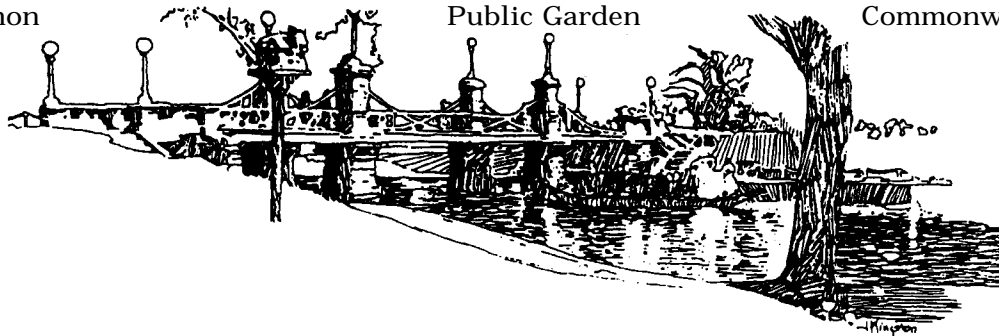

FRIENDS OF THE PUBLIC GARDEN

Boston Common

Public Garden

Commonwealth Avenue Mall



FALL, 2004

NO. 45

This letter carries each year a message so similar to its predecessors that we only hope you have short memories. Such repetition reflects, nonetheless, an all but timeless continuity. A report for 1880 would describe the same balance of gain and retreat, the same concerns over tree care, funding, and encroachment. This reminds us not simply that problems persist, but that each generation must work anew to preserve and protect these precious spaces, and never more than at present.

We count our blessings in having in recent years a well-managed Parks Department, now led by Antonia Pollak, and an administration led by Mayor Menino, of many caring and able people, elected and appointed. Such conditions are not commonplace in our history or noted in flattery. In a time of economic pinch, they are a saving grace. But we know as well that public funding in ebb or flow is insufficient. For the Common, Garden, and Mall, it is private support that now as ever makes a critical difference. We cannot do as yet, Friends and Parks Department together, all that is needed, but owing to helping hands, this year more generous than ever, we can hold the gains achieved and look forward to brighter days ahead.

TREES

The great treasures of these parks are, now as ever, their mature trees. And like all treasures they are difficult and costly to keep. This year, as before, we have pruned many trees, injected elms for Dutch Elm Disease, tested and treated others. In all we have spent over \$100,000. The Parks Department has done additional work especially in prompt removal of dead and diseased trees and shrubs. At this writing, we have lost three trees to D.E.D. in the Garden and Common, none on the Mall below Massachusetts Avenue. Any casualties are worrisome owing to possible spread of disease by root graft, but it is clear that the program of injections has extended the life of countless trees that would otherwise be lost. The record is, in fact, far better than we expected, and owes much to Henry Davis, our wise advisor, Greg Mossman, City Tree Warden, and to assistance from Beacon Hill Elms, the Heritage Condominium Trust, and many individuals.

All this is encouraging but not good enough. We must do more in pruning, injections, fertilization, and aeration, perhaps three times the present level. Trees die each year



Elms for the Commonwealth Avenue Mall

from soil conditions, treatable diseases, and general neglect. Such need is one reason for making tree care an important part of our capital campaign. It is cause as well for appeal each December for your help. Trees, as we often say, do not understand economics. They need attention every year, or the game is lost.

This in mind, we note that many people have contributed generously to projects on the Common or to seasonal tree lighting on the Commonwealth Avenue Mall, each providing much pleasure to us all. We appreciate such efforts, but our concern rises at the City's reluctance to remove decorations in time for needed pruning or at putting embellishment before care of the trees themselves. Without the trees both Mall and Common would be bereft, and at holiday time much darker.

All is not preventive medicine. As reported elsewhere, we continue to plant in each park. This year we have drawn for the first time on our nursery of disease-resistant elms at the Massachusetts Horticultural Society in Wellesley. In the fall, we set out two elms in the Garden, and in May six on the Mall and one each in the Common and Garden, all with many thanks to the Society for its care and to Bartlett Tree Co., which moved and planted the trees without charge.



