

January 20, 1952

Report on the status of the
NORTH VISTA RAIL---

Dear Mrs. Bliss,

A copy of the contract documents is enclosed---
dated December 7, 1951---and consisting of working drawings,
specifications and the agreement which I entered into for you
with the District Ornamental Iron Works---Mr. Philip Finelli.

This was one of five bids received:

- 1---Treitel-Gratz Co. Inc., New York-----\$ 730.
 - 2---Oscar Bach Studios, New York----- 2250.
 - 3---Acme Iron Works, Washington----- 870.
 - 4---A.F.Jorss Iron Works, Inc., Washington----- 2870.
 - 5---District Ornamental Iron Works, Washington----- 1558.
- Mr. Philip Finelli

and after careful consideration and comparison #5 seemed to me
the best choice. You will see by the enclosed agreement what the
conditions are.

For material I was able to get Swedish Charcoal Iron from the
Swedish-American Steel Corporation, New York and this has been
delivered to Mr. Finelli in Washington. This is the same material
that was used for the older ironwork at Dumbarton Oaks. I found
that A.F.Jorss had been ordering it recently from the same source
and checked up with him as to it's quality. He says it is as good
as it ever was and vastly superior in quality to the iron material
generally used today and that

it is not so mechanically regular in shape
is resistant to rust
lends itself to hand forging.

Mr. Finelli plans to start the rail by taking the iron for the
bottom rail to Dumbarton Oaks and bending it to the proper curve
right there on the wall. Either Mr. Steinbraker or I should be on
hand to see that this line is correct---and I have been leaving it
in Mr. Steinbraker's hands, hoping to save a trip to Washington and
knowing that he would be as accurate about it as I would. They have
tried several times and been held up by the weather---and will try
again tomorrow morning. If this attempt is not successful I had
better go to Washington and take the risk of laying out the line
for this indoors in order to get it started.

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The sheet of Specifications describes the finish recommended by the Swedish-American Steel Corporation for Swedish Charcoal Iron out of doors---an oil treatment darkened with lamp black but not painted. The upkeep involves going over it with an oiled cloth once a year---unskilled labor---and as it is a relatively small area of iron it seems worth while to experiment with this finish for the rail. If it is successful it may be a means of reducing maintenance cost on the ironwork generally.

Mr. Gianetti has made some plasticene models for the wheat motifs for the rail. Mr. Steinbraker will leave them in the Founders' Room on Monday, January 21st. If they meet with your approval he will send them to me. The Alexander Sculptural Service will cast them in bronze. They are shown on the full size of the scroll on the enclosed working drawings.

Since the contract was signed Mr. Finelli has found that he will not be allowed to buy either bronze or brass for the toprail---though he can use it if it is supplied by the owner. He says I would be allowed to buy it---and in that case the cost would be deducted from his contract price. That situation puzzles me a bit but tomorrow Mr. Wall, of Julius Blum, Inc. (who supplies toe bronze) is coming to explain it---and if it seems a reasonable thing to do I will buy it. If not, we can redesign the toprail for iron without too much loss I think. In any event we should have the wheat motifs cast in bronze without delay. Mr. Tatti (Alexander's Sculptural Service) says he will be allowed to use bronze for this purpose---and it is only necessary for him to account for the quantity used---which is small.

I had hoped to save you an account of all these tiring details----otherwise, what have you got me for?---but perhaps I need to tell you that things are not standing still.

Sincerely yours

Ernest M. Harvey