

August 22, 1959

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Mrs. Robert Woods Bliss  
The Claridge Hotel  
London, England

Dear Mrs. Bliss,

Last week I think I made the first bit of real progress in the matter of the fountain at Meridian House. I found a man whom I think capable of doing a really good piece of work and doing it reasonably. We went over the design together and he is now going to work up the details and let me know what the approximate cast will be.

Following your first suggestion, our plan is for a lead container for planting; in plan---approximately the same size as the top of the bases, and curved to fit them; in height---about nine inches for the body plus about an inch and a half for its base; the cover---removeable, used in the winter months.

In spite of the fact that the central figures are probably of bronze, lead seems to me a better choice for the containers. Mr. Patten is not equipped to work in bronze---but even if he were I think I should choose lead.

We think of the containers made of sheet lead---perhaps in strips woven together---with cast decorations. These might be in bronze, but here again I think lead.

I went into the matter of making a design using a white marble shell as a bird bath. We would need to wait for Mr. Giannetti to be free to make a clay model and cast it in plaster---find someone who could carve marble---find the marble in the same tone of white as the rest of the fountain---spend myself a disproportionate amount of time on this in Washington---and find it could be finished months from now at great cost. And in the end, white marble is not very pretty, is it?

I also combed the New York shops hoping to find something that might just fit on those bases---no.

I am judging Mr. Patten's ability just from talking with him and seeing his workshop at Redding, Connecticut, and a few things he has done. I expect he is someone we are going to want to add to our list. I left photographs with him and feel pretty certain he would catch the spirit of the place.

I have delayed answering your cable expecting working sketches and estimates to arrive momentarily from Mr. Patten, who is involved in moving but assures me that he will send something in the next few days. In spite of all these difficulties it is the best solution I have been able to find.

Meanwhile I have an appointment with Mrs. Chanler's plumber to set the faun in place at the center next Wednesday. I think the height of the old base will be about right.

If this all sounds a bit disjointed, lay it to the brutally long siege of unbearable heat we are having, with no relief in sight.

When there is anything to report on the Tennis Court Parterre I will let you know. It is not going well, but I hope the visit to Washington next week will settle some things.

Sincerely yours,

