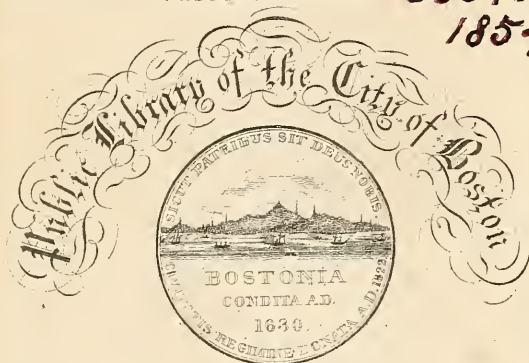


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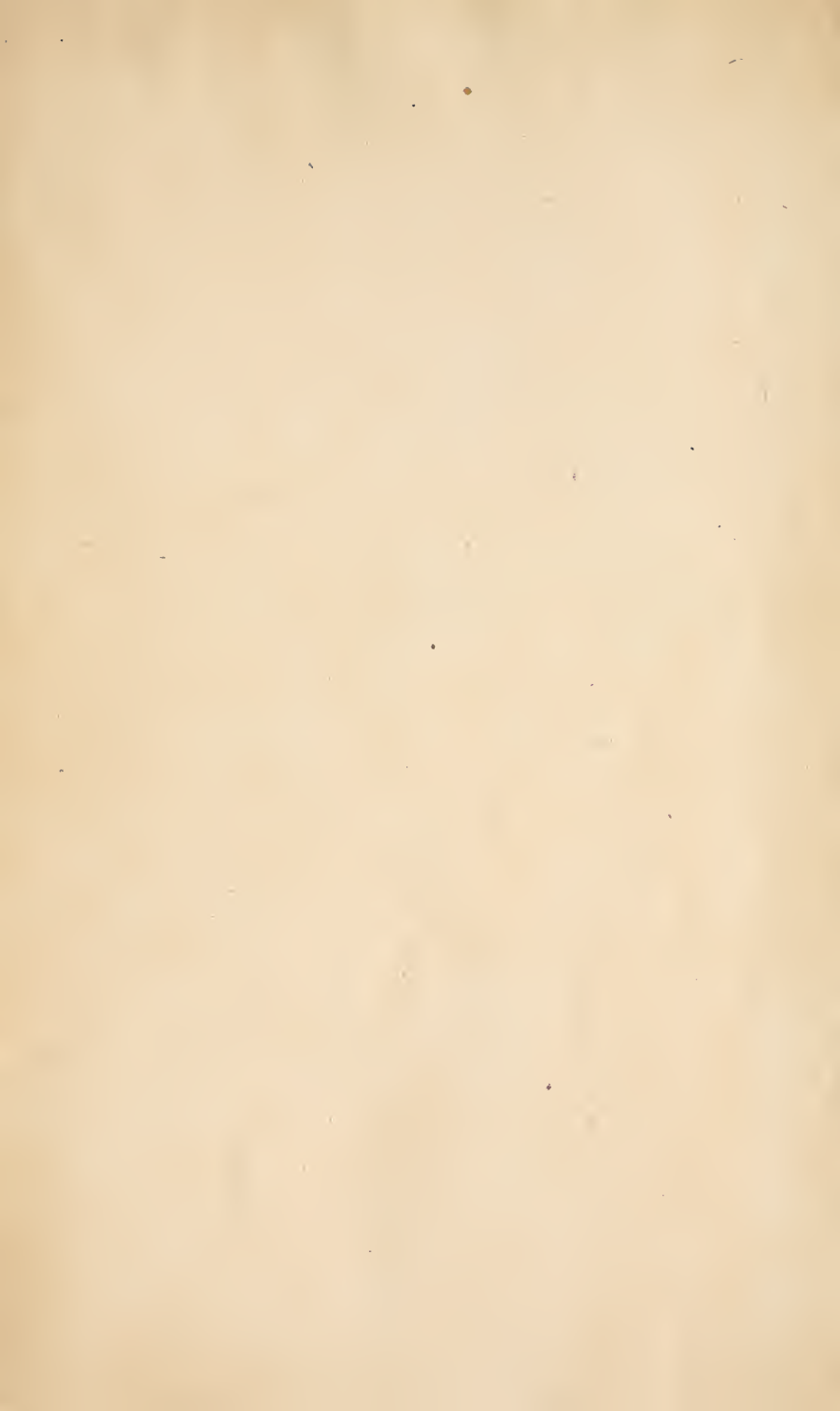
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ADDRESS
OF THE
HON. LINUS B. COMINS, MAYOR,
TO THE
CITY COUNCIL OF ROXBURY,
DELIVERED BEFORE THE
TWO BRANCHES IN CONVENTION,
JANUARY 2^D, 1854.



