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THE

VALEDICTORY ADDRESS

OF THE

HON. JAMES RITCHIE, MAYOR,

DELIVERED BEFORE

The Board of Aldermen,

DECEMBER 31, 1855.

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ROXBURY:  
PRINTED FOR THE CITY COUNCIL.  
1855.

CITY OF ROXBURY.

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN, Dec. 31, 1855.

ORDERED, That the Address of His Honor the Mayor, delivered before the Board this evening, be printed for the use of the City Council.

JOSEPH W. TUCKER, *City Clerk.*



# City of Roxbury.

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IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN, December 31, 1855.

Alderman WM. D. ADAMS offered the following resolution, which was passed unanimously :

*Resolved*, That the members of this Board tender their sincere thanks to the Hon. JAMES RITCHIE, for the impartial and dignified manner in which he has so acceptably performed the duties as presiding officer, and for the promptness and ability in which he has discharged his other duties incumbent on him as Mayor during the past municipal year ; and that in retiring from the office of Mayor, he will carry with him the respect and confidence of the Board of Aldermen.

Passed unanimously.

JOSEPH W. TUCKER, *City Clerk*.

His Honor the MAYOR responded to the resolution as follows :

GENTLEMEN OF THE BOARD OF ALDERMEN,—

It is proper and becoming, at the close of our term of official duties, to put on record a statement of the acts which have chiefly characterized the administration of municipal affairs for the past year. In my Inaugural Address, I took occasion to recommend such measures as an intimate acquaintance with the wants of the city presented most forcibly to my attention, and which had been subjects of deep thought and reflection long before it occurred to me to have an opportunity to present them to the consideration of the City Government. Fortunate has it been for me and for the interests of our city that those recommendations found in your honorable body a most prompt and cordial response.

In the course of events we entered upon our duties at a time when among the poor of our city there was unusual want and suffering. Hundreds of laborers, with their families, were clamorous for the means of satisfying the common necessities of life. The cry of the poor was not unheeded. Prompt measures were taken by the City Government, in the spirit of enlightened liberality and of a common humanity, with a prudent and judicious regard for the public good, to provide for the emergency. Employment was furnished for the men, at a compensation which enabled them and their families to exist, and at the same time accomplished far more for the city than could have been possible at any other season at the same expense. It is the testimony of the best judges that never was so much done at the same cost for the streets. Norfolk Avenue, a large portion of East, Eustis, Short, Sumner, Union and Lowell Streets were macadamized. At the same time the public property on Highland Street was much increased in value by the blasting and removal of rocks, some of which were broken up on the streets, and others sold for the building of cellar and other walls. As Chairman of the Surveyors of Highways, I distributed the pay to the families of those employed, in food, fuel and money, as they were severally required, and took care that none should be retained in employment who expended the proceeds of their labor in the purchase of intoxicating drinks. Without any consideration of evils prevented by the employment of those who otherwise would have been idlers in the community, and nearly at the starving point, I may safely say that the three or four thousand dollars thus expended enured to the benefit of the city of more than double that amount.

The sale of Brook Farm was early made the subject of consideration. Whatever might have been the policy of its purchase, that of its sale was indubitable. It could not be retained and improved by the city except at great cost of money and a vast amount of strife. It was sold for \$21,000, the sale was pronounced a good one, and the proceeds were applied towards the extinguishment of the public debt. The disposal of the Monroe Farm and of the Stony Brook lands followed in due course, and the result is the reception of an annual interest of about \$3,000, besides a great addition to the taxable property of the city.

The Stony Brook *improvement* is now a matter of history. Its net cost to the city was \$40,000, a sum nearly double of that expended in widening Washington Street on its northerly side. But let that pass.

It is not for us, against whom so many charges are preferred, to reflect upon the acts of our predecessors. Sufficient for us that we are willing and proud to have our doings of the past year stand side by side with others in the public records, and to have them compared and contrasted as long as time shall endure.