Commonwealth Avenue Mall Committee; photo: Fred Mauet

COMMONWEALTH AVENUE MALL
 Formed by Stella Trafford in the 1960s, the Commonwealth Avenue Mall Committee has long been a joint endeavor of the Friends and Neighborhood Association of the Back Bay (NABB). Last fall both organizations approved a reorganization of the Committee with formal appointments, terms, and duties. For this important step, we owe special thanks to Fred Mauet, who drafted the agreement and guided its passage. Current members are Margaret Pokorny (Chair), Stella Trafford (Hon. Chair), Kevin J. Ahearn, Francie Cramb, Michael Forrester, Stephen Kunian, Jeryl Oristaglio, Patricia Quinn, Jane Roy, and Patricia Ann Sullivan. The Committee will meet on a regular basis to develop policy recommendations and set priorities for expenditure of funds. As before, the Friends will be the primary agent of support in matters of care and maintenance, the NABB the principal advisor to the City on issues relating to use of the Mall.

The Committee's first meeting in new guise was attended by Parks Commissioner Antonia Pollak and Manager



Dedication of dogwood in memory of Jane Lauro. Public Garden

of the Parkman Fund, Angela Parker. Strong lines of communication were initiated and several long-range plans for the Mall discussed. Approval was given to removal of the damaged fencing around the Hereford block and the temporary installation of picket fences at several cross streets.

Items included in our capital campaign are completion of the ornamental fencing at Hereford and Gloucester, plus the lighting, restoration, and further endowment of monuments. The Parks Department has continued, with some support on our part, to care for the irrigation system and turf, while hope springs eternal for capital funds to repave the paths and perhaps in time install a new system of lights.

As noted, the Committee pruned trees to the extent possible and twice injected elms for Dutch Elm Disease, a program of signal success. With the end of Zegna's four-year commitment of support, continued treatment and help for other trees, many in poor condition, must now depend on our finding new sources of assistance.

Drawing on our nursery, we set out six new elms on the Mall, the gifts of Michael McGovern; Marjorie Smith in memory of her brother, Jim Smith; Cheryl Cummer and Jack Eyle; Maura Connolly and Beth Dickerson in celebration of their children; Robert Murphy; and Sarah McClean in memory of her father, Charles McClean. Three benches came from Gerald Robbins in memory of Frank Mackie, Susan Rockefeller in honor of her mother, and Lee Schorr with others in memory of Richard Harmon. Committee chair, Margaret Pokorny, reports that bench locations are still available in some blocks, which she hopes to fill within the next two years.

Improvements are also completed or planned for a number of monuments. New plantings now accompany the Sarmiento statue, more paving was added at the Glover to protect its planting from maintenance vehicles, the Garrison will be cleaned in fall or spring, the Hamilton is re-lighted, and the Morison is re-lighted and soon to receive new plantings. And as further dividend, Margaret Pokorny has prepared a brochure "Commonwealth Avenue Mall, A Walking Tour," a fine companion to those for the Common and Garden and available through the Friends or directly from Mrs. Pokorny at 384 Marlborough Street, Boston, MA 02115 (CommAveMall@verizon.net).

PUBLIC GARDEN

In a cold and snowless January, the Garden lost a great number of shrubs and half a dozen trees. Gone as well are five young willows caught in an earlier freeze and succumbing, as trees often do, a year later. Working with the Parks Department, we have begun, as funds allow, to replace shrubbery along the four edges and at several entrances. The Horticultural Committee, headed by Westy Lovejoy, has also replaced several trees, and behind the White Memorial, a troublesome site, has tried again with ten yews (*Taxus cuspidata*). The Committee set out last fall two elms from our nursery, gifts of Sean McGrath and friends of John Butler, and this spring an apple tree (*Malus 'David Wyman'*) given and adopted by the Learning Project School, a golden-rain (*Koelreuteria pan-*



9/11 Memorial. Public Garden



Tending the roses

iculata) given by Peter Nessen, and a dogwood (*Corpus 'Stellar pink'*) from her friends in memory of Jane Lauro. A bright spot has been the rose beds, where we lost some hundred plants in 2003. This year with more careful mulching and other ministrations, casualties were few. The Rose Brigade in concert with the greenhouse staff replanted forty or so specimens, with many more to come next spring, and is once again providing

the beds with tender, loving care. To the volunteers who give their time each week to this prickly task we are ever indebted. Their leader, China Altman, honored last fall by the Young Friends and Boston Green Space Alliance, severely injured her shoulder in the off season. To our great relief, however, she returned from spring training ready for command. Without her the roses might have refused to bloom.

