

Valley Club of Montecito
Santa Barbara, California
March 21, 1947

Mr. John S. Thacher, Director
Dumbarton Oaks
3101 R Street
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Thacher:

About three weeks ago, a letter was sent to Mrs. Bliss saying that it did not seem physically possible for me to go on as consulting landscape gardener to Dumbarton Oaks. Whether this letter was awkwardly worded, or whether it came at a bad moment it is hard to tell, but in it I asked whether a letter should "officially" go to you. No answer has come, nor a reply from Miss Sweeney. A letter to her accompanied the revision of a part of the Dumbarton Oaks report which was asked to type and submit to Mrs. Bliss. Mrs. Bliss told me you had been very far from well, and in constant and considerable pain, so that your letter telling of a European five month leave of absence explains itself in none too agreeable a manner. Naturally I am distressed and grieved as we have become good friends in our work together and one does not want a friend to be ailing or suffering.

It is unnecessary to underline the reasons why the strain at Dumbarton Oaks is so great, as we all feel it, but the conflicting personalities, the complications, and the delays and manifold details on the gardening side are more than are now possible for me to carry. The actual physical walking around the place, (indispensable for a person who can conscientiously act as consultant) is out of the question for me. "Would it be agreeable to you and to Harvard for me to become emeritus or honorary, and stand with and behind Mr. Patterson and you, even if not on the spot."

It would not be fair to Mr. Patterson not to help him in every way, and it would not be fair to Mr. and Mrs. Bliss and you not to continue to do all I can, but my physical presence does not seem possible, at least for the moment. Mrs. Bliss was told that the Dumbarton Oaks notes would be slowly carried forward, but writing does not come easily to me, and has to be taken in small doses. "It will be for you to think the question over and whether you prefer a clean break with the past, or what arrangements you would think wise from the point of view of Harvard and the two Blisses."

You do not need to be told that a complete severance of the many years of happy association with D.O. is difficult. Mr. and Mrs. Bliss have given me the chance, and with it, the affection and confidence which have made the work the most deeply felt and the best of a fifty year practice.

It is impossible to emphasize too heavily the feeling that a "Miss Sweeney" is indispensable for Dumbarton Oaks. She should be well paid, given facilities to work and acknowledged as a vitally important member of the garden's educational staff. The garden side of Dumbarton Oaks deserves

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to be treated as a definitely educational project and not merely as a pretty place in which tourists are allowed to wander. There should be well kept records, a guide trained in horticulture and botany, and a small library or picture collection to illustrate the work on the grounds. The three "indispensables" seem to me the Director, the consulting landscape gardener, and the trained garden guide and record keeper. The actual gardening end of the place could be carried on with less training and ability than these three positions. Will you tell me what is in your mind?

Yours ever,

Beatrice Farnham
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