

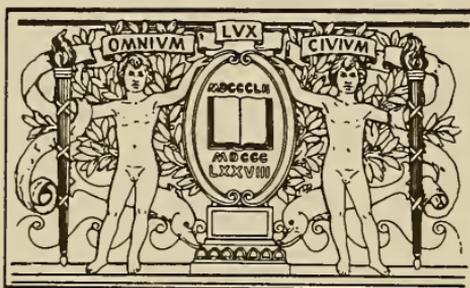
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City Document. — No. 6.

R E P O R T

OF THE

JOINT SPECIAL COMMITTEE

ON

G A S.



ROXBURY:

L. B. & O. E. WESTON, PRINTERS, GUILD ROW.

1860.

City of Roxbury.

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN, May 7, 1860.

Report read and accepted, and ordered to be printed.

Sent down for concurrence.

JOSEPH W. TUCKER, *City Clerk.*

IN COMMON COUNCIL, May 7, 1860.

Concurred.

FRANKLIN WILLIAMS, *Clerk.*

ROXBURY, May 7th, 1860.

THE Joint Special Committee that was appointed to confer with the Directors of the Roxbury Gas Company, in relation to the Order introduced for the reduction of the rates of Gas for the City, and citizens generally, have attended to their duty, and submit the following

R E P O R T :

Your Committee take pleasure in stating, that after an interview with the Directors of the Company, they have, in a most creditable and liberal manner, sent the following propositions: One cent per hour on City Lamps, instead of $1\frac{1}{4}$ cents, as heretofore. To citizens, \$3.25 instead of \$3.50 on 1000 feet, to go into effect on and after the 1st of July next. And the further assurance of a reduction of 25 cents per 1000 feet to the citizens on the 1st of January, 1861, or the 1st of April, 1861.

Thereupon, your Committee voted that it was inexpedient for them to take any further action upon the subject.

JOSHUA B. FOWLE,
FREDERICK A. BROWN.

City Document. — No. 7.

R E P O R T

OF THE

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE

ON

PARKS OR SQUARES.



ROXBURY:

L. B. & O. E. WESTON, PRINTERS, GUILD ROW.

1860.

CITY OF ROXBURY.

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN, May 7, 1860.

Report accepted, and one thousand copies ordered to be printed, for the use of the City Council.

Sent down for concurrence.

JOSEPH W. TUCKER, *City Clerk.*

IN COMMON COUNCIL, May 7, 1860.

Concurred.

FRANKLIN WILLIAMS, *Clerk.*

City of Roxbury.

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN, May 7th, 1860.

THE Joint Standing Committee on Parks or Squares, to whom was referred that portion of the Mayor's Annual Message relating to the subject, — and also the petition of Edward Winslow and 104 others, asking the City to purchase a piece of land lying between Walnut and Warren Streets, for a Public Square, ask leave to

REPORT:

It is often said that our predecessors, when land was cheap, should have bought Parks or Squares, many years ago, and that now it is too late to do it.

That we may more fully realize their position then, and the responsibility that *now* rests upon us, it may be well to look at a few facts bearing on this point.

The population of Roxbury in 1790 was	-	2,226
In 1800 it was	- - - - -	2,765
being an increase of 539 in ten years.		
In 1810 it was	- - - - -	3,669
being an increase of 904 in ten years.		
In 1820 it was	- - - - -	4,135
being an increase of 466 in ten years.		
In 1830 it was	- - - - -	5,247
being an increase of 1112 in ten years.		

The whole increase, therefore, for a period of 40 years, only amounts to 3021, or an average of about 750' for ten years, or 75 per year.

This was the period when land was cheap. From 1820 to 1830, some of the most picturesque and desirable spots in the town for a public park, including the lower and upper Forts, were selling at from *fifty* to *one hundred* dollars per acre! How deeply it is to be regretted, that 10 or 20 acres were not then dedicated to the public;—it almost makes the very pen creak with lamentation to record the contrary!

But with the scattered population of that time, and the very slow increase, can we wonder that little interest was *felt*, and nothing *done* about public squares?

