

February 1, 1971

Dear Kitty:

I have asked Mike Morgan to deliver this letter and to add his words to mine. You have been creating a very difficult situation in relation to Millard Meiss, and I am sure you are aware of it. It would be much more agreeable for all of us if you would find it possible to come to some reasonable arrangement about this matter, but in the absence of such, I can only say that the Meisses will seek legal redress against what they consider an intolerable situation.

Sincerely yours,

Carl Kaysen

Mrs. J. Robert Oppenheimer
63 Maxwell Lane
Princeton, New Jersey 08540

January 19, 1971

Dear Millard:

I am sorry to hear of your further troubles with your neighbor. I understand that you will have some peace for a while, at least, because she has again left Princeton. While I will try once again to persuade her that the part of wisdom would be to get a different dog, in the end I have no power in this matter. Kitty is the Institute's tenant, but I don't think that relationship gives us any legal power, and I know from experience that she is unlikely to be responsive to arguments based on good will. Accordingly, I suggest that you go to the courts and simply seek civil relief in the usual way should that prove necessary.

Sincerely,

Carl Kayser

Professor Millard Meiss
Institute for Advanced Study

Dear Carl -

January 15, 71

When we returned from Europe last summer and, anxiously, and with fear, tried to settle into our house, we were confronted once again with life next to the mastiff. Since Kitten was in residence and there were no noisy parties in the swimming pool, such as had been normal when there were young house-sitters, we tried hard to ignore the roars of the beast. When both my work and our sleep were disturbed over a period of several weeks I talked with Mike. He as always assumed that we had the right to be free of such disturbances, and seemed to accept my proposal that the dog be kept in a pen on the southeast front of the house (where I hoped it would not disturb the Atiyahs or the Selbergs) rather than in the L of the Oppenheimer house, which sends most of the noise to us, even (for reasons that puzzle me), very little diminished, into our court. Soon after this conversation the house became unoccupied, the dog left, and we rejoiced in our re-possession of our home. ^{a large part of} I should add that I told Mike that the "acoustical" fence around the pool, all 4 or 5 feet ^{the promised} high (not "8"), had been removed prior to our return (see my note of May 2, 1968).

Around Christmas of this year the dog and its mistress returned, just as Mitz was beginning to recover from pneumonia. The evening of December 30 the mastiff, lodged as usual between

the Oppenheimer house and ours, barked from 6²⁰ to 8⁴⁵ P.M.
We called the police. Last night, our second since our return, the
roar drove me from my study at 10¹⁰, and when there was no
respite we called the police at 1²⁰ A.M., who asked Kitty to take
the dog indoors when she returned home at 1⁵⁰.

I write now to ask for a formal reply to my request
for relief from this intolerable situation.

Yours

Millard

P.S. You understand, of course, that I have referred
above only to the extreme disturbances, but lesser ones
are more or less continuous, though totally unpredictable.

o. l. m. v

THE INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED STUDY
PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY

SCHOOL OF HISTORICAL STUDIES

Feb 3 71

Carl -

Here's part of the background
to which I referred.

Millard

43 Maxwell Lane
Princeton, New Jersey
July 7, 1970

Dear Mr. Rddner:

I enclose the material on the Oppenheimer house about which I spoke with you on the phone.

I am not sure if you saw our house before theirs was built in front of us. We had thought long and hard before moving onto Institute land from our house on Pretty Brook because quiet is so essential to Prof. Meiss' work. We moved only when it seemed quite certain that the area was so settle that we could plan a house and his study in such a way that he would be assured of the quiet that he must have. At first we were going to buy two lots from the Institute (acre zoning here) but in the end bought only about one an^d third, being assured by the manager, Mr. Morgan that we might as well let the Institute hold the remainder of the acreage which would be of no use to us and which he assured us would never be changed. It was just a wild woodlot and we agreed to keep it in order. At that time in addition to absolute peace we had a charming view - over a hundred and seventy feet looking down over the fields to the Farmed ared and Fuld Hall of the INstitute. IN the nearer dsstance was a little old stone house with a tower which usually housed two adult couples in the winter and was empty in the summer. I mention this because of course the summer when windows are open is the time that noisgyneighbors would Be the greatest ythreat. Beyond the stone house was a little old white farm house, far from us, but also usually empty.

