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REPORT

OF THE

*Board of Metropolitan Park
Commissioners.*

JANUARY, 1894.

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Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

OFFICE OF METROPOLITAN PARK COMMISSION,
111 AND 112 AMES BUILDING, BOSTON, Dec. 15, 1893.

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled.

The Board of Metropolitan Park Commissioners, appointed under the provisions of chapter 407 of the Acts of 1893, present the following report:—

The members of the Board were appointed on the 8th of July, and the Board organized immediately thereafter, upon the 17th of July. On the 29th of July H. S. Carruth was appointed secretary. His report for the portion of the year which has since elapsed is herewith submitted.

In the report of the temporary Board of Metropolitan Park Commissioners submitted to the Legislature of 1893 (House Document No. 150) a scheme of public reservations within what was then referred to, and has since been incorporated, as the Metropolitan District was set forth in detail. In accordance with the recommendations contained in that report an act for the appointment of a permanent Board of Metropolitan Park Commissioners was reported and passed practically in the form in which it was drafted by the Commission.

Under these circumstances there would appear to be at this time no especial occasion for any elaborate report setting forth the purposes of the Commission, or a scheme of public reservations within the Metropolitan District. It is the understanding of the Commissioners that they were appointed to carry into effect the recommendations made a year ago. The scheme of reservations included in those recommendations was set forth in the elaborate reports of the consulting landscape architect,

Mr. Eliot, and the secretary of the temporary Board, Mr. Sylvester Baxter. It seems unnecessary now to repeat what was then sufficiently said.

Acting upon this view of the purpose of the Legislature in creating the present Board, the Commissioners, as soon as circumstances warranted their so doing, proceeded to carry out the plans and recommendations of the previous Board. In view of the character of the work to be done and the engineering and legal proceedings involved, the progress made has necessarily been slow. It will be remembered that in the report of 1893 the Commissioners called attention to the fact that the scheme proposed involved two classes of acquisition: one exemplified in the case of the Middlesex Fells and the Blue Hill forest, where it was possible to proceed with comparative rapidity; the other, exemplified in the cases of the Revere and Nantasket beaches and the Charles River basin, involving elaborate engineering plans and difficult questions of law. In the cases of this class the expense would necessarily be large, as well as difficult to estimate in advance, and progress correspondingly slow.

Even the acquisition of the Middlesex Fells and the Blue Hill region has necessitated careful surveys, which could be made under favorable circumstances only during the colder season when the trees are stripped of leaves. Those surveys have been in steady progress, and, as will appear from the accompanying report of the secretary, all the steps requisite to the acquisition of both of these reservations either have been taken or will be taken at an early day. Together they will include an area of not less than 4,850 acres—950 in the case of the Middlesex Fells, and 3,900 in the case of the Blue Hills; and it should also be borne in mind in regard to the former reservation that the water boards of Malden, Melrose and Medford and the town of Stoneham own within and adjacent to this area about 1,600 acres additional, which will practically increase the reservation within Middlesex Fells to 2,550 acres.

The group of trees in Belmont and Watertown commonly known as the Waverly Oaks, but more properly the Beaver Brook Oaks, has been acquired. The Commissioners were enabled in this case to act with greater quickness owing to the lim-

ited size as well as simple character of the taking; and their action was greatly facilitated by the liberality of the widow of the late Elisha Atkins of Belmont, and her son, the present Edwin F. Atkins, who contributed the large sum of \$12,500, more than half its entire cost, towards the preservation of this most interesting locality, thus setting a precedent which it is hoped and believed wealthy residents in other localities will not be slow to follow.

Steps have also been taken towards acquiring on the Revere Beach certain holdings of a preliminary character. These it is proposed to follow by other takings as rapidly as the complicated nature of the problem in that case will permit.

No steps have as yet been taken towards the acquisition of Nantasket Beach or its adjuncts.

Under these circumstances, the work thus far done having of necessity been mainly of a preliminary nature, the Commissioners do not consider it necessary now to submit any detailed report, or to make further recommendations, or to ask for increased powers, or that additional funds should be put at their disposal. It has seemed to them desirable to proceed slowly and in a sure, conservative manner, rather than to endeavor to make a large and, possibly, a more or less deceptive showing of work already done. Evidence is abundant that the idea of adequate public reservations has taken firm possession of the popular mind; and especially is this the case among the inhabitants of the Metropolitan District. In this respect the magnificent Boston park system has done a great educational work. That this idea will grow steadily, and now calls for no nervous action or emphatic utterance from them, the members of this Board are well satisfied. They further think that the means already placed at their disposal by the action of the last Legislature will suffice to ensure during the coming year the carrying out in its larger and more general aspects of the scheme submitted a year ago. The details of that scheme can then be considered and provision made for them. Accordingly, with the coming spring, the Commissioners hope to open to the public at least two large reservations, one in the Middlesex Fells and one in the Blue Hill region. When the inhabitants of the Metropolitan District once appreciate the advantage and enjoyment to be derived from those reservations,

the Commissioners feel little apprehension lest additional power and the means requisite to carry the entire scheme into early effect will not readily be given them.