The men of those days might well question the expediency of taxing themselves for purchasing for the public, what almost every one had in excess, viz., land. And the prospect, certainly, was not very flattering, that Roxbury would ever have any future worth providing squares for.

Let us now glance at the contrast which the next period of 30 years presents.

With a population in the year 1830 of - 5,247

We have in 1840, - - - - - 9,089

In 1850, - - - - - 18,316

And now, in 1860, probably - - - 36,000

This includes, of course, West Roxbury, as in all of the preceding statistics.

During the last 30 years, then, we have the population doubling every ten years, and an increase of over 30,000 in 30 years, against an increase of only 3021 in a period of 40 years.

The valuation of property during the same period has increased as follows:

In 1830 it was - - - - - \$4,302,933

1840, - - - - - 6,721,000

1850, - - - - - 13,712,800

1859, - - - - - 28,065,000

Whether the increase for the next ten years will be in

a less or greater proportion than for the past ten years, no man is prophet enough to tell. Surely there is nothing to cause alarm, unless we believe that, while population is increasing on each side of us, Roxbury is to stand still!

Depending, mainly, for an increase of our population upon the prosperity of Boston, and its commercial advantages, do the high prices paid for land by the most *intelligent* capitalists, and the amount of building there — the net-work of railroads, diverging all over the country, and centering there — the fact that the great modern improvement of horse-cars upon street-railroads now accommodates all parts of our territory, — do all these considerations allow one to doubt of the future growth of Roxbury? Thirty or forty years since, doubt and distrust might have been excusable; not now! Let us assume, then, that a candid view of the *present* is encouraging for the *future*, and that this City is likely, at no distant day, to be a populous place.

The *first* and most important inquiry, then, that presents itself, is, are Parks, Squares, Commons, Play-grounds, call them what you please, are they desirable, and to a limited extent *necessary*?

When we consider that the City of Roxbury, with a population of 26,000, and increasing with a steadiness, certainty, and rapidity never before exceeded, has not a single broad acre of ground appropriated to the use of her citizens, where, free from the dust, noise and turmoil of the streets, they can go, men, women and children, for a social gathering, or pic-nic, or where boys and young men can go for cheap, innocent, healthy, manly, exciting sport and recreation, the inquiry seems almost unnecessary. But the simple fact that, up to the present time, all efforts in that behalf have proved unavailing, and that now, in 1860, in this nineteenth century, distinguished for attention to the moral, intellectual and physical education of man, we

are destitute of *even a play-ground* for our children, proves that the *importance* of the subject has not been fully realized.

It has been asserted, that, as a Nation, our ceaseless, nervous, anxious pursuit of business is changing the very structure of our bodies. That we are growing narrow-chested, angular, thin-faced, with a troubled and care-worn expression of countenance; and so forcibly has the subject impressed the public mind, that within a short time a very noticeable change has taken place, and more attention is now paid to out-door, active, exciting social and joyous sports. As a late writer has said, We do not want "physical exercise" simply. We want athletic *sports*; not only a *development of muscle*, but a *development of spirit* as well. Heaving coal or sawing wood are exercise, as well as *ball-playing, skating* or *boating*; but the former are infinitely less inspiring, and therefore less healthful than the latter. Of two men exercising strictly under the two different systems, one will be of a clear, ruddy complexion, happy looking, and full of healthful vigor; the other, equally strong, perhaps, but with a countenance heavy and dull, and a look of despair. In-door exercise is of great value, but, especially in cities, it is impossible to rear healthy men and women, unless they are provided with a cheerful and beautiful place of recreation, where old and young may pursue their several inclinations, under every influence which may enhance their health and enjoyment.

It is most observable that all nations, without distinction, in cities and considerable towns, have their public squares, parks, or play-grounds. In the large cities of Europe, their crowning glory and beauty, and often the boast of their inhabitants, is the public promenade, play-grounds, parks, or squares. In this country, and especially in New England, the school-house, the church, and the common, even in the smallest towns, are usually found in company.

And who that was born outside of Roxbury, does not retain the most vivid and pleasing recollections of the many sights and sounds, sports and amusements enjoyed on some spacious old Common, with its waving elms, shading maples, and green turf?

