

January 7, 1954

Mrs. Robert Woods Bliss
1537 Twenty-eighth Street
Georgetown, Washington, D.C.

Dear Mrs. Bliss,

I hardly know where to start---there is so much to say.

ONE---The warmth that came with your greetings on Christmas evening! It sets me back on my heels when you pause in your busy day to do such a thoughtful thing. Thank you very much. I wish you every happiness.

TWO---THE GATES---every time I see them I get so excited about them I want to sit down and write you a tome. That man Mr. Freund is so adroit it is a pleasure to work with him. He does not go off on tangents but takes the drawing of what you want and interprets it in metal in the most pleasant way. We reached the half-way mark early in December and are now in the process of assembling. Thousands of little scrolls have been made---nice ones---the frame is ready to assemble---and the foliage is done except for the wheat, and that is well along. He has done a particularly good piece of work on the foliage---heavy gage bronze hammered into most graceful sweeps. I saw and approved the first samples of gold leaf on one of the large bronze leaves at the top corner of the gate. Mr. Freund is being lavish. It does not seem to him good to touch up just the highlights with gold and then carry on with paint---so he covers the whole surface of the bronze and then tones down from the highlights with burnt umber---deep brown. The color and quality of the gold is lovely, and as the toning down process can be carried to any degree---and as this finish can be expected to outlast the paint of the gate by many years---it seems to me very good.

But what pleases me most---the thing that gives me gray hairs until I see it taking shape---is that I think we have hit the right scale in the choice of iron sizes. I feel satisfied now that the gates will look substantial without being clumsy. Some of the cyphers have been partly assembled---good.

I do not suppose that you would feel that life was not full without a journey to Astoria---or that you could be persuaded to make one---but the week of January 18th will be a crucial one here---and that will be the moment when I wish with all my heart that we were making the gates right around the corner from you in Washington. Then the wheat will be done---and the cornucopias for the top---and we will set one gate up in the shop to be sure everything goes together. That will be the moment for many final decisions---and how I wish I could have my hand held---because you always take the very best I can do and make it so much better.