It is possible, however, that the proceedings now being taken may have so far developed before the adjournment of the present Legislature that the Commissioners will desire to submit a supplementary report. This will be a matter for the landscape architects of the Board to decide upon. Their reports, rather than the formal official reports of the Board or of its secretary, shall, it is proposed, hereafter set forth in a continuous series, illustrated by maps, diagrams and plates, the gradual development of the great and beneficent scheme they have conceived. Of this series the admirable report of Mr. Charles Eliot, submitted a year ago, will constitute the initial number, and it is upon the lines set forth in that report the Commissioners are now working; to that report, therefore, the Legislature is referred for information. Should further developments in the immediate future call for it, a second report of the series will be forthcoming before summer.

Full detailed information as to the course otherwise pursued by the Board will be found in the accompanying reports of its secretary and of the landscape architects.

All of which is respectfully submitted.

CHARLES FRANCIS ADAMS.

PHILIP A. CHASE.

WILLIAM B. DE LAS CASAS.

ABRAHAM L. RICHARDS.

WM. CHASE.

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY.

HON. CHARLES FRANCIS ADAMS, *Chairman, Metropolitan Park Commission.*

SIR:— In submitting my first report as the secretary of the Commission it seems proper to rehearse very briefly the facts connected with my term of office. Appointed on the twenty-ninth day of July last, I assumed the duties of this position on the first day of August, thus making only a little more than four months as the time to be covered by this report.

The first matter of importance was the organization of the office, the development of the system for the conduct of its business and the arrangement of the duties of its subordinates, as well as the selection of permanent offices. This was quickly effected. The necessary subordinates were chosen under the civil service rules and suitable offices were selected in the Ames Building. The question of the employment of civil engineers and surveyors for the determination of the boundary lines of the several proposed reservations was at once taken up and, so far as was practicable, the services of local surveyors were engaged. This was done in order that the Commission might avail itself of the advantages of the familiarity with local and property boundaries which, in most cases, these local surveyors possessed.

The work was pushed with the utmost rapidity, and while in some cases obstacles were encountered which caused unlooked-for delays, yet substantial results have been accomplished.

On November 3 the work of surveying and determining the boundaries of the south section of the Beaver Brook Reservation had been completed and the Board passed the necessary act of taking, followed on the 1st of December by the taking of the north section, which together comprise the Beaver Brook Reservation, with an area of 58.61 acres.

On December 12 the first and most important of the four sections of the Blue Hills Reservation, containing 932½ acres, was taken, and the work of preparation for the taking of the three remaining sections is practically completed.

The Middlesex Fells has presented many more difficulties to be overcome than has been the case in the Blue Hills or at the Beaver Brook Reservation. The existence of the large population upon at least three sides of the proposed reservation has rendered the decision as to where the boundary line should be run very difficult and requiring great care and judgment in its determination. The wish not to intrude upon desirable building land of the cities and towns surrounding this wild tract, at the same time so shaping the taking that it shall be in harmony with the purposes for which it is to be established, has led to the running of several alternative lines, and the final determination of the boundary having now practically been completed, the taking can be made at an early date.

At Revere Beach have been encountered the greatest obstacles with which the Commission will have to deal in any of the localities in which it is intended to establish open spaces. The condition of this beach, rapidly growing more serious with every year, is such at the present time as to render impossible the immediate acquiring of the beach itself in its entirety. A plan has been made and will shortly be submitted which comprehends within its lines about one-third of the entire length of the beach. This is based upon and is a part of a general scheme which eventually will include the entire beach from the existing pier at Crescent Beach to and including the Point of Pines. Just how much more can be taken in the near future and where the ultimate limits of the reservation will be placed are questions for future determination, and largely depend upon the measure of co-operation which is extended to the Commission by the land-owners upon the beach.

Complete preliminary plans have been made of the Stony Brook Reservation, previously known by the name of Muddy Pond Woods, and little more remains to be done than the preparation of the necessary plans for record and the passing of the papers of taking. No difficulty appears to present itself in connection with this reservation which should delay beyond a few weeks its completion.

In connection with several of these reservations it will be necessary to provide proper means of ingress and egress by further takings, small in extent and inexpensive in character. That the expenditure of money which has been made and is to be made shall be of the largest possible benefit and use to the people of the Metropolitan District it is necessary that means should be taken to acquaint the public with the easiest and most expeditious means of reaching these various reservations from the different parts of the district. It is my intention, if it should meet with the approval of your honorable Board, to prepare and issue for public use and guidance a brief pamphlet upon each of the reservations, containing maps, showing the means of access and the main paths which traverse the larger reservations.