The Almshouse estate on Highland Street, to which the poor were removed on the sale of Brook Farm, has been vastly improved this year. This estate has been very much neglected in the past, and has stood, with its unsightly out-buildings, a disgrace and a shame to the city. During the present year, the old structures have been taken down or removed, the land graded, a slimy basin adjoining Highland Street filled up and converted from a nuisance into an ornament to the grounds, excellent and well ventilated stables have been constructed for the city horses, where they can live and breathe in health, in place of stalls erected against a stone and earth embankment, where the poor animals could scarcely live, were often sick, and in summer mornings were led forth in worse condition than when taken from work at night. The wing on the west end of the brick building, very unsightly and wholly useless, has been moved to Highland Street and converted into an excellent dwelling-house, containing twelve rooms, where the city teamsters, who have been obliged to board at a distance of half a mile, can be accommodated in the immediate vicinity of the horses, and at a saving of much time to the men and the city.

The pest house, which was sold under a former administration, has been repurchased and well fitted up for its appropriate purposes. The almshouse building has been repaired, papered and painted within, well supplied with water drawn through pipes from a never failing spring and from a large brick cistern constructed under the main building; and, in every respect, the whole has been made such an home for our own poor as they deserve, and as such a city as Roxbury may be proud to afford. From being a disfigurement, the whole estate has been converted into an ornament to our city. The new dwelling-house alone will rent for more than enough to pay the interest on the whole amount expended in its construction and on all the other improvements on the estate.

The most important and valuable improvement ever made in Roxbury,—the widening of Washington Street below Warren,—has been accomplished this year. After expending all the leisure time I could obtain for the space of three weeks, in making estimates and calcula-



tions, I ventured to propose to the City Council that Washington Street, on the northerly side thereof, be widened in accordance with a plan made in 1852, provided that the expense thereof should not exceed \$25,000. The proposition was unanimously responded to, and the appropriation made. Very few in the community believed that the work could be accomplished for any thing like the sum named, and I well might have distrusted the result, when experienced mechanics did not hesitate to proclaim that the improvement would cost the city forty, sixty, one hundred and even two hundred and fifty thousand dollars. But my calculations, aided by those of two members of this Board experienced in the value of property and in the general business affairs of the street, were based upon facts which could be relied on. The result has confirmed the data of my proposition; nay, it has placed this work among the wonders of the age, viz.,—a vast undertaking accomplished within the estimate. The value to the city of this widening cannot yet be fully computed. It has certainly vastly enhanced the worth of property on the street, and rendered its taxable value a source of real income to the city. One piece of property on the street, valued under oath in May last at \$4,800, cash, was rated by the same individual, also under oath, in October at \$6,000, cash, and this, too, not in the most business portion of the street. This may not be the just measure of increase of value, but it is an indication of the general idea. We may well glory in this crowning act of our administration, which, however it may be regarded now, must finally entitle the present government to the gratitude of the citizens, at the same time that it will be an enduring monument of our enterprise and forecast.

The widening of Eustis Street, at its intersection with Washington, a subject of debates, resolves and estimates in former administrations, has during the present year been accomplished.

The widening of Washington Street, at its intersection with Summer, has been effected.

Washington Street has been re-paved from above Vernon Street to Eustis.

Ruggles Street, from Tremont to Parker, has been widened from 33 to 40 feet, and converted from a muddy, and oftentimes almost impassable road, into a good and substantial street, with curb-stones and an excellent sidewalk on the easterly side.

Francis, Eaton, Webber, Zeigler and Highland Streets have been thoroughly graded and finished, and will not soon require any further



outlay. Our intention to improve and put in good condition Heath Street has been frustrated. That street has been for some time neglected and is in a bad state.

In nearly all parts of the city, improvements have been made in streets and sidewalks. Those persons who for years have suffered from the mud and water at the corner of Vernon and Washington, Dudley and Warren, Sumner and Eustis, Vernon and Ruggles, Washington and Tremont Streets, can now pass those points dry shod and with comfort. Many, too, daily rejoice over the brick sidewalk from the Norfolk House to the Universalist Church.

