



Smithsonian Institution

Smithsonian Institution Archives

Proceedings of the Board of Regents Meeting held on May 7, 1984

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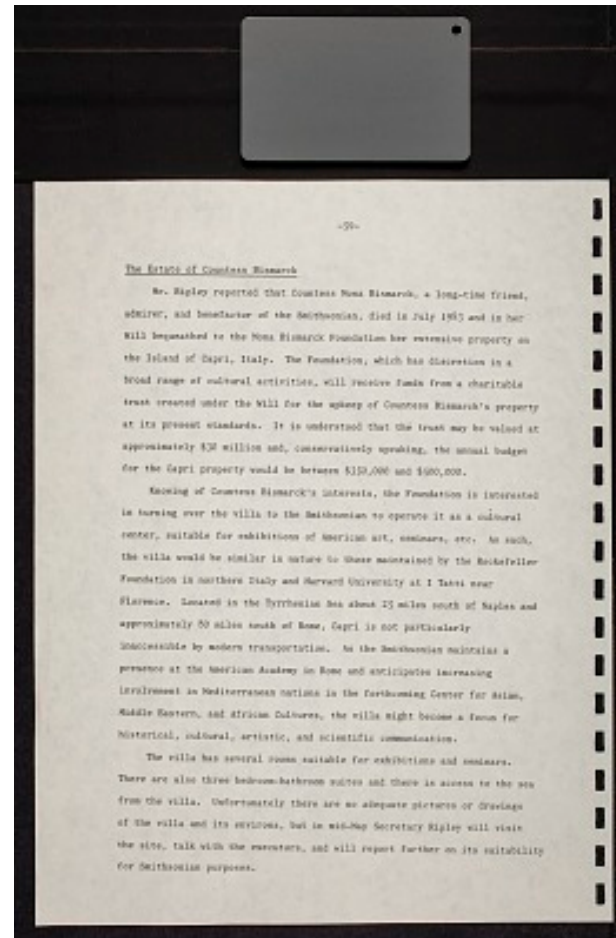
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The Estate of Countess Bismarck

Mr. Ripley reported that Countess Mona Bismarck, a long-time friend, admirer, and benefactor of the Smithsonian, died in July 1983 and in her Will bequeathed to the Mona Bismarck Foundation her extensive property on the Island of Capri, Italy. The Foundation, which has discretion in a broad range of cultural activities, will receive funds from a charitable trust created under the Will for the upkeep of Countess Bismarck's property at its present standards. It is understood that the trust may be valued at approximately \$30 million and, conservatively speaking, the annual budget for the Capri property would be between \$350,000 and \$500,000.

Knowing of Countess Bismarck's interests, the Foundation is interested in turning over the villa to the Smithsonian to operate it as a cultural center, suitable for exhibitions of American art, seminars, etc. As such, the villa would be similar in nature to those maintained by the Rockefeller Foundation in northern Italy and Harvard University at I Tatti near Florence. Located in the Tyrrhenian Sea about 25 miles south of Naples and approximately 80 miles south of Rome, Capri is not particularly inaccessible by modern transportation. As the Smithsonian maintains a presence at the American Academy in Rome and anticipates increasing involvement in Mediterranean nations in the forthcoming Center for Asian, Middle Eastern, and African Cultures, the villa might become a focus for historical, cultural, artistic, and scientific communication.

The villa has several rooms suitable for exhibitions and seminars. There are also three bedroom-bathroom suites and there is access to the sea from the villa. Unfortunately there are no adequate pictures or drawings of the villa and its environs, but in mid-May Secretary Ripley will visit the site, talk with the executors, and will report further on its suitability for Smithsonian purposes.



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