In spite of the fact that the Blue Hills and the Middlesex Fells, especially the former, have been for years visited by those who have by accident acquired a knowledge of their beauties, the people at large have but small knowledge of the charming spots of natural beauty possessed by these two remarkable tracts of land.

The larger part of the land necessary for these principal reservations having either been taken or about to be taken, the question which becomes the important one during the ensuing year is as to their management and care. It is very important that these beautiful spots shall be made readily accessible to the public; that while for several years yet to come no road building or other expensive work need to be undertaken, it is very desirable—in fact, it is absolutely necessary, if proper security is to be had against the terrible devastation of forest fires—that a reasonable amount should be expended in the very near future in the cleaning up of the woods themselves. This is particularly necessary in the Blue Hills Reservation, but applies also, with less force, to the Middlesex Fells and Stony Brook Reservations. In these forests, which have never received any attention, there exists upon the ground an immense amount of fallen wood in various stages of decay. It is this material which affords the fuel which causes the terrific heat in the forest fires. The quick burning of leaves in the autumn of the year seldom does much serious injury, but in the spring of the year, when the high

winds of March have dried the surface of the ground, these sticks and fallen trees, overlying each other in the best possible manner to cause quick-spreading fires, have done and will continue to do, unless immediately checked by proper precautions, irreparable damage to the woods.

Illustrating this point, I would respectfully call attention to the tremendous damage done by the forest fire in the Blue Hills Reservation so short a time ago as the spring of 1893. Hundreds of acres of valuable and beautiful woodlands were utterly ruined, necessitating their being cut to the ground, leaving scarcely a single tree where one short year ago existed a beautiful forest.

Even more dangerous than the state of affairs which I have just outlined as causing destructive fires in most of these woods, is the condition brought about by these same forest fires. The death of the trees by the forest fire may not be immediate. A year or perhaps two years may ensue before the trees finally give up the unequal struggle and die. They remain standing, their limbs largely intact, presenting every opportunity for another and still more disastrous fire. It is absolutely indispensable that these areas of dead trees should be removed at as early a date as is possible, and that also the ground under the woods now living, as yet unvisited in recent years by severe forest fires, should be put in such a condition as to reduce to the minimum the danger of future conflagrations.

I would respectfully suggest that your honorable Board authorize the expenditure of an amount necessary to remove from the reservations this imminent danger of fire. The employment of men now idle would at this time be opportune and the means of preventing the destruction of property to an amount many times the sum required to accomplish it. This would be work not made for the occasion, but necessary, and in its doing not only would the public receive the full equivalent of the money spent, but, as I have before stated, it would be the means of preventing serious losses in the future.

With the cleaning of the woods and the providing of proper means of ingress and egress, the opening of the disused wood roads, rendering them available to pedestrians and equestrians, the occasional repairing of existing boundary fences, and the erection of new fences upon the boundaries of the reservations

where at present none exist, little remains that is absolutely necessary to be done at the present time. It may safely be left to the future to determine when it shall be desirable to supplement the already existing roads by more substantially constructed carriage roads, and it will be far better to wait until the topographical surveys shall determine the proper location of such roads.

Respectfully submitted,

H. S. CARRUTH,

Secretary.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT.

RECEIPTS AND EXPENDITURES FROM AUG. 1, 1893, TO JAN. 1, 1894.

<i>Office Expenses, Salaries, etc.</i>	
Appropriation,	\$10,000 00
<i>Expenditures.</i>	
Salaries,	\$1,296 67
Office fittings,	185 07
Rent of office,	585 52
Stationery,	269 41
Plans surveying,	4,407 99
Landscape architects,	1,500 00
Legal services,	525 00
Sylvester Baxter, services,	200 00
Telephone,	95 45
Carriage hire,	85 50
Maps and books,	41 00
Tools, etc.,	116 44
Contingent expenses,	289 41
	<hr style="width: 10%; margin: 0 auto;"/> 9,597 46
Balance of appropriation,	<hr style="width: 10%; margin: 0 auto;"/> \$402 54

REPORT OF THE LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS.

Hon. C. F. ADAMS, *Chairman of the Metropolitan Park Commission.*

DEAR SIR:—In a professional report addressed in 1892 to the preliminary or advisory Metropolitan Park Commission, Mr. Eliot (who has since become a member of our firm) reviewed the hills, streams and coasts of the neighborhood of Boston and sketched in colors, on a map, the areas which it seemed to him should be reserved for public use through metropolitan as distinguished from municipal action. No attempt was made to define the exact boundaries of any of the reservations proposed. At the time of writing it was not decided that an executive Metropolitan Park Commission would ever be established.

