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# FRIENDS OF THE PUBLIC GARDEN

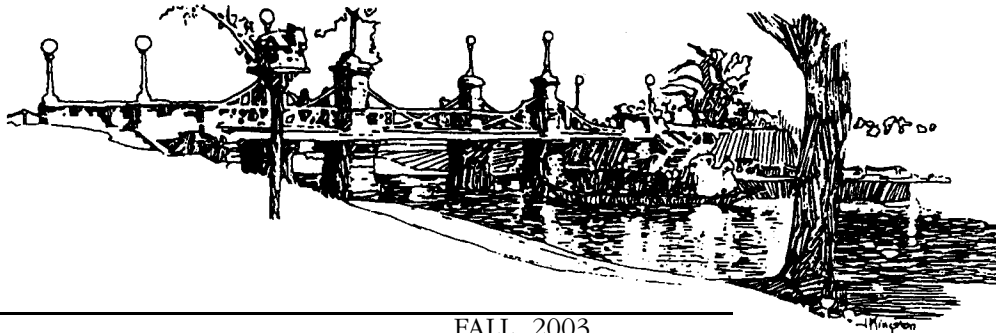
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**Boston Common**

**Public Garden**

**Commonwealth Avenue Mall**

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FALL, 2003

NO. 44

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As noted last year, our parks have been subject always to financial tides. Recent years have been, perhaps, as good as it gets. Now we are in ebbing times with no sea change yet in sight. For the Parks Department this means serious cuts in services and personnel, a moratorium on many capital improvements, and threatened elimination of the Park Rangers. The greatest danger, of course, is to aspects of park care that cannot be put aside. If you have ever neglected a garden even for a month, you know that the work of years can quickly slip away. Nature, alas, does not wait for better days.

We are not, however, without strengths. The Parks Department is making every effort to hold the line. Mayor Menino, supportive as fiscal constraints permit, has given notice that he will not abandon the parks. And once again the Friends will do all possible to fill gaps and continue essential programs. Both the public and private sectors are today better equipped than before to cope with financial pinch. Where once there was neither will nor means, there is now determination to keep the gains we have all worked so hard to achieve.

Downturns remind us, nonetheless, that to see our parks flourish, whatever the level of city support, we must contribute in substantial manner to their keeping. This is the lesson of Central Park, once in dire straits, now a pride of the city. Only by our hands can we bring similar results to the Common, Garden, and Mall.

This reality borne in mind, we can report better news on the whole than conditions might lead us to expect.

## TREE CARE

This year, as last, much of our effort and wherewithal has gone to tree care in all three parks. Ideally, we should apply injections for Dutch Elm Disease to all elms in a park, often twice, a program of exceptional cost. As ever, we have done all we can, in the Common less than we would wish though much assisted by Beacon Hill Elms, in the Garden reasonably well with support of the Heritage Condominium Trust, and in the Mall better still thanks in part to the gift of Ermenegildo Zegna. Another month will tell whether we can match last year's record of a single casualty, but we have clearly slowed to a crawl the ravages of this still incurable disease.

On the Common and Mall, we have begun a fertilization program for elms in special need, and in each park



*Ginkgo on the Common in Honor of Eugenie Beal.*

have continued the sanitary and structural pruning of trees, young and old. Trees other than elms also need treatment for various ills; some die without notice; others suffer the indignities of public life, especially from lawnmowers. Yet in all tree work we are doubly fortunate in the supportive efforts of the Parks Department tree division and the wise and indispensable guidance of Henry Davis, a man whose generosity of time and knowledge seems infinite.

Thinking ahead, we hope to set out in each park disease-resistant elms, never in such numbers or of such beauty as their predecessors but in some measure of replacement. Elms at our nursery under care of the Massachusetts Horticultural Society in Wellesley should be ready for re-planting in 2004 and thereafter. Indeed, one tree for the Garden is already bespoken.

Encouraging, thus, is our ability to accomplish more each year in preserving the great trees of these parks. Worrisome is our failure still in doing all that is needed. It is very much a work in progress with increasing pressure to accelerate our pace and contribution.

## THE COMMON

For all its burdens, the Common has enjoyed a benefiting year. The Parks Department has done much with limited resources, especially in turf care, tree planting, and litter control. Other angels, too, were present. The Massachusetts Convention Authority completed the repaving of the Beacon Street Mall along with new curbing and benches, the fencing along Charles Street, and the restored entrance at Boylston and Charles. This was a prodigious contribution to the Common, wholly unfore-



*Creating a Replica of the Ancient Fishweir. Photo: courtesy of Ross Miller.*

seen and owing largely to the hand of Gene Sullivan, former head of the Under Common Garage. The Common has had few better friends.

