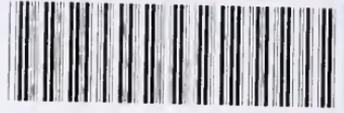


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CITY OF BOSTON.



REPORT

OF THE

COMMISSIONERS ON THE ANNEXATION

OF

DORCHESTER.

In Board of Aldermen, March 1, 1869.

Laid on the table, and ordered to be printed.

Attest:



McCLEARY, *City Clerk.*

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CITY OF BOSTON.

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT, CITY HALL,
BOSTON, March 1, 1869.

TO THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BOSTON:

I have the honor herewith to transmit to you the very able and comprehensive report of the Commissioners appointed on the thirty-first of December, 1868, to consider and report to the City Council on the subject of annexing a portion, or the whole, of the territory of Dorchester to the City of Boston; and recommend it to your early and favorable consideration.

NATH'L B. SHURTLEFF, *Mayor*.

Ms. A. 1. 2. 11. 2. 10

CITY OF BOSTON.

TO HIS HONOR N. B. SHURTLEFF, MAYOR :

SIR,—I have the honor herewith to transmit the report of the Commissioners, appointed to consider, and report to the City Council, on the subject of annexing a portion, or the whole of the territory of Dorchester, to the City of Boston.

Very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

CHAS. R. TRAIN, *Chairman.*

BOSTON, March 1, 1869.

CITY OF BOSTON.

In Common Council, Dec. 10, 1868.

Whereas, in the opinion of the City Council, it has become necessary, in order to complete the system of drainage, and harbor improvements, which have been devised for the benefit of Boston by the various Commissions which have had, and now have these subjects in charge, to annex a portion or the whole of the town of Dorchester to the City of Boston.

Ordered, That his Honor the Mayor be requested to appoint a Commission of three discreet and intelligent persons, who shall carefully examine the subject, in all its financial, industrial, and sanitary relations, cause such surveys to be made by the City Surveyor, or under his direction, as they may consider necessary, and report the result of their doings, with such suggestions as they may think proper, to the City Council, as soon as may be.

A true copy of order passed by City Council, Dec. 22, 1868.

Attest;

S. F. McCLEARY, *City Clerk.*

CITY OF BOSTON.

THE Commissioners appointed by His Honor the Mayor in pursuance of the foregoing order respectfully submit their

REPORT:

TO THE CITY COUNCIL OF BOSTON:

PRELIMINARY REMARKS.

In 1867, during the Mayoralty of the Hon. Otis Norcross, the subject of the annexation of the town of Dorchester was brought to the notice of the City Government, and a Board of Commissioners appointed to confer with Commissioners on the part of that town. In that instance, the movement originated with citizens of Dorchester. In the present instance, it proceeds from the City Council. That Commission was unable to arrive at any definite conclusions with respect to the subject-matter submitted to them, except that — after expressing the opinion that it may become desirable, if not necessary, at some early day to annex, a portion at least, of the town of Dorchester, in order to complete the elaborate system of drainage and harbor improvement, which has been devised for the benefit of Boston “they recommended a reference of the whole subject of this and future annexations of territory to the City, to a Commission to be created by the Legislature.” No action was taken by the City Council on this recommendation, and none by the General Court, and the net result is, the loss of a year’s time in the accomplishment of this desirable public improvement.

Your Commissioners have carefully considered the subject intrusted to them. Assisted by an accurate map of Dorchester, made by the City Surveyor, showing its boundaries, water-shed, harbor and river lines and streets, they have personally examined the territory. They have, also, held frequent conferences with an intelligent Committee, appointed by citizens of that town upon the bearings of this proposed annexation, upon the separate interests committed to their charge. The substance of these opinions, together with much statistical information upon the financial, industrial, and sanitary condition of the town, will be found embodied in this report.

BAD EFFECTS OF PAST NEGLECT.

It has been the misfortune of the City of Boston, hitherto, to be governed by necessity, rather than choice, in the improvements, which the advancing tide of business and population, has rendered essential to the comfort and convenience of its citizens. Its peninsular situation, and the conformation of its territory interposed, at the beginning, natural obstacles to the adoption of a uniform system of streets and squares, in which the element of space should have due consideration.

Nor was there any effort made during its early history to surmount these obstacles. The old thoroughfares, which nature had in part provided, supplemented by narrow cross streets and lanes, were considered sufficient for the uses of those days, but they served to fix the boundaries of estates, and thus, unfortunately, entailed upon succeeding generations, the difficult and costly labor of adapting them to the uses of an overflowing population. A large part of this expense has fallen to our lot, under circumstances, in the financial condition of the country, that aggravate the difficulty, and greatly increase the cost of every new undertaking.