Has any one thing that can be named contributed so much to the beauty and renown of the city of Boston — so much health, pleasure and happiness — so much love of country and patriotism to its inhabitants — as that glorious old Common, striped all over with its beautiful walks, and dotted thick with its graceful and friendly shading trees? And could you ask any Boston boy, who has now been absent from his native city for twenty years, what *sight* would give him *most pleasure*, next to his nearest kindred and friends, he would tell you a sight of that same old green Common, so associated and consecrated with past pleasures and youthful friends. Our city may never be as large, or our commons as beautiful, but human nature is the same, and pleasing recollections and fond associations will soon entwine themselves with every spot that may be set apart for such a purpose. What was the population of Boston when it first had its Common? Less than our own. What will be the population of this city one hundred years hence? for we must recollect that we are purchasing commons, or open spaces, not only for the Roxbury of to-day, but for the Roxbury of 1960.

The Common is the poor man's pleasure-ground. Let those who are more fortunate, look upon an outlay for this purpose as a contribution, for all time, to the comfort, happiness, and health of those less fortunate. There let toiling industry find relaxation, health, strength, and pleasure. There, free from the dust, tumult and noise of the crowded thoroughfare, let children pursue and enjoy their necessary pleasures, and gain health and strength for the toil and business of manhood.

There a more social, friendly spirit will be cultivated among men, and mingling together, political bitterness, sectarian animosity, sectional jealousy, and class distinctions will be softened and rightly controlled. Such a place will be too open and well ventilated for intemperance, lust, and evil passions to congregate. With many, the cheap, healthy, manly out-door sports will be substituted for the attractions of the bowling-alley and the billiard-room, with their impure and poisonous atmosphere; thus improving the health, morals and happiness of the whole community. In another point of view, too, all observation proves, that open parks increase the value of the surrounding land, and greatly improve the class of houses and the character of the population that occupies them.

Influenced by such considerations, your Committee came to the conclusion that Parks or Squares *are desirable*, and for the best health and *highest prosperity and beauty* of a city, *a necessity*.

Believing that it is not too late for this City to retrieve, to some extent, the golden opportunities that have been so unwisely neglected in the past, your Committee have considered the advantages of the present time, and they find that the unusual supply of money seeking investment at low rates of interest, the temporary depression of commerce, keeping down for the present the price of land, render this a favorable time for the City to purchase. Should a sudden change in these particulars occur, and money and land become high, the most hopeful on this subject would despond.

The people will be benefited by them — they are, therefore, entitled to expect them; and if, by unwise delay, the subject is longer deferred, the treasury will ultimately be obliged to pay heavy extra interest for the waiting. Shall we, the free, sovereign people, be less thoughtful for the health and happiness of ourselves and children, than

the monarchs and despots of other nations are for their subjects? Is it not the duty of those having charge of public affairs, to add something to the attractiveness and healthfulness of the place under their care?

We have not been unmindful of the debt which we now owe, or of the unwise economy in former years, which has caused it. Shall the subject be deferred till the debt is paid? Posterity, we fear, would consider this decision as disastrous as those of the past, and public squares would be an impossibility.

With deliberation, with thoughtfulness, and the truest regard to economy and the best good of the City, in their judgment, therefore, the Committee recommend purchasing, at the present time, three several parcels of land, to be kept open *forever* for the health and enjoyment of the inhabitants, and for the beauty and prosperity of the city.

The first piece contains about 107,000 square feet, and is bounded about 300 feet on Ruggles Street, on two other sides by streets, and on the fourth side by the Boston and Providence Railroad, and is laid down on the plan of T. B. Moses, dated April 14th, 1860, herewith submitted.

The price for this lot is 25 cents per foot. It belongs to the Boston and Providence R. R. Company, and from conversation with officers of that corporation, your Committee are satisfied it can be bought for about 22 cents. There is a town way, over which this corporation have built one of their buildings, and the land embraced in that road, the Committee think, may be exchanged, without any detriment to the City, in payment to the amount probably of some \$4000, should this lot be purchased for a square.

