The Charles River Conservancy presents

River Stories *Volume III*

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CHARLES RIVER conservancy

A treasury of poems, stories, artwork, maps, and quotations about the river and its parklands by those who cherish them

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"The Charles River parklands are a vital resource—we need that open space along the water—and yet, in Cambridge, they are in rough shape. I applaud the Charles River Conservancy's advocacy for the parks and the public/private partnerships that allow for improvements." - Cathie Zusy, Chair, Magazine Beach Committee, Cambridge Neighborhood Association

Dear Parklands Friend,

We are delighted to bring to you this third volume of *River Stories*, in which a wide array of writers share their own very personal attachments to the Charles River. Some are scholars and scientists who study the river, others neighbors who enjoy its recreational opportunities. We include essays by several journalists whose writing helped bring about improvements to the river, and a former governor of the commonwealth who oversaw early efforts to implement the massive cleanup that has made the Charles so much more inviting. We are proud to include poets and prose writers both present and past, whose vision of the river helps shape our own, as well as an essay by an architect whose work has added to the beauty of the riverscape. We are also including a scattering of short quotes from civic leaders and parklands users, whose particular feelings for the river must stand for the many thousands more we might have elicited. In short, we offer this volume as a sort of tasting menu of the river's innumerable delicacies and delights.

It is now fifteen years since I founded the Charles River Conservancy, inspired by Charles Eliot's vision of the parklands as our "democratic common ground." Today, public funds are insufficient to maintain and enhance this legacy, and it has been gratifying to watch the ranks of our volunteers and supporters swell to more than 30,000. The thousands of hours they have devoted to the river—we estimate the value of their labor at over $1,000,000—have enabled us to paint benches and prune trees, clear pathways and improve access, combat invasive species, and remove literally tons of trash from the parklands. Together, we have planted the many thousands of daffodils that adorn broad swathes of the parklands each spring. Summer Sundays along the river are enlivened by our Sunday Games. And, of course, our small but dedicated staff can coordinate these efforts only with the financial support of our donors, large and small.

Over time, the Conservancy has taken on larger advocacy and capital projects as well. As I write, construction is underway for the Lynch Family Skatepark in North Point Park, a 40,000-square-foot, $5,000,000 project the Conservancy has pursued for over ten years in partnership with the Department of Conservation and Recreation and a host of donors. Our ongoing advocacy for a swimmable Charles will include several Community Swims in 2015 and is building support—and soliciting designs—for a more permanent swimming venue.

After five tireless years of advocacy, the Conservancy in 2014 gained the support of the Department of Transportation for bicycle/pedestrian underpasses at the three bridge intersections that have long impeded fluidity and access along the Dr. Paul Dudley White Path on the Boston side. Further on the horizon are plans for an Allston Esplanade, widening the path into a new riverfront park to serve the 21st-century urban district that is starting to take shape along the river in Allston. With all these longer-term projects, the Conservancy is not only continuing the legacy of Eliot, Storrow, Shurcliff, and other visionary creators of the Charles River parklands, but adding substantially to their legacy as we pass it on to future generations.

This has been and continues to be the work of many thousands of dedicated people, staff, board members, advisors, volunteers, and donors, and I feel privileged to have a place in such a distinguished band. Whether you are among our long-term supporters or are new to our work, we hope these stories will inspire you to join us in the tasks that lie ahead. There are so many more opportunities to improve the parklands for the benefit of us all.

Sincerely,

Renata von Tscharner

Renata von Tscharner
Founder and President, Charles River Conservancy

Renée La Rivière

A Charles River Journal by David Gessner

When most people think of the Charles, if they think of it at all, they imagine a tame and preppy river, a river that got into the Ivy League, a river of boathouses and scullers. But when Captain John Smith spied the Charles from Boston Harbor in 1611, he wasn't thinking about scullers or tea parties or finals clubs. Like any explorer worth his salt, his dreams were of discovery, and in the river he thought he'd hit upon something big. He took one look at its great gaping mouth and assumed that it was a mighty corridor of water that cut deep into the continent. It turned out he was spectacularly wrong in this assumption: not only doesn't the river reach halfway to California, it barely makes it halfway to Worcester. What Smith had not anticipated was that the Charles, like many people, has a mouth too big for its body. His disappointment over the river's length did not stop him for naming it after his prince, forever saddling the poor river with a name that is stiff, a little goofy, and effetely English. Imagine the difference if he had called it the Chuck.

But what has surprised me over the years is how much wildness is still available on the Charles. One year, I paddled the river's length and heard coyotes howl and watched deer wade, observed a beautiful sharp-shinned hawk swooping up into the canopy, and delighted in swallows cutting above the water in front of me as kingfishers ratcheted past. Another year, a decade ago now, the year my daughter was born, I lived in Cambridge during a particularly snowy winter, a winter that transformed the river banks into a tundra and the Charles into a frozen turnpike through which animals could wander into the heart of the city.

Walking at night during those snows, I became aware how the winter winds used the river as a pathway, flying up off the water through the man-made canyons between the old brick buildings. With the river frozen and blanketed with snow, it was easy to study the prints now covering it, and for the more bold animals the river is a natural pathway, devoid of human obstacles. That was the year I became obsessed with finding a coyote on his nightly peregrinations using the frozen river as a highway into the heart of downtown Boston.

Though I never saw a coyote on the Charles that winter, there were other wild sights. One day, I walked along the banks during a morning snowstorm. As the snowfall intensified, the whiteness began to illuminate other whitenesses. The birches along the water gleamed, and a gull with black-tipped wings was transformed into a stranger, more exotic bird: a white dove of some sort. I walked to the open water near the grate where I knew I would find the great blue heron, and, sure enough, he was there, hulking, long neck pulled in, solitary. I worried for the bird: how would it survive? What was it eating? As I moved forward, it leaned forward, too, poised for flight. It had become habituated to the walkers and joggers and cars, but this new, unusual creature, with his curious movement forward and his pauses and uncertainties, must have seemed uncategorizable and, therefore, predatory. Finally, the bird pushed off into the snowstorm, gray legs straight behind it as if in a steep dive. It disappeared in the white for a moment before reappearing by the other open grate. It dipped into the sewer tunnel as if into a cave.

When spring came and the snow finally melted, other winged guests arrived. One day, on my way down to the river, I noticed that the tree swallows were back, carving up the air. Life burst out of the concrete world. On the bottom of many of the lampposts, I saw nests. Near the old gym, I watched chickadees fly out from under one of the stanchions and catbirds emerge from behind a pompous old veritas crest on Quincy House. Meanwhile, in front of Lowell House, a mockingbird was doing a perfect imitation of an oriole; and then, a little while later, by the water, I saw the oriole itself. It shone fierce orange and black, flitting boldly from branch to branch and letting out its liquid cry in purer form than its imitator. The river itself was cluttered with scullers, galley slaves involved in some ancient form of discipline the rest of us don't understand.

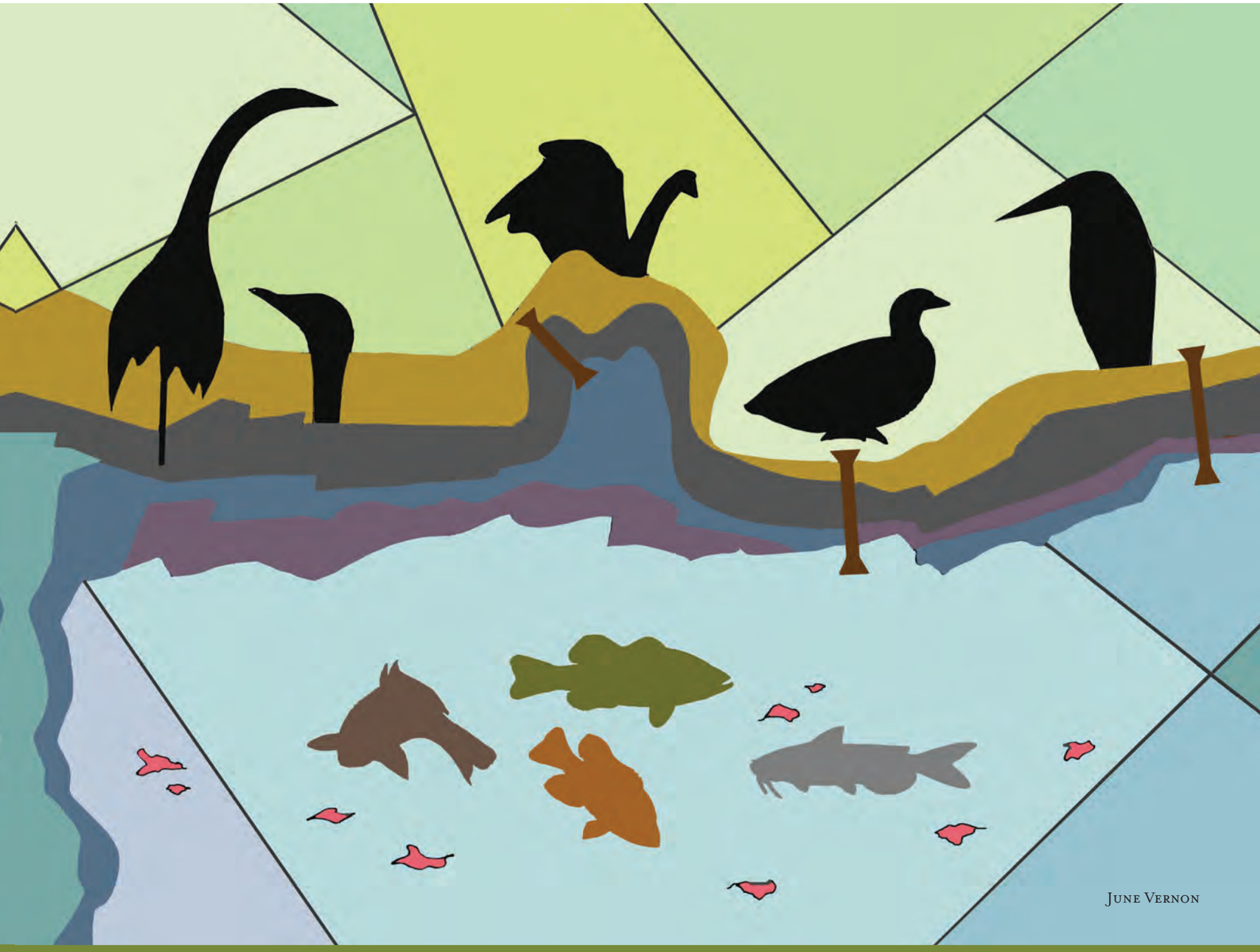
While the rowers dominated the river, geese covered the riverbank. I watched four Canada Geese with dozens of goslings, down covered, pecking at the grass. They looked yellow-greenish, almost urine-stained, with a yellow-greenish shine to their heads. When humans got too close, they hurried back into the phalanx behind the adults. During the course of the day, several different mothers tended them in a kind of communal goose daycare.

The birds I was most excited about were the night herons. They led a strange, nocturnal life, and, during the day, they tried to rest. But they had picked a bad

"The parklands along the Charles River transform our urban landscape—making Boston one of the most stunning cities in the world. I am proud that the Boston Foundation was 'there at the beginning' to launch the Charles River Conservancy.

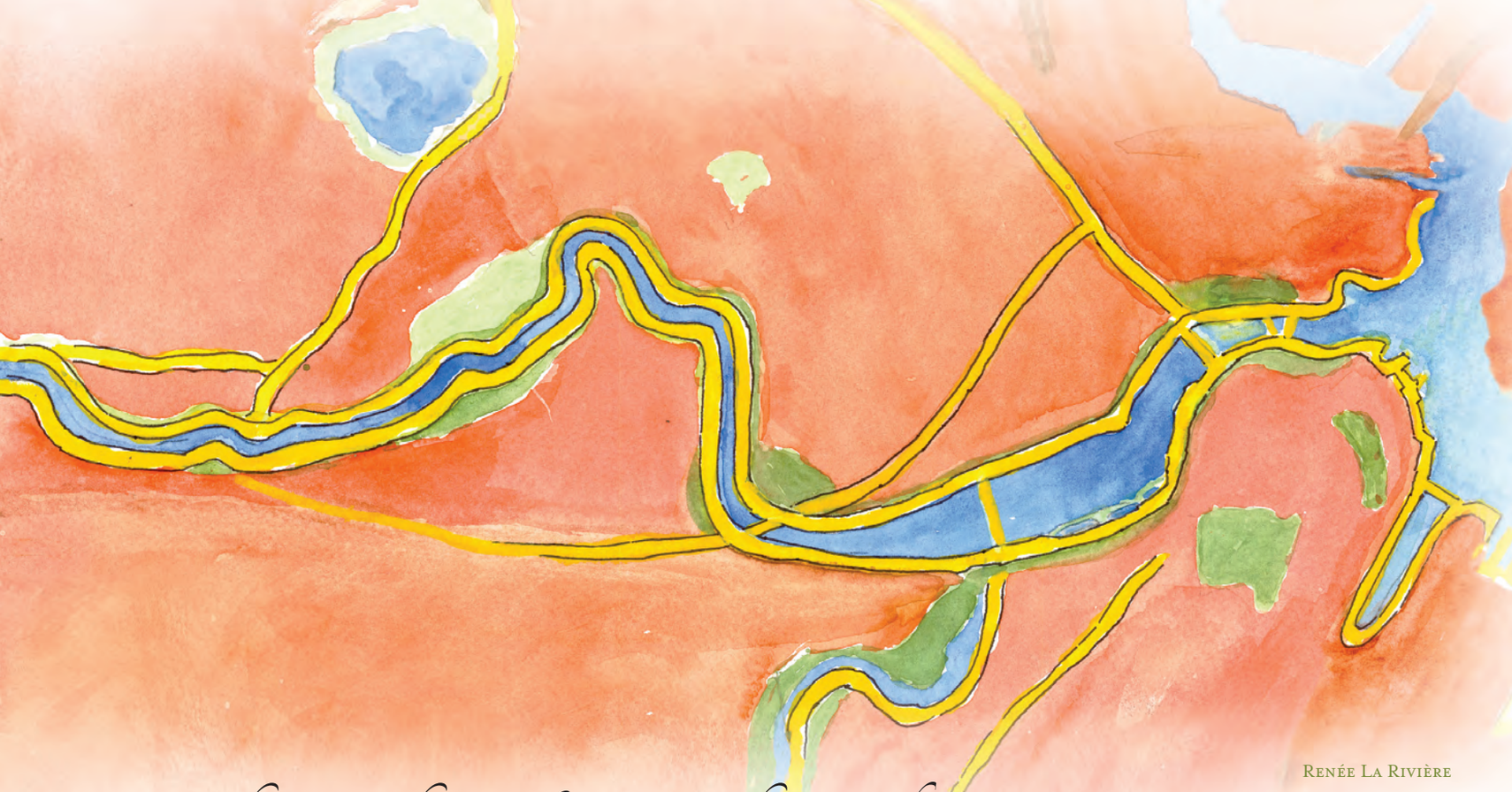
place for roosting, in this center of human community, and they were constantly disturbed, flying back and forth, complaining with loud "sproaks," trying to find some privacy. On the days that I kayaked the river, I could get close enough to see their burning eyes. One day, I watched dozens of them roosting around the small camp of a homeless man behind a concrete barrier. I kept perfectly still, drifting in the slow current, and they didn't fly off, their eyes reflecting the red-orange of the blooming maple they sat in. They had large feet, silky white underfeathers, gray backs, black bills, and a distinctive hunch. They hopped nervously from branch to branch. Then, before they flew off, they dipped down a little, as if they needed to push off.

