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~~SAN MARTIN, CALIFORNIA~~ Bar Harbor, Maine

June 28, 1941

Prof. Paul J. Sachs
Fogg Museum of Art
Harvard University
Cambridge, Mass.

Dear Mr. Sachs:

In a letter which is going today to Mr. Thacher and to Mrs. Bliss a tentative brief report on the Dumbarton Oaks grounds policy is being sent them for sharp criticism, suggestion, and much needed improvement. Will you give the sketch of the report your attention and see where I have omitted material questions and whether the questions we all have in mind seem to be covered.

We are hoping that either business or pleasure may bring you and Mrs. Sachs in our neighborhood this summer as we should like to show you our attempt at a Northern acid-soil garden.

With kind regards, I am,

Yours very sincerely,

Beatrix Farrand

REPORT SUBMITTED FOR CRITICISM AND SUGGESTION.

The splendid gift from the Hon. and Mrs. Robert Woods Bliss of Dumbarton Oaks house, collections, and grounds to Harvard University carries with it the need for a re-study of certain problems in grounds management. The transfer of ownership from an intimately personal control to a necessarily more impersonal but an enduring educational institution must alter the point of view from which the gardens are considered. The responsibility of keeping up the integral units of the design is fully realized and accepted by Harvard together with the recognition of an alteration in certain principles of maintenance. It is not necessary to emphasize that the first duty of an educational institution is to use its resources for the benefit of its students; and for them the teaching staff, library and collections are of paramount importance. At the same time the training of the eye to an understanding of outdoor beauty should be acknowledged as a vital part of the student's life at Dumbarton Oaks. The composition of the views from the windows at which they may study, the unconscious infiltration into their minds of daily familiarity with garden problems and their solution must be important.

It is hoped that the larger simple lines of the design may remain reasonably unchanged as none of them have been established without much thought. The entrance roads, wide lawns, flower terraces, Lovers Lane Pool, Green garden, and North vista all seemed to fit the landscape better than other features which were discussed and in some instances tried. There is no intention implied or latent that the design be kept unchanged, but the suggestion is made that alterations if considered be made only after careful study and with a reasonable hope of their fitting into an already established scheme. Therefore certain few principles should be taken into account.

One of the characteristics of the Dumbarton Oaks grounds is a pleasant sense of withdrawal from the nearby streets, together with the feeling of an intimate connection with all that a great city can offer. This quiet and seclusion should be preserved by care and re-planting of its boundaries, and as the students will mainly be in residence during the leafless months of the year evergreen plant material should make up the bulk of its boundary shields. For the same reason the plants immediately surrounding the house should be mainly evergreen. The open lawns to the south and southeast of the house were designed to give a sense of spaciousness and ease of scale and therefore these should be preserved and well kept up.