The 9/11 Memorial was completed in July. We had concerns for its impact on the Garden, but in the hands of designer Victor Walker and a sensitive committee, it has proven a quiet embellishment of plantings, sod, path, benches, and a modest but affecting memorial wall.

Our proudest boasts are always the flower beds, now in summer glory, and the Swan Boats, the great draw and feature of the Garden. All who visit this park know that spring comes to Boston when the Swan Boats return and the first tulip blooms. To Roy Blomquist and the staff of the greenhouses and to the Paget Family, owners and operators of the Swan Boats since 1877, we owe the Garden's principal sources of public pleasure.

The Parks Department, with Friends support, has increased dog control of the geese, so far with good results. So long as people feed them, the geese will remain but perhaps in diminished numbers. The swans returned in May with usual ceremony and, as all the world knows, one began soon to lay eggs. Surrounded by a fence and guarded by many male ducks, the would-be mother tended her nest for six weeks. In the end she and her admirers realized that maternity was not to be. The governor has not spoken on this matter, and the writer is too ignorant to comment further.

Capital funds for repair of the paths and revival of the Ether Fountain, long ago approved, are still on hold. The decorative fencing likewise awaits better days. But some gains have occurred. The light standards, flag pole, and bridge were painted, peripheral fence repaired, and plans advanced for lighting the Washington and White Monuments. This year also we installed two benches, the gifts of Shari Loessberg and of Michael C. Stone in memory of John C. Jenkins, and arranged the adoption of three others by Kevin and Karyn Lamb, Alicia Towns Franken and Michael Franken, and Nancy M. Daly in memory of Thomas S. Mairs.

In all that we undertake in the Garden, we are beholden to countless people including our Horticultural Committee, Rose Brigade, Garden staff headed by Richard (Sammy) Sameski, the Heritage Condominium Trust, providers of vital support, the Park Rangers, who here as in the Common are essential guardians and guides, and to all whose contributions of time and effort have helped to keep this precious holding.

Words of thanks go as well to the students of the Dorchester Youth Academy, who assisted for much of the summer in maintenance of the flowerbeds and greenhouses. With such help, the Garden, despite its reduced staff and winter woes, is holding up pretty well. Problems are ever present, but on a summer's day it is still a place of special charm and beauty.

THE COMMON

For the Common the good news and bad are tied as always to its activities. Splendid attractions this year have included the Commonwealth Shakespeare Company's presentation of "Much Ado About Nothing," the Boston Landmarks Orchestra's free concerts, the spectacular show at First Night, and the Parks Department's Emerald Necklace Ball. Some 100,000 people, including 84 school



Swan nesting in vain. Public Garden



Skating at the Frog Pond

groups, enjoyed winter skating at the Frog Pond and almost as many children the summer wading program. All Bostonians are indebted once again to Tom Kershaw and his director, Duncan Finch, for a facility not only popular but superbly operated. By these and other offerings — ball fields, tennis courts, and exhibits like the ancient fishweir



Native American Celebration, Fishweir-Recreation. Public Garden

— the Common provides an extensive array of cultural and recreational pleasures that bring people together in numbers and variety possible perhaps in no other venue. In creating these opportunities, Mayor Menino, the Parks Department, and others involved have brought the Common back to its historic place as a stage and center of city life.

The down part, of course, is the damage wrought by so many events, some of little or no appeal. This is not to say that efforts are lacking. The staff here as in the Garden does its best. Benches are repaired, peripheral fencing mended, trees planted, one this year a gift to the Friends from Mr. and Mrs. Michael Tooke in memory of Tracey H. Davis. But the city can rarely replace turf, mend decorative fencing, aerate impacted soil, or protect trees. Indeed, the task of cleaning up after large events alone is colossal. We are not a neat generation.

Common remains, management plan or no, event rich and maintenance poor.

The state of monuments is also mixed. The Brewer Fountain is defunct once again, a condition it has suffered off and on since 1868. Even in the 1880s one critic referred to its mythological figures (Poseidon, Amphitrite, Acis, and Galatea) as the four seasons of drought. The fountain's lighting installed by Light Boston and the Friends is also episodic. A statue from the Soldiers & Sailors Monument was found one morning toppled from its perch. Inspection of the other three figures revealed their hold so precarious they too were removed. Some restoration is under way, but the whole monument needs about \$200,000 to place it in reasonable shape. This is part of our special items list in the forthcoming capital campaign, but if anyone would like to save our principal Civil War memorial right now, do let us know. It would be a wonderful and lasting gift to our city.