"A river touching the back of a town is like a wing," Thoreau tells us. "It may be unused as yet, but ready to waft it over the world. With its rapid current it is a slightly fluttering wing. River towns are winged towns." Full of winged inhabitants, he might have added. Full of wildness and life.



June Vernon

As a crucial steward of this vital resource, the Conservancy has made what was just a dream in the late 20th century—a swimmable Charles River—a proud 21st-century reality." - Paul S. Grogan, president and CEO, The Boston Foundation



Renée La Rivière

The Day They Took Our Beach Away from Us by Michael Dukakis

Kitty and I grew up in the Town of Brookline. It was—and is—a great town. It has great schools. It built the first indoor municipal pool in America in 1906. But it doesn't have a beach or even an outdoor municipal pool. So when we were kids, the closest beach was Havey Beach in West Roxbury, just off the VFW Parkway. And that's where we went on hot summer days.

It's still there. The old bathhouse can be seen from the Parkway. In fact, there is a sign that tells you it is still Havey Beach. But there's no beach. There is no swimming area. The place where we spent some of our happiest summer hours is overgrown with trees and brush.

Havey Beach is on the Charles River. And at a time when we were fighting World War II and gasoline was rationed, it was the closest and one of the only places where families could do some swimming and sunning. Then, one day, we arrived eager to dive into the river only to be greeted by signs telling us that swimming would no longer be permitted at our beach. Something about pollution and it being unhealthy to swim in the river. We turned around and headed back over the Brookline line to South Brookline, and we never swam at Havey Beach again.

Looking back on it, what was so amazing—and so troubling—was that there were no demonstrations, no public protests, no demands of our state politicians that they do something about it. We just more or less accepted it. That was "progress."

At about the same time, Magazine Beach was closed for the same reasons. That beach on the Cambridge side of the BU Bridge, a haven for hundreds of people on a hot summer afternoon, also closed with little or no public outcry. Too bad. The river was polluted, and nobody seemed to know what to do about it.

By the time I went to law school up the river, the stench coming off the Charles on a hot day smelled like rotten eggs. I remember as a young legislator sitting through one session after another listening to engineers tell us that the only answer was to build giant flushing machines at great expense that would literally clean the river water and put it back.

Finally, somebody came up with a new idea. If we could find the sources of pollution and force the people producing it to eliminate them, the river—with time—might just cleanse itself. "Point source pollution," they called it. And that is exactly what we did.

Today the river is back to good health and recently received an A-minus rating—suitable for virtually any activity, including swimming, most of the time. It has taken a lot of work and, above all, an aroused public that finally decided the trashing of the public realm and, especially, our priceless river was unacceptable. I am delighted the Charles is getting cleaner and cleaner, but I won't be satisfied until my old beach on the VFW Parkway is reopened for public swimming and recreation.

Kitty and I plan to be there—and I hope you'll be there, too.

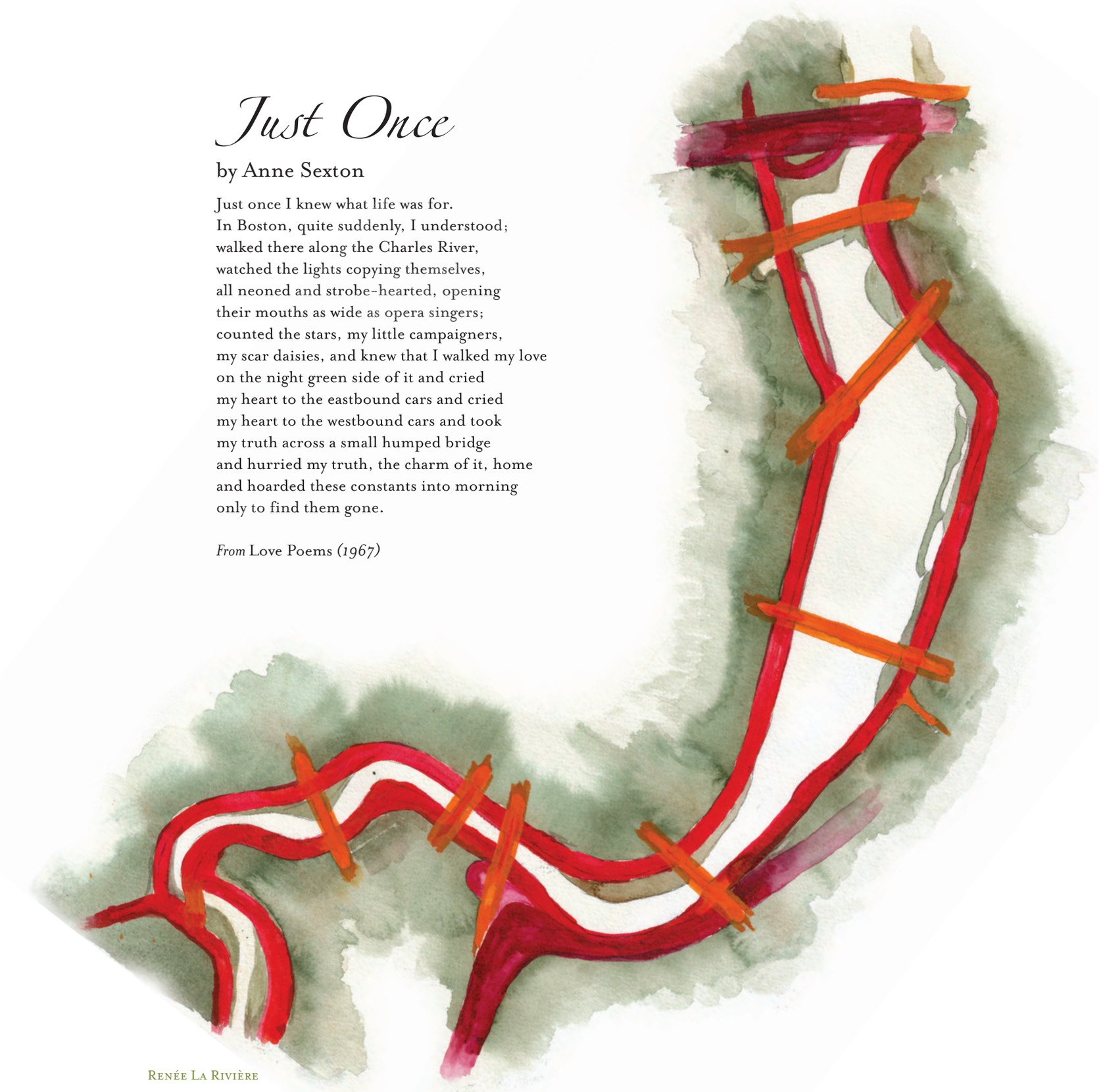
"I often go to the Charles River parklands to recreate and spend time with friends. Because public resources for the maintenance of the parklands are limited, I am happy to volunteer to do my part in their upkeep. While volunteering, I get to meet like-minded people and work outdoors in the fresh air in all seasons." - Brian McCormick, Conservancy volunteer

Just Once

by Anne Sexton

Just once I knew what life was for.
In Boston, quite suddenly, I understood;
walked there along the Charles River,
watched the lights copying themselves,
all neoned and strobe-hearted, opening
their mouths as wide as opera singers;
counted the stars, my little campaigners,
my scar daisies, and knew that I walked my love
on the night green side of it and cried
my heart to the eastbound cars and cried
my heart to the westbound cars and took
my truth across a small humped bridge
and hurried my truth, the charm of it, home
and hoarded these constants into morning
only to find them gone.

From Love Poems *(1967)*



Renée La Rivière

"The Charles has an enchanted storybook quality for me—every bend, every stretch offers a new character, a new unfolding drama on the water and off. I find it comforting, even pleasing, that the Charles will flow and the dramas on it unfold long after I'm gone." - Sara Hall, rower, author

Tony Conner

An Epic Paddle by Tom Ashbrook

A child's rite of passage in our house is kayaking the Charles, from up in the tree-lined shallows between Watertown and Brighton, where a boy or girl can imagine they're out in deep woods, down to the great wide basin where the city skyline with its golden dome says "You are in Boston!"

I grew up catching crawdads in far-off Kickapoo Creek. Learned to kayak in the South China Sea. Read every tale of rivers and ferrymen and Siddhartha and samadhi I could get my hands on. Then settled down with kids in Newton, and all we wanted to do was paddle on the beautiful Charles.

Our kayaks went all over, but the Charles ritual came first and it was this: as soon as each child had the arm strength—what were they? Nine, ten, twelve?—we put in by Daly Field and Community Rowing and paddled toward the sea. Our destination was MIT, where mama worked. For a child of the right age, this was an epic journey, an adventure.

We would take to the river on a bright day in May or June, sliding our kayaks into the water early in the morning, when the bend by the boat launch was all green and rippling gold. The river is wide but much of it shallow there. A paddle easily touches bottom. A child is put at ease. What is wide and imposing is not necessarily deep or unknowable, they see.

"Imagine a place just two minutes from the Red Line, where you can feel the wind on your face, see the clouds, sun, and sky reflected on the water, where the urban soundscape melts away and you hear the lapping sound of water on the

The journey is not a race. We would find our stroke and travel and talk. About birds and lily pads. The Arsenal and the Civil War. About how the Charles was used and shaped over time. Textiles and watchmakers. The Head of the Charles. Boathouses. Ancient Greeks and the sliding stroke and triremes and getting to Troy.

By the Anderson Bridge, we'd be working at it. A little sweaty. Gliding by Harvard's grandeur. Thinking bridge design and wide arches. Grateful for the moments of shade. Acknowledging the trip was long, a little tiring. At Magazine Beach, the river wide again, we'd nudge to shore and pull out sandwiches. Watch the runners go by, the dogs at play. Check our blistered hands.

And then it was the home stretch. Past the BU Boathouse, where the river got so broad it felt like an ocean. Where a swell could rock the boats and progress was hard to feel on the wide water. Where we stayed close to one another for safety, for help if need be. And a last long bridge slid overhead. And there was the city, our Oz on the water, with its steeples and brownstones and familiar towers. It always looks so elegant from the river.

We would clamber out at the MIT Sailing dock, find our land legs in the Infinite Corridor, and present the child in triumph to the mother who always pronounced the young traveler heroic. It never failed to be a great day.

They say you never step in the same river twice. The water moves on. Fair enough. But there's the Charles, then and now. Cleaner and better than ever thanks to a lot of community effort and care. Ready for paddles and dreams and adventure.

hull of your sailboat. Now breathe deeply and take in that feeling of tranquility and freedom. Welcome to the Charles River." - Charlie Zechel, executive director, Community Boating, Inc.

A Tiny Arm of a Vast Sea by Stephen Greenblatt

My Charles River is, for the most part, the very modest stretch that I run along when the weather is right: from my house down to the bottom of Sparks Street in Cambridge and then west, in the direction of Mt. Auburn Hospital, where I was born. I breathe a sigh of relief when I've crossed Memorial Drive to the river side, in part simply because I've dodged the four lanes of traffic and in part because suddenly the city seems to drop away, not completely of course, but enough to conjure up a different rhythm in my body and mind. I pass the stone marker for Sir Richard's Landing—where, as I read when I stopped once, in 1632 the Reverend George Phillips first protested against "taxation without representation"—and the Cambridge Boat Club; I cross over the Eliot Bridge and down the wooden stairs and through the dank tunnel under the road. And I emerge into the light and onto the pleasant macadam path that follows the bends of the river.

My run takes me past the kiosk where they rent canoes and kayaks, onto a little wooden walkway that borders a lily pond, then alongside the community garden where there are usually people digging and chatting, past the children's playground, and—if I am feeling sufficiently energetic—all the way to the Northeastern University boathouse, where I turn around and begin the jog back. On this part of the river, there are usually boats of rowers training for competition, often accompanied by coaches in motor launches; on the path there are dogs and flocks of Canada geese and mothers pushing baby carriages and friends chatting and old people resting on benches and lovers entwined in each other's arms.