After Robert Oppenheimer res~~igned~~ as director of the Institute the Board of Trustees voted to build him a house since he would have to move out of the directors house. The matter of finding a location that suited Mrs. Oppenheimer was not easy and shortly the matter was greatly complicated by the knowledge that Prof. Oppenheimer had cancer, and was very seriously ill. Thrashing aro^und in an effort to quickly find a site that would suit Mrs. Oppenheimer, there came the idea of tearing down the three houses (I only mentioned two because one was hidden by the ston house and we did not see it) between our house and the Institute and create thus a large tract for an Oppenheimer residence.

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This occurred in March of 1966 (see my husband's first letter). We should probably have consulted you at once about our legal position for there was certainly an immediate and large deterioration in the actual value of our property aside from other damages. But in view of Dr. Oppenheimer's illness we decided to try to go along with the plan and as you will see attempting only to protect Prof. Meiss' working conditions - which as a professor at the Institute seemed a reasonable demand. As you will see from the architect's letter of April 4th the solution was to enclose the pool with a wall and a roof. ect

As always -

Margaret Meiss

✓ MCM -
No return
Re: 5-9-68

THE INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED STUDY
PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY 08540

SCHOOL OF HISTORICAL STUDIES

May 2, 1968

Dr. Carl Kaysen
The Institute for Advanced Study

Dear Carl,

For the record I wish to refer to a statement in the letter to me last July from Mike Morgan. I did not accept the change in the design ^{previously} agreed upon for the pool and the continuous wood fence. For reasons which I believe are respectable but may have been disadvantageous to me, I did not object.

When thinking about the problem please remember that we wish to prune up the large spruce tree so as to ^{to} capture a very small part of what we have lost. I would expect that a shift southward of part of the fence would be accompanied by an understanding that no planting would be done north of the fence in its new location. Unless that is agreed upon we might immediately face the same old difficulty in another form.

Sincerely,



Millard Meiss

MM:le

THE INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED STUDY

PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY 08540

Telephone-609-924-4400

THE DIRECTOR

April 16, 1968

Memorandum for the Record

Conversation with Professor Meiss in the Director's Office on the morning of April 15, 1968.

Professor Meiss raised some questions about Mrs. Oppenheimer's dogs and other problems of neighborly relations.

1. I agreed, in view of these problems, that the Meisses should construct a wood fence (for which the Institute would bear half the cost) running for as far along the boundary of the two properties as seemed necessary to shut out sight and sound of the dogs and other activities on the Oppenheimer side, and I stated that the Institute, as the land owner on the Oppenheimer site, would have no objection to the fence's being over 6 ft. 11 in. in height if this proved necessary to accomplish the purpose. Professor Meiss agreed to take the responsibility for ordering the construction, and setting the line of the fence, and also said he would let me know what the proposal was so that I could inform Mrs. Oppenheimer before construction. We agreed that the exact location of the fence should be determined in terms of existing planting and without too careful regard for the previous property lines, given the Institute's interest in both properties. I further suggested that it might be useful to explore the possibility of planting between the proposed new fence and the existing wire fence.

2. I agreed that at a suitable early date we would look into the question of changing the line of the wire fence where it now goes to the left of the large tree on the Meiss property in such a way as to be highly obtrusive and to intrude onto what had been a protected view. Further, I indicated that this problem would be dealt with by the end of the summer.

3. At some point I will raise with Mrs. Oppenheimer the question of the number, size, ferocity, and audibility of her dogs.


Carl Kaysen

cc: Mr. Morgan

July 26, 1967

MEMORANDUM for: Professor Meiss
FROM: Minot C. Morgan, Jr.
SUBJECT: Oppenheimer House

Dear Professor Meiss:

Pursuant to our conversation yesterday, the Institute will proceed with planting and construction on the property now occupied by Mrs. Oppenheimer, as follows:

1. In those places where the new, four-foot wire fence is visible in an unpleasant way, we will plant ivy, or some other fast-growing vine, to cover it.
2. We will proceed with the construction of an acoustical wall, approximately eight feet in height, on the north side of the pool, with a short return on the west side of the pool. The wall will be constructed of the same siding that was used on the house, with posts on center, and the siding facing both you and the house.
3. We will screen with a cedar fence, or planting, the unsightly filter mechanism.