If not yet Tivoli Gardens, the Common is providing an impressive amount of entertainment. The Commonwealth Shakespeare Company, now an annual fixture, offered in July-August a handsome production of *Macbeth*. Last



*Bronze Frog for the Playground and Frog Pond. Photo: Eugenie Beal*

September the Lyric Opera's *Carmen* drew some 30,000 people on two nights. And still another attraction has been the Boston Landmark's Orchestra, which this summer included a performance of Daniel Pinkham's musical narrative of Robert McCloskey's *Make Way for Ducklings*. The Common is always host as well to numerous exhibitions. One of special interest this summer was the re-creation of an

American fishweir found some years ago during a subway excavation. An educational project directed by Ross Miller and joined by archeologists, schools, and members of the Wamponaug Nation, it offered fascinating evidence of life at the Common's edge 5,000 years before the coming of Europeans. If the sponsoring group can obtain funding, the fishweir could become an annual project. Of more permanent nature is the Tadpole Playground opened last year and embellished this June. The munificent gift of the Highland Street Connection, designed by Lynn Wolff Associates, it has been an oasis for children from the first day. At its side the Frog Pond remains a premier attraction, drawing 100,000 skaters in the winter and ever more children in the summer. Under the care of Tom Kershaw and facility director Duncan Finch, the program affords year-round public pleasure with easy accommodation to its surroundings. The only cloud here is the need still for endowment to assure the facility's future and to underwrite programs for inner city children.

And finally on the activity side, we are giving thought to the inclusion of a seasonal carousel. We would welcome your views on such an addition and word, of course, of potential sponsors.

Among the trees set out by the City and Friends were two of special note. A red oak at the Charles-Beacon entrance was a gift of the Greenspace Alliance in honor of Linda Cox, co-founder of the Esplanade Association. Near the corner of Park and Tremont now stands a ginkgo tree given by the Boston Natural Areas Network as part of its tribute in April to Eugenie Beal.

Thus, good things have happened, for which many people, public and private, deserve our thanks. But as mentioned every year, no report on the Common is reflective without note of the continuing imbalance of use and care. Some uses are welcome, some part of the Common's historic function, some of dubious value, but the sheer number of events and the stress they impose make it all but impossible for the Parks Department, as presently funded, to provide adequate maintenance. Lie down anywhere and see what has happened to the soil. Look at the trees, some of which have never been pruned. Note the fountain, defunct again, or the damage to fencing, benches, and other items. For all the benefits and improvements, we have far to go before the Common matches in care its increasing popularity.

#### PUBLIC GARDEN

The Garden, too, has its problems but enjoyed once again a radiant spring. The flowering trees, in the cool and rainy weather, were inspiring, the tulips never more colorful, and the lawns lush and green where blades are seldom seen. In mid-April the Swan Boats, ever the Garden's heart and soul, began their 126th season. As promised last year, the Parks Department and Friends, joined by the Esplanade Association, have made efforts to reduce the goose population. Here as elsewhere the project includes use of a trained border collie that scares but doesn't harm the intruders. The operation has been moderately effective with the number of geese down, but the inclination of people to feed them, signs notwithstanding, all but assures



*The Swan Boats, 126th year.*

their return. Hence, we have gains but as yet no victory.

As to problems, many arose from a long, hard winter. Two beeches and a tulip tree succumbed, the yews along the main paths have multiple afflictions, the irrigation system and fountains required an extra month and heavy expense to repair. Most distressing, perhaps, was the loss of more than 100 roses, enough to discourage the most devoted volunteers. The Rose Brigade, however, responded in heroic fashion, planting new specimens, nurturing the survivors, and installing a temporary irrigation line. By July the beds were looking much better and should continue to improve this year and next. For these saving efforts we owe heartfelt thanks to the Brigade's dauntless leader, China Altman, and to loyal assistants Sally Noteware, Jack King, Daniel Ryan, Mila Vaskov, Brookes McDonald, Jane McKinnell, Melissa Scher, and Nancy Murphy. This fall China, representing the Brigade, will be honored by the Young Friends at their annual soiree, and in November she will receive an award from the Greenspace Alliance at its Faces of Green Space Celebration. No person and group are more deserving of any prize they care to accept.