In the past few years, the people I encounter have become more racially and ethnically diverse, along with the languages that reach my ears. There are Brazilians now and Salvadorans and Mexicans; Russians and Armenians; a few Africans in colorful robes; Chinese, Korean, Cambodian, and Indian families; many women in headscarves and some occasionally in full burkhas. The sight of them along the banks of the Charles, alongside the English, Irish, Jewish, Italian, African American, and other faces familiar from my Boston childhood, pleases me. It enlivens the river, at least in my imagination, with forms of navigation other than the sculls that are constantly rowing by. It helps me take in that the Charles is a tiny arm of the vast seas across which we all passed, sometime or other, some very recently, many others like my grandparents in the late nineteenth century, others still further back in time, back, back to the schooners and the slave ships and the Pilgrims and the Norsemen.

Some days I feel a bit lazy, and instead of crossing the Eliot Bridge, I shorten my run and follow the other bank of the river, along a narrow dirt trail that leads through the trees. The trail is tangled in some places with roots, so my jogging is slower, and I glimpse the river only through gaps in the trees, but there is a special reward. For a moment, all signs of the contemporary world—the paved path, the bicycles, the kiosk, the playground—are effaced, and I am catapulted still further into what Shakespeare calls "the dark backward and abysm of time." I can now conjure up those people, the only ones who did not find their way to the banks of the Charles by crossing a great sea. They descended instead from those intrepid souls who walked ages and ages ago across the land bridge that once linked the Western and the Eastern hemispheres and began the great trek that peopled a part of the globe that until then had not borne the imprint of human feet. I am brought back then—a graying elder jogging along the river—to an early chapter of our region and to an early chapter of my own life, when I prowled around my backyard in Newton, near another reach of the Charles, digging in search of arrowheads and dreaming about those who came before me.

Renée La Rivière

"Vans is excited to support the skatepark with a $1.5 million donation because we want skateboarders and BMX riders in Boston to have a great facility on the river and in the heart of the city where they can express themselves through their sport. The Conservancy's tenacious advocacy and planning allowed us to make this vision a reality." - Steve Van Doren, VP of Events and Promotions, Vans

Printed with Permission of the Harvard Map Collection

"My favorite part was that we got to go out in the fresh air and ride bikes by the Charles River." "I loved that I got to ride along the bike paths with my friends." "The sun was blazing and my hair was blowing—it was super nice!" "Riding up the big hill on Magazine Beach I went to gear one, so it felt like I was riding on air. I felt as if I could climb Mount. Everest." - Children from the CYCLE Kids program

Down by the River

by David Ferry

The page is green. Like water, words are drifting
Across the notebook page on a day in June
Of irresistible good weather. Everything's easy.

On this side of the river, on a bench near the water,
A young man is peaceably stroking the arm of a girl.
He is dreaming of eating a peach. Somebody's rowing,

Somebody's running over the bridge that goes over
The highway beyond the river. The river is blue,
The river is moving along, taking it easy.

A breeze has come up, and somewhere a dog is barking,
Acknowledging the stirring of the breeze.
Nobody knows whose dog. The river is moving,

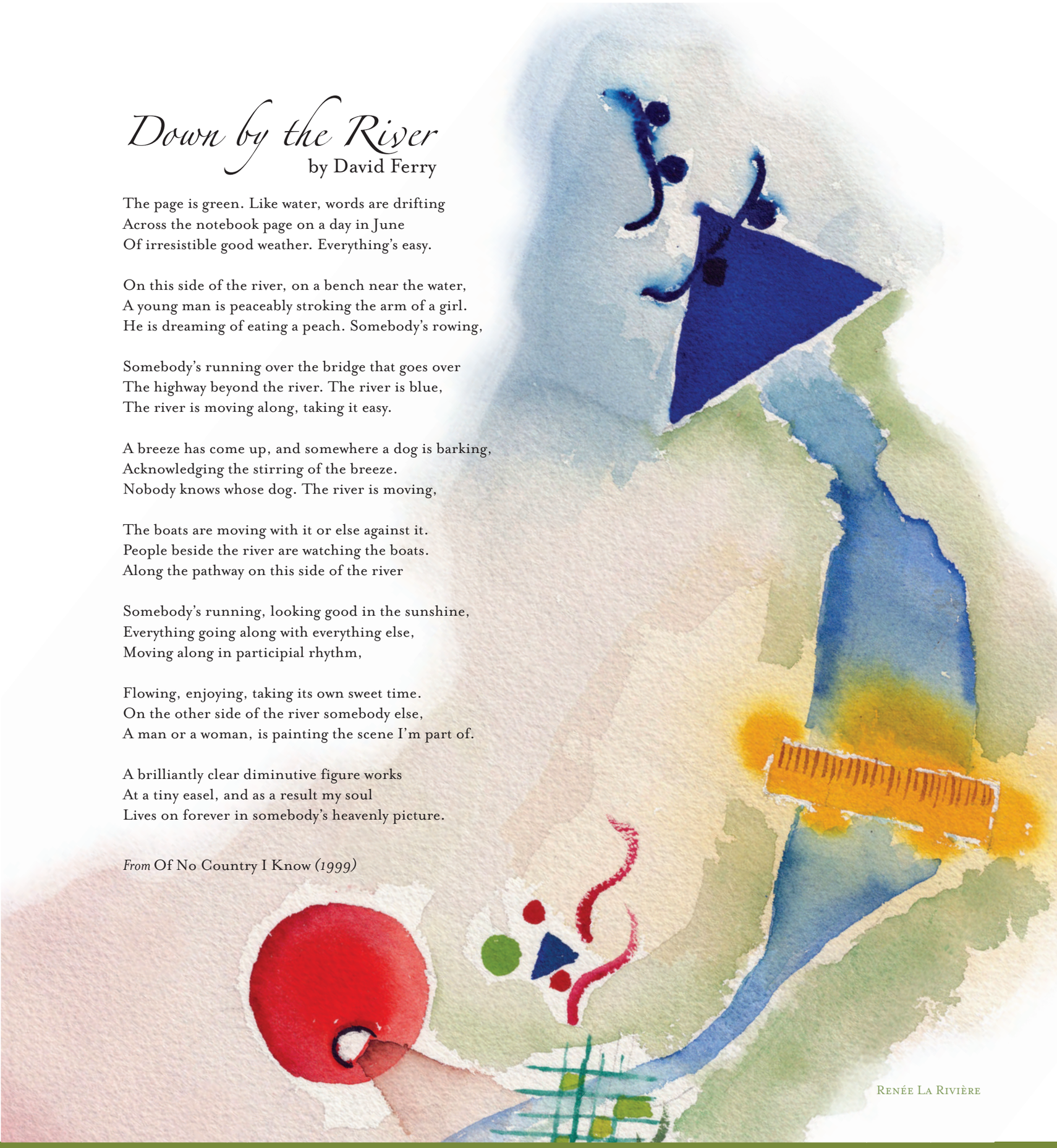
The boats are moving with it or else against it.
People beside the river are watching the boats.
Along the pathway on this side of the river

Somebody's running, looking good in the sunshine,
Everything going along with everything else,
Moving along in participial rhythm,

Flowing, enjoying, taking its own sweet time.
On the other side of the river somebody else,
A man or a woman, is painting the scene I'm part of.

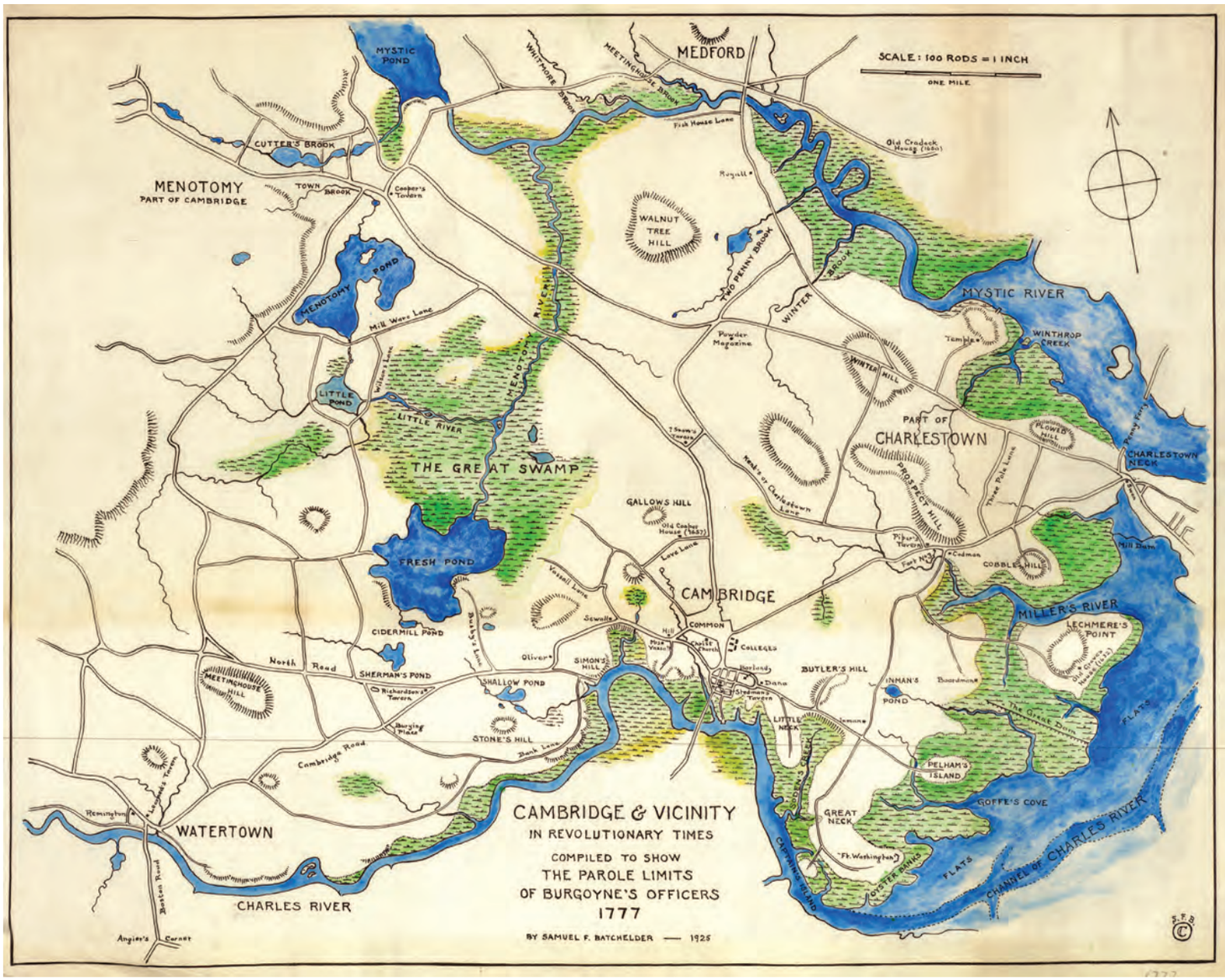
A brilliantly clear diminutive figure works
At a tiny easel, and as a result my soul
Lives on forever in somebody's heavenly picture.

From Of No Country I Know *(1999)*



Renée La Rivière

"The Charles River is an integral part of our business at Boston Duck Tours and we believe it's the highlight. When you see the eyes of guests as we splash into the Charles, cruise along the riverbanks, and show them the Boston and Cambridge skylines, you know you've created a memory that they will never forget." - Cindy Brown, CEO, Boston Duck Tours