As I said yesterday, I am very grateful that you are willing to accept this modification of the drawings that Mr. Longstreth showed you last year; and it is understood that if the acoustical treatment is not successful, we will discuss more drastic measures.

Cordially yours,

Minot C. Morgan, Jr.

MCM:jws

copy to: Dr. Kaysen

copies filed as follows: 1) Faculty--Professor Meiss ✓
2) Institute General--Oppenheimer House

March 23, 1966

To the Committee on Buildings and Grounds
Institute for Advanced Study

Gentlemen:

I write this letter with great reluctance and only because I see no alternative. My wife and I wish to believe that the unpleasant problem which has suddenly been thrust upon us originates in Robert Oppenheimer's illness rather than in thoughtlessness towards a new neighbor.

We were informed about two weeks ago of the radical changes immediately in front of our house. Demolition began at once, and today we were informed we might see the plot plan of the projected new house. We are discouraged by the unfriendly manner of the procedure and troubled by the plan.

When my wife and I placed our present home three years ago we had every reason to believe that the charming and historic house to the south of us, inhabited for years by the members of the Institute, was a fixed and stable structure, and we were assured that families with children would not normally be assigned to it. Now we are faced not only with the demolition of this house but with the erection of a new one closer to the front of our own. The proximity of the proposed new house does not conform with the pattern established in this neighborhood of scientists and scholars.

Our greatest distress is caused by the placing of the swimming pool. Though the Oppenheims have a large lot and the alternatives were innumerable, the pool is placed close to our living rooms, and worse, my study. The fence indicated on the plan will presumably screen the swimmers from mutual view but it will not contain the noise that inevitably accompanies the use of a pool. This remark is not intended to be personal. We are regularly in

Princeton during the summer but the Oppenheimerss rarely have been here and others have been using their pool. The same observation would be true a fortiori if the house were to pass into other hands. A shift of the pool to the south-easterly side of the house, where there is plenty of room, would take it away from the neighbors.

I am not primarily protesting the loss of an amenity but a threat to my professional life. Since the Oppenheimers are destroying two houses and moving another to provide a site that they like I hope they - and if not they the Trustees - will prove sympathetic to the interest of others in preserving what is essential to them.

Faithfully yours,

Millard Meiss

April 2, 1966

Dear Mr. Longstreth:

Mr. Morgan has given us a few hours ago the drawing of the plot and the schematic plan of the house. I would very much appreciate information on the following points, either through drawings or a letter.

1) Does the line around the pool and the court represent a wall? If so, how high and of what materials? Will there be a gate in such a wall? (Mr. Morgan mentioned access to the pool only through the house).

2) Is the roof over the pool of which Mr. Morgan speaks permanent or removable? Does it cover the pool completely?

3) Is the indication of the location of the demolished house approximate or exact?

I would be glad to know also something about the heights above grade, both of the house and the north enclosing wall.

Very truly yours,

Millard Meiss.

THADDEUS LONGSTRETH, A.I.A.

ARCHITECT AND CONSULTANT

112 HEATHER LANE, PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY • TELEPHONE: WALNUT 4-3045

April 4, 1966.

Professor Millard Meiss
43 Maxwell Lane
Princeton New Jersey, 08540.

Dear Professor Meiss,

Thank you for your special delivery which arrived just now. I wish to hasten assurances on the following points in your letter:

1) The line around the pool and the court does represent a wall. The top of the wall is planned at the elevation of the bedroom roof eave or about 9'-6" above grade taken at the eave. The material around both sides of the pool is planned as masonry similar to what would be used for the fireplaces and chimnies. It is my recommendation, and the Oppenheimers have indicated approval, that it be similar in character and treatment to that which I have used for the southwest corner stair tower of the Princeton Public Library being constructed on Witherspoon Street. So far I have heard nothing but happy comments from many citizens on the appearance of this wall, and with planting against it, as the Oppenheimers are planning, it should look like a handsome garden wall. I have urged that the rest of the wall around the courtyard be of another material, such as redwood or cedar, to avoid any hint of monotony. There is no gate planned for the wall, and access to the pool would be only from the house itself.