We have before us, at the present time, in the widening of

several of our public streets, a conspicuous illustration of the truth of this statement.

The founders of the city were, in most things, sagacious and far sighted men; but they seem to have been sadly deficient in the first duty of their time,—the laying out of its streets and squares upon some regular plan, which would have simply required extension to meet the demands of increasing numbers.

In this respect we may be thought wiser than our fathers, but there is danger that we may render ourselves liable to the charge of a similar shortsightedness.

THE GREAT INCREASE OF POPULATION.

The multiplication of our population by an increasing ratio is a mathematical certainty. We cannot close our eyes to the fact, nor can we avoid the immediate responsibility, it imposes upon us, to make a wise and timely provision for its future welfare. Looking at the present population of the city,— which may be roughly estimated at 240,000,— and adopting the ratio of increase between the years 1855 and 1865 as a basis of calculation, it is apparent that we shall have at the end of the next decade, 1880, without accessions from suburban cities or towns, a population of rising 300,000; in 1890, on the same ratio, 360,000 and upwards; in 1900, 450,000. Such a population cannot be compressed within the existing limits of the city. Some portions of it may find accommodation on the Back Bay, but a greater part will be obliged — if desirous of enjoying its privileges — to occupy South Boston or the Highlands. The Back Bay territory is limited, and will continue to be occupied for a considerable time at least, by the more wealthy class of our citizens.

South Boston, with its prospective extended area of filled land, it is generally conceded, is to become the seat of extensive manufacturing industries, as also of the freighting business for

the railroads on the south side of the city, which is estimated to require at least one hundred and fifty acres of filled land. The Highlands are left, then, as the only territory on that side of the city proper, accessible to persons who prefer to remain within its limits, and yet wish to avail themselves of the better sanitary conditions of the suburbs. The importance of retaining the industrial classes of our community within the city limits cannot be overestimated. An industrious, intelligent mechanic, who has a family, and is laboring to place his children in a better position than he has been able to attain, is a most valuable man in any community. To retain such men we must be able to give them land at moderate prices. They will always remain in the city if they can live as cheaply and comfortably as elsewhere, not only because the interests of their labor are here, but because of its better facilities of education, recreation, libraries, and other advantages which the metropolis affords. The money invested in building up compact villages in the near suburbs should be applied within the limits of the city, thus retaining the population and wealth now lost, and adding to its character, wealth, numbers, and virtue. The amount of Boston capital invested in real estate in the cities of New York and Chicago, not to mention numerous other localities, is estimated to reach millions of dollars. This capital should be employed here, but will not be so long as Boston maintains its present contracted limits. It is apparent to the most casual observer that there is not sufficient room for the middling and laboring classes, and if the present state of things should be permitted to continue, the city will ultimately be left to the care of the very rich and the very poor.

The wants of business in the city proper continually encroach upon the habitations of the people. The removal of Fort Hill for business purposes, and the still more recent demand for eight acres of land, north of Causeway Street, for the accommodation of the business of the Eastern and Lowell Railroads,

thus depriving seven hundred and nineteen families and a population of four thousand people of their homes, are remarkable illustrations of the truth of this proposition. This population may not itself seek homes beyond the present limits of the city, but it displaces, of necessity, another class of inhabitants which the city cannot afford to lose, and which will accommodate itself in the adjacent towns. The growth of these suburban towns is mainly due to the overflow of the population of Boston, and what they gain in the advantages which the country affords, we lose in the substantial character of our citizens.

The annexation of Roxbury, though unwisely delayed, was a most important step in the right direction. It is, then, evident, on these general views, that timely provision should be made for the acquisition of territory of large capacity, bordering closely upon the city, in the direction of the movement of population, best adapted to our existing system of water distribution, drainage, etc., a territory which we shall have the power to shape at small expense, for the healthful occupation of our increasing population.

THE TERRITORY PROPOSED TO BE ANNEXED.

