she is in New York.

The Indian Arts Fund is now in a difficult position as the Management of the Museum has asserted its right to abrogate the previous agreements and to insist upon control of the Fund collections.

As you may recall, I anticipated such a maneuver, basing my opinion upon the attitudes expressed by members of the former Board of Regents, and the new Director of the Laboratory, Fred Wendorf. Mr. Wendorf has certainly measured up to my judgment of him, for he is evidently determined to take over the Fund's management of the collections. There has been a ruthless move to weaken the position of the Fund by requiring Stanley Stubbs to resign from the Board. As you know, Stanley has been with the Museum almost 30 years, and will complete his service for retirement in another year. He has likewise been associated with the Indian Arts Fund for this period, first as general factotum under Dr. Mera and Mr. Chapman, and later as the curator of the collections. His resignation from the Board and from his responsibilities to the Fund has been demanded by the Museum administration on the ground that no museum employee can carry responsibilities or "divided loyalties". Whether or not this has been applied to other members of the Museum organization elsewhere, I do not know, but Stanley found himself in the difficult position of being forced to leave the Indian Arts Fund, or to remain and lose his position in the Museum and his pension.

The contract between the Fund and the Museum states specifically that the officers of the Fund may at any time and upon due notice withdraw the collections from the premises of the Laboratory. Inasmuch as they are now being threatened, Miss Gilpin is considering withdrawal. Miss White has offered to the Fund a building on her premises in which she is willing to install the necessary steel shelving, etc. This would, of course, be only a stop-gap measure, but might very well force the Regents to reconsider setting aside the contract. However, it would

make the collections virtually unavailable for the time being, and would probably mean some additional hazard to their safety.

This whole tragic sequence now indicates to me that the powers-that-be in Santa Fe cannot evidence good will in the management of the affairs of this very complex institution. For reasons that escape me, the Machiavellian nature of these otherwise intelligent and able people requires them to scamper off in separate directions, each following his own ambitions or pet project. It seems impossible for them to join in a common interest. I fear that if the Indian Arts Fund succumbs, it is only a matter of time until the collections of the School of American Research, the Historical Society, the Spanish Colonial Arts Society, and the Bartlett Bequest tumble.

Perhaps the final solution will be the transfer of title of all collections to the State owned museum. I can understand why such a solution of the problem may become necessary; however, the ways and means by which this solution, or any solution, is to be gained cannot be achieved by riding roughshod over those who have been responsible for the foundation of the museum, itself, and the preservation of these materials for the past fifty years. Therefore, I think some effort should be undertaken to preserve the identity of the various interested agencies before they have been completely obliterated.

It occurs to me that each of the organizations which I have mentioned have one thing in common; i.e., the need for appropriate quarters, exhibition space, and management. Is it out of the question for us to consider joining the interests of these private organizations under one roof until such time as the official acts of the Museum of New Mexico may be clarified, both as to the intent and mode of execution. I believe there is enough interest among the several boards represented to insure a plan of action founded in sincerity and good intention. Their union in such a project should not be thought of as being brought about through expediency, but rather through their common interest in the cultural resources of New Mexico.

At several times during the preparation of my report, I felt prompted to suggest such a program to such people as Parker Wilson, John Meem, and Oliver Seth; however, my assignment was specifically for the purpose of analyzing the Museum of New Mexico, and it did not seem wise to veer off on other

problems. Do you think it would be appropriate for anyone to suggest a plan of action for the private agencies which now seem to be on the verge of disappearing in the shadow of the Board of Regents?

Perhaps I am stirring up the Santa Fe broth unnecessarily by such a suggestion. I would appreciate your reaction, however. I am taking the liberty of sending a copy of this letter to Miss Gilpin, as I know she would appreciate being kept posted on any thoughts along these lines.

All good wishes to you and Mrs. Albright.

Sincerely,

Mitchell A. Wilder
Director

MAW:pcp