The second piece, another lot in this part of the city, preferred by some on account of its location, &c., is part of the Tremont Improvement Company's land, and is laid down on a plan marked "Plan of Park on Tremont Improvement Co.'s Land, Nov., 1859." The price of this lot

is 15 cents per foot, embracing one-half of the streets, and is to be filled by the City, the Company agreeing to build a good class of brick buildings on the surrounding streets.

The Committee recommend buying but one of these lots, and the one that shall be for the best interest of the City.

The third piece is situated on Dale Street, near the boundary between Wards 4 and 5, mid-way between Boston and West Roxbury, and contains about 9 acres, exclusive of the surrounding streets. The land is owned by a large number of parties, and the prices vary, but the average per foot is a little over 8 cents, and is laid down, in green, on a plan drawn by T. B. Moses, dated March 31st, 1860, herewith submitted.

This lot has been chosen by the Committee, in place of the one petitioned for by Edward Winslow and als.

1st. Because it is more central and accessible.

2d. Because it is more healthful, being high and dry, and needing no filling.

3d. Because it is in part higher ground, affording fine views of the surrounding country, and the ocean, and the surface is sufficiently diversified by hill and plain, to answer well the purposes of a Common.

And your Committee are of opinion, a great majority of the petitioners *themselves*, and certainly the great mass of the public, will sustain the Committee in their opinion.

The fourth piece is situated on each side of Orchard Street, contains about 80,000 feet of land, at one shilling per square foot, and is laid down on a plan of T. B. Moses, dated April 28th, 1860.

Before closing their report, your Committee desire to say, that they are decidedly in favor of having that ancient, well-preserved and historical spot, called the "Old Fort," purchased and laid out as a public promenade or park. It is believed to be in the best keeping of any Revolutionary

fort in the State. As part of the fortifications around Boston, reared in 1775 for the protection and defence of the principles of liberty, under the direction of the immortal Washington, this Fort will always be dear to the anti-quarian, the historian, and all true lovers of human freedom.

Is it unreasonable to suppose, that an earnest and united petition, on the part of our citizens, to the next Legislature, to purchase it, would be favorably received? It would require but a small part of the receipts of the Back Bay Lands, now flowing into the Treasury of the *State*, instead of the Treasury of this *City*.

An appropriation was made by the State, a few years since, for a similar purpose, to assist in fencing a square in Cambridge.

In conclusion, the Committee desire to express their united opinion, that these lands will be bought, if bought at all, at the most reasonable prices.

The Committee recommend the adoption of the accompanying Orders.

THEODORE OTIS, *Chairman*.

CITY OF ROXBURY.

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN, May 7th, 1860.

ORDERED, That the Joint Standing Committee on Parks or Squares be, and they are hereby authorized to purchase three several pieces of land, for public Parks or Squares, as set forth in their report herewith submitted, one situated on Dale Street, one on Orchard Street, and the third situated on Ruggles Street, or on the Tremont Improvement Company's land, as they shall deem it for the interest of the City. And to pay for the same on delivery of satisfactory deeds thereof in City Scrip, payable Ten thousand dollars in ten years, Twenty thousand dollars in fifteen years, and the balance in twenty years, from the 1st day of June next, at five per cent. interest, payable semi-annually.

And the Treasurer is hereby authorized to issue said Scrip, under the direction of the Committee on Finance, to an amount not exceeding Seventy thousand dollars.

CITY OF ROXBURY.

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN, May 7th, 1860.

ORDERED, That the Joint Standing Committee on Parks or Squares be, and they are hereby authorized to sell the piece of land on Walnut Street, lying between Munroe and Townsend Streets, belonging to the City, (first obtaining the consent of all parties having any claim upon the City that the same shall be kept for a public square,) at such price and on such terms of payment as they may think for the interest of the City, *provided* said Committee purchase another public Park or Square on Dale Street.

Also, further Ordered, That said Committee have authority to negotiate a settlement with the Boston and Providence Railroad Company, in relation to an old town way leading from Ruggles Street across the road of said Company, and on a part of which their car-house now stands, either by selling the land in said way to said Company, or in such other way as said Committee may think for the interest of the City.



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