FRESH POND WATER: MEASURES PROPOSED FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE PURITY OF THE WATE-SUPPLY OF THE CITY OF CAMBRIDGE. REPORT PF A PUBLIC HEARING

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W. O. ROBSON

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FRESH POND WATER.

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REPORT OF A PUBLIC HEARING

BEFORE A

JOINT CONVENTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF CAMBRIDGE, ON THE PETITION OF SAMUEL B. RINDGE AND MANY OTHERS, NOV. 15, 1878, AT 7½ O'CLOCK P.M., HIS HONOR MAYOR MONTAGUE PRESIDING.

STENOGRAPHICALLY REPORTED BY W. O. ROBSON.

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REPORT OF HEARING.

A HEARING was given by a joint convention of the City Council of the city of Cambridge, on Friday evening, Nov. 15, on the following petition of Samuel B. Rindge and 2,755 others: —

"*To the Honorable, the City Council of Cambridge:* —

"The undersigned, citizens of Cambridge, and many of us water-takers, solicitous for the purity of our water-supply, and alarmed by the recent action of the selectmen of Belmont in authorizing the erection of a large slaughter-house upon the borders of Fresh Pond, respectfully and earnestly request you to take immediate steps, under the authority conferred upon you by the legislature, to secure, by purchase or otherwise, sufficient land upon the margin of Fresh Pond to protect our water-supply from pollution. We believe the acquisition of this territory a public necessity, and that advantage should be taken of the low price of real estate at the present time."

After reading the petition, his Honor the Mayor said, —

The matter is now before the Convention, and, if the petitioners are present, they will now be heard. The Chair would suggest to the members of the City Council, that this hearing is for the petitioners, and that they be allowed to go on and present their case, and answer any questions that may be asked by the members of the City Council or the Water Board; and then, if any one wishes to remonstrate, they will be allowed a hearing, after the petitioners have concluded.

REMARKS OF SAMUEL B. RINDGE, ESQ.

MR. MAYOR, AND GENTLEMEN OF THE CITY COUNCIL, — The petition that has been presented to the city government asks for some action to be taken by your honorable body towards protecting the purity of the supply of water which we receive from Fresh Pond. We think that the Water Commissioners and the Committees appointed by previous honorable boards of this city are as well posted in relation to the purity of our water as any one.

They are consumers of it, as we are. They have investigated the borders of Fresh Pond; and I suppose that their reports, in their own language, speak stronger sentiments than any of us, as citizens, can express, and I would present to you from their own reports to the city government their very language. I have before me some of their reports. In the first place, by authority of the legislature of this Commonwealth, by an act approved May 1, 1875, the city of Cambridge has the right to take and hold, by purchase or otherwise, such land on and around the margin of the ponds, including Fresh Pond, not exceeding five rods in width, as may be necessary for the preservation and purity of their waters. On that question a petition was ably presented before the legislature, which granted the city of Cambridge authority to take that quantity of land around Fresh Pond. Since 1875 no action has been taken to any extent; but, when the city asked for that action, they believed it was necessary for the preservation and purity of our water.

In the report of the Water Board for the year 1876, which was signed by George P. Carter, J. Warren Merrill, H. L. Eustis, C. W. Kingsley, and F. A. Allen, they remarked that there has been dissatisfaction in relation to the purity of the water, the principal reasons for which they think are, —

"First, In the use of Fresh Pond for boating, by which more or less persons have been drowned; and in some case, the bodies have been in the pond several days before they were recovered.

"Second, The surface drainage that finds its way into Fresh Pond from the dwellings and lands around the pond, and which is constantly increasing as the surrounding country becomes settled."

In regard to the second ground of complaint they say, —

"We can only say that there are undoubtedly some places where the drainage from various sources finds its way indirectly into Fresh Pond, more particularly in times of heavy rains, and during the spring freshets caused by the melting snow. . . . We are satisfied, that while the evil of surface drainage can be wholly removed only by a sewer around the pond, yet, at a small expense, a large part of the drainage into the pond can be so arranged as to be filtered through a gravel bank before it finds its way into the pond, thus removing all substances held in suspense, and greatly mitigating, if not wholly removing, the evil."

Now, then, no action has been taken to purchase any land upon which is a gravel bank, by which the purity of the water running into the pond can be preserved. The Board continues, —

"There is a constantly increasing demand upon us to provide for the

drainage from the estates bordering on the pond, which now pollutes the water. The construction of a sewer in connection with such a road would carry all the drainage into Alewife Brook, below the outlet of the pond. This, with the cleaning up of the banks between such a road and the borders of the pond, would do much towards keeping the water clean and pure."

As far back as 1873, a report was made: —

"We were gratified at the prompt action of the City Council in voting to put in a sewer in Concord Avenue and Vassal Lane, by which a large amount of surface drainage on the easterly side of the pond can be kept out of the pond, and carried below the outlet into Alewife Brook; while at the same time we can properly drain the new pumping-works that have been erected. The subject of protecting our water-supply from drainage around the pond is an all important one, and appeals to the personal interests of every one who uses the water."

A committee, consisting of Samuel L. Montague, George H. Howard, Perez G. Porter, George F. Whiting, and Archibald M. Howe, were appointed by the City Council to report upon the pollution of the water-supply of the city of Cambridge. In their report they say, —

"The only places from which your Committee think that there is immediate danger to Fresh Pond are on the south-westerly side, near Cushing Street, where more or less drainage, at certain seasons of the year, finds its way into the pond, and should be cared for at once; also from the drainage which may find its way into the pond from Fresh Pond Hotel and the picnic grounds and the boating connected therewith. . . . In regard to the picnic and hotel grounds, your Committee would recommend, that so much of the land bordering on the pond as is connected with these premises be immediately taken, under the authority given us by the legislature; and that the same be properly fenced, so as effectually to exclude all persons from the pond in that locality. . . . In regard to Wellington Brook, there are some houses in Belmont whose drainage, if any, would naturally find its way into the brook. . . . Fresh Pond is really our reservoir or settling basin, and should be protected from the constantly increasing drainage on the shores. While no perceptible evil has yet come from this source, yet it is wisdom to provide for the future, and see that the pond is properly protected. To do this, we must control the borders of the pond, and, if possible, the pond itself. And we would therefore recommend that immediate action be taken, under the *authority that we already possess*, to control that portion of the borders connected with the hotel and picnic grounds, and on the south-westerly side, near Cushing Street, as previously mentioned in this report; and that after a careful survey has been made, and a system of sewerage adopted for this whole territory, then, whatever land is shown by the survey to be necessary for the full protection of the pond and for ultimately building a sewer entirely around it, be taken for that purpose."