Dorchester seems to your Commissioners to present these important requisites. It has a large area of high land, well adapted for residences, and its situation is such that it can be easily and cheaply drained. Its north and west boundaries, following those of the City, intersect neighborhoods that have lived in common for generations. Indeed, so undefined and obscure are these limits, that a non-resident would find it difficult to tell where the territory of Dorchester begins, or that of the city ends. These lines cut many streets at right angles, thus rendering impossible—in the existing state of things—any general and comprehensive system of street and sewerage improvements. It has a navigable harbor and river line on the

east, of about three miles in extent, and a continuous river line above, navigable to Lower Mills, and reaching to within a short distance of its southern limit, with valuable deep water at Commercial Point and Port Norfolk, affording sites for wharves, factories, ship-yards, etc., unsurpassed by any in the vicinity of Boston. Vessels drawing from eighteen to twenty feet can come up to Commercial Point, and sixteen feet at high water, to Port Norfolk. The Old Colony and Newport Railroad, with three passenger stations in the town, runs within a quarter of a mile of the shore, crossing the river at Port Norfolk, from whence the Dorchester and Milton Branch Railroad runs near the river, to Mattapan. The Hartford and Erie Railroad passes through the entire territory, with five passenger stations therein, while the Metropolitan Railroad intersects the town with three distinct lines of tracks. The distance from the farthest station in the town to State Street, is accomplished in twenty minutes. The navigation of the river is closed for only about two months in the year by ice.

There are various important industries in different parts of the town, that give employment to large numbers of its population, and they are represented to be in a prosperous condition. Nearly one half of the population, it has been estimated, do business in the city. Its streets are in good order, and the same may be said of its public buildings and other property; and the health of the town is as good, if not superior to that of any other in the neighborhood of Boston. The following statistics exhibit the number of its population, dwelling houses, legal voters, and other details, as also, its financial condition.

STATISTICS OF THE TOWN.

Inhabitants, estimated	12,000
Dwelling houses, May 1, 1868	1,830
Ratable polls	2,918
Legal voters	2,100
Churches	13
School-houses, of the larger class	7
" " of the small "	3
One steam fire-engine, and several hand engines,	
Scholars	2,000
Acres of land	4,532 $\frac{3}{4}$
Valuation for 1868	
Real estate	\$9,291,200 00
Personal	6,035,100 00

FINANCIAL CONDITION.

Town Debt	\$147,700
Cash on hand Feb. 1, 1869, and due from State and for Taxes	111,092 41
Actual debt	\$36,607 59
Valuation of town property	\$237,182 26

COMPARATIVE STATISTICS.

The following statistics are presented for the purpose of showing the comparative areas of Boston, Roxbury and Dorchester, the aggregate area of the three places being 9,902 acres, and the density of population to the square acre and square mile of Boston proper as compared with other large cities.

The original area of upland in Boston was	690 acres.
The area added, and in progress by filling flats, is	880 "
The area of South Boston is	900 "
The area of East Boston is	800 "

Making a total of	3,270 acres.
The area of Roxbury is	2,100 "

The united areas of Boston and Roxbury are 5,370 acres.

The area of the City of New York is	14,502 acres.
" " Philadelphia is	82,560 "
" " London is	74,070 "

The population of Boston to the square acre is	59
" " Roxbury " "	13
" " New York " "	56
" " Philadelphia " "	7
" " London " "	40

The population of Boston in 1865 was	192,317
in 1855 "	160,490

Increase in ten years 31,827

$19\frac{83}{100}$ per cent.

The area of Dorchester is	4,532 acres.
" " Boston is	5,370 "

The united areas of Boston and Dorchester are 9,902 acres.

The population of Dorchester in 1865 was	10,707
" " " in 1855 "	8,340

Increase in ten years 2,377

$28\frac{50}{100}$ per cent.

Boston has less square miles within its corporate limits than either of the following cities.

New York has	22 square miles.
Philadelphia	129½ " "
Baltimore	15 " "
Buffalo	27 " "
Pittsburg	24 " "
Louisville	12¾ " "
Chicago	23¾ " "
Boston	10 " "

And its proportion of population to the square mile is large in comparison with that of other cities, being more than that of the city of London.

London has to the square mile	24,768
Liverpool " "	29,712
Bristol " "	22,080
New York " "	32,068
Cincinnati " "	30,143
Philadelphia (census of 1860)	4,403
Chicago	10,833
Pittsburg	5,623
Boston	25,600

CENTRALIZATION OF WEALTH AND POPULATION.

The tendency of population to centralize in cities, is an established physical law, and its operation upon this continent, in the building up of great cities, presents more striking illustrations than may be found in any part of the Old World. This concentration has not advanced as rapidly in the city of Boston as in many other cities of the Union, but if the rate of progress has been slow, it has been sure and irresistible. In a note appended to the printed census of 1865, the following statements

occur. "Within the limits of the City of Boston, are contained about one-seventh of the population of the State,—44.06 per cent, or nearly one-half of the personal property—and more than one-third of the real estate. The cities and towns within ten miles, but exclusive of Boston, contain more than one-sixth of the population of the State,—nearly one-sixth of the personal property,—and a fraction over one-fifth part of the real estate. Within ten miles and inclusive of Boston, therefore, are comprised about one-third of the population,—six-tenths of the personal property,—and above one-half (.54) of the real estate of the Commonwealth. More than *one-half* of the population of the State, *seven-tenths* of the personal property, and *two-thirds* of the real estate, are situated within a distance of twenty-five miles from the State House.