PRINTED BY ORDER OF THE CITY COUNCIL.

ROXBURY:
NORFOLK COUNTY JOURNAL PRESS
1854.

84484

CITY OF ROXBURY.

IN COMMON COUNCIL, January 2, 1854.

ORDERED, That the Address of His Honor the Mayor, delivered before the two branches of the City Council, in Convention, this day, be printed for the use of the City Council.

JOSHUA SEAVER, Clerk.

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN, January 2, 1854.

Concurred.

JOSEPH W. TUCKER, City Clerk.

ADDRESS.

GENTLEMEN OF THE CITY COUNCIL :

In accordance with the provisions of the City Charter, we have assembled for the purpose of organizing the Municipal Government for the ensuing year.

To me this appears a season well befitting the commencement of our municipal labors. The gate of time swings once more upon its hinges — a new year has commenced. Though in the dead of winter, with its frigid influences surrounding us — when all nature is without a charm — by a closer union of heart and of purpose, the genial current of good feeling flows spontaneously from man to man, from lip to lip, the welcome harbinger of brotherly love and harmonious action.

The duties and responsibilities of the office, to which, by the generous suffrages of my fellow citizens, I have been elected, and which I have sworn to faithfully perform and discharge, are not wholly unknown to me.

Although I have had no experience in the executive duties of the Chief Magistrate of our municipality, the associations connected with the room in which we are assembled though pleasant and agreeable in the main, warn me that the path of any one connected with the government of the city, is not wholly strewn with garlands and flowers.

In entering upon the duties which are before me, I do not purpose any minute or extended review of the past, or to present to you such considerations, in regard to the especial

interest of the city, as the position I occupy may seem to suggest. You will not expect it from me, having for nearly five years had no connection with either branch of the government. The remarks I shall make at this time will be of a general character—reserving the privilege of conforming to the requirements of the City Charter, by recommending such measures as in my opinion the interest, prosperity, and progress of our city may require, as I become more familiar with the condition of its affairs, and have a more accurate knowledge of its wants.

But few towns in the Commonwealth have so much increased in population and wealth, within the last fifteen years, as Roxbury. Her present and future prospects are not surpassed by those of any city in the vicinity of the metropolis of New England.

While I would urge upon you the importance of the strictest economy in all the expenditures of the city, I would recommend a policy in accordance with the age in which we live—liberal and progressive. As we reproach the past for not anticipating wants we now feel pressing so hard upon us, and which a few years ago could have been secured at an exceedingly small outlay compared with the present expense of even commencing radical improvements, let not future generations reproach us for even a greater dereliction of duty than those who have gone before us.

Every citizen familiar with the localities of our city, must acknowledge with great pleasure the many substantial and permanent improvements which have been effected within our limits during the past few years. There are many improvements yet to commence, which can not fail to commend themselves to every member of the government, and which, however shrouded in darkness in their incipient stages, will, when completed, be warmly applauded by every citizen having the real welfare of the city at heart. The natural beauties and advantages of Roxbury for elegant residences are so well known and acknowledged, that nothing but a parsimonious policy can prevent her from being

what nature intended her to be—the most attractive of the many suburbs which surround the great commercial emporium of the Commonwealth.

