



# MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

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## MEMORANDUM

TO: The Governing Board

FROM:  Joseph T. Edmiston, FAICP, ASLA Hon., Executive Officer

DATE: May 7, 2008

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item XVI: Consideration of resolution authorizing negotiation with the Claretian Missions to purchase part or all of collection of Gillette/Clarence Brown/Claretian era furnishings for King Gillette Ranch mansion.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board adopt the attached resolution authorizing negotiation to enter into a purchase agreement with the Claretian Missions for purchase of all or part of the Claretville Collection of furnishings for the King Gillette Ranch park, pending appraisal review and funding.

Background: The MRCA may have the opportunity to purchase and restore to the Gillette mansion some or all items dating back to at least the Clarence Brown ownership and perhaps to that of Mr. Gillette. The Claretian Order of the Catholic Church acquired the current King Gillette Ranch in the early 1950's and a number of furnishings from the previous owners stayed with the property. The Claretians owned the campus until the late 1970's and operated the site, then called Claretville, as a seminary and novitiate. When the Claretians sold the ranch their furnishings and paintings were moved to the Claretian Center in west Los Angeles and to Rancho Dominguez adobe.

Late last Fall, Glen Peterson, a former seminarian at Claretville, now a Las Virgenes Municipal Water District board member, arranged for MRCA and National Park Service staff to visit the Claretian Center to view the Gillette/Claretville collection. Father John Raab provided a list of some 35 researched items in the "Claretville Collection." The joint King Gillette park agency steering committee is very interested in seeing if any of the items, particularly those attributable to Wallace Neff and Gillette, might be acquired for display in the mansion and/or the eventual Visitor Center.

The Claretians have commissioned an appraisal of the items but their report is not yet ready. Staff has also lined up an NPS-suggested review appraiser to compare values. The Claretians, MRCA staff, and our park partners are very interested in

seeing if historic-interest items could be restored to the ranch, but valuations, affordability, and potential donor-fund raising are still only speculative at least for the next few weeks. Because the Claretians had to sell their Los Angeles home and move out last week under a very short escrow, staff offered to move and store the collection on a "traveling loan" basis, pending a purchase agreement. The joint park agency staffs will be better able to view and prioritize items that have the most significance to the original Wallace Neff interior design, and/or can be identified from the Clarence Brown or Claretian eras. Once the appraisal and appraisal review are complete, the feasibility of entering into a purchase agreement for some or all items will emerge. The Claretians are very flexible as to terms, but they must sell the collection.

Items include Italian or Spanish Baroque style chairs, tables, credenzas, cabinets; mirrors; paintings; lamps; a tapestry; and a bronze sculpture seen in old photos from the mansion.

Funding sources may include filming revenue, NPS Task Agreements, bond grant funds, and/or donations. Once obtained, additional information will be brought back to the Governing Board for a decision on expenditure.