"This condensation of population in the vicinity of Boston, as compared with other portions of the State, has existed from an early period. A circumscribing circle, drawn from the State House at Boston as a centre, and containing exactly one-half of the population of the State, would have had a radius in 1765 of less than 30 miles; in 1800, of less than 35 miles; 1810, of 34 miles; in 1820, the radius would have been 32 miles; in 1830 31 miles; in 1840, 29½ miles; and in 1865, a fraction less than 25 miles.

"The number of dwellings in Massachusetts in 1865 was returned as 208,698; the number of families 269,968; there being 61,270 more families than dwellings. The proportion of families to dwellings in Boston being 38,021 of the former to 20,649 of the latter."

In view of these facts, for they are facts and not speculations, the duty of the present and future guardians of the city, is as clear as the day. It is not to attempt to divert this wealth and population into new channels, or to create new centres for it. It is to accept the actual, existing conditions, and provide by seasonable legislation for its natural, necessary and healthful

expansion and distribution over a wider area, into the beautiful suburbs which nature has so lavishly furnished for the purpose.

DRAINAGE AND HARBOR IMPROVEMENT.

On this subject, your Committee refer to the report of the Back Bay Commissioners, made to the City Council in 1863 — City Document, No. 81. The Commissioners say “By the second report of the United States Commissioners on the condition of Boston Harbor, dated Dec. 12, 1860, it is shown that between the years 1835 and 1847, there has been deposited in Charles River, between the Mill-Dam and Charles River Bridge, an amount of sediment equal to 1,499,000 cubic yards. No doubt the largest portion of this sediment has been brought down by Charles River, draining as it does many square miles of territory. The remedy which we think must finally be adopted will be to intercept Stony Brook at, or near, Washington Street in Roxbury, and by the construction of a tunnel and sewer, in a south-easterly direction through Roxbury and Dorchester, discharge all the water of this brook, and this territory into the most easterly end of Dorchester Bay.

This method of its discharge will relieve Charles River and the main body of the harbor from the deposit of any sediment from this section of territory. The proposed point of discharge for this great sewer, when built, is three-quarters of a mile from the nearest point of South Boston, three-quarters of a mile from Savin Hill, and more than a mile from Thompson's Island; and is so situated that all the discharge from the sewer will be swept by the current from Neponset River into the back way or channel of the harbor, and thus tend to keep the main channel and shores of the harbor free from the deposit of sediment from the sewers.”

It is obvious that the Commissioners in considering this subject, to which they seem to have given great attention, anticipa-

ted the time when South Bay would be filled up solid as well as the fact that Fort Point Channel should not be made the point of discharge for the sewerage which will be required for the population which is to occupy South Bay and the adjacent territory.

His Excellency the Governor in his recent inaugural address interprets accurately the public sentiment. Speaking in connection with the filling up of the South Boston flats, he said "The filling up of these flats is no doubtful experiment. The continual rise in the value of real estate in Boston proves that *the great present and future need of this City is land.* These flats, *together with a very large territory belonging to the Commonwealth in South Bay,* are directly in the path of the growth of Boston. If a large portion of this territory was filled up, it would sell at remunerative prices. The whole of it will be needed within this generation."

Your Commissioners have obtained from the State Harbor Commissioners, an expression of their views which, without expressing an opinion further upon the question of how best to deal with this subject, which increases in importance and difficulty with the growth of the south part of the city, they append hereto. There is no difference of opinion, that the interests of our Commerce require that the whole Harbor front of what is known as Boston Harbor, in all matters of regulation and police, should be under the municipal control of the city.

WHETHER A PART OR THE WHOLE.

Your Commissioners have given careful attention to the consideration of how much, if not all, of the town of Dorchester it is necessary, expedient, or desirable, should be annexed to the city. The question is attended with some difficulty. An experimental line has been surveyed from the southeast corner of the city, in the Highland District, as a continuation of our south boundary on Seaver Street, thence running nearly in a

southeasterly direction, parallel with and in the rear of Washington Street, Dorchester, south of said street to a point on that street midway between the Town House and the church, and thence by a nearly direct course to Granite Bridge, on the Neponset River. This line, at the first view, would seem to be the most natural one that could be drawn, because it preserves the continuity of the south boundary, follows the trend of the land to Neponset River, and gives us Dorchester Bay, the basin, and tidal waters of Neponset River up to a given point, and, also, the ground through which a drain may be constructed.