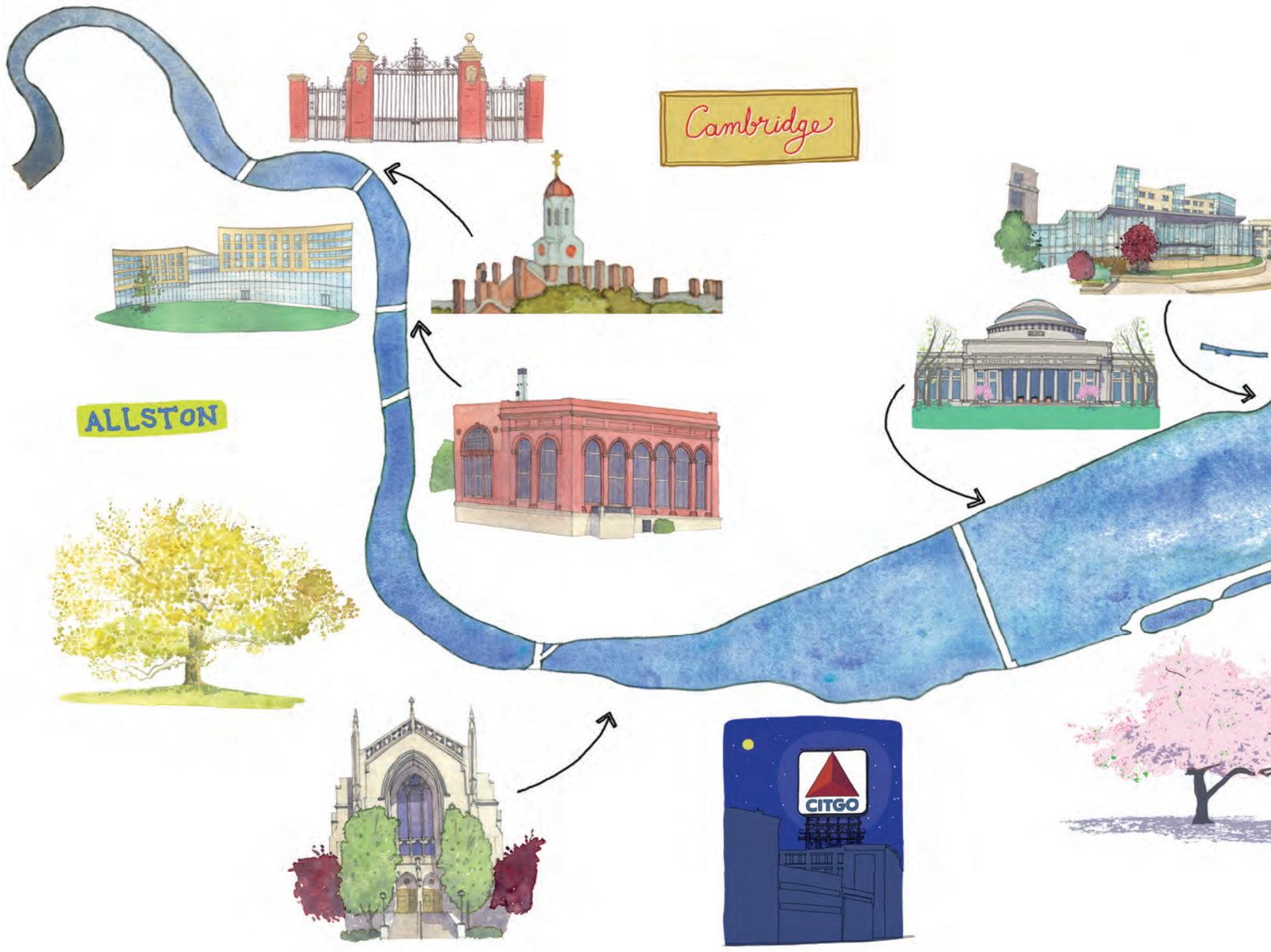


Excerpt from Thoreau's Journal by Henry David Thoreau

Coming out of town,—willingly as usual,—when I saw that reach of Charles River just above the depot, the fair, still water this cloudy evening suggesting the way to eternal peace and beauty, whence it flows, the placid, lake-like fresh water, so unlike the salt brine, affected me not a little. I was reminded of the way in which Wordsworth so coldly speaks of some natural visions or scenes "giving him pleasure." This is perhaps the first vision of Elysium on this route from Boston. And just then I saw an encampment of Penobscots, their wigwams appearing above the railroad fence, they, too, looking up the river as they sat on the ground, and enjoying the scene. What can be more impressive than to look up a noble river just at evening,—and behold its placid water, reflecting the woods and sky, lapsing inaudibly towards the ocean; to behold as a lake, but know it as a river, tempting the beholder to explore it and his own destiny at once? Haunt of waterfowl. This was above the factories,—all that I saw. That water could never have flowed under a factory. How then could it have reflected the sky?

From The Journal of Henry David Thoreau *(July 09, 1851)*

"When I'm having a mental block, I tell myself, 'Stop this and get out!' and I take a run along the Charles. That's always how I get a breakthrough." – Diane Paulus, artistic director of the American Repertory Theater



Designing Buildings for the Charles River Edge by William Rawn

When in 1927 Charles McKim designed Mellon and Hamilton Halls, two Harvard Business School (HBS) residence halls on the Charles River, he chose to give each building a subtle concave curve facing the river. Soldiers Field Road did not exist then, so the two long buildings faced the river directly. In 1948, Alvar Aalto, the famous Finnish architect, designed Baker House at MIT along the river. Also a residence hall, it has an extended "S" shape producing essentially two concave curves facing the river. Both at HBS and MIT, those concave curves—curves like the interior of a circle or an ellipse—create a sense of opening toward the river, a sense of the outreaching of two arms welcoming passersby along the river to engage the building. In certain ways, all three buildings "front" upon the river. Interestingly, four Harvard River Houses (Eliot, Winthrop with its two structures, Leverett, and Dunster Houses) are three-sided rectilinear buildings, each with its fourth, open side facing the river. Call these a form of concave rectangles.

The Charles River has two "natures" as it flows eastward into Cambridge and Boston. One is the still meandering waterway, making sometimes subtle and sometimes strong turns in its curving path. This nature is very apparent between the Eliot Bridge and the Boston University Bridge. Its other "nature" evolves as it widens into the lower Charles River Basin, east of the

"When I welcome new students to Harvard each year, I encourage them to spend some of their time at the Charles River. Walking its banks in the quiet of early morning, watching rowers glide by on its surface, or enjoying breathtaking sunsets from its bridges: these experiences are part of what makes life

Tom Gastel

BU Bridge. The edges of the river open up and become quite straight. Ironically, with the exception of McKim and Aalto, most architects have designed buildings along the river that are either rectilinear with a "bar" parallel to the river, or shaped with a convex curve—curved like the exterior of a circle or ellipse—facing the river. These latter buildings are often thought to mimic the curve of the river at a particular point.

When we were hired as the architects for Tata Hall, we were given a spectacular site, the only large expanse of grass left on the HBS campus, facing the river adjacent to the Weeks Bridge. We considered all three of these "alternative" building forms and quickly chose a quite gradual concave shape. Why?

The Business School, the donor, and we as architects all felt strongly that because this was the last HBS open space along the river, we wanted to "give back" to the city some green open space along Soldiers Field Road. All of us wanted a sense of openness to the public. Anything approaching a sense of wall seemed inappropriate. A long bar building parallel to the river would inevitably feel like a wall. A convex curved building facing the river would also feel like a wall. This question was much discussed, as some felt the convex shape would naturally mimic the curve of the river in a positive way at that location. To avoid any sense of wall, we enthusiastically selected the concave form.

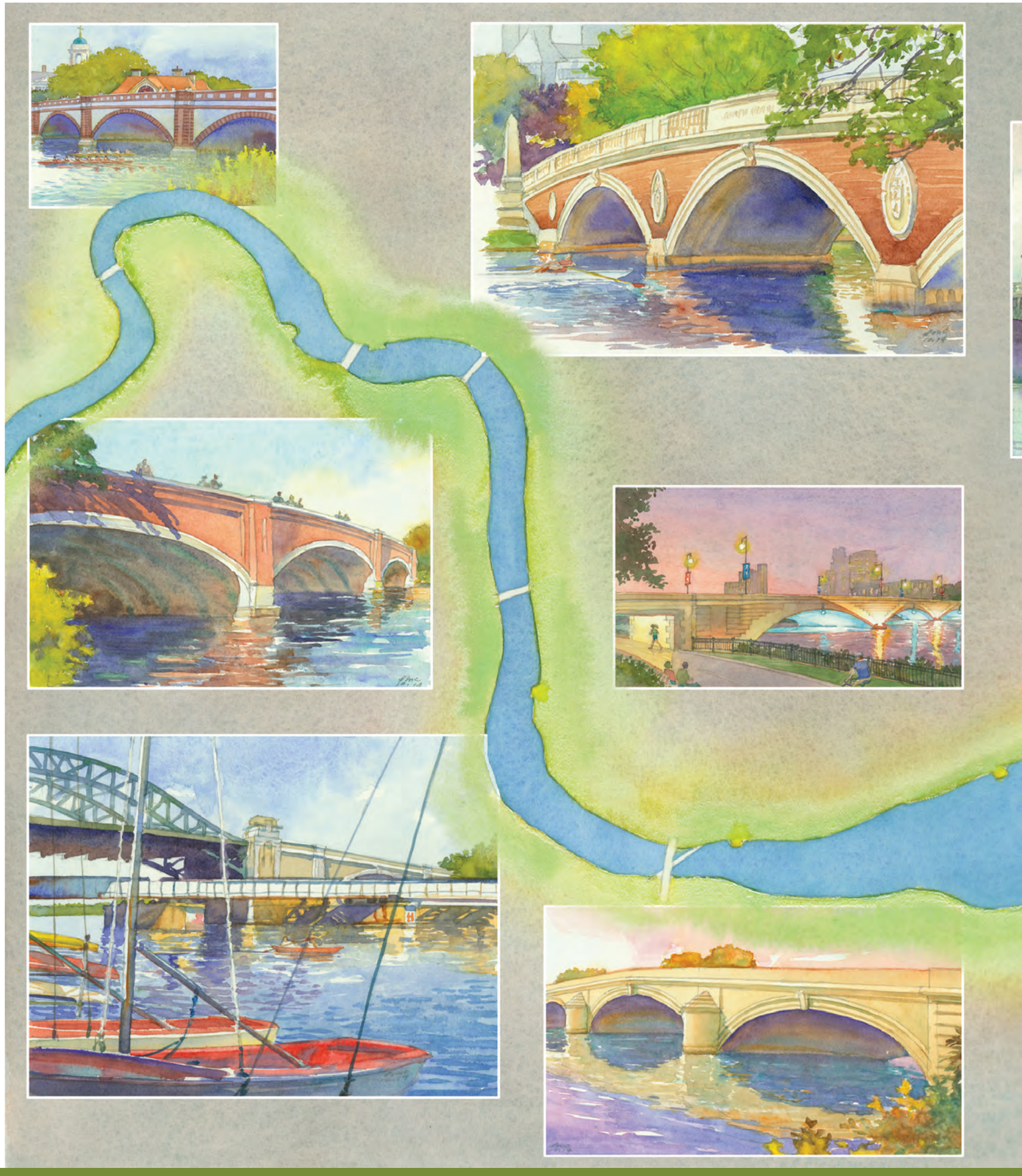
HBS was interested in both the sense of "seeing through to the campus" and the sense of "opening the building up" metaphorically to the broader public. The Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) strongly supported this goal, too.

The result, of course, is the Tata Hall you see from the river and Soldiers Field Road. The lower 37 feet of the building is all glass. It is particularly clear "low iron" glass and is part of a "double wall" system of glass wall which supports serious sustainability goals to mitigate the heat gain and glare commonly associated with glass buildings. The glass allows the public to see through to the campus and allows HBS users to see through the building out to the river. The building deliberately does not face inward; it faces outward. Reed Hilderbrand, Landscape Architects, supported this scheme with a gently arced set of paths, new trees, and a somewhat rolling lawn. This landscape makes that open space even more public in its support of the building. I would note, too, that a crème-colored limestone was selected to reinforce this sense of welcome. We felt a brick building on top of glass would feel too heavy and foreboding. Instead, a light-colored stone feels deliberately lighter in weight and more accessible.

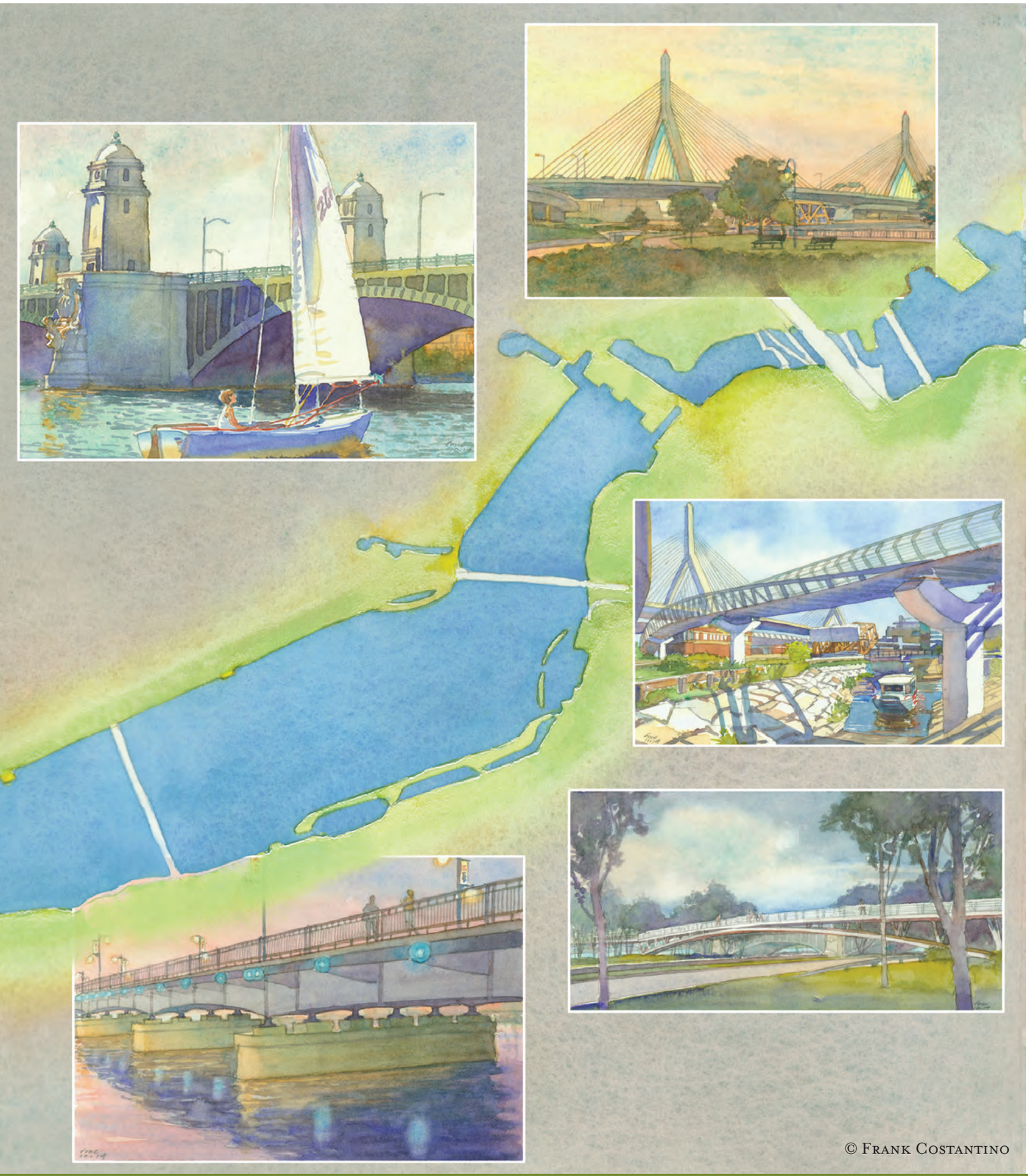
We also like the way the concave building shape acts as a contrast to the bulging edge of the river at the Weeks Bridge. This shape creates a dynamic counterpoint of building to land form. Hopefully it reflects the lyricism of the curved shape of the building as it relates to the differently curved form of the river's edge.

