

RUTH M. HAVEY · *Landscape Architect* ✻ TWENTY-FIVE FIFTH AVENUE · NEW YORK 3, N.Y.

THIS REQUIRES NO RESPONSE---NOT EVEN AN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT. IT IS TO PUT INTO YOUR RETICULE---AND BRING OUT SOME DAY WHEN YOU ARE MUSING ON DEVELOPMENTS AT DUMBARTON OAKS.

September 8, 1950  
" n 10 / 4

Mrs. Robert Woods Bliss  
Greenbrier Hotel  
White Sulphur Springs  
West Virginia

Dear Mrs. Bliss,

My "Retreat" over Labor Day at Dumbarton Oaks has been, I think, the most productive time I have ever spent on Dumbarton Oaks affairs. The chance to think out, with the ground in front of me, and the previous records of the Bar Harbor Files---particularly the early Berrall surveys---at my elbow---contributed to a much deeper understanding of our problems and their interrelation. I feel sure that when we give consideration to, for instance, the Arbor Terrace, the Melisande Steps, the Director's House, the Herbaceous Border Walls etc---the solution of these problems will advance in a much more direct line.

But the main line of inquiry has been---that this final solution we have come to on the North Vista shall be the final answer for all time, and the right one. Mr. Kearney and I staked the plan out roughly on the ground---the inner line of the console and rail---and with these stakes it is possible to stand back and visualize exactly what part of the present view we are enclosing and preserving. Standing at the North end it is all there. From the house we narrow it down to the vicinity of the two centralized trees. We could increase this view a little by omitting the six foot return at the end of the wall---but the advantage is very small and does not begin to counterbalance the disadvantages such a move would bring on.

I feel we have reached the very best solution we can get---proceeding on the premise that the East wall is there to stay---and we accept the fact that the wide view we now get from the house will be narrowed down and centralized on the two trees. The working drawings and specifications are going forward.

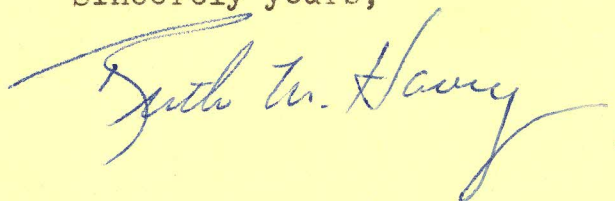
THE FOLLOWING CAN BE IGNORED IF YOU LIKE---it is brought on by your serious dissertation last Friday on the absolute necessity of not making another mistake on the North Vista---which brought me up short with the realization that in my heart of hearts I do not think it is the ultimate solution we could reach. For early this year when we were trying very hard to set up some basis whereby four people could work well together and arrive at a solution that would be acceptable to all---of the solutions that came to mind one seemed to me far better than any of the others. I presented it and everybody gave it polite consideration---you, perhaps, gave it a longer period of thought than the others. And when your decision was that we should narrow our study to the area enclosed by the East and West walls, I went along wholeheartedly with this decision---because I have confidence in your judgement and because I could not hope to grasp in a few months the conception you have built up over at least thirty years of intimate study and experimentation and creation at Dumbarton Oaks.

Given the premise that the side walls are to stay, I have no qualms about our present solution. I think that we have reached the end of our search here---and that it will be good---within the framework of the conditions we impose upon ourselves.

However, if you are not completely confident that the decision to retain the East and West walls was the wisest one---and that it the crux of the matter---then let us---you and I---explore a little along the lines I was trying to point out so inadequately last Sunday with you and Mr. Kearney---which would involve the removal of the East wall.

The Coolidge work is going forward. More of this later.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "F. M. Harvey". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "F" and a long, horizontal tail stroke.