During the past seven months five miles of sidewalk have been made, 25,000 feet of curb-stones have been set, 1,756 square yards of block stone crossings have been laid, and 2,845 square yards of brick sidewalk. Five and one half miles of gutters have been paved; more than the whole quantity paved under all the previous administrations of the City Government. The importance of suitable gutters and sidewalks in our city cannot be over-estimated, and they should be provided as soon as possible at whatever cost to the city.

A vast number of stone and wooden posts, awning supports and several pumps, which for years have obstructed our sidewalks, have this year been removed, and the nuisance of overhanging trees has been greatly abated.

A commencement has been made in providing for the drainage of Roxbury, a matter every year becoming more essential and urgent. The sewer, more than 800 feet in length, constructed through a portion of Bartlett Street, at a cost of \$3,400, has been made with a view to meet future as well as present necessities. It is on a grade low enough to receive all waters in its vicinity, and elevated sufficiently to afford a good descent to tide waters. It is a permanent structure covered with thick granite stones, and having a capacity sufficient for the discharge of immense quantities of water. The abutters contributed \$1,000 in aid of this work.

The old lock-ups, which were in a very bad condition and unsuitable for the occupancy of human beings, have been removed, and their places supplied by as good ones as can be found in the country, with stone floors and coverings, walls of brick and doors of iron, at a cost of \$1000.

Two spacious reservoirs have been constructed, one in Winthrop, corner of Grenville Street, and the other in Smith, near Parker Street, at a cost of about \$1,700.

The dangerous crossing of the Boston and Providence Railroad, over Washington Street, has been temporarily protected by the establishment of gates.

The New York Central Railroad Corporation have been compelled to erect a substantial truss bridge over Norfolk Avenue.

The establishment of Nahum Ward & Company, on Parker Street, the subject of so much complaint, and the dispenser of so much foetid odor over Highlands and Lowlands, has been almost entirely suppressed, their piggery has been broken up, and the occupants thereof brought to an untimely market or transferred to more rural districts.

The keeping of swine in the more thickly settled portions of the city has been prohibited, and the general health of the inhabitants thereby greatly promoted. Indeed, in no season for the last six years has there been so little sickness in those regions.

A vast number of nuisances have been abated, not by buying up the infected districts, but by compelling the owners to abate them at their own expense.

But these are minor matters.

The track of the Metropolitan Railroad has been located in Roxbury this year, through all the principal streets; and a proviso has been insisted upon, that certain routes should be simultaneously laid, that the citizens, now using omnibus conveyances, may not be inconvenienced by the change. I understand that contracts for rails and cars have already been made, and that early next Spring the road will be completed, and the lines in operation through Washington and Dudley Streets, over Eliot Square by Centre Street to the Chemical Works, over Warren Street to corner of Walnut, and over Eustis Street to Dorchester line. In my opinion this road will be highly acceptable to our citizens, and the occasion of great accessions to our population, and of a great enhancement to the value of our real estate. I am happy to be able to record the fact that one of our most worthy citizens has offered to the Metropolitan Railroad Corporation about 25,000 feet of land, in a very desirable location, for car houses and stables. This is an encouragement to the Company, and will undoubtedly be a good investment for the wise donor.

A survey of the city is now in progress, by direction of the City Government, for the purpose of an accurate map and a delineation of lots and estates, in such a manner that none can escape the notice of

the assessors or fail of paying its proper quota to the expenses of Government and the improvement of the city.

The city in every part has been thoroughly provided with lights. The number of gas lights has been increased from 13 to 208, and the number of fluid lamps from 166 to 192. This was an improvement much desired and greatly needed. It is a noble work, and has greatly contributed to the value of real estate in the city by rendering a residence here far more desirable than heretofore. The Committee who have had this matter in charge, have performed a great amount of work. They have suffered, too, a vast amount of blame and vituperation, have undoubtedly made some mistakes, but I verily believe that those most forward in fault-finding could not have executed the same business more satisfactorily to the community or more advantageously to the city.