One other interesting element comes from the concave shaping of a building along a river. Aalto, when he designed the MIT building, made a big point of the fact that with a concave curve facing the river, the inhabitants get to look out and see the river at an angle, experiencing the broader expanse as well as the directionality of the river. Looking out of a straight bar building parallel to the river, you are only able to look across the river, a less vibrant, less "moving" sight. We, of course, knew of Aalto's powerful admonition. At Tata Hall, we felt an almost spiritual obligation to provide an open lawn to the river to supplement the famous Baker Lawn 250 yards to the west. For us, the concave shape, with its arms suggesting open embrace, created a sense of welcome and reinforced the openness and publicness of the building that were so fundamentally important. These, combined with Aalto's observations about views looking up and down the river, simply affirmed our other instincts about designing along the Charles.

at the university—and life in Boston and Cambridge—so special. Fixed but always flowing, the Charles is a symbol of both tradition and change, a beautiful reminder of the potential of individuals and the power of institutions they build and foster." - Drew Gilpin Faust, president, Harvard University



"The edge of the Charles River was once seen only as a place for people and nature. Road builders saw it instead as an easy route for highways. Finally, the 21st-century reconstruction of the Longfellow Bridge and work by the Mass. Eye and Ear Infirmary offer the opportunity to consolidate Storrow Drive under one



© Frank Costantino

bridge arch and thereby restore much of the river-edge parkland taken away by a road." - Anthony Pangaro, principal at Millennium Partners, and Member of the Board of Directors, Esplanade Association

February on the River by Florence Ladd

In frigid morning air amid strangers
I watch
a young woman
in a spring green parka, black pants and cap
walk on ice
across the Charles River,
its flow stilled
in alabaster patches.

She pauses
now here now there
to test the texture under foot
and creeps on.

We stare in silence
dreading a fissure and a splash.

A woman breaks the silence: She must be doing it on a dare.
Another: Probably thinks she can walk on water, too.

I take off a glove, feel in my pocket
to ready my phone;
guessing where the ice is thinnest or thickest,
fearing the force of the river's undercurrent.

Approaching the Boston bank, she looks back.

A man photographs her, clicks and clicks again
when she touches land and turns
to make the return trip.

I leave the band of spectators
viewing her wintry one-woman show.
Distressed by her bravado I walk away
wondering if she will make it across safely
or
make the evening news.

"For a few brief hours each Fourth of July, the Hatch Shell feels like the center of the universe. There's a magic that still gives me chills after twenty years: the thousands of people, the green expanse of the Esplanade, and the gleaming

June Vernon

river reflecting the night sky. I feel immense pride: pride in our country, our city, and its amazing orchestra."
– Keith Lockhart, conductor of the The Boston Pops

Hollis Machala

Mapping the River's History by Nancy S. Seasholes

When I was in fifth grade in Chicago, our teacher had us draw a map of Boston showing the small peninsula on which Boston was located at the time of the Revolution. I think the purpose was to help us understand the "one if by land and two if by sea" line from Longfellow's poem about Paul Revere's ride. Whatever the reason, I distinctly remember drawing the map and then being very surprised, when I came to Boston for college, to find no evidence of that small peninsula. I later learned that the waters surrounding the peninsula had been filled in to make the land on which the city is now located, a process I call landmaking. And perhaps it was the contrast between that fifth-grade map and the present landform that piqued my interest in finding out more about when, why, and how this landmaking was done.

I only pursued that interest many years later, however, when working for archaeological contract firms engaged in

"The magnificent Charles River is a powerful magnet that lures, captivates, seduces, and enchants people from every walk of life, old, young, fat, slim, of every ethnic or religious order. The Charles River Conservancy, under the brilliant leadership of Renata von Tscharner along with staff and friends, has brought to fruition a 40,000-square-foot world-class skatepark

environmental review. The jobs—usually projects such as highway widenings or gas pipelines that involved what archaeologists term "subsurface disturbance," or, in plain English, digging—required an archaeological assessment before construction could begin. My job was to conduct historical research to determine where archaeological sites might exist even before we began excavating. Historical maps proved to be one of my most useful sources.

Whenever I had a job in Boston, a place with so much man-made land, I felt as if I were reinventing the wheel. I always had to figure out whether the project was located on original or made land and, if the latter, when the area was filled, why, by whom, how, and with what. At the time there was one modern book on the subject—Walter Muir Whitehill's *Boston: A Topographical History*—but I soon found it inadequate because Whitehill doesn't cover all parts of Boston and includes some errors. So I began to amass my own knowledge about Boston's topographical development. At the time, however, I was working on a dissertation about something completely different, and though I'd found some excellent materials in the western part of the state, my full-time job in Boston made them difficult to pursue. Then one day my academic advisor said, "Why, when you've learned so much about it, aren't you writing a dissertation about how Boston was filled in?" I replied, "Beats me," and changed dissertation topics on the spot. The rest, as they say, is history—I did write a dissertation on Boston landmaking, turned it into a book, and also produced an accompanying book of walking tours.

When I began my research, one of my first tasks was to figure out where and when filling had taken place. Historical maps proved to be the key. By comparing successive maps in the same series, I could readily see the changes in the Boston shoreline from one map to the next. The trick was to find map series that were reasonably accurate, but, since Boston has been well mapped since the 1700s, this was not very difficult. Once I'd identified where and when land had been added to Boston, I then did further research about the landmaking projects.

The Charles River was a good place to apply this methodology, for landmaking has completely transformed the lower river, creating what is now the Charles River Basin. Maps showed that the lower river was originally a tidal estuary, subject to the rise and fall of ocean tides. Just downstream from where the BU Bridge now stands, the river opened into a large bay on the back side of the small peninsula on which Boston was founded, hence the name Back Bay. Back Bay was huge—its waters originally covered not only what are now the Back Bay and Fenway neighborhoods but also the Prudential Center, part of the South End, and, on the Cambridge side, the area now occupied by MIT.

Many Bostonians know that Back Bay was filled in, but most think all the filling occurred during the major project that took place from the 1850s to 1880s. Actually, it began around the edges in the 1790s and early 1800s, making land that is now part of the Public Garden and also Charles Street at the foot of Beacon Hill. Later maps showed a Mill Dam constructed in 1818–21 across the entire mouth of Back Bay—from Charles Street at the foot of the Common to what is now Kenmore Square—with a road on top that's now Beacon Street. Filling around the edges continued in the 1830s, creating what is now the Public Garden, Bay Village, Mass Pike Towers, Castle Square housing, and the Tremont Street section of the South End. Maps also illuminated the major Back Bay project itself, showing the line of fill progressing across the bay from east to west, culminating in the 1880s and bordered along the river by a seawall north of Beacon Street—the same seawall that's now next to Storrow Drive. In the late 1880s and '90s, a seawall was also built on the Cambridge side and the area behind it filled, making the land where MIT now stands.

So, by the end of the 1800s, filling on both sides of the river had created the basic shape of the Charles River Basin, but that basin was still tidal. How did it become the freshwater basin we know today? The answer is again shown on maps: the first Charles River Dam was constructed in 1905–10 across the river with an L-shaped park on the upriver side, now the site of the Museum of Science. The dam changed the Charles River Basin from salt water to fresh and, as part of the project, a narrow embankment, or esplanade, was filled along the Boston side of the basin between the Longfellow Bridge and Charlesgate. In the early 1930s, the width of the Esplanade was doubled and the lagoon between Exeter and Fairfield created; then, in the early 1950s, Storrow Drive was built on the 1906–8 part of the Esplanade. To compensate for the land taken, islands were filled east of the lagoon, creating a new series of lagoons. Thus, historical maps enabled me to trace where and when the Charles River Basin was created, but it took research to understand the reasons for the various landmaking projects, who conducted them, and how they were accomplished.

under the strikingly beautiful ramps of the Zakim Bridge. The scenic confluence of this river from nature and the man-made structures of bridge and skatepark commends this once-desolate area to its finest use."
- Nancy Schön, sculptor and skatepark visionary

Swimming Home by Liza Ketchum

Renée La Rivière

On a steamy July day, I join a group of interested observers at the Waltham boat launch. Heat radiates from the asphalt, and compressors vibrate on two flatbed trucks. An enormous tank sits on each truck, and a large hose snakes from one tank across the asphalt and out onto the dock. The river is calm on this bend in the Charles River, where swallows dive for insects above tea-colored water—but it's about to become a busy place.

We are here to witness the release of 200,000 shad larvae into the Charles. The larvae, recently hatched in a Fish and Wildlife hatchery in North Attleboro, will soon embark on their journey to the sea.

At the invitation of a friendly Fish and Wildlife intern, I climb a stepladder and peer into the tank. At first, the dark, swirling water seems lifeless.

"They're tiny," the young woman says. "Look closely."

I lean over the tank, squinting. Thousands of larvae, the size of small commas, are suddenly visible, wriggling and twisting as if they know something exciting lies ahead. The intern hands me a Fish and Wildlife brochure that shows a single larva, magnified many times and shaped like a question mark. Dye stains the larva's tiny otolith (the area behind its brain). In four or five years, when adult shad return to spawn, researchers will scoop up the fish downstream and look for the dye. These releases began in 2006, and already the majority of the returning shad carry the marker—a sign that the stocking is a success.

When it's time to release the larvae, pale yellow water gushes from the tank. The wriggling shad larvae will imprint on this warm, placid spot in the river. Like salmon, shad are anadromous (Greek for "running up"). Both species live in salt water but spawn in freshwater rivers. Instinct—and, possibly, what scientist Bern Heinrich calls "scent nostalgia"—will draw these larvae back to the place of their release.

I am fascinated by creatures with a homing instinct (a behavior that scientists call "philopatry"). Female leatherback turtles hatch on a beach in the Caribbean, circumnavigate the Atlantic Ocean for decades, and then return to lay eggs on the beach where they were born. Female lemon sharks swim into the mangrove lagoons of their birth to deliver live shark "pups." During four generations, the monarch butterfly migrates from all over North America to Mexico, where its cycle began the previous year.

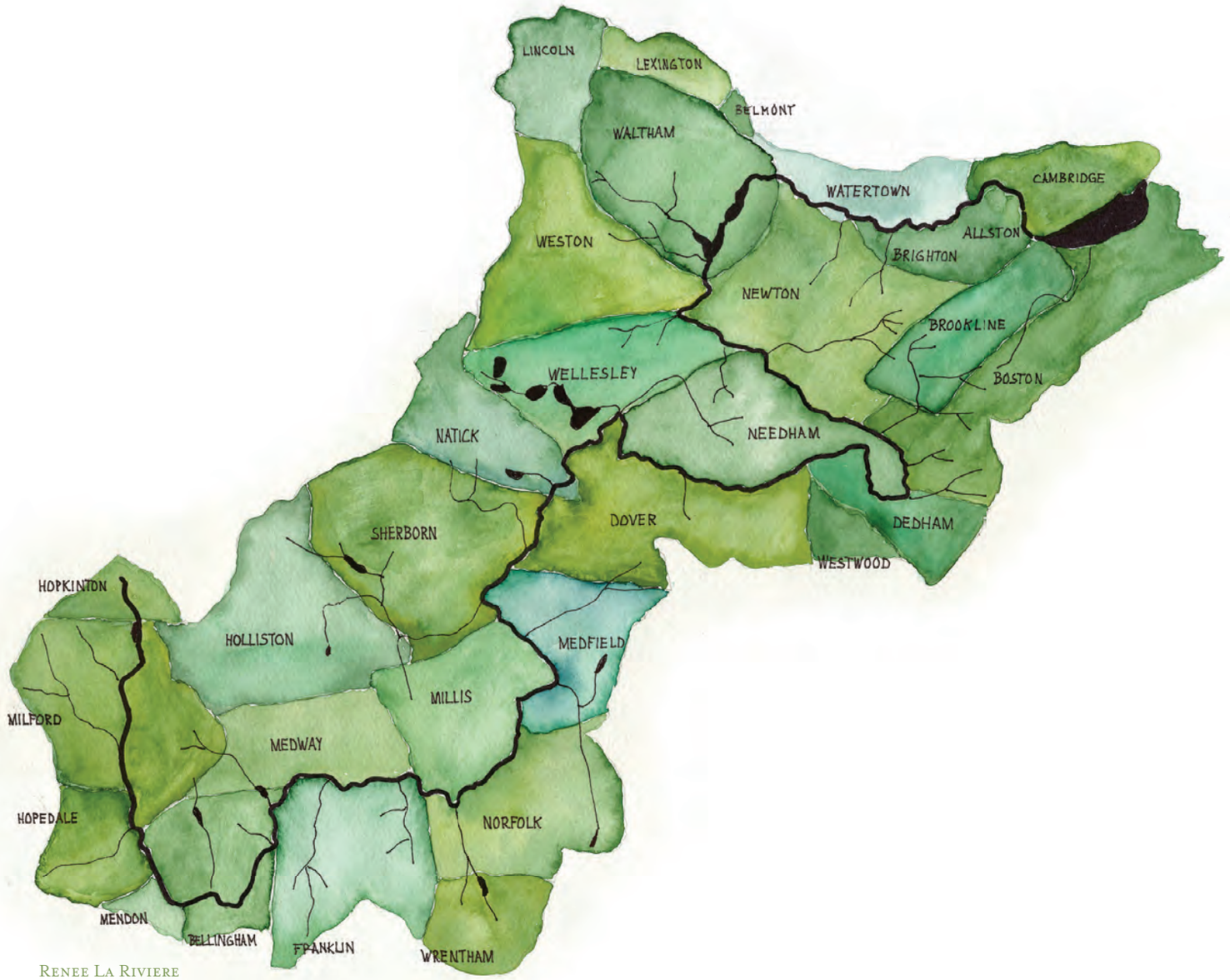
I am a city transplant, far from my own natal home in Vermont. When I moved to Watertown in 1997, the town's proximity to the river helped me to feel closer to nature. I walk the river paths all year long. For many years, I also tested the river, joining a team of more than 80 volunteers who take monthly samples from 35 sites, from the river's source to Boston Harbor. "Citizen scientists"—as the Charles River Watershed Association calls its volunteers—drop their buckets into the river at precisely 6 A.M. on the second Tuesday of the month, except when the river is frozen.