The condition of the Shaw/54th Regiment Memorial, our greatest work of public art, is considerably better, thanks to the care of Clifford Craine and the parental eye of its committee chaired by Ann Beha. Even Colonel Shaw's sword is restored, though perhaps not for long.



Hollow Tree Tops, Shaw/54th Memorial. Boston Common

The Monument does have some problems. It needs mortar work again owing to vibration of traffic, and its flanking elms are on their last legs. Of good size at the Memorial's dedication in 1897, they are now weak and hollow. We have had to remove much of their tops (see photo) but will do our best to keep them standing as long as safety permits.

A miracle of spring was the cleaning through the Adopt-a-Statue program of the Boston Massacre monument and the allegoric figures at the Parkman Circle, the first such work in many years. This action stemmed from the coming of Sarah Hutt as director of the Boston Art Commission, a position long unfilled. With an optimism and energy that revive all of us, she has set out to restore and protect all of Boston's public art. Matters may go slower than planned in a field ever short of funding, but she has renewed a pro-



Gerry Wright as Frederick Law Olmsted. Annual Meeting

gram and raised hopes where all seemed lost.

ANNUAL MEETING

Our Annual Meeting took place in happy custom at the First and Second Church, a boon for which we thank again the Rev. Stephen Kendrick, Administrator Ellen Meyers, and their ever helpful staff. Our speaker was Frederick Law Olmsted, or at least a fair representation of the master by Gerry Wright. We were entertained, informed, and brought as close to meeting the creator of our parks, Commonwealth Avenue to Franklin Park, as mortality allows. With new parkland in the offing, we are more conscious than ever of Olmsted's legacy and thank Gerry Wright for his vivid evocation. The audience appeared so taken by the presentation that questions to the writer and Park Commissioner were all but forgotten, a device each of us should bear in mind.

On the business side, members elected to the Board of Directors Anne Brooke, Richard M. Burnes, Ann Collier, Linda Cox, David Dixon, William C. Fletcher, Sue Hazard, Barbara Hostetter, Kevin Lamb, June McCourt, Barbara Moore, and Richard Wheatland.

EVENTS

The Friends have benefited greatly in recent years from a series of parties: Skating-in-the-Park, Chanel fashion shows accompanying the Return of the Swans, the Young Friends Swing-into-Fall Gala, and the Green & White Ball. To those who made these occasions possible and successful we are forever grateful.

In the past year, two of these events continued under our own auspices. The Swing-into-Fall party at the Four Seasons last September enjoyed the best turnout and return in its nine-year history. Our thanks are enormous to co-chairs Courtney Forrester and Alison Fiscoeder, their fine committee especially the organizers of the silent auction, and to Thomas Gurtner and the staff of the Four Seasons, superlative hosts always. Honoree of the evening

was China Altman, organizer for many years of the pick-up squad in the Garden and later of our magnificent Rose Brigade. No one has given more selfless service to the Garden or done so with greater skill and enthusiasm. Like her fellow brigade members, she deserves any accolade we can bestow.

This year's Gala, chaired again by Mesdames Forrester and Fiscoeder will be held at the Four Seasons on November 5. With understanding of seating limits, those wishing to receive invitations should let us know. Honored on this tenth anniversary will be Kevin Lamb, a founder of the event and beneficent friend of our parks.

The Green & White Ball returned on June 4 to its home at the Ritz-Carlton. A small but remarkable committee decided on a simpler affair than those of recent years. This carried some risk in appeal, but working with Erwin Schinnerl and members of his staff, they produced a wonderful evening. Our indebtedness is infinite to the Ritz-Carlton, which donated the entire dinner, and to generous sponsors Firestone & Parson, Goody, Clancy Associates, Martignetti Companies, Tiffany & Co., and Winston Flowers. No thanks would be adequate to the committee, to Kathryn O'Connell and Christopher Drake for design and decor, or to other members Barbara



Stella Trafford congratulated by Mayor Menino, Green & White Ball; photo: Roger Farrington



Committee members Barbara Hostetter and Nina Doggett flanking Honoree Stella Trafford and Henry Lee; photo: Roger Farrington

Hostetter, Nina Doggett, Lee Bierly, Frank Gilligan, Beth Johnson, Karyn Lamb, Amy McNamee, Wendy Murphy, Georgia Saylor, and Anne Swanson, each of whom performed wondrous deeds.