The Horticultural Committee, chaired by Westy Lovejoy, set out in the spring three dogwoods, one a gift of the Beacon Hill Garden Club in memory of



*Unheeded Admonition, Public Garden.*

Georgia O'Neil Welch. Also planted were two willows, one donated by Richard and Nonnie Burnes, the other by Nathan Lloyd Frank and Krystal van Speidel honoring Polish-American amity.

Donors of benches included Abner and Elizabeth Kurtin; Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth J. Novack in honor of their son Jeffrey; Tom, Lisa Dexter, and Constance Blumenthal in honor of Wendy Shattuck; Maureen H. Morse and siblings in memory of their parents, Albert Joseph and Esther Rita White; and friends at Shreve, Crump & Low in memory of Barrie Drummond Birks.

A new category of gifts this year was the endowment of flower beds. Two donors were Thomas Kershaw, whose



*Mrs. Mallard, Ever a Center of Attention.*

generosity knows no end, and a host of friends in memory of Luci Daley Vincent, whose husband Steve selected the bed welcoming visitors at the Charles-Beacon entrance. Especially fitting was the funding of a tulip bed by descendants of Horace Gray, founder of the Public Garden. First imported and set out by Mr. Gray, tulips have been a springtime feature of the Garden for 165 years.

In prospect is a memorial to those who died in the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. As a rule we do not view the Garden as a suitable place for memorials or additional sculpture. Its purpose and appeal differ from those of other parks. In this instance, which we trust is unique, we are working with the sponsors, Parks Department, and designer to create a respectful space that will blend easily into the Garden, even perhaps enhance it. Much remains to do and discuss, but good will and cooperation continue on all sides.

The ongoing saga of George Washington could be ending this fall with landscape work, repointing, and replacement of lost elements, a far less invasive solution than envisaged last year. Planned restoration of the Ether fountain, many pathways, and drainage systems still awaits the freeing of city funds. The White Memorial, too, lies in waiting for structural improvements, activation of the fountain, and with Friends support a new lighting arrangement. In such instances, delays are always discouraging but seldom fatal. In time we shall succeed.



*Glover Monument, Commonwealth Avenue Mall, in Holiday Glow.  
Photo: Elena Houghton.*

**COMMONWEALTH AVENUE MALL**  
Although its gains are tentative, the Mall looks better every year. Despite shade and foot traffic, the grass is holding well, a credit to the Parks Department and this year perhaps to Mother Nature. In addition to its focus on tree care, the Commonwealth Avenue Mall Committee was active on numerous fronts. Co-chair Margaret Pokorny reports the planting of trees given by the Schmid, Erhardt, Jones, Hardenburgh, Hayes, Griffith, and Murphy families plus two more from friends in honor of Linda Rackley and last fall from the Greenspace Alliance in honor of Jeryl Oristaglio (companion to that on the Common for Linda Cox). The Committee also replaced several trees, mostly sweet gums, undone by the harsh winter.



*Endangered Species Park Rangers.  
Photo: Elena Houghton*

With the remarkable response to the memorial tree program, the Mall is now almost full. Several difficult locations with fireplugs, utilities, etc. remain, and trees, of course, will be lost from time to time. But the planting of some 150 trees in the last decade has largely restored the Mall to its historic design.

The program for new benches has been similarly successful. Six benches installed this spring were gifts of the Perry,

Zabriskie, Jaye, Guadagno, and Schleiman families and of numerous friends in honor of Susan Huber. Only 23 bench locations remain, affording us good hope of completing the work within the next few years.

Monuments, too, received attention. Rooftop lighting of the Morison statue was restored through the generosity of the St. Botolph Club and residents of 200-202 Commonwealth. Paving was set by the monument to prevent rutting from trucks, and this fall will see new plantings and replacement of elements lost from its stone base. Thanks to a gift from Peggy Engel, some landscape work will also be done around the Glover Monument. And in October will appear in the Fairfield-Gloucester block the long-awaited Women's Memorial with figures of Abigail Adams, Phillis Wheatley, and Lucy Stone.

These are good tidings, but continued progress, even holding the line, will require substantial funding. Budget cuts have already limited work on grass and irrigation, tree care will depend on new sources of support, and the restoration and lighting of sculpture still awaits angelic attention. What is certain, in all events, is our debt to those who have brought the Mall so far, to Stella Trafford, forever the Mall's saviour and still a strong and watchful presence; to Margaret Pokorny, whose stewardship and skills are matched only by her selflessness; and as both leaders would insist, to Susan Juretschke, in whose care innumerable trees have grown and flourished. This year we expect to join with the Neighborhood Association of the Back Bay in putting the Mall Committee on a more formal basis with no change in purpose but clearer lines of responsibility and appointed membership.