On river testing days, I carried a notebook where I kept track of the weather and of birds and other wildlife at our site. My jottings recorded occasional fish jumping, along with great blue and little green herons. Once, we even saw a black-crowned night heron on the bank below the Western Avenue Bridge. Now I wonder if the fish we spotted were shad returning home.

One of my favorite river walks is the stretch that begins near the Watertown dam. In May, the shriek of gulls announces the run of blueback and alewife herring—and, lately, of shad. All fish run a gauntlet. Gulls dive-bomb them from above, cormorants slip underwater to snatch them from below, and herons wait on the banks, their patience a Buddhist lesson in concentration.

If the fish escape human and avian predators, they face an even bigger obstacle in the dam. The Pequossette Indians built a fish weir on this site, which later became a gristmill for grinding corn. Though the sound of tumbling water is aesthetically pleasing, the dam serves no purpose now. A fish ladder was built on the south side of the river, yet the current draws most fish to the north side, where eager fishermen (and a few women) wait to net the struggling fish. This means that fewer fish find the ladder that should help them scale the dam.

"The physical changes in the section of the Charles River that I see from my office desk every day serve as both proof and a daily reminder that the volunteer hours invested in cleanup efforts can, and do, make a difference. Additionally, the dramatic progress in the overall health of the entire river and surrounding



Renee La Riviere

The odds of a full-grown shad reaching its natal home are slim, yet they persist. Each desperate leap against the wall of water reveals the strength of the homing instinct. Their determination tugs at my heart. Is the desire to return home universal?

In the past few years, more than a thousand dams have been removed across the country. A recent report on the radio program "Living on Earth" traced the return of steelhead salmon to the Elwha River on the Olympic Peninsula after two major dams were removed. When the fish returned, predators followed: eagles and herons; otters, fishers, and bears. This story made me think of Pete Seeger's song about the Hudson and his hope that "Someday, though maybe not this year/My Hudson River will once again flow clear."

The Charles River recently celebrated receiving an A-minus grade for water quality from the EPA. What if "flowing clear" meant more than clean water? What if we could return to the boat launch some May morning to watch hundreds of adult shad spawn in the same shallow waters where they began their life's journey? It's a dream I carry as I walk the river.

ecosystem serve as validation to all volunteers that our efforts have paid off. Personally, the overwhelming sense of accomplishment I feel knowing that I helped contribute to this change is truly heartwarming."
- Jesse P. Gawrys, associate principal at Genzyme

The Bridge by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

I stood on the bridge at midnight,
  As the clocks were striking the hour,
And the moon rose o'er the city,
  Behind the dark church-tower.

I saw her bright reflection
  In the waters under me,
Like a golden goblet falling
  And sinking into the sea.

And far in the hazy distance
  Of that lovely night in June,
The blaze of the flaming furnace
  Gleamed redder than the moon.

Among the long, black rafters
  The wavering shadows lay,
And the current that came from the ocean
  Seemed to lift and bear them away;

As, sweeping and eddying through them,
  Rose the belated tide,
And, streaming into the moonlight,
  The seaweed floated wide.

And like those waters rushing
  Among the wooden piers,
A flood of thoughts came o'er me
  That filled my eyes with tears.

How often, O, how often,
  In the days that had gone by,
I had stood on that bridge at midnight
  And gazed on that wave and sky!

How often, O, how often,
  I had wished that the ebbing tide
Would bear me away on its bosom
  O'er the ocean wild and wide!

For my heart was hot and restless,
  And my life was full of care,
And the burden laid upon me
  Seemed greater than I could bear.

But now it has fallen from me,
  It is buried in the sea;
And only the sorrow of others
  Throws its shadow over me.

Yet whenever I cross the river
  On its bridge with wooden piers,
Like the odor of brine from the ocean
  Comes the thought of other years.

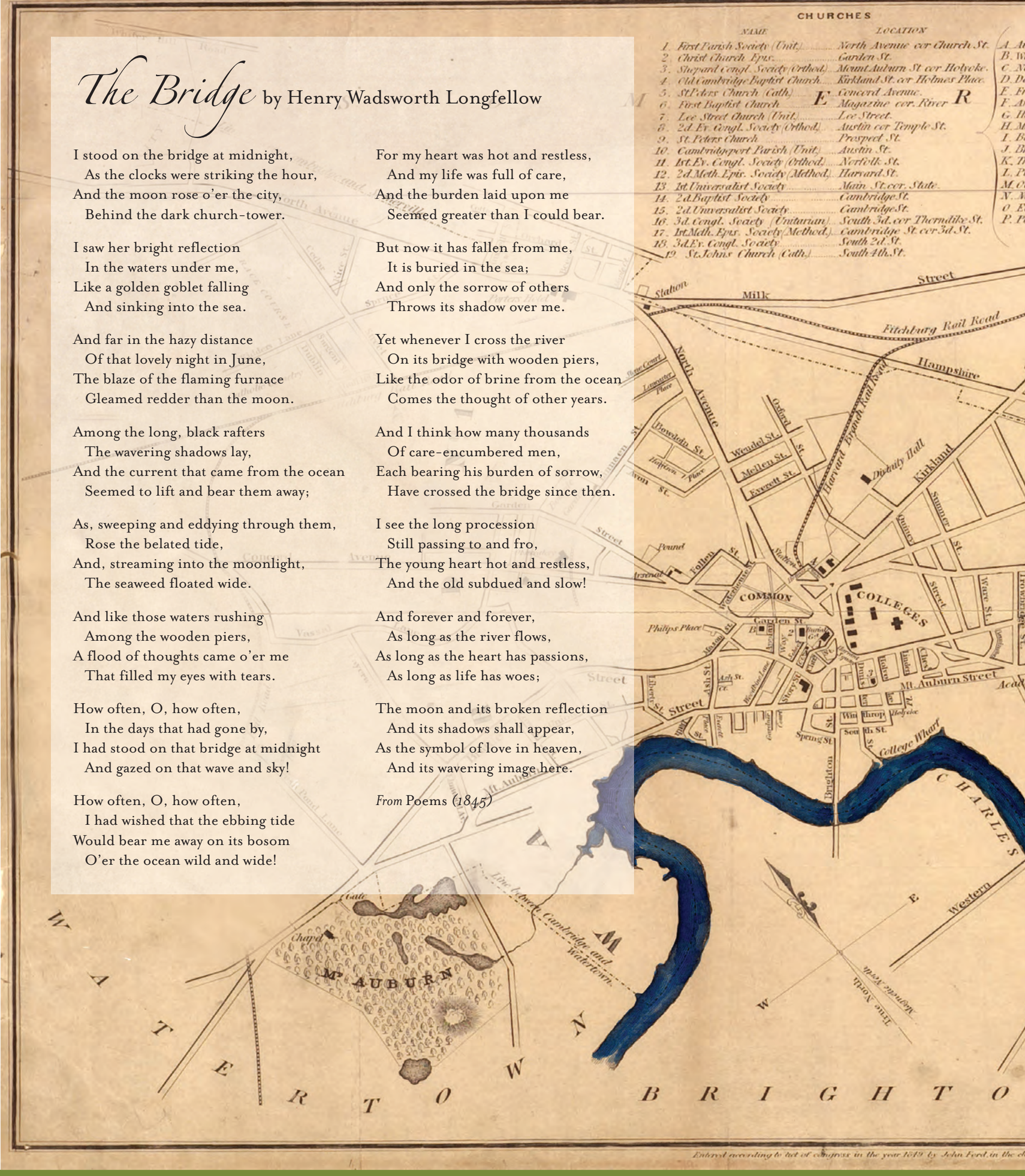
And I think how many thousands
  Of care-encumbered men,
Each bearing his burden of sorrow,
  Have crossed the bridge since then.

I see the long procession
  Still passing to and fro,
The young heart hot and restless,
  And the old subdued and slow!

And forever and forever,
  As long as the river flows,
As long as the heart has passions,
  As long as life has woes;

The moon and its broken reflection
  And its shadows shall appear,
As the symbol of love in heaven,
  And its wavering image here.

From Poems *(1845)*



"We depend on water to nourish the body but also to feed our human creativity. The sensory nature of water—its movement and sound, its scent, touch, and taste—provides endless inspiration for artists to create work that ranges from sublime awe to quiet contemplation. From the Charles River's narrow windings to the broad expanse

of its Lower Basin, the river has inspired painters, musicians, dancers, public art, and every sort of festivity along its banks, making it a cultural as well as a natural treasure." - Jason Weeks, executive director, Cambridge Arts Council

A Much More Better Charles

by Peter Howe

One deep satisfaction of spending decades as a newsman in a hometown you adore is seeing dreams you've written about actually come true.

Before jumping to New England Cable News in 2008—and shedding my middle initial—I worked 22 years as Peter J. Howe of the *Boston Globe*, taking a special interest in the Charles River and Boston Harbor cleanup. (I possibly wrote more articles and graphical explainers about cost-benefit analyses of combined sewer overflow upgrade proposals than any mass-market newspaper reporter in history.)

Two decades ago, I tracked the steadily climbing letter grades issued each year by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for the Charles's swimmability, including the 1999 triumph when the river finally left behind Ds and Cs for its first B-minus. I chronicled park lovers' battles with Central Artery engineers to make sure a wall of highway ramps called Scheme Z wouldn't kill century-old dreams of reconnecting the Charles River Basin with Boston Harbor—even if the best they could get would be "parkland squeezed in and around ramps and cement plants…and new pedestrian bridges 22 feet above the North Station railroad tracks." I introduced readers to an all-time good guy of the Metropolitan District Commission, Dan Driscoll, and his quest to reclaim the river's banks from illegal parking lots and construction dumps in Watertown and Newton with new ribbons of trail and timber causeway. Stories chronicled how, as the Charles gained in cleanliness after decades as an open industrial sewer, residential development blossomed in pioneering projects like Cronin's Landing in Waltham and North Point in Cambridge. And two years after they first rumbled down the city's streets and splashed into the basin, I noted how "the quirky Duck Tours" were rapidly becoming "one of Boston's must-do attractions."

"In recent years," my *Globe Magazine* piece observed just before the 1997 Head of the Charles, "the Charles River has become one of those rare examples of a natural resource that has gotten better the more people use it."

Fast-forward 20 years, and how much more better, forgive my English, it's gotten. With millions invested in unglamorous but critical storm sewer upgrades, the Charles earned its first A-minus from the EPA in 2013, safe for swimming

Joe Barbieri

84 percent of dry-weather days (think: hot summertime stretches when you'd most want to swim). A $25-million, 700-foot-long "sinusoidal" steel bridge opened in the summer of 2012, snaking from North Point those 22 feet over the North Station train tracks to Paul Revere Park in Charlestown. It's consistently swarmed with bicyclists and joggers and rollerbladers enjoying an infrastructure-threading urban adventure in its own right while also connecting the river to the harbor and people to both. Dan Driscoll's miles of bike paths have transformed the Watertown riverbanks west of the dam, opened new connections into Nonantum and Auburndale, and inspired millions more dollars in riverfront residential

"As a busy mediator trying to help bridge gaps between people and organizations, it is always with a great sense of relief that I get on my old bike and ride the paths along the glorious Charles River. I can breathe deeply as I take in the ever-changing drama of river and sky—that is, until I come to one of the bridge intersections. Suddenly I am confronted with the disruption

development. The Duck Boats aren't just more popular and more shamelessly imitated than ever; they've become the fixture of those sports championship parades we Hub sports fans have become spoiled to expect almost annually.

And as so many predicted back then, each new boater and sculler and sailor and jogger and bicyclist and pedestrian—and yes, sometimes swimmer—the river attracts becomes a constituent for making this natural resource better, someone who will insist that the long, ugly decline the Charles suffered in the mid-1900s never happens again.

Twenty years ago, promise and dream were stirring towards the reality we more and more experience as one of the great blessings of life in Boston today. The Lower Charles is not perfect. Much work and construction and renovation—and advocacy and vigilance—remain critically needed. I think, though, of how back in 1997, John Connor, skipper of a newly launched Waltham tour boat called the *MV Totem Pole*, told me: "The key is really awareness of how good the river can be."

Seventeen years later, knowing and believing how good it can be remains spot-on advice for the river's lovers and defenders to live and fight by, as this jewel of our hometown flows from success to success, delighting and attracting new generations to cherish the Charles.

and danger of intersecting traffic. I look forward someday to continuing my ride, uninterrupted, through safe, pleasant, well-lit and well-drained underpasses—which the commonwealth has now pledged to construct in response to the advocacy of the Conservancy and many others." - Jack Wofford, mediator and advocate

Renée La Rivière

"Running along the Charles is one of my favorite aspects of Boston. I love how I can match the vibe along the Charles to the tempo of my run. From Cambridgeport, I can turn left to experience the sunrise or, during the day, the bustle of the Harvard and Longfellow bridges and downtown Boston. In the evening, I can turn right toward the sunset and

By a River Possessed by Megan Marshall

My father, who'd been a Harvard student in the 1940s, liked to say that, sooner or later, everyone passes through Harvard Square. I was a kid growing up in Southern California then and had no reason to doubt him. But when I finally reached Cambridge in the mid-1970s as a dropout from Bennington College, it was the Charles River, not the Square, crowded with panhandlers and street musicians, that grabbed my attention. If you've seen *Chinatown*, you know what the Los Angeles River looks like: a dry concrete trough. In Pasadena, my hometown, we had the Arroyo Seco. If you know Spanish, the name tells everything. But in Cambridge and Boston, the Charles River was always full, always flowing (except when frozen), and, to me, that was an ever-present miracle.