In accordance with the recommendation of my Inaugural Address, a Police Court has been established in this city. Most satisfactory results have followed. Not a single objection, urged at the outset, has been sustained by facts. Thus far, instead of being an expense, it has been a source of revenue to the city. But this, to my mind, is not the standard of its value. If it diminished the number of cases to such a degree that its receipts amounted to little or nothing, its value would be greatly enhanced. It has greatly lessened the number of cases. It has contributed materially to the dignity of the administration of justice. It has never created a nuisance about the City Hall, nor ever been attended by the number of hangers-on, who in past years have thronged the Justices' Courts in our main streets. It is an institution which deserves, as I believe it will receive, the support of all order-loving citizens. Before pressing the establishment of a Police Court, I wrote to the authorities of fifteen cities and towns, where such Courts existed, and received favorable returns from all but three; and in two of these the objection was not to the court but to the character of the judges. These returns are now on file in the Mayor's office.

The office of City Marshal has been re-established. The necessity for this officer is fully apparent. He is recognized by the laws of the State, and in very many of the long-established ordinances of the city. The system which prevailed in the early part of the year was, to say the least, very inconvenient. In my opinion it was in conflict with the legal execution of several of the city ordinances. In reply to letters addressed to the executives of all the cities of New England, came, with

a single exception, a full and explicit assertion of the necessity of a City Marshal, or Head of Police. Those answers are now on file. The double-headed organizations of the Police did not harmonize, and never could. The appointment of either of the *heads* to the office of City Marshal would not have promoted harmony. The present City Marshal was a candidate for the office before it was abolished last year. His claim was backed by a petition, commencing as follows:—"We, whose names follow, most cordially recommend Benjamin Meriam for the office of City Marshal," &c. This petition was signed by 225 citizens, and among them a large number of those who now most strongly object to his appointment; and what is their objection? Nothing in particular, but general assertions that they do not think him fit for the office. When I perceive how quick the opposition of a man to a clique will often bring upon him the condemnation of those who once sustained him, I do not feel as if a man's merits or competency for a particular place have much to do with the expressed opinions of the members of such a clique, and I should place more reliance in their previous "cordial recommendation" than in their after vituperation. Thus much I have thought it best to state, in justice to myself and to Mr. Meriam. In my opinion he has proved himself all that he was cordially recommended to be; but his report is now before you, and you can judge as well as I of the manner in which he has discharged his duty.

In every city there are some persons who attempt to gratify their own malignant feelings without regard to consequences,—and Roxbury has her share of these. They have all along sought to destroy harmony in the Police force, and have instigated officers to acts of insubordination and disrespect, which otherwise they would never have committed. Reports were circulated in the papers, tending to bring disrepute on our police, and offering inducements to rogues to make Roxbury the scene of their depredations. An excitement was created in consequence, which cost the city in one month \$477 for extra police. With this exception, our city has never been more quiet. There have been few extensive depredations upon property, and very few destructive fires.

In this review it is proper to notice what are termed our extravagances. In the first place, we have vastly increased the expense of lighting the city, so that it will annually cost \$5,000 more than heretofore, if all the lamps are lighted. This is true, and will add 33½ cts. per annum to the tax on every \$1,000. Will it pay?



We have expended \$25,000 on the Streets. This seasonably done, as it has been, will save a tax of 33½ cts. on every \$1,000, for years to come.

We have increased the pay of the Fire Department, officers and men, and have added greatly to the facility of their operations.

We expended \$775 for the Celebration of the Fourth of July, \$350 of which, however, were contributed by individuals. The balance of \$425 is about four times the usual expenditure for this purpose.

The Mayor and Aldermen visited New York and Brooklyn, for the purpose of examining the Horse-power Railroads in those cities, before locating them in this city, and were absent five days, at a cost to the city of \$272.

We have expended a large sum in widening Washington Street; whereas, in process of time, as the old buildings were removed, the street could be gradually widened at a much less expense.

We established a Liquor Agency, in accordance with the law of the State imposing a fine of \$100 for every three months' neglect so to do; and this has cost the city about \$400.