#### ANNUAL MEETING

For many years we have held our Annual Meeting at the First & Second Church, an ideal and convenient site. From the start, the Rev. Rhys Williams extended to us the warmest possible welcome. With his passing this summer we have lost a good friend of great and selfless service to his community. We are fortunate and grateful that his successor, the Rev. Stephen Kendrick, and members of his staff have continued to tolerate our presence.

At this year's meeting, we turned to family for our speaker in asking Margaret Pokorny to describe the history and current status of the Commonwealth Avenue Mall. She gave as always a superb presentation and answered more questions than members have ever asked.

On the business side, members elected as directors for terms of three years are Eugenie Beal, Susan F. Child, Brian DeLorey, Mason J.O. Klinck, Giles W. McNamee, Patricia Rodgers, and Vincent J. Ryan.



*Mayor Menino with Mr. and Mrs. Kevin Ahearn, Green & White Bash. Photo: Roger Farrington*

#### FESTIVITIES

The Young Friends gave us in September a scintillating start with their annual Swing into Fall Gala at the Four Seasons Hotel. Honoree of the occasion was Nina Meyer, founder of the Historic Neighborhoods Foundation, which along with many educational programs sponsors the ever more popular Duckling Day. As leader of the Foundation, Mrs. Meyer has managed in artful ways to impart in every neighborhood of the city a new interest in its history and architecture.

For their magical touch, we were beholden again to co-chairs Karyn Lamb and Maud Cabot, a sterling committee, Thomas Gurtner, General Manager, and the staff of the Four Seasons, to Cartier, Inc., our most generous sponsor, and to many donors of items for event and auction. We had the double pleasure, indeed, of a party enjoyed as always by participants and a silent auction of great benefit to the Friends. This year's gala, chaired by Courtney Forrester and Alison Fiscoeder will take place at the Four Seasons on October 3.

The Return of the Swans was delightful as ever with a grand parade, entertainment for children, and ceremonial release by Mayor Menino. A children's lunch followed at the Four Seasons surpassing holiday dinner at Hogwarts. The day's success stemmed from a happy inter-working of the Friends committee chaired by Amy McNamee, members of the Parks Department led by Mary Hines, and

Thomas Gurtner and his staff. Not content with being a genial and generous host, Mr. Gurtner was spotted by the writer dispensing cookies in the Garden.

The Green & White Bash on May 30, a combination of two previous events, included cocktails given by the Ritz-Carlton, a Chanel fashion show on Commonwealth Avenue, dinner under tents on the Mall, a lively auction, and the Spirit of Growth award to Linda Cox and Jeryl Oristaglio for their extraordinary leadership of the Esplanade Association.

Problems in planning arose almost daily, the worst being a required change in venue from Newbury Street to the Mall, contravening our own policy and that of the NABB, causing neighborhood concern, and costing us



*Linda Cox and Jeryl Oristaglio, Winners of Spirit of Growth Award, Green & White Bash. Photo: Roger Farrington*

money intended for better purpose. But at the eleventh hour we had to proceed and, with community forbearance, came and went with minimal damage and disturbance. We even cleaned the street.

That the evening, despite all difficulties, proved a shining occasion was owing to the work and dedication of its dynamic chair Anna Cheshire Levitan and her fine committee, the generous participation of the Ritz-Carlton and Chanel, Inc., the guiding hand of Susan Doll, the surpassing arrangements of Rafanelli Associates, and the leadership support of Howard and Michele Kessler. Such help and that of many others enabled us to raise funds in good cause.

As noted, budget estimates called for elimination of the Park Rangers, who have served a critical role in protecting the parks from misuse, accommodating visitors, and



*Park Ranger. Photo: Elena Houghton*

affording to everyone a sense of security. When we joined with others in founding (and initially funding) the Rangers, we thought of them as vital to the welfare of our parks, especially the Public Garden and Arboretum. Fifteen years later we feel the same way.

Accordingly, at their meeting in April the

Directors approved an unprecedented grant of \$100,000 for the Ranger program with the proviso that it be matched by the city dollar for dollar. Other groups joined in pledges of support, and in June Mayor Menino announced the retention of the Rangers, reduced in number but with operation intact and their coverage of parks continued. With the agreement, indeed urging, of the Green & White Committee, we allocated proceeds of the evening toward fulfillment of the grant and, through individual auction bids, added a further \$35,000. Those attending the party can feel assured, therefore, that their contributions in a time of dire need have brought direct and saving benefits to our three parks.