Before I became acquainted with the Charles, the water I'd known best was a lake in the high Sierras where my family had a one-room log cabin and where I'd learned to row a lightweight wooden dinghy and paddle a canoe. Once I'd seen the Charles, I wanted to get out on it. I talked my way into the Radcliffe boathouse, insisting I was capable of taking out a racing shell. But—why did the seat slip and slide under me? Why didn't the absurdly elongated vessel turn when I dropped an oar in the water? Why was I nearly in the water? Next, I joined Community Rowing so I could take out one of their flat-bottomed rowing skiffs. I imagined I'd do this on a daily basis, circuiting the Charles Basin as I had the lake on summer days. But once I was pulling away at the heavy oars among dozens of speedy sailboats skimming the water, I knew I'd made another wrong choice. Maybe it was enough just to observe this ever-flowing miracle from its grassy banks. Green grass in summer (without an elaborate sprinkler system)—another gift from on high!

I stayed in the Boston area, first as a transfer student at Harvard/Radcliffe and then to work in publishing and later as a writer and professor. My astonishment at the river that runs through our communities has never ceased and serves as a reminder to me of the value of maintaining an outsider's perspective in writing about New England. Margaret Fuller, the subject of my most recent biography, would not have lived her extraordinary life if her parents hadn't met crossing the West Bridge (now the Longfellow) between Cambridge and Boston. Margaret herself admired the "undulating line" of the Charles. But, more often, the river was an obstacle to cross on her way to school as a child or to lectures and concerts once grown, a feature of a landscape she'd always known and taken for granted. Margaret Fuller felt herself to be most alive when she left New England for Rome and the banks of the Tiber. There she could live "in a much more full and true way," she wrote. Would Margaret be surprised to know that I feel the same way about the city and the river she left behind?

Renée La Rivière

the peaceful, tree-lined banks of Cambridge and Watertown. To be able to run along—and enjoy—the Charles every day throughout the year is a special treat." - Jon Puz, president, Cambridge Running Club

My Computerized Charles River by Ferdi Hellweger

I came to Boston from Hamburg, Germany. Boston's Charles is quite similar and often compared to Hamburg's Alster, ever since Charles Eliot inspected the Alster in 1886 as part of the research that led to the creation of Boston's landmark Metropolitan District Commission.

Like the Charles, the Alster is in the heart of a major city, dammed at the downstream end to form a basin and used extensively for recreation. Both rivers have similar challenges arising from centuries of heedless pollution and industrial abuse. We don't currently, but many would like to swim in these urban rivers. So, although I enjoyed sailing on and running around it, the Charles didn't immediately capture my attention. It was only after graduating from college and leaving Boston that I learned to appreciate it more. Those who have had to live in New York will understand.

When I came back to join the faculty at Northeastern, people were talking about making the Charles swimmable again, and I got inspired by this vision. I started researching its water quality by collecting samples and analyzing them in the lab. My students and I spend much time on this beautiful river, and we enjoy it (except when doing a high-volume sample run during a heat wave or manually collecting hourly samples over a 48-hour period—later we learned to use a sampling robot for this). The hourly data from the robot helped us characterize how the bacteria levels change in response to drivers like rainfall or operation of the dam.

Renée La Rivière

We helped characterize and understand water quality at potential swimming locations, and in 2013 we helped organize the first public swim in over 50 years. I was very happy to participate in this and found it wonderfully refreshing. Do all these people on the Esplanade realize that there is a cool and inviting (and swimmable) river just a few feet from where we sweat in the sun? The plan is to do more of this, and I think this would significantly improve the quality of life in Boston.

Much of my work now focuses on developing a computer model of the river, like a global climate model, and running simulations. I have my own little Charles River video game on my computer and can play with it. I can change how we operate the dam and see what that does to the bacteria. I can cut the phosphorus loading in half and predict how that changes the algae. In effect, I can play God, redesigning the river as we might want it to be or making it act up in ways we might like to control.

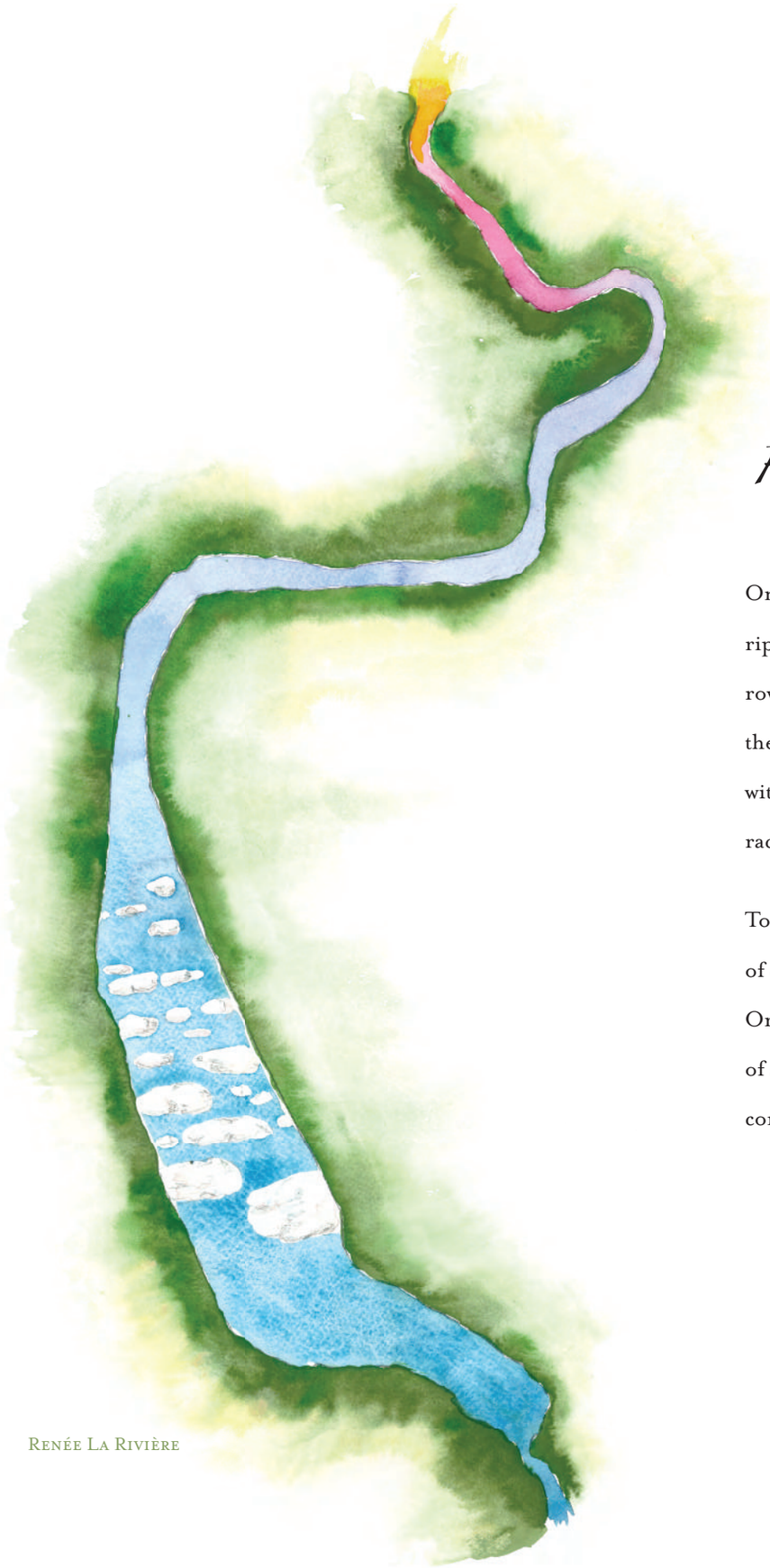
The model is fun but also quite useful for understanding how the river works. However, in contrast to the "real river," the computerized river is quite well behaved—there are no unexpected toxic algal blooms such as the ones that periodically crop up and have occasionally disrupted the Conservancy's pilot Charles River community swims. In its whimsical behaviors, the Charles is not unique or even unusual: we still have a lot of work to do before we understand and can predict how our rivers respond to what we do to them.

I have grown quite fond of my computerized Charles River, over which I can exercise such control and which tells me such interesting secrets about the river's behavior. But, still, I can't dive into it for a refreshing swim on a hot day. For that, we will have to carry on the work of analyzing the river, building safe facilities for swimming, and persuading public officials that a swimmable Charles—or Alster—is not a scientist's fantasy but a real opportunity waiting to happen.

"When I joined the MIT faculty in 1980, the Charles was beautiful from a distance, but the water was a bit less inviting once you got close. By contrast, in the two years that my wife, Chris, and I have lived in the MIT President's House on Memorial Drive, we have found ourselves drawn to the river again and again. Chris particularly enjoys the

Carolyn Newberger

way the little sailboats catch the light. And I love the fact that, depending on which way they are turned, the letters on the sails read 'MIT' or 'TIM'—the name of our Institute mascot." - L. Rafael Reif, president, MIT



Renée La Rivière

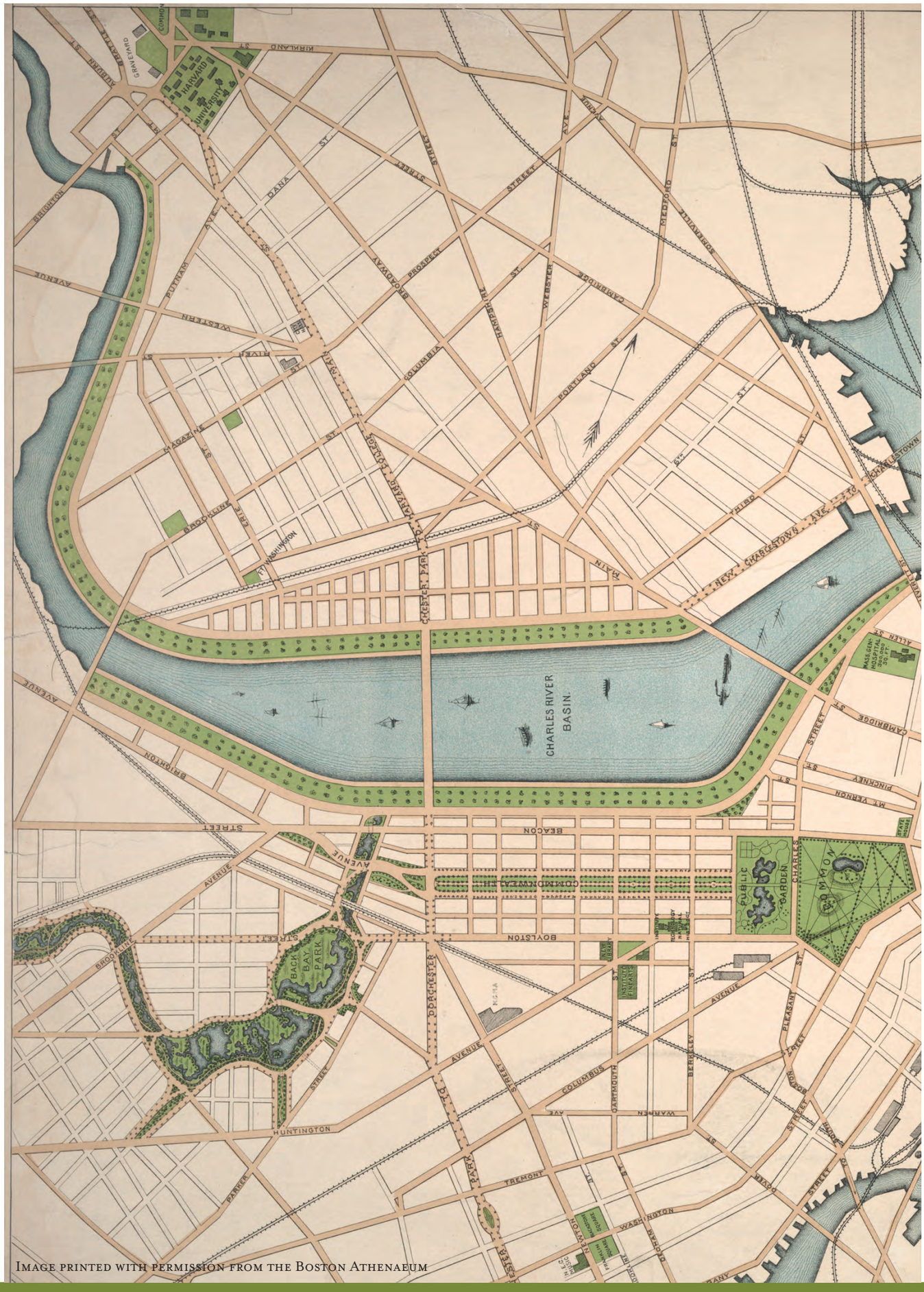
Head of the Charles

by Florence Ladd

On the Charles River
rippled by October's bracing breeze
rowers in sleek sculls and shells—
their oars slice the water
with disciplined elegance
racing up river—but for what?

To break records, earn a prize or praise
of cheering coaches, friends, and family?
Or merely to know the delicious harmony
of supple bodies and smooth strokes
composing new water music?

"The Charles River Basin was shaped first by promoters of landmaking and bridges and railroads before it was taken by acclamation into the public realm in the 1890s. It is not surprising that there are continuing conflicts between ever-increasing traffic and advocates for public space like the Charles River Conservancy. The river's champions



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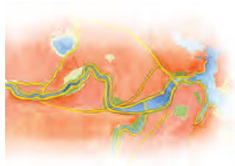
have played a crucial role in defending and enhancing the Charles for all of us." - Karl Haglund, author of *Inventing the Charles River*, and senior planner for the Department of Conservation and Recreation

Artwork Captions

Renée La Rivière (Page 1)
The Charles River gently flows through its parklands, where visitors can take advantage of the landscape and outdoor activities. *Above the river, left to right:* shorelines taken care of by Conservancy volunteers, Sunday Parkland Games, the Lynch Family Skatepark. *Below the river, left to right:* Dr. Paul Dudley White bicycle paths, swimming in the restored river.

