

April 24, 1972

Dear Walter (and Eric when he gets back)

Seeing you at The Botany Seminar reminded me of an errand I had been meaning to do. You said you didn't know too much about how The Forest was given to Harvard back at the turn of The Century. Knowing that The Trustees of Public Reservations were involved somehow, I looked up that period in their annual reports. They had something, so I xeroxed up the relevant pages and am sending them on to you. I was interested because it fit into my scheme of the limits the Trustees were feeling due to lack of funds - I'm sure that if they had had the money to support it, they would have taken The forest right on!

In any case, I hope it helps you. I'm sure you'll be seeing us fair-weather friends as soon as it gets to be spring out there!

Yours truly,

Jennifer Richards.

1912 (pp. 16-17)

22nd Annual Report

The record of the year would not be complete without mention of the decease of our valued associate, James W. Brooks of Petersham, which occurred in Oct. Mr. Brooks was an enthusiastic lover of nature, and his interest in the objects of this Society was evidenced by his attendance at our meetings and by his calling upon us for advice in connection with his gift to Harvard University, which, with generous donations from other persons, made possible the establishment of the Harvard Forest. We shall miss his attractive and genial personality, his friendly interest in our affairs, and the zest of his devotion to the fine things in nature.

This was the last mention of the "Harvard Forest Affair" that it came across in the annual report - just hope you can read my handwriting!

been set in a boulder near the entrance. There was so little snow last winter that it was not possible to remove all the wood piles left from the forestry work which was being done according to the State Forester's plan at the time the gift was made. The remainder will be removed this winter. There is need of some paths, and a road to the summit of the hill where the best views can be obtained would be very attractive. Mrs. Nash, who established this park, is having a study made to ascertain whether such a road is practicable and can be built for a moderate expenditure.

1906
1906
At the last annual meeting a member of the Board of Trustees requested the appointment of a committee to visit him and examine certain tracts of woodland belonging to him, with respect to their availability as a public reservation. The committee appointed for this purpose were entertained by him in June, and passed a large part of two days in an inspection of these lands. They comprise some 2,000 acres of woodland of a most varied and interesting character, and nearly encompass the village of the town in which they are situated. They are not alone of interest in themselves as woods, but are an essential part of the scenery and picturesque charm of one of the most beautiful of the New England hill towns. It is to be hoped and it seems probable that the generous and far-seeing intention of the owner will be in some way realized, and it will be a public service performed if this Board shall have been able to assist in bringing about such a result.

On October 13 last a memorial to Charles Eliot was dedicated in the Blue Hills Reservation near the summit of Great Blue Hill in Milton. The creation of this Board was his idea, and was largely due to his individual efforts. He was our first Secretary and afterwards Chairman of the Standing Committee, which office he held at the time of his death. It was natural that many of our members became interested in the movement to erect this memorial, and took an active part in carrying out the plan. The memorial is in the form of a bridge, which carries across a little ravine near the top of Great Blue Hill a path which encircles the summit of the hill and affords the most extensive views of any point in

from 16th Annual Report of The Trustees of Public Reservations, 1906.

and to the east towards Amherst. The custodian reports that hardly a day in the summer season passes without visitors, most of them coming from Northampton by trolley and many staying to lunch under the shade of the trees.

There has been no addition to the lands held by the Trustees this year, but the result of an investigation referred to in the last report is of much interest. Through the efforts of Mr. James W. Brooks, extended through a period of many years, a large portion of the woodlands surrounding the hill town of Petersham, in Worcester County, have not only been preserved, but a very considerable area purchased by him from time to time has been steadily improved in quality and appearance. It is also due to the same gentleman as a citizen, and for a time as tree warden, that the roadside trees have to such an extent been saved from destruction. The result has been to give to this New England village a peculiar charm, which is well known to every one who is familiar with it. Your committee, who visited it in June, 1906, to consider what steps could be taken to ensure the preservation of at least some part of these beautiful woods, was met with several apparent obstacles, the most obvious one being the necessity which would arise at once of securing a sufficient fund to provide an adequate income for the maintenance of any considerable tract. Out of these investigations, however, a plan developed which, while it precluded the Trustees from acquiring some portion of these most attractive woods, will result not only in their preservation, but will also provide for their care and careful development. Through the generosity of Mr. John S. Ames of North Easton, with the cooperation of Mr. Brooks and others, 2,000 acres of this woodland, to be known as the Harvard Forest, is about to be conveyed to the President and Fellows of Harvard College, and will be placed in charge of the Division of Forestry of the newly established Graduate School of Applied Science. To his gift of \$55,000 for purchase of land, Mr. Ames has added \$5,000 towards equipment, and several residents of Petersham have also aided the project by gifts of land. The Harvard Forest is to become the laboratory, as one may say, for the Harvard students of forestry, and in the practical

from 17th Annual Report of the Trustees of Public Reservations, 1907

study, on the ground, of forest conditions and economic development, it is expected that the product from the forest itself will contribute substantially to the maintenance of the school. Professor Fisher, after a careful investigation, has expressed the opinion that these woods are the best suited of any in New England for the purposes to which they are to be put. Inasmuch as this use is perfectly compatible with the public enjoyment, under proper restrictions, of the forest, your committee feels that the outcome of their visit to Petersham has been most fortunate.

The National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty is an English society which has accomplished much in the same lines as this Board. Several years ago the Trustees were asked to nominate a representative to serve on the council of the National Trust, and have this year been requested to again nominate a member. Your committee, acting under the powers conferred on them by the by-laws of this body, has again nominated Prof. Charles S. Sargent to the position which he has hitherto filled.

HENRY P. WALCOTT, *Chairman,*
 CHARLES S. SARGENT,
 NATHANIEL T. KIDDER,
 CHARLES S. RACKEMANN,
 EDWARD W. FORBES,
 GEORGE WIGGLESWORTH, *Treasurer,*
 JOHN WOODBURY, *Secretary,*
Standing Committee.

from 17th Annual Report of the Trustees of Public Reservations, 1907
 (1907)

Jennifer Richards, 7 Howland St.
Cambridge, Mass. 02138

May 2, 1972

Dear Jennifer:

Many thanks for the background material on the Harvard Forest. I certainly never knew before about the role played by the Trustees of Public Reservations and neither did Ernie or Martin. We shall see that the information you sent gets into our permanent records. When I see John Fiske next I'll see what he knows about the background. His grandfather married a Brooks and he may know something about the reason why Brooks assembled the land. You may remember that Ernie says it was to avoid having the County Jail here. Where he got this piece of information I don't know - possibly from John Fiske.

Do come out and see us, the red maple are blossoming but that's about the only evidence of spring so far.

Sincerely

Walter

Early History of Harvard Forest

The attached references to the early history of the Harvard Forest were sent by Jennifer Richards, a student in Biology 298 during the fall of 1971.

She wrote a paper on the Trustees of Public Reservations and found the material which going into the background of the Trustees.

May 2, 1972
WHL

May 4, 72

Mrs Danaher made a copy of this and placed it in the Vault.
WHL