With a grand dinner, short speeches, and the music of Michael Carney and his orchestra, the evening was reward and pleasure both. Although space allowed only 220 guests, costs were lower and profits higher than for any previous ball. Such generosity boosted our endowment for trees, sculpture, rangers, and other pressing needs in all three parks.

Keeping to the family, the Committee gave its 2004 Spirit of Growth award to Stella Trafford for her forty years of extraordinary service to parks, neighborhood, and city. Speakers exhort us often to make a difference in our communities. No one has achieved that end more fully than Stella. In the Garden, Mall, Copley Square, and much of the Back Bay, you need only look about to learn of her accomplishments.

PROJECTS HIGH AND LOW

As usual, we attend to various projects, in motion or in mind, that affect our parks. The One Charles condominiums, a space with suitors since 1971, will open this fall. The Emerson College dormitory on Piano Row, also on land many times claimed, is under way with a completion date in 2006. Both seem tolerable in use, size, and design, and to our parks a friendly presence. Far taller buildings are in prospect at Washington-LaGrange and Clarendon-Stuart Streets that reduce zoning limits to a lost cause but have small impact on the Garden, Mall, or Common.

Planners for the pay toilet (approved earlier this year for the Common at Boylston and Charles) forgot, it seems, the subway roof and must now find a new site. The facility would meet urgent needs, we are sure, but in a public park should not be obtrusive or carry commercial ads. The proposal for bus shelters at Charles-Beacon, and Massachusetts-Commonwealth, now being considered, will raise the same concerns.

Far greater in scope and impact will be Phase III of the Silver Line. Although final decisions on the various align-

ments await further study, the line, intended to speed riders to Logan Airport and the new convention center, has strong political support. If funds, federal and state (over \$700 million), are forthcoming, the project will probably go forward by one route or another. Happily, the giant loop under the Common, once in favor, now appears less likely than one at the junction of Charles and Boylston Streets. This will mean, nonetheless, several years of tunnel construction (open cut) along Boylston Street with considerable encroachment on Emerson buildings and erection on the Common of various vents and head-houses.

We often note that parks reflect the company they keep. With the rebirth of the Tremont-Boylston neighborhood, the Common in that quarter has much improved both in appearance and safety. It would be a downturn for everyone to see the area return to its former desuetude. With many aspects of the Silver Line project still in flux, it is hard to judge whether the social and business gains outweigh the afflictions. In any event, many groups, including the Friends, are working in concert to assure the greatest possible protection for the community and its parks.

MILITARY HISTORY

Each year the Ancient & Honorable Artillery Co., founded in 1638, gathers on the Common for commemorative ceremonies with marching, speeches, and cannon fire. People complain at times of the warlike display, not realizing, perhaps, that it is part and parcel of the Common's history.

From its very beginnings in 1634 the Common was used for the training of militias, then vital to the town's protection. Indeed, these 48 acres may constitute the most venerable military turf in our nation. From the Common, troops set out in 1745 for the attack on the French fortress of Louisburg and here in 1758 were encamped 4,500 troops under the command of Gen. Jeffrey Amherst. Here, too, British troops were present for eight years, 1768-1776, embarking from its shore (now Charles Street) for Lexington and Concord and burying their dead after the Battle of Bunker Hill. Here Washington reviewed his troops following the British evacuation and again as president in 1789. Lafayette was feted on the Common on his return in 1824, firing a cannon at a floating target in the Back Bay. President Jackson and several successors reviewed troops, and militias paraded regularly through much of the nineteenth century, on one occasion clashing with one another. Recruiting tents dotted the landscape during the Civil War, and virtually every regiment was dispatched and mustered out on what had become all but sacred sod. Even in World Wars I and II recruiting booths, canteens, war bond sales, and victory gardens were part of the scene. One booth carried the fitting sign "Keep off the grass. If you want to roam, join the Navy." Today the marching is limited and largely symbolic, but the sound of cannon, window-rattling as it is, reminds us each year of the Common's extraordinary role, military and patriotic, through all of its 370 years.