June Vernon (Page 3)
As the Charles River's health has returned, so has its wildlife. The birds that have come to populate the parklands include *(left to right)* the great blue heron, cormorant, Canada goose, white domestic goose, and night heron. The fish here are *(clockwise from left)* the common carp, largemouth bass, channel catfish, and perch.



Renée La Rivière (Page 4)
Kevin Lynch, the legendary city planner and writer, once asked, "Where does the Charles River flow into the ocean?" While the dam and its locks provide the de facto transition, only recently did pathways connecting the shores of the Charles with the Harbor Walk allow walkers to answer that question for themselves.

Renée La Rivière (Page 5)
The roads along the urban Charles were created as "parkways," but many have become major traffic arteries that dramatically reduce park users' enjoyment of the adjacent pathways and parklands.

Henry Pelham, 1776 (Page 9)
"A Plan of Boston in New England with its Environs; Including Milton, Dorchester, Roxbury, Brooklin, Cambridge, Medford, Charlestown, Parts of Malden and Chelsea; With the Military Works"

Renée La Rivière (Page 10)
This Kandinsky-inspired rendition of the Charles River Conservancy's projects includes the Skatepark, Harvard Bridge illumination, Sunday Park Games, and Conservancy volunteers.

Tom Gastel (Pages 12-13)
The landmarks that dot the Charles River Basin include: *Above the river, left to right*: Leverett House gates at Harvard University, Dunster House clock tower, Blackstone Station (steam plant), MIT Great Dome at Building 10, and MIT Sloan School of Management.
Below the river: Tata Hall at Harvard Business School, Marsh Chapel at Boston University, CITGO sign in Kenmore Square, Hatch Shell, and Liberty Hotel (formerly Charles Street jail).

"The river holds special value for me. While I plant, weed, and harvest, I can glance up and take in the changing flow of water, of birds, boats, runners, walkers, children, people fishing, dogs, geese . . . It's the perfect spot to practice Tai Chi with the river as my teacher, a reflection of the Tao." - Juliet Stone, longtime gardener, Herter Community Gardens

Frank Costantino (Pages 14-15)
Top row, left to right: Anderson Memorial Bridge, John W. Weeks Footbridge, Longfellow Bridge, Leonard P. Zakim Bunker Hill Bridge. *Middle row:* Eliot Bridge, Western Avenue Bridge with underpass, North Bank pedestrian bridge. *Bottom row:* Boston University Bridge and Grand Junction railroad bridge, River Street Bridge, Harvard (Massachusetts Avenue) Bridge, Charles Circle pedestrian bridge.

June Vernon (Page 17)
This abstracted view of the Charles River, as seen from above, shows the river flowing from its source in Hopkinton to Boston, wending its way over 80 miles.

Renée La Rivière (Page 21)
The watershed of the 80-mile-long Charles River includes 58 municipalities. The Charles River Conservancy's efforts focus on the last ten miles of the river, which travels through the municipalities of Boston, Cambridge, Newton, and Watertown.

J. Haywards & W.A. Mason, 1838 (Page 23)
This map shows the relationship between the Charles River, the now-extinct Miller's Creek, and Boston Harbor as it was in the mid-19th century. Streets, parks, and school buildings are also denoted, showing how much (or little) the layout of Cambridge, MA, has changed through the decades.

Joe Barbieri (Pages 24-25)
The idea for "The Curley River" came from the imagination of artist Joseph Barbieri in response to a late-1970s debate over the proposed renaming of the Charles River in memory of former Mayor of Boston James Michael Curley.

Carolyn Newberger (Page 29)
The Charles, Mystic, and Chelsea Rivers as they flow into Boston Harbor.

Albert Coolidge, 1875 (Page 31)
"New Boston and Charles River Basin" This map shows the "new Boston" created with esplanades hugging both sides of the Charles River and the addition of the Back Bay Fens intersecting the Commonwealth Avenue Mall, leading directly to Boston Gardens and Common.

Renée La Rivière (Page 36)
The Charles River Conservancy works to enhance the beauty and accessibility of the urban parklands for both active recreation and contemplation. Round inserts depict programs such as the Conservancy Volunteers program, the Sunday Parkland Games, and public swim events. Square boxes show capital projects, including bridge illuminations, a permanent swimming area, and the Lynch Family Skatepark.

"No matter how busy life feels, anytime I arrive at the Charles by bike, my entire body relaxes and I am completely happy." - Nicole Freedman, former director of bicycle programs, City of Boston

Authors

Tom Ashbrook joined the staff of WBUR Boston and National Public Radio in 2001 after many years in Asia as foreign editor for the *Boston Globe*. He now hosts the very popular discussion show *On Point*. He lives in Newton.

Michael Dukakis served as governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts from 1975–79 and 1983–91 and was the Democratic Party nominee for President in 1988. He teaches at Northeastern University and UCLA and continues to be a strong advocate for rail transportation, public transit, and the environment.

David Ferry, who taught for many years at Wellesley College, is the author of numerous books of poems and translations. Among his many awards are the Ruth Lilly Poetry Prize (2011) and the National Book Award for Poetry (2012). He now lives in Brookline after many years in Cambridge. "Down by the River" appeared originally in *Of No Country I Know* (1999); thanks to the University of Chicago Press for permission to reprint.

David Gessner, who teaches writing at the University of North Carolina (Wilmington), is the author of numerous articles and nine books addressing human interactions with nature, including *My Green Manifesto* (2011), an account of his canoe trip down the length of the Charles River. His newest work, *All the Wild that Remains*, is forthcoming.

Stephen Greenblatt, who is the John Cogan University Professor of Humanities at Harvard University, is a widely known literary scholar. His work on Shakespeare includes *Hamlet in Purgatory* (2001) and *Will in the World* (2004), while his Pulitzer Prize–winning book *Swerve* (2011) reached a large general readership. Greenblatt is the General Editor of *The Norton Shakespeare* and of *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*.

Ferdi Hellweger is an Associate Professor in the Civil and Environmental Engineering Department at Northeastern University. A passionate advocate for a swimmable Charles River, he hopes to build a model forecast system that can be used to predict when and where it is safe to swim.

Peter Howe is Business Editor, "CEO Corner" host, and fill-in anchorman for New England Cable News. He lives in Newton Centre with his wife, author Holly LeCraw (*The Half Brother*, *The Swimming Pool*), and three teenaged children.

Liza Ketchum is the author of sixteen books for young readers, including the recent young adult novel *Out of Left Field*, which takes place during the Red Sox's winning 2004 season. A previous novel, *Where the Great Hawk Flies*, won the Massachusetts Book Award for Young Readers. A member of Watertown's Friends of Bees committee, she writes and gardens—with pollinators in mind—in Watertown's East End and in Dorset, Vermont.

Florence Ladd, former director of the Bunting Institute at Harvard University, is the author of the novel *Sarah's Psalm* (1996) and, more recently, *The Spirit of Josephine* (2014), as well as several published poems and the forthcoming suite of poems, *Reclaiming Rose*. She divides her time between Cambridge and Burgundy, France.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807–82), one of America's most cherished poets, joined the Harvard faculty in 1834 and lived the rest of his life in Cambridge. In addition to such longer works as "Evangeline" and "The Song of Hiawatha" and a notable translation of Dante's "Divine Comedy," Longfellow published collections of shorter poems throughout his life. "The Bridge," from an 1845 collection, may have been inspired by his frequent walks from Cambridge to Boston while courting his second wife, across the bridge whose replacement we know as the Longfellow Bridge.

"RiverSing is one of Revels' most successful ventures amongst its many performances, celebrations, and activities throughout the year, attracting thousands to the Weeks Bridge at the fall equinox, to mark the passing of summer with song and festivity. Our collaboration with CRC when we launched RiverSing in 2004 was a perfect marriage of

Authors, Cont.

Megan Marshall is the author of *Margaret Fuller: A New American Life*, winner of the 2014 Pulitzer Prize in Biography, and *The Peabody Sisters: Three Women Who Ignited American Romanticism*, a Pulitzer Prize finalist. Both books won the Massachusetts Book Award in Nonfiction. She teaches at Emerson College.

William Rawn is founder and a principal in William Rawn Associates, an architectural firm located in downtown Boston and specializing in academic campus and public realm buildings. Among his celebrated projects are Seiji Ozawa Hall at Tanglewood, residential towers G and H at Northeastern University, the new Berklee College of Music building, and the new Cambridge Public Library.

Nancy S. Seasholes is an independent scholar, a Research Fellow in the Department of Archaeology at Boston University, and the author of *Gaining Ground: A History of Landmaking in Boston* (MIT Press, 2003) and *Walking Tours of Boston's Made Land* (MIT Press, 2006). She is currently the director and editor of *Atlas of Boston History: The Making of a City*, a historical atlas of Boston that will be published by the University of Chicago Press in fall 2016.

Anne Sexton (1928–74) was born in Newton and spent most of her life in and around Boston. Her many volumes of poetry include *Live or Die*, awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1966, and *Love Poems* (1969) from which "Just Once" is taken. Thanks to the Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company for permission to reprint.

Henry David Thoreau (1817–62), naturalist, philosopher, and writer, was born in Concord, Massachusetts, attended Harvard College, and lived the remainder of his life in Concord. In addition to *Walden* (1854), his best-known work, Thoreau published several dozen books of natural science, travel narrative, and political critique and filled dozens of notebooks with his observations. His journal, which he maintained for 24 years at a length of two million words, contains mostly minute observations of Concord; the excerpt we include is one of his few accounts of the Charles.

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The Charles River Conservancy extends heartfelt gratitude to all who have contributed their time and effort to this project.

The Charles River parklands are owned and managed by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, with whom the Conservancy partners on all programs and projects.

Renée La Rivière

missions: CRC's dedication to the river, its parklands, and its bridges, and Revels' commitment to celebrating the seasons and building community through traditional music and the arts." - George Emlen, music director, Revels

Get Involved

The Charles River parklands are a rare oasis of green and blue running through the center of a great city. The Charles River Conservancy's mission is to ensure their beauty and integrity and to increase their accessibility and active use.

Here are some ways you can join us in this effort:

• Become a financial supporter. You will always receive our printed and electronic information and updates, so you can see how your contribution is helping the Charles River Conservancy continue its work. Advocacy work and parklands programs all depend on the generosity of donors. You can use the enclosed envelope or you can donate easily and securely on our website, www.TheCharles.org. The Conservancy also accepts donations of stock. Call us at 817.300.8174.

• Sign up your business, alumni association, church, or neighborhood group for a team-building day of landscaping along the Charles. Each year, we bring more than 2,000 volunteers to the riverbanks to help prune, plant, paint, and pick up debris. Some groups make this a yearly tradition.

• Visit our website at www.TheCharles.org to learn more about the parklands and the Conservancy's activities and opportunities to get involved.

• Contribute your own River Story or river art. By consciously recalling what we treasure about the Charles, we commit ourselves to caring for it. Your stories or your images, like the ones in this volume, will help build and inspire a community of people who share affection, responsibility, and vision for the river and its parklands.

• Or include the Charles River Conservancy in your estate planning. A gift or bequest to the Charles River Conservancy will have a lasting impact on the parklands you hold dear. Certain gifts may also have favorable tax consequences for you. Please contact Renata von Tscharner to learn more about how you can support the Charles River Conservancy with a gift or bequest through your estate. It may be a tax-efficient way for you to leave your legacy to the parklands. For planned giving or donations of stock, call 617.300.8174.

In whatever way you can help to make these urban parklands more active, attractive, and accessible, you can make a difference. And many will be grateful, now and for generations to come.

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Renée La Rivière

The Charles River Conservancy was created in 2000 to foster the vitality and use of the Charles River parklands from the Boston Harbor to the Watertown Dam. Our mission is to maintain the beauty, integrity, and accessibility of this extraordinary public resource. We promote recreational and cultural opportunities and advocate for physical improvements. We are grateful to have a cadre of over 2,000 volunteers per year that work to maintain and renew the public grounds. The Conservancy also collaborates with other organizations, public agencies, and coalitions in its quest to ensure a better future for the parklands. The Charles River parklands have world-class potential—let's work together to realize that goal.

Other Charles River Conservancy Publications:

River Stories I and *II* (available as e-editions online at www.TheCharles.org)
Inventing the Charles River by Karl Haglund (co-published by the The MIT Press and CRC)
Charles River Poster Map (availble to order at www.TheCharles.org)

Charles River Conservancy

TheCharles.org

"I am proud that ninety-seven percent of Bostonians live within a ten-minute walk of a park, making us number one in access to parks nationwide. The Charles River parklands helped create a culture where our residents live within walking distance to a park. The river is as much a part of Boston's identity as are our championships and world-class hospitals and universities. We must work together in order to continue to preserve and improve this legacy so that future generations of Bostonians can enjoy all the river has to offer." - Martin J. Walsh, mayor, City of Boston

The Charles River Conservancy was founded in 2000 and is dedicated to the stewardship and renewal of the Charles River parklands from Boston Harbor to the Watertown Dam. We fulfill our mission through advocacy, education, programs, celebrations, and physical improvements.

To make the parklands more active, attractive, and accessible to all, our programs include:

- Parklands Advocacy
- Conservancy Volunteers
- Service Learning
- Environmental Education
- Swimmable Charles Initiative
- Lynch Family Skatepark
- Sunday Parkland Games
- Bridge Illuminations
- Tree Stewardship
- Pathway Improvements
- Shows on CCTV and YouTube

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