In discharging the labors incumbent upon us, we are not to consult our tastes and preferences, but to do our duty. Nothing contributes so much to the well being of a community, as the administration of the laws. It is no part of the duty of the executive to judge of the merits of a law. If a statute of the State is impolitic and considered by the people oppressive, the General Court of the Commonwealth is the tribunal to which the people must look for amendment or repeal. The executive must enforce all laws as it finds them, taking care, however, that no fundamental principle is violated in so doing.

The finances of the City, always a subject of great interest, are by no means, I am happy to say, in a condition to create alarm.

The annual current expenses of the City—including the interest on the City Debt—amount to about \$95,000. The amount of the liabilities of the City at this time, is \$189,110.40. The City Treasurer holds notes receivable to the amount of \$19,840.24; leaving a City Debt of \$169,270.16; of which sum \$82,410.40 was created in 1851, and \$47,700 in 1852. This large increase of more than \$130,000, in a period of two years, was to some extent, necessary and indispensable. But the largest item of this debt was caused by the “Stony Brook land purchase.” The amount of this purchase, including expenses on the same, as made up to Feb. 1st, 1853, is \$84,202; of which sales have recently been made and settled for, to the amount of \$15,027.77. The estimated value of this purchase remaining unsold, is \$26,000; leaving a deficit or loss on the purchase, of \$43,174.23, exclusive of interest.

The available property of the City is valued at about \$125,000. It will be a question for your early consideration, whether a portion of the City Debt shall not be liquidated by a sale of such public property as can be judiciously disposed of.

The subject of popular education will naturally receive your earnest and most careful consideration. There is no subject upon which you will be called to act, and for which large appropriations will be required, second in importance to our Public Schools. No censure too great — no reproach too withering can fall upon us, if we neglect this sacred trust.

The utility of the New England system of Education is fast developing itself to the civilized world. So irresistible is the love of educating the youth of our country, implanted within the human breast, that a young woman in a sister State, braves the walls of a felon's cell rather than omit this christian calling.

In respect to education, Roxbury has always maintained a high position among her sister cities. The interior management of our schools is placed by law, under the supervision of a Committee chosen as an independent Board. For a statement in detail of their condition, I must refer you to the report of the School Committee which will be soon laid before you.

In several cities in Massachusetts and in the adjacent States, the office of Superintendent of Schools has been established. Wherever the experiment has been tried, there has been but one opinion in regard to the necessity of this office, in the economy and efficiency of school administration. Should the School Committee press this subject upon your attention, I trust it will receive a favorable consideration.

The permanent establishment of evening schools for adults, is an object highly worthy of your attention. These schools have done a vast amount of good, wherever they have been commenced and fostered. In some of the cities of New England and New York, they take their rank among the permanent institutions. The class of persons who attend them is that which it most interests the City to enlighten and instruct. They are those for whom in my opinion a school system should be maintained. They are those whose youth has been neglected, and whose time for

preparation for the duties of life is short. The time for their education at our day schools has passed. They have arrived at the verge of manhood or womanhood, almost entirely ignorant of the simplest knowledge necessary to enable them faithfully and well to discharge their duties as good citizens. By their want of instruction they are cut off from many of the avenues to wealth and comfort, and from many of the incentives to an honorable, healthy and useful ambition. Many of them, ignorant of reading, or without any love for it, pass their time, when not employed at labor, in places and among companions little calculated to contribute to the elevation of their characters or the welfare of the City.

To meet what seemed a positive necessity, our worthy City Missionary, five years ago, opened an evening school for such as have been referred to. The school was crowded, and many were unable to be accommodated. The expenses were mainly defrayed by private contributions, for the first year,—the City providing a room, warming and lighting the same for the use of the school. The public have every year become more fully convinced of the advantages of evening schools, and the City Council has gradually increased the appropriation therefor. Still the school can not accommodate all who would come. With its present means it cannot be kept up during the winter for more than two evenings in the week. The scholars would be glad to attend four or five, and would progress much more rapidly and the morals and good order of the community would be much advanced thereby. If two schools, one at the Point and one near Tremont Street, were established for four nights of each week, from November to April, I am confident that it would greatly subserve the best interests of the City.

