



## THE GARDEN CONSERVANCY

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December 22, 2022

Mr. Robert Levash, Chairperson  
Community Preservation Committee  
Town of Milton  
525 Canton Avenue, Milton, MA 02186

Dear Mr. Levash:

It is with great pleasure that I write on behalf of The Garden Conservancy, the nation's leading nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving, sharing, and celebrating outstanding American gardens for the education and inspiration of the public, to recommend the Milton Garden Club for a Community Preservation Committee grant from the Town of Milton to continue preservation initiatives at the Spalding Garden.

Spalding Garden reflects the work of two prominent 20th-century landscape architects – Fletcher Steele and Ellen Biddle Shipman. It is a nationally significant cultural resource, designed in 1924 by Steele and later improved upon by Shipman (from 1927-1938).

Fletcher Steele, who studied under Frederick Law Olmstead Jr., is widely considered to be one of America's premier landscape architects whose design style represents a transition from predominantly Beaux-Arts to one that combined classical and new modernist sensibilities. Steele approached landscape design as an art form, and his work and writings, according to SUNY's College of Environmental Science and Forestry, "added much to the theoretical and artistic base of the profession of landscape architecture." The Spalding Garden is noted as one of the few remaining Steele gardens.

Ellen Biddle Shipman is one of the leading landscape architects of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and was a trailblazer for women in the industry. She managed a very active landscape design firm in New York and designed the famed Italian Garden at the Cummer Museum of Art & Gardens and Longue Vue Gardens in New Orleans, LA. Her horticultural knowledge and approach to plant choice and design as artistic expression complimented the vision Steele designed.

Spalding Garden retains its original hardscape, including walls and a fountain of the bowling green designed by Steele, as well as extant plant materials, including linden trees and a variety of evergreen shrubs. The patterned brick walls at Spalding are similar in design and style to those at Naumkeag. This site's preservation of the masonry is keenly important in maintaining Steele's design intent and vision.

The fact that this garden still reflects Steele's design intent and Shipman's contribution, as well as original plantings, is significant. It provides a layered cultural and historic context to learn more about landscape architecture and design and presents a unique opportunity to observe and conserve actual historic plantings. Gardens, such as the Spalding Garden, enhance our experience and understanding of the larger world in which we live and inform our sense of place. The fingerprints of these 20th-century designers are living works of art worthy of celebration and preservation.

The Milton Garden Club is uniquely positioned to elevate and expand on the historic interpretation of Steele's work as it relates to the larger history of landscape architecture in Massachusetts through the preservation of Spalding Garden. Though Steele designed hundreds of gardens in his lifetime, only a few, such as Naumkeag, remain.

The Garden Conservancy enthusiastically recommends the Milton Garden Club for a Community Preservation Committee grant to support preservation work at Spalding Garden.

Sincerely,



James Brayton Hall  
President & CEO  
The Garden Conservancy