#### REMEMBRANCE

In the passing this summer of Robert McCloskey, the Garden lost its greatest spokesman. It is hard to believe that he wrote *Make Way for Ducklings* in 1942 after witnessing a scene much like his story. He was a retiring person, happier writing than speaking, but ever gracious and accommodating to groups concerned with the Garden he had made so familiar to children everywhere. He lives always in the immutable charm of his tale and in the evocative sculpture of Nancy Schön, a loadstar for children every day of the year.

Another friend lost was William Morris Hunt. Every few years from 1975 to 1986, we conducted in the Garden a Victorian Promenade with participants in period costume. In these events, Bill Hunt played a pivotal role, leading the parade and organizing tableaux on the Swan Boats, one especially recalled of Swan Lake by the Boston

Ballet that held a thousand onlookers in absolute silence. An historian of the Boston theater non pareil, Bill loved the dramatic, and on these occasions brought it in memorable fashion to the Garden.

#### LOVE IN BLOOM

We speak often of our parks as sources of public pleasure. They are also, it seems, inspirations of matrimony. The Holmes Path on the Common, once the Long Path, is named for Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr., in remembrance of his Autocrat who, walking with his intended, asked if she would take the "Long Path" with him. Many proposals, perhaps less metaphorical, are made each year on the Swan Boats; last summer a young man took a bloom proffered by the Rose Brigade to propose then and there to his companion; and this year a man sought to adopt a bench where he had finally put the question and been accepted. Weddings are frequent in the Garden, one a few years ago on New Year's Eve at twenty degrees. And how many meetings of dog owners on the Common have led to romance one can only surmise. Thus, you should know when assisting the Friends that Cupid as well as the IRS is at your side.

#### ALL IN THE FAMILY

A lesson soon learned in park affairs is the interplay of interests across the city. Budgets and city services link all park groups in common cause. For this reason, we have served from its founding on the Greenspace Alliance, a joining of some sixty organizations citywide, and have close ties with fellow advocates from Columbus to Franklin Park including neighbors Copley Square and the Esplanade. We are members, too, of the Boston Preservation Alliance, an invaluable force in protecting the city's historic fabric.

Of equal impact are projects of construction and transportation. Shadows are a constant threat, some from surprising distance, and changes in traffic patterns, lighting, bus routes, and the like all affect the welfare of these central spaces. We cut our civic teeth as part of the Park Plaza Civic Advisory Committee, still active and contentious in its 30th year. While many concede that we were right on Park Plaza in 1973, battle lines are much the same in 2003. Fortunately, the two closest projects, the dormitory for Emerson College on Boylston Street and the condominiums in Park Plaza, are moving ahead in benign fashion.

Our longest tie may be to the subway system with its history of good and bad effects. This year, as example, we are pleased by the decision of the MBTA to construct the handicapped entrance to the Arlington Street Station some distance from the Garden, long a matter of concern. We worry now over the impact on the Common of the proposed Silver Line at Boylston and Tremont Streets.

Dealing with these and other problems stemming from a subway beneath a park, we often forget their origin in efforts of those protecting the Common including a formidable army of women. By 1892 traffic (horse-drawn) had grown so tangled on Tremont and Boylston Streets that the City and State decided to take a portion of the



*William Morris Hunt Leading the Victorian Promenade with Smoki Bacon and Stella Trafford. Photo: Dana Bisbee.*

Common for trolley tracks. Although many voiced opposition to the plan, all seemed lost until February 9, 1893. As reported in the *Boston Advertiser* the next day, “The women of Boston entered their protest against the surrender of Boston Common for purposes other than those which it was intended yesterday morning at the state house, and they did so with vigor....”

“Two days ago the women of Boston awoke to the realization that the proposed rapid transit schemes comprehended taking a part of the Common, and since then over 1500 of them have signed a remonstrance. Mrs. Julia Ward Howe’s name heads this list, and it is followed by that of Mrs. Mary Hemenway. Then comes an array of signatures such as was probably never before presented to the legislature in behalf of any object....And this is what the women said: ‘We hold that the trust committed to us must not be betrayed, that the silent but powerful plea of the poor...must, for humanity’s sake, be regarded....’”