Our highways are in their usual good condition. Many improvements have recently been made in grading and straightening our principal streets, and in constructing sidewalks. I recommend that the liberal policy which has marked the administration of our immediate predecessors in this department be continued.

A Gas Company has recently been organized within our City. I trust you will at an early day make arrangements with the company for lighting our Streets and Public Buildings.

I am happy to say we have as efficient, orderly and well disciplined Fire Department as can be found within the Commonwealth. Any appropriation expedient and necessary to maintain an organization so useful, and of such great consequence to a community so exposed by the close proximity and construction of its buildings as Roxbury, will meet my ready approval.

The great immigration of foreigners to our shores in 1847-8, and the prevalence of a malignant epidemic among them, filling our Alms House with an unusual number of paupers, caused the subject of the removal of this establishment to be investigated. The Special Committee to which the question was submitted came to the conclusion that the interest of the City and the well being of the inmates of the institution would be promoted by its removal from its location on Highland Street, and located upon a farm at some more remote situation. "Brook Farm" was bought — its present cost, including the original purchase, is not far from \$30,000. The poor of the City have been provided for at this new establishment during the last two years, apparently to the satisfaction of the department. The causes which led to the purchase and improvement of Brook Farm, have, in consequence of the general good health which has prevailed among immigrants the last few years, and the ready and profitable employment found by them as they arrive, nearly ceased to exist. And when the buildings now being erected by the Commonwealth for the reception of State Paupers shall have been completed, and the State Paupers removed thereto, Brook Farm will be no longer required. The whole number of inmates of the establishment at the present time is 147. Of this number 134 are State Paupers, and will soon be removed to the State Alms House. Leaving only 13 in charge of the City. Surely we shall not require so large and expensive an establishment with so few paupers.

The health of the inmates is good. There is not a case of fever in the house, and not an inmate confined to the bed with any kind of disease.

Mr. Isaac H. Meserve, the able and gentlemanly Superintendent, has been appointed by Governor Clifford, Superintendent of the State Alms House at Tewksbury. I congratulate the State upon securing the services of so able a man. Under the faithful and vigilant superintendence of Mr. Meserve, Brook Farm has been brought under a high state of cultivation and improvement, and would undoubtedly sell, the coming season, for a sum equal if not above its cost, should you in your wisdom deem it expedient to dispose of it, and support the small number of paupers left to our care, at a much less expensive establishment.

By a judicious sale of Brook Farm and the estate on Highland Street, nearly one half of our City Debt could at once be liquidated; an object far more desirable to our citizens than experiments in agriculture.

The principal features of our system of Police are described in "An Ordinance, authorizing the appointment and prescribing the duties of a City Marshal." It is made the duty of this officer, placed by law at the head of the Police, to preserve, by every means in his power, the public peace; and to prevent all riotous and disorderly proceedings. "He shall be vigilant to detect the breach of any law, by-law or ordinance. It shall also be his duty to prosecute all offenders as soon as may be, and attend, in behalf of the City, the trial of all offences which may be prosecuted; and to use all lawful means for the effectual prosecution and final conviction of offenders."

The usual quiet and good order which prevails within the limits of our City, leads me to the conclusion that this department has generally been well administered. Its efficiency, however, not only depends upon the energy, faithfulness, and courtesy of its officers, but upon the determined support they receive from the executive and its co-ordinate branch of the government.

In a community so renowned for its love of order, as our

beloved City, any force other than an ordinary Police, will seldom be called into requisition. But in large and populous cities, on occasions of great excitement, more powerful and summary aid than civil authority is sometimes required. I can safely say that should such a melancholy occurrence take place within our borders, we have a volunteer militia company which has ever maintained a high character for military discipline and soldiery appearance, and which will form a powerful auxiliary branch of our Police. We should therefore, most cheerfully and liberally make any appropriation for their comfort and convenience, required by law or dictated by our sense of propriety.