And a collateral note. In 1938 on occasion of the Ancient & Honorable's 300th anniversary, King George



Ancient & Honorable Artillery, Boston Common

VI of England sent Boston an oak sapling from Great Windsor Park. Stripped of its soil on arrival, it somehow survived for planting by the mayor and governor on the hillside below the Soldiers & Sailors Monument. Soon forgotten, its plaque gone, the tree grew in anonymity until a man pursuing research five or so years ago reminded us of its presence. Alas, compaction of soil and erosion have now brought the tree close to demise, a good example of maintenance problems. We have pruned it radically and done all we can to revive its spirit, but we may need before long to ask Queen Elizabeth if she would like to give us a new tree.

PARK DWELLERS

A park has many virtues. It is a place of rest and retreat, of recreation and aesthetic pleasure. It lifts property values and provides jobs. Most of all it is a space that belongs to us all, those who play, those who relax, even those who call it home. And it draws to mixed review a great variety of wildlife. On the avian side, along with ducks, geese, and pigeons, are an amazing number of birds, both familiar and unusual. Kenneth Hudson, whose nature column appears in the *Beacon Hill Times*, observed this spring nests for kingbirds, waxwings, vireos, and orioles, all rare in urban parks. Squirrels, of course, abound indeed believe they own the place. And now and then raccoons make nocturnal visits. As yet no moose, but one should keep an eye out.

Dogs and their owners find the Common the best of social scenes. Unfortunately their numbers prompt now and again calls for a dog run and other restrictive measures. A dog run, we feel, would be the worst of all worlds for dogs and people alike. In the Garden, dogs must be on leash to protect the plantings and fellow creatures, but in the Common their free run on the Parade Ground, with proper controls and pick up, seems a fair and reasonable arrangement. And when something works effectively, it is probably best to leave it be. The City could, of course, enforce the 18th-century ordinance limiting dogs on the Common to 14 inches in height to prevent their biting the udders of cows.

FRIENDS

We cannot begin to thank all the people who benefit these parks, but praise must always flow to Eugenie Beal, chair

of the Common Committee and the city's most creative thinker, to Westy Lovejoy, who guides our planting of the Garden, Margaret Pokorny, who does everything imaginable for the Mall, and Nina Doggett, who with other tasks will now chair our Development Committee. Many people made gifts to the Friends this year in lieu of flowers in remembrance of Elaine Mourey, Josiah Child, and Isabel Barrett Lowry, the last for the purchase of tree labels. A special gift came from Philip Daouest honoring our long-time member, Stephen McCabe.

The capital campaign has been in its so-called "quiet phase," during which all members of the Board have made generous gifts or pledges. In the coming year you will learn more of this effort aimed at putting the Friends on a more secure and formal basis, providing much needed endowment for trees and sculpture, assuring the continuance of the Frog Pond programs, and meeting other pressing needs in all three parks.

We still number around 2,500 in 31 states and keep in better touch by e-mail (fopg@gis.net) and website (friendsofthepublicgarden.org). Thanks of our assistant, Brian Kind, the computer now holds all sorts of data that once resided helter-skelter in the writer's head. Brian returned this summer to Wisconsin with our profound thanks but has left the office in the good hands of Sheila Sullivan and Ellen Kolemäinen. Thus, we edge toward a normal administration with hopes of reaching in the next year or so a full-time operation. Be assured, however, that we still run in frugal fashion with the great percentage of our income going to the purposes you intend.

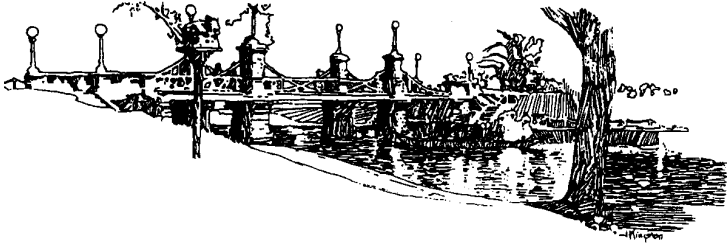
While our hopes still exceed our resources, we have done much since our founding both directly and in public-private partnership. Many accomplishments, too, are what you don't see, that is the encroachments successfully opposed. This progress, seen and unseen, stems now and always from the interest and participation of our members. Your letters come with warm encouragement and often fond recollection. The Common, Garden, and Mall, we find, have countless friends both near and far afield. Such support is the heart of our endeavors, the impetus of all we do, and best of all assurance that another generation will enjoy as well these historic and treasured spaces.

Henry Lee

Friends of The Public Garden

Boston Common Public Garden Commonwealth Avenue Mall

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