April 11, 1939

Dr. Hugh Darby
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College of Physicians and Surgeons
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New York City, N.Y.

Dear Hugh and Carrie:

We certainly appreciate your taking care of Johnny when he arrived in New York. I am enclosing a blank check for you to fill out to reimburse you for the ticket, the "inner man", and the taxicab. Johnny was undoubtedly right regarding the round-trip ticket between Millerton and New York.

The same three hundred acres which I bought was purchased under the Murphy Act. The Murphy plan allows the buying of back-tax certificates at public auction. These certificates are a first-lien against the property and after two years can be foreclosed, giving a clear title to the certificate owner. Prior to the expiration of the two-year period, the certificate holder cannot improve or occupy the land in question. My certificates were registered as bought on September 15, 1938, so that I will not be able to act upon them until September 12, 1940. Foreclosure proceedings at that time will not amount to much more than $50.00 a tract. The sizes of the tracts run between three and sixty acres. The certificates call for 3% interest for the certificate holder from the date that the taxes were due, and not from the date that the certificates were bought. This is rather discouraging to the owner to redeem the property, as it would generally mean a 50% return on your money over a two-year period.

Two of the five-acre tracts I bought are located on the second creek below us. One, Number 63, I think is worth while buying as an investment or for house or camp use. The owner of these two tracts is a hard-boiled real-estate agent in the northern part of Florida. He also owns the Venice-Myakka Hotel up at Venice. He is aware that I have the certificates and has been down here a number of times to try to get me to buy a quit-claim deed to them. Though I think the land is of prime value, and situated in as good a location as the laboratory, I am not in the market for more land unless it comes awfully cheap. Mr. Bartlett has been trying to sell me his interest in either of the five-acre tracts for $250.00 each. Mr. Bartlett is not a man with a reputation for integrity and I imagine that the necessary expenses such as attorney's fees, survey, court costs, probably would run the per-acre-cost up to around $75.00. If you are interested in any such proposition on bayfront property, let me know and I'll send you a drawing of this location so you can judge whether you want to consider it.
Should you and Ginnie care to wait another year and a half, we will probably have considerable acreage available at $25.00 an acre, but it will be further up the creeks than the two tracts mentioned above.

In the next few days, I expect to go over to our County Seat in Punta Gorda and look into some of these matters. There is a second way of acquiring land through the tax system. Its cost is more expensive, as you have to pay all back taxes before foreclosing. Foreclosure can be inaugurated immediately after the purchase of taxes. The original owner has a right of redemption within one year, but he has to pay the total cost and plus the cost of any improvements made, plus heavy penalties. Sometimes these penalties run up as high as 25%. I will let you know more about this later in the week if I see any property that I think you would care to buy under this system.

Under separate cover you are going to get our last-three-month’s heartache. Look it over and tear it apart. It will be followed later by a live-animal number, and a parasitology issue. When we get all the specialties issued as units, we are going to put in the blurbs and call it a catalog. I call it a catalog now, but there seems to be some lack of a meaning of the minds among the gang down here as to the definition of "catalog." The rebels claim that it is a "price-list." Probably physiologists have their idea of what a catalog should be from Sears and Sawbucks and Monkey Ward.

Best of love to you both, and thanks again for looking after Johnny.

Yours very truly,

John F. Bass Jr.

JB:MF