The subject of Public Squares has often been brought to the attention of the City Government by my predecessors. The lamented Dearborn, in his inaugural addresses of 1847-8, very forcibly and eloquently illustrates the great and growing importance of this subject. A Joint Special Committee was appointed under an order of the City Council, August 4th, 1851, "to ascertain if any suitable parcels of land could be procured for one or more Public Squares." The report of that Committee is an able and interesting document. I trust you will not consider me as trespassing upon your patience if I quote from its pages:—"The Committee have given this subject (Public Squares) a careful examination, and are now prepared to submit in part, the result of their deliberations.

"They would recommend that a tract of land be purchased in Ward 3, and a portion of the same be laid out as a Public Square. The tract of land proposed, is situated between Tremont and Ruggles Streets, and north-east of a line commencing on Ruggles, near Vernon Street, to the foot bridge across Stony Brook, thence across said bridge to Tremont Street. Containing, by measurement, seven acres, three-quarters, nine rods; or 342,800 feet. Four acres, twenty five and a half rods, or 181,000 feet, of which is upland, and three and one-half acres, and thirty-three rods, or 161,000, feet is water or flats covered with water."

The purchase was made at an expense to the City of

\$84,000. And it was universally supposed that the happy event which had been so long foreshadowed, had arrived—that at least four acres of the purchase was to be converted into a Public Square.

The Committee further said:—“After selling a portion of the property, say for instance, 139,200 feet, there will remain about 203,600 feet, or *four and one-half acres, and twenty-seven and one-half rods* of valuable land, for which the City will owe a debt of \$9,162, making a cost of about *four and a half cents per foot*. Now we believe that in a few years, the valuation of the property around that Square, will be nearly if not quite sufficient to pay the interest on the debt; so that no burden will arise from it in that respect, and we are very certain, that if at any time in the next twenty years, our successors in office should come to the conclusion that it is not required for the public good that it should be kept open, the land may be put into the market, and sold for the cost and interest at least, and probably for a large profit.”

Why the result of this well intended effort to adorn our City with a Public Square, and to “turn deformity into beauty” has been so entirely different from what was anticipated, I am not able to inform you.

Let not the present government be swerved from its sense of duty and of justice, in consequence of the failure of our predecessors to accomplish that which they so much desired, and so sanguinely promised.

Should a favorable opportunity present itself, the improvement of which will yet secure our City the benefits of a Public Square, you will have my hearty co-operation in the undertaking.

Our rural cemetery, “Forest Hills,” has continued in prosperity, far above the expectations of its most sanguine friends. The original cost of the grounds was \$36,894.67. In conformity to an act of the Legislature of the Commonwealth, passed at the request of the City Council, the receipts of the Cemetery must be appropriated and applied to the liquidation of this debt, and to improve and adorn the

grounds. Since the consecration of Forest Hills, in June 1848, over seven hundred lots have been sold. The Commissioners have had ample means from receipts from these sales to make thus far, all desirable improvements and embellishments, and liquidate over \$7,000 of the debt.

The beauties and advantages of this well chosen location, can not be described within the limited space appropriate for this occasion. Nature seems to have drawn most bountifully upon her exhaustless resources and lavishly bestowed her choicest gifts upon this hallowed spot.

Gentlemen, I am aware of my want of experience and of wisdom. Looking around within the circle of those with whom I am to be associated in the City Council, I see my seniors on every side — among you I see many personal friends: may I not ask your kind forbearance and indulgence. And be assured, whatever of ability, zeal and energy I possess, I will not fail to bring to bear, in co-operation with you upon the interest and welfare of our constituents.

And may God, the gracious giver of all good, grant His blessings upon us, and upon our beloved City.

LINUS B. COMINS.

Roxbury, Jan. 2, 1854.

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