“The green room was packed full. All sorts and conditions of women were there, most of them, however, apparently of the well-to-do classes....Chairman Kitteridge opened the proceedings by explaining the different schemes proposed....The women were all expectant and did not hesitate to make known their feelings. ‘This common is the people’s and you cannot touch it,’ said Miss Minna Smith. ‘The honor of old Boston is nailed to the old elms of Boston Common....’ The hearing broke up with considerable acrimony.”

One can only imagine the effect of this onslaught on

the all-male legislature. Nothing would ever be quite the same, neither the proposals, which soon died, nor the role of women in the city’s public life. Support grew for a tunnel as a compromise solution, and in 1897 America’s first subway, Park to Arlington, opened with great fanfare. Everyone considered it a marvel of modernity. The problems were for a later day.

#### IN APPRECIATION

A year after the death of Justine Liff, it is still hard for everyone — groups like the Friends, members of the Parks Department, the Mayor himself — to grapple with her loss. Still, we go on as we must, with the tasks before us, many of which she set in motion. In this difficult stretch, two people in particular have held our course. One is Mary Hines, Director of Public Relations for the Parks Department who, despite illness of her own, has reached out with sensitivity and skill to constituents throughout the city. A second is Antonia Pollak, the Acting Commissioner. To replace Justine Liff, to add the burden of Commissioner to that of Director of Environment, to face budget cuts and loss of personnel would seem a mission impossible. But she has proven a steady and experienced hand — dedicated, caring, fair, and effective. All of us involved have been sustained by her presence.

Our gratitude extends as well to many other members of the Department who do so much with so little to keep our parks intact. For one man especially we have much nostalgia. Last fall David Hynes retired after 35 years of

service to the Public Garden. Although we gave him a farewell reception at the Hampshire House and have dedicated a bench in his honor, no gifts can ever requite the care and devotion he accorded the Garden almost every day starting at 5:00 a.m. We pay homage also to Roy Blomquist and the staff of the greenhouses for making the Garden, and parts of the Common as well, exceptional places of beauty and appeal. Each summer we bask in their achievements.

#### FRIENDS

Thanks to Karin Dumbaugh and Andrew Cabot, our website ([friendsofthepublicgarden.org](http://friendsofthepublicgarden.org)) is now providing information on the three parks, membership, and our various offerings. Available still are the Public Garden book, notecards with historic scenes of each park, and the Victorian paper dolls created by Catherine Zimmerman and prepared, like the cards, by Anne Swanson. We remind you as well that anyone interested in adopting a bench (\$4,000) or tree (\$1,300) on the Commonwealth Avenue Mall may write to us at 51 Beacon Street, Boston 02108 or call Margaret Pokorny at 617-536-2920. For the Garden, a few opportunities also occur each year for tree or bench at similar prices, plus the possibility of adopting existing benches (\$1,000) or flower beds (\$5,000).

A wonderful, perhaps unique, aspect of the Friends has been your support over the years despite slow deposits, little or no thanks, and other frailties of a cottage industry. You have judged us, happily, by accomplishment before accounting and with assurance that help has always gone,

so far as possible, to the purposes intended. As we move toward a more structured state with office and assistance, our efficiency should improve and our future grow more secure. Much will depend naturally on the success of our capital campaign now in what is called the "quiet stage." Besides administrative help we will be seeking funds for tree and sculpture care, endowment of the Frog Pond, and a number of specific projects. More information will be forthcoming early in 2004.

Here and now this letter carries our warmest thanks to all of you, many in states across the country, even abroad, who have helped us to meet the challenges of a pinching time. Describing historic threats to the park, Mark A. DeWolfe Howe noted in 1911 that "Whenever the Common cried out to be saved, there was an army ready to save it." In 2003 you are that army and whatever problems may face our three parks, we know they rest in strong and protective hands.

Henry Lee



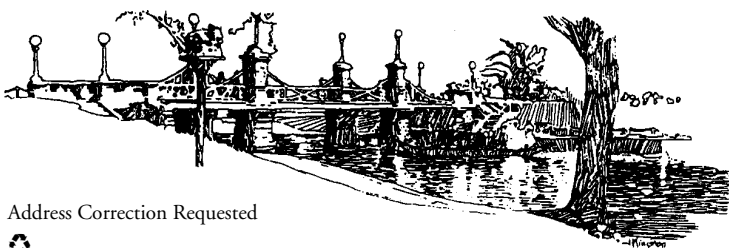
*The Writer and Young Friend Inspecting the Garden. Photo: Patricia Rodgers*

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## Friends of The Public Garden

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