

To the Committee of the Mall Improvement  
Association. Newburyport.

Gentlemen:

You are determined that your ancient  
Common shall be made more useful and  
attractive than it ever yet has been as a prom-  
enade for the grown folks of your City and  
as a playground for the children of the schools.  
At the request of Mr Currier I submit a  
suggestive or preliminary plan for the improve-  
ment of the Common — the plan being directed  
~~to fulfil~~ towards fulfilling the two ends just  
mentioned — without proposing any such  
radical changes of surface or outline as would in-  
volve large expense. Let me describe my  
plan part by part.

The Broad-walk on High St. has two rows of  
trees, which altho' injured by ice-storms, have  
many years of life before them. At one end of  
the long walk stands the Washington statue —  
— on one hand is a straight curbing which di-  
vides the Mall from the street — on the  
other hand a steep bank some 12 feet high  
divides the broad-walk from the low central  
part of the Common.

Here my plan shows a 25 foot walk central  
between the rows of trees, strips of grass on  
either hand out of which the tree trunks rise,

frequent and ample openings upon the High St. curbing on the one hand, and upon steps which descend the bank upon the other. People coming from Jones and Court streets may cross the broad-walk and go down to the pond-shore by steps placed conveniently for them, and the scholars of the Putnam School are to have a flight of their own! Only by making liberal provision of this sort can you hope to keep the most of the bank neat and untrampled. Even after wide spaces have been given up to gravel the accomplishing of this proposed crossing over of long strips of ground which the school children have long played upon may prove a difficult matter. It can be carried out successfully only by careful and patient managing.

Along Pond St., where there are now some large trees, I propose that a new broad-walk be built: — not as broad as that on High St. — but continued so as to join the High St. walk at its eastern end. A side-walk, for the use of persons going from Park and High Streets to the railroad freight-house, is also provided here.

At the meeting of the High and Pond St. walks or broadwalks the plan shows considerable space where children may play: — there are other spaces before the Court House and

before the Tutnam School: — but the largest space is made at the point where it seems the greatest throng of children gather: namely the western end of the High St. Mall. Here the malls are made more than 30 ft. wide, and a shaded space about 60 ft. square is provided in the angle between the malls and at a level (owing to the slope of the land) a few feet below them. Grass banks, which will have to be defended by dwarf fences, separate this ground from the malls — and other banks descend from the edges of the playing space, on one side to the gravel beach of the pond and on the other side to a roadway which here descends from Auburn St. to the pond beach.

A circular grass plot at the junction of the mall at Auburn and High streets might someday receive a drinking fountain or a monument which would terminate at this end the vista of the High St. Mall — as does the Washington statue at the other end.

Along Forester St. let a 10 or 12 ft path be carried at a level ~~down~~ on the existing terrace: the street and its sidewalk being left to rise and descend again as it does at present. The continuing of this terrace path to Pond St. will involve some gravel excavation at the point near Forester St. where the land recent

by purchased adjoined the old Common: — but this excavation had much better be done — particularly as the material to be thus obtained will be required in correcting the outline of the Pond as described further on.

No more than one flight of steps to the pond-shore seems necessary on this side: the existing steps are in the right position. From the head of these steps a path is shown leading in a circuitous way to Pond St. — by way of the brink of the steep bank and close beside two large trees. This is merely a stroller's path. Between this path and the Pond St. broad-walk will be a nearly level grass-field, the only such space on the Common, and so of value as a pleasant thing to look at, and possibly as a tennis ground or as a small boys ball ground.

The whole of the central part of the Common is a deep basin containing a pond the waters of which (as I understand it) are drawn off when needed by the fire department. In the Spring the pond stands some feet above its average Summer level — in any seasons its area shrinks considerably. All this forbids enclosing it with a curb. [The ordinary curbed ponds of a public garden is fed from the town water supply and maintained at one level by means of an overflow gate.] Any form of steep bank —

shrub. covered or otherwise — is similarly  
out of the question. Were the pond to be low  
such a bank would be extremely ugly.

The existing beach-like gravel shore is the best  
shore for your pond: — and it makes an ex-  
cellent playground. I propose the widening  
of the beach at some points, and some changes  
in its curves: — the principal change being by  
the Court House, where it would be well to get  
room to put some lawn between the beach and the  
ugly rear wall of the building, in which to plant  
some of the larger shrubs and some climbers.  
This rear wall is a very ugly thing from many  
points of view.

Almost everywhere the beach is close against the  
foot of the straight and steep banks which  
surround the pond's basin: but at the East  
end of the pond the bank recedes, and here is  
a chance to make a way to the pond without  
steps and at the same time gain a sight of the  
water from the streets at the East end of the Common.  
Let the steep bank be here dropped down and some  
of its material used in filling behind the Court  
House: you will thus get a hollow way or  
valley descending to the water: — a pleasing  
break in the monotony of formal banks which  
must continue to surround the pond on all its  
other sides.

I append a list of the works necessary to the completion of the plan as here continued. You will probably choose to spread the work over several years, completing some particular section in each season. This list may be of some assistance to you in making such a division of the undertaking.

As to the cost of the works I find I am hardly in a position to make even a guess. For instance there are spaces to be gravelled and spaces to be paved, and I neither know how much fit gravel and brick is now upon the ground nor what it costs to buy these necessary things in your City. Again I have not the data for making any but the very roughest estimates of quantities [the ~~sq~~ cubic yards of gravel to be moved for instance], and cannot have without making costly surveys. The best thing you can do will be to hand the appended list of areas to some local contractor who is familiar with the ground. He will be able to make some sort of a bid for the work upon the High St. mall for instance — then for the grading and sowing of the spaces A B C D — then for the making of the Pond St. broadwalk — and so on. — Then perhaps his rival will bid lower.

Some carpenter will put a price on the steps required — and so much per foot for the

dwarf fence.

The "heavy grading" recommended to be done cannot well be contracted for. For this you will make arrangements for men and teams at so much per day. An engineer must first stake out the work, and I should want to have a look at it. This present Autumn weather is the right time to do such work.

Yours respectfully  
Charles E. Diet.

9 Park St. Boston.

12<sup>th</sup> October, 1887.

\$ 300.  
to  
\$ 500.

1. ?  
?

Gravel cutting and filling — the same to about  
balance each other.  
Valley at West end of Pond.  
Continuation of terrace walk to Pond St.  
Filling of playing space below mells at  
High and Auburn Streets.  
Filling of beach-shore of Pond.

2. Spaces to be graded with loam.

Along High St. Mall	860	sq. yds.
Banks around playing space	220	" "
Space, A.	520	" "
" B.	740	" "
" C.	370	" "
" D.	1330	" "
" E.	100	" "
	<u>4140</u>	yds

3. Spaces to be graded with gravel.

High St. broadwalk and all spaces	3000	sq. yds.
Pond St. broadwalk.	760	" "
Terrace path	280	" "
Other paths and sidewalks	830	" "
	<u>4870</u>	yds

4. Miscellaneous.

Restoration of grass banks.  
Flights of steps — 3 long, 3 short.  
Dwarf fencing for ends and angles  
of steps on Mells. 500 feet.