We have appropriated \$500 for Evening Schools for Adults.

We awarded too much to the owners of land at the corner of Eustis and Washington Streets.

We established the office of City Solicitor, at a cost of \$500 per annum,—and that of City Physician at a cost of \$200 per annum.

We have set a bad example, by not having any Public Dinners or Suppers, at the cost of the city.

We expended four dollars for Mounted Police,—the expense of which has been greatly decried in the public journals.

The expenditures of the City Government for this year have been large in the aggregate, but not so for ordinary purposes. Among our extraordinary expenses, most of which have been adverted to, the following will be charged to our account :

For amount paid for School-House on Gore Avenue, . . .	\$9,000
“ “ “ widening Washington St. (northerly side)	23,500
“ “ “ “ “ “ corner of Sumner	1,600
“ “ “ “ Eustis St., corner of Washington	4,000
“ “ “ paving Washington Street, . . . . .	3,000
“ “ “ “ gutters, . . . . .	2,400
“ “ “ setting curb-stone, . . . . .	2,000

For amount paid for crossings and brick sidewalks, . . . . .	1,500
“ “ “ sewer in Bartlett St. . . . .	2,400
“ “ “ two reservoirs, . . . . .	1,700
“ “ “ lock-ups, . . . . .	1,000
“ “ “ house and almshouse improvements, . . . . .	4,000
“ “ “ employment of poor in winter, . . . . .	4,000
“ “ “ increased facilities for Fire Department, . . . . .	2,000
“ “ “ increase of State tax, . . . . .	3,300
“ “ “ 195 iron lamp posts and lanterns, . . . . .	4,600
Total for unusual expenditures,	<u>\$70,000</u>

The whole expenditure for 1852 was \$181,000, or \$15,000 a month.
“ “ “ “ 1853 “ 149,000, “ 12,400 “
“ “ “ “ 1854 “ 173,400, “ 14,400 “
“ expenditure for 10 mos. 1855 “ 173,000, “ 17,300 “

It follows from this statement, that if you deduct a portion of the amount of expenditure for unusual and permanent improvements from the expenditures of 1855, the ordinary monthly expenses would average less than for the four past years.

It is true the public debt has been increased the present year by \$34,500, to which must be added \$4,000 early next year to pay for the improvement at the corner of Eustis and Washington Streets. But it must also be stated that about \$50,000 worth of real estate has been disposed of, and that notwithstanding, the estimated value of the real estate owned by the city is \$217,861 88, while the amount of bills receivable is about \$60,000.

At the commencement of the year the liabilities of the city were, in round numbers, \$209,000, with an offset of notes amounting to \$14,000, leaving \$185,000. At the close of the year the liabilities of the city are \$234,000, with an offset of notes amounting to \$58,000, leaving \$176,000.

In comparing the financial condition of our city with that of others, I do not find that our progressive tendency to ruin is very fearful. The alarmists of to-day, who think that our administration has irretrievably involved the city, will do well to consult the past. They will find that in the year 1851 the public debt was increased by \$91,910; in 1852, by \$46,423; in 1854, by \$18,155. In other years the debt has been diminished. There is no cause for despair.

Considering the amount accomplished for the improvement of the city and for works of decided usefulness and comfort to citizens, we may confidently put the question, whether, during the past five years, as much has been accomplished with the same amount of money as during the year of the present administration? In fact, so much has been done in places where expenditure was much needed and where its results have appeared so marked, that it has been again and again asserted that the expenditures must have been extravagant and the city deeply involved. When, however, it is considered that during the past ten months such a new aspect has been given to our city as to excite the admiration of our sister cities and the terror of our own tax payers, we may proudly point to the doings of the present year and challenge comparison with those of any other, both in magnitude of results and economy of means.

