

4601 North Park Avenue  
Apartment 615  
Chevy Chase, MD 20815

The Honorable Bruce Babbitt  
Secretary of the Interior  
Washington DC

January 23, 2000

Dear Mr. Secretary,

I have not been involved in the issue of what is to happen to the Visitors' Center or the Cyclorama in Gettysburg, but recently I have had reason to give it some thought. On visiting the Cyclorama last month, I was moved by how effective it is to see that magnificent 19th century painting of the battle and then to go outside and look at precisely the same view. I am convinced that if and when the painting is moved it will not have the same sense of connection to the landscape and to the events that occurred near that site.

As a long standing and dedicated preservationist, I am writing to ask you to think again about demolishing the Neutra building in which the Cyclorama is located. Perhaps the office wings could be removed, but the central cylinder, in which the painting hangs, is significant in its own right. As part of "Vision 66," a great deal of thought was given to the location of this building and it was also designed by one of our country's foremost modern architects. As such it is a monument to the Battle of Gettysburg in its own right.

We, as a community, would never consider leveling the Pennsylvania monument or other large renderings, which also obstruct the view of the battle, as the combatants would have seen it. Are we willing to tear this monument down simply because it was built by our generation and therefore is somehow disposable? If left standing, I have no doubt that our grandchildren will see the significance of Neutra's expression, just as we appreciate today the impulse that prompted the construction of other battlefield monuments in times past. Furthermore, the Neutra building—the only one of his work on the East Coast of the United States—was dedicated by the Supreme Commander of Allied Forces Europe during WWII, and former President of the United States. We certainly recognize the importance of historical linkage when considering the Peace Light Memorial, dedicated by Franklin Roosevelt. Since it is also located on battlefield territory would we consider pulling it down?

I certainly endorse moving the Visitors' Center, but I would ask you to re-think what it really means to tear down Neutra's building—our generation's (and the Park

Service's) monument to the heroic struggle at Gettysburg. Current older monuments, as well as town development, assure that the hallowed battleground of Gettysburg can never be completely returned to its civil war state. For that reason, I oppose discriminating, indeed singling out, this specific monument. With proper planting, it could be less of an imposition on the scenery than many of the older monuments that will remain.

Thank you for your consideration. With respectful best wishes.

Sincerely,

Susan Eisenhower

CC: Richard Moe