2) The roof would be over the entire area of the pool and its surrounding paved area. It would be permanent, non-movable installation.

3) The indication of the demolished stone house is taken directly off Van Note-Harvey Associates, Civil Engineers' survey of February 1966, and to the best of my knowledge is exact.

from 132?
The mean height above grade of the Living Room roof is 12'-4" as measured from the north side facing your home. The mean elevation of the Bedroom roof above grade is 10'-4", and of the Guest House is 9'-4".

I certainly wish to assure you that I am empathic with your concern and hope for not only a most beautiful and satisfying home for the Oppenheimers, but also one which will delight the entire neighborhood.

Yours very sincerely,

Thaddeus Longstreth
Thaddeus Longstreth

April 11, 1966

General Edward Greenbaum
107 Mercer Street
Princeton, N.J.

Dear Mr. Chairman:

As I have already said to you, the new project for the Oppenheimer house contained in the drawings I received on April 2nd and in the explanatory letter from the architect I received on April 5th removes the objections I expressed to you in my letter of March 23. I refer to the location of the new house on the site of the demolished one, to the roofing and enclosure of the pool, and to the permanently closed court around it. I venture to express my hope that since the new house will be 150 feet long high trees will not be planted to the west of it; they would completely block our view.

I am deeply grateful to you and to the committee for your concern with this problem.

Faithfully yours,

Millard Meiss

THE INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED STUDY

PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY

OFFICE OF THE GENERAL MANAGER

July 26, 1967

MEMORANDUM for: Professor Meiss
FROM: Minot C. Morgan, Jr.
SUBJECT: Oppenheimer House

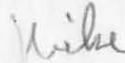
Dear Professor Meiss:

Pursuant to our conversation yesterday, the Institute will proceed with planting and construction on the property now occupied by Mrs. Oppenheimer, as follows:

1. In those places where the new, four-foot wire fence is visible in an unpleasant way, we will plant ivy, or some other fast-growing vine, to cover it.
2. We will proceed with the construction of an acoustical wall, approximately eight feet in height, on the north side of the pool, with a short return on the west side of the pool. The wall will be constructed of the same siding that was used on the house, with posts on center, and the siding facing both you and the house.
3. We will screen with a cedar fence, or planting, the unsightly filter mechanism.

As I said yesterday, I am very grateful that you are willing to accept this modification of the drawings that Mr. Longstreth showed you last year; and it is understood that if the acoustical treatment is not successful, we will discuss more drastic measures.

Cordially yours,



Minot C. Morgan, Jr.

MCM:jws

copy to: Dr. Kaysen

THE INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED STUDY

PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY

OFFICE OF THE GENERAL MANAGER

September 25, 1967

TO: Professors Meiss and Selberg
FROM: M. C. Morgan, Jr.
SUBJECT: Planting on the Oppenheimer Lot

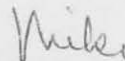
Gentlemen:

In order to eliminate any further misunderstanding regarding our intentions with regard to planting on the Oppenheimer lot, let me try to spell out our threefold objectives:

1. At the request of the Selbergs we intend to plant three or four evergreens which will form a screen for both visual and acoustical privacy between the Selberg house and that portion of the pool area which is not now screened by a wall.
2. At the request of both neighbors and Mrs. Oppenheimer herself we propose to plant various shrubs and vines to break up the rather stark view from various angles of the chain-link fence.
3. In addition to the above, which will be ordered by the Institute in consultation with all three parties, Mrs. Oppenheimer will be doing additional planting on the lot.

It is our further intention to accomplish all three of these objectives to the satisfaction of everyone concerned without violating the original agreement with the Meisses to protect their cone of view from their windows on the south to the open fields. To this end I am, this afternoon, putting up some stakes with Mr. Clark of the Howe Nurseries to identify this cone of vision on the Oppenheimer property so that any planting will not violate the agreement as to location or height. W

Cordially yours,



Minot C. Morgan, Jr.
General Manager

MCM/op

cc: Mrs. Robert Oppenheimer