But it is time to bring this long review to a close. It is sufficient for us that the doings of this administration have been in good faith for the best interests of the city. If not so regarded by others now, they will be hereafter. They are all of them of a character which will increase in favor with the lapse of time. They have all been accomplished at a cost which at no future period could be less, and, in all probability, would be far greater. None of the public money has been wasted. A value received can be shown for all that has been expended. We may well congratulate ourselves that our administration of the affairs of the city has contributed to its beauty and convenience as well as to the value of its real estate and its general desirableness as a place of residence. We have also made the way easy for our economical successors. The demands which were urgent at the outset of the year have been very generally met, and the citizens for a time at least will acquiesce in a less progressive condition of things.

But it is objected that we have burdened the next City Government with the settlement of much of our business. On the other hand, it seems to me less than usual has been passed over. The settlement of three bills of Mr. Sigourney's tenants, of the land claims of Amos J. Dean, of land claims on Ruggles Street, in consequence of widening, are passed over, but are all in good train for settlement. The city has claims also upon abutters on Francis Street, and upon sundry persons for non-payment of bills for curb-stones, which are not yet adjusted, but are in process of settlement by due course of law. I do not call to

mind any other matters which have originated with us that have not been fully adjusted.

We have, moreover, finished much business which came to us from former administrations,—such as land damages to sundry persons on Dudley Street, between Warren and Elm; also on Washington Street, near Suffolk Place; also on Ruggles Street, at the corner of Water Street, where a suit was pending between the city and a land owner; also the completion of the Gore Avenue school-house. Brook Farm, too, and the Stony Brook lands have ceased from troubling and are at rest. If, however, we have overburdened our successors with duties from the past, we have at least the satisfaction of reflecting that we inflict nothing upon them which, in their places, had the public will so ordered, we should have refused to accept and faithfully have performed.

In the review that has been made, I think we can find no cause of self-reproach. There is no act I would recall for the purpose of change. Guided by a pervading sense of justice and right, and a sincere devotion to the best interests of the city, I feel, as I doubt not you do, an inward satisfaction which cannot be diminished by the lack of immediate public appreciation. It has been remarked, that the success of an administration is to be judged by the degree in which the measures proposed have been adopted and carried out. With this test we may certainly feel satisfied since not a prominent recommendation of my Inaugural Address has failed to be approved and carried out into successful operation.

Gentlemen, what I have said in this farewell address is not intended in the way of boasting or self-gratulation, but as a suitable exposition of the doings of an administration which has been, as it appears to me, most unjustly and severely attacked. Every measure which has brought obloquy and discredit upon this government has been proposed and urged by myself. Many things have undoubtedly been done out of deference to my opinion, where it was supposed I had the best opportunity to understand the state of the case. It is proper and right that for these things the public disapproval should fall upon me alone. As chief executive and representative of this government, whatever of blame is deserved, is and should be mine to bear. All I desire is that I may share with you whatever of credit is justly our due for those acts of ours which have contributed to the well-being of our city and its inhabitants.



Gentlemen, this is our last official meeting. Permit me to express my heartfelt thanks for the kind and generous consideration with which you have ever treated me and my recommendations. The harmony of this Board has been almost unexampled in municipal history. Private prejudices have never interfered with public objects. Our debates have been on public interests and not on personal ambitions. You have consulted for the people, not in any time-serving spirit or with any desire to court approval, but with a single eye to the public service and with due and solemn regard to your oaths of office. I owe much to your support, and shall ever think of it with pleasure and gratitude. My thanks are also most heartily given to the City Clerk and the City Treasurer, for the faithful services they have rendered, and for the gentlemanly alacrity with which they have contributed information and advice, and for the respect and regard which they have ever manifested to me in public and private intercourse. To the City Messenger also it is a satisfaction to pay a well-deserved tribute. His services this year have been unusually arduous. For the first three months there was scarcely a night when it was not his duty to prepare for the meeting of some Committee of the City Government. Without complaint he has steadily and faithfully discharged his duty. *My* thanks and *yours* are freely accorded him.

Gentlemen, it is my hope and desire that the friendship we have here formed for each other may not cease when we part, but ever live in our memories and be yet more strongly cemented by future intercourse as well as by a firm and unalterable devotion, in every possible way, to the interests and well-being of the city which is our home and our pride.

