Your Commission having been created and organized, you asked us to give our attention to the definite demarcation of five of the reservations proposed in Mr. Eliot's report, namely, the reservations at the Blue Hills, Middlesex Fells, Muddy Pond Woods (or Stony Brook), Revere Beach and Beaver Brook. You directed us to prepare projects for boundaries which would show alternative or maximum and minimum limits, wherever possible, in order that a choice might be open to your Board when the estimates of the probable cost of the lands to be taken should be compiled by you. Six parties of surveyors were placed at our service by your direction, and during the months of September, October and November we gave much time, in conjunction with the surveyors, to the careful study of the problem put before us. On Dec. 15, 1893, we sent to your office the last of a series of eight surveyors' maps, drawn to a scale of two hundred feet to an inch, upon which we had indicated by a continuous green line what seemed to us to be the most desirable boundary for each of the

proposed reservations. By a broken green line we also indicated such possible alternative positions for the several boundaries as seemed worthy of consideration. In accompanying reports we explained the proposed boundaries in detail.

In accordance with your request, we now submit the following memoranda of the general principles upon which we have worked in determining the lines lately submitted to you, as just described : —

First. The boundaries of the proposed reservations should, if possible, be established so as to include all lands belonging to the same topographical unit and exhibiting the type of scenery characteristic of each reservation. Obviously, a public domain is not well bounded if it includes only half a hill, half a pond or half a glen. Neither is it well bounded unless it includes such contiguous lands as form the essential framework of the hill scenery, the pond scenery, the glen scenery, or whatever other type of scenery it is desired to preserve. For example, it is desirable to include in the Blue Hills Reservation all the hills of the high range down to the base of their steep slopes. Similarly, it is desirable to include in the Stony Brook Reservation all the uplands which enclose the glen or valley of that stream. To city men it is most refreshing to find themselves in what appears to be a wilderness of indefinite extent. This impression cannot be enjoyed unless the boundary of a valley reservation is established beyond the summits of the enclosing hills.

Second. The boundaries of the proposed reservations should be, if possible, established upon public streets or roads, or upon lines drawn where roads may ultimately be built upon good grades.

The reasons for this principle are many. It is obvious that the back fences of private lands cannot make a handsome boundary for a public domain of any description. It is obvious that private lands abutting directly upon public lands will be much more liable to trespass than they would be if a public roadway separated the two. Private land in the position described is a nuisance to the public, while the public is likely to be a nuisance to its owner. Speaking generally, the policing and the general administration of a public reservation is greatly facilitated when the boundary is a road. Still more impor-

tant is the consideration that if the private lands which adjoin the reservation are provided with a road frontage which looks upon the public domain they will eventually be greatly increased in attractiveness and value.

These two principles taken together explain most of the possible boundary lines submitted for your examination. Where existing streets meet the requirement of the first principle, they have been adopted as the boundary, as, for example, at Washington Street, Melrose, and Blue Hill Street, Canton. Where it has been necessary to devise new roads to serve as boundaries, this has been done, with due respect to the first principle, with due regard for grades and curves, and with care to exclude improved lands, and lands which will ultimately become especially suitable for building sites.

It remains to mention three classes of exceptions to the principle of the existing or proposed road boundary.

In some places it has proved necessary, for the sake of economy, to exclude from the reservations, by arbitrary lines, improved lands which would have been included under our first principle had they not been occupied by buildings: as, for example, at two places on Washington Street in Melrose, and again at Summit Street in Malden.

In some places the reverse operation has proved desirable, and tracts of wild land which would have been excluded under our second principle have been included in the reservation by arbitrary lines, because some subordinate yet still important element of the scenery of the reservation could by so doing be preserved: as, for example, along the north side of the valley of Furnace Brook in the Quincy section of the Blue Hills Reservation, where there has been included the face of a ridge which is in view from the whole basin of the brook, although the road must here be within the reservation in the valley of the brook. Houghton's Pond has been shown as included in the Blue Hills Reservation for the same reason. It is not an essential part of the hill scenery, but it is an exceedingly valuable addition thereto.

In some places, after a road boundary had been studied and mapped, the line was found to lie in such relations to adjacent or parallel township boundaries that rather than leave parts of townships isolated from the main body it was deemed best to

adopt the township boundary as the boundary of the reservation. It was in this way, for example, that the township boundary which divides Quincy from Randolph and Braintree came to be suggested as the southern boundary of the Blue Hills Reservation. Another variety of this exceptional kind of boundary is illustrated in several places about the Fells, where arbitrary lines have been drawn so as to connect the new reservation with pre-existing watershed reservations without leaving wedges or islands of private lands between the two.

The total length of alternative lines thus studied, mapped and described by us for your consideration is about thirty miles.

Yours respectfully,

OLMSTED, OLMSTED & ELIOT.