But such a line could hardly be expected to meet the views of the citizens of the town. The territory left out would be too small for a township, having less than two-fifths of the whole area, and one-fifth of the population, bad in shape, and so situated as to make its annexation to either one or the other of the towns of Milton, Hyde Park, or West Roxbury, which it adjoins, unavoidable. This line is within the six-mile radius, and however convenient it might seem to be for a boundary, there were so many objections raised to it that your Commissioners felt obliged to abandon it. A more contracted line, taking in less territory, would clearly be to the disadvantage of the city. On this subject your Commissioners assumed that it would not be going beyond the scope of their instructions to canvass the opinions of the citizens of the town. They did so freely, and the balance of opinion was found to be, so far as they could judge, in favor of the annexation of the whole of the territory, rather than its division by the proposed line, or any line which would separate one part from the other. A strong feeling of attachment to the name of the town, and its history and traditions, was manifested.

It was thought that, as in the case of Roxbury, by the annexation of the whole territory, Dorchester might continue to retain her boundary and local history, as a precinct of the city. The annexation, last year, of a portion of the back territory of the

town to Hyde Park, relieves the question of much of this difficulty. It was found that the present south boundary of the town came within the seven mile radius, which seems to be generally admitted to be a rational, and practicable limit to the extension of the city's boundary. It should, also, be stated that by taking the whole territory, a part of Mount Hope Cemetery will be embraced within the city limits, an object both interesting and desirable.

CONCLUSION.

On the ground, therefore, of the necessity for a part, and the desirableness of the whole of the territory for the present and prospective wants of the city, the highly favorable financial, industrial and sanitary condition of the town, and paying due respect to the opinions and wishes of its inhabitants, your Commissioners report it to be their unanimous judgment that the whole of the territory should be annexed to the City of Boston, without delay, and they, respectfully, recommend to the City Council that His Honor the Mayor be authorized to petition the Legislature, in their behalf, for an Act to that effect.

CHAS. R. TRAIN,
 NATH'L J. BRADLEE, } *Commissioners.*
 GEO. A. SHAW,

Boston, March 1, 1869.

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS.

HARBOR COMMISSIONERS' OFFICE, CITY HALL.

BOSTON, Feb. 25, 1869.

HON. CHARLES R. TRAIN, *Chairman Commissioners on the annexation of Dorchester to Boston.*

SIR,—The Board of Harbor Commissioners have the honor to make the following report upon the request of the Commissioners appointed by the Mayor of Boston to consider the subject of the annexation of a portion or the whole of the town of Dorchester to the City of Boston :

Upon the general question of the expediency of enlarging the water front of the city, it would not be proper for this Board to express any opinion, as they have jurisdiction equally over the water fronts of Boston and Dorchester ; and can take as efficient measures for the protection of navigation and the preservation of the harbor, whether the corporation limits are diminished or enlarged.

In regard to the matter of drainage, the Commissioners, desirous of furnishing such information as they could command, directed their Engineer to examine into the subject of deflecting the drainage of Stony Brook from Charles River to Dorchester Bay. The results of his examinations have been communicated to the Board, as follows :

The topography of the country of which Stony Brook is the natural drain, does not admit of other relief for its water-shed, except at points near the mouth of said brook, at its confluence with Muddy River.



Between this general locality and the shores of Dorchester Bay, the ground is low and level, and a drain or sewer carrying even a part of the flowage of Stony Brook, at times of freshet, would have to be of large capacity, and through expensive ground to occupy for this purpose.

The distance from the nearest point of Stony Brook, favorable for deflecting drainage, to the present nearest shore of Dorchester Bay, is about two miles, — 10,500 feet.

The distance from the same point to Charles River, is about one and a quarter miles, 6500 feet.

The route most favorable and practical for a drain or sewer, turning Stony Brook into Dorchester Bay, passes just tangent to the township line of Dorchester and is already within the limits of the City of Boston near the head waters of South Bay, and would not therefore, involve questions of municipal interest.

The physical bearing of the drainage from Stony Brook is a questionable one. As a tributary to Charles River it is of value. Its volume, during a recent freshet, was 400 cubic feet per second. The deposits from it, as a sewer, would be injurious; but its influences in comparison with the water volume of Charles River, or with its mud deposits, are of small proportions.

Respectfully submitted,

JOSIAH QUINCY,

Chairman Board of Harbor Commissioners.

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