

FOR RELEASE UPON DELIVERY
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 1968

Office of the Press Secretary
to Mrs. Johnson

THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS BY MRS. LYNDON B. JOHNSON AT
THE DEDICATION OF COLUMBIA ISLAND AT
THE DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR AUDITORIUM

Mr. Secretary:

The other day, I thumbed through an album of pictures of plantings, visits with members of our Beautification Committee, to various "objects of our affection" in the District of Columbia.

It was amazing how many of these pictures showed umbrellas, rainfall and -- yes -- even snow.

I almost called Marvin Watson and asked if we couldn't borrow that slogan on the Post Office Department:

"Neither snow nor rain nor heat, nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds."

But I am glad that weather has never dampened our enthusiasm and zeal for the great outdoors of Washington.

The wonderful gifts of dogwoods, daffodils and trails from the Inaugural Committee and the Society for a More Beautiful Capital have been underway for several months. But we thought this magnificent gift to make a gateway for Washington truly worthy of this city should prompt a special formal occasion to say thank-you.

For more than 30 years, I have loved the parks and trees and open expanses of this city. Some of the happiest memories of being a young Congressional wife in less busy years, were gathering up our children on a Saturday afternoon and finding the perfect spot for a picnic along Rock Creek.

Through the years, I have taken many constituents to see the sights of Washington -- and high on my list was the drive along the Potomac the length of Columbia Island which gave me an opportunity to point out the Navy-Marine Memorial -- my favorite sculpture -- with its graceful, soaring seagulls.

Dredged out of the historic Potomac, some fifty years ago, Columbia Island is a gift of nature and man. For it is a triumph of conservation and a trust.

I'm so pleased that this piece of land -- 121 acres -- challenged this Committee, and we have concentrated much of our efforts and gifts -- in preparing it as a magnificent gateway to the Capital.

Having been there when the daffodils were planted, having seen them in their drifts of yellow along the slopes of the river, having watched almost everyone of these trees planted, and envisioned how that expanse of white and pink dogwoods will look next May, you can be sure that -- I shall return.

And I shall plan my visits to this city when Columbia Island is abloom.

Nash, I can warn you now, that some April before long your phone will be ringing and someone in Texas will be asking, "What is the best date to come?"

I am grateful to Dale Miller and all the members of the Inaugural Committee who have paved the way into the Capital with dogwood blossoms, and to the society for providing the daffodils, the additional dogwoods, and the mile of trails.

I am indebted to the imagination and dauntless enthusiasm of Secretary Udall who thinks such things can be done, and continuous and devoted stewardship of the Park Service.

The nature poet William Cullen Bryant wrote many years ago, "The groves were God's first temples." I hope that America's future generations will enjoy these lovely groves, for it is to them that I am proud and happy to dedicate this entrance to Washington.

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