

**REPORT OF THE BOARD OF
METROPOLITAN
PARK COMMISSIONERS.
NO. 48. DECEMBER, 1914**

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VARIOUS

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METROPOLITAN
PARK COMMISSIONERS.
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Public Document

No. 48

Mass. Metropolitan Park Commission
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REPORT

OF THE

BOARD OF METROPOLITAN PARK
COMMISSIONERS.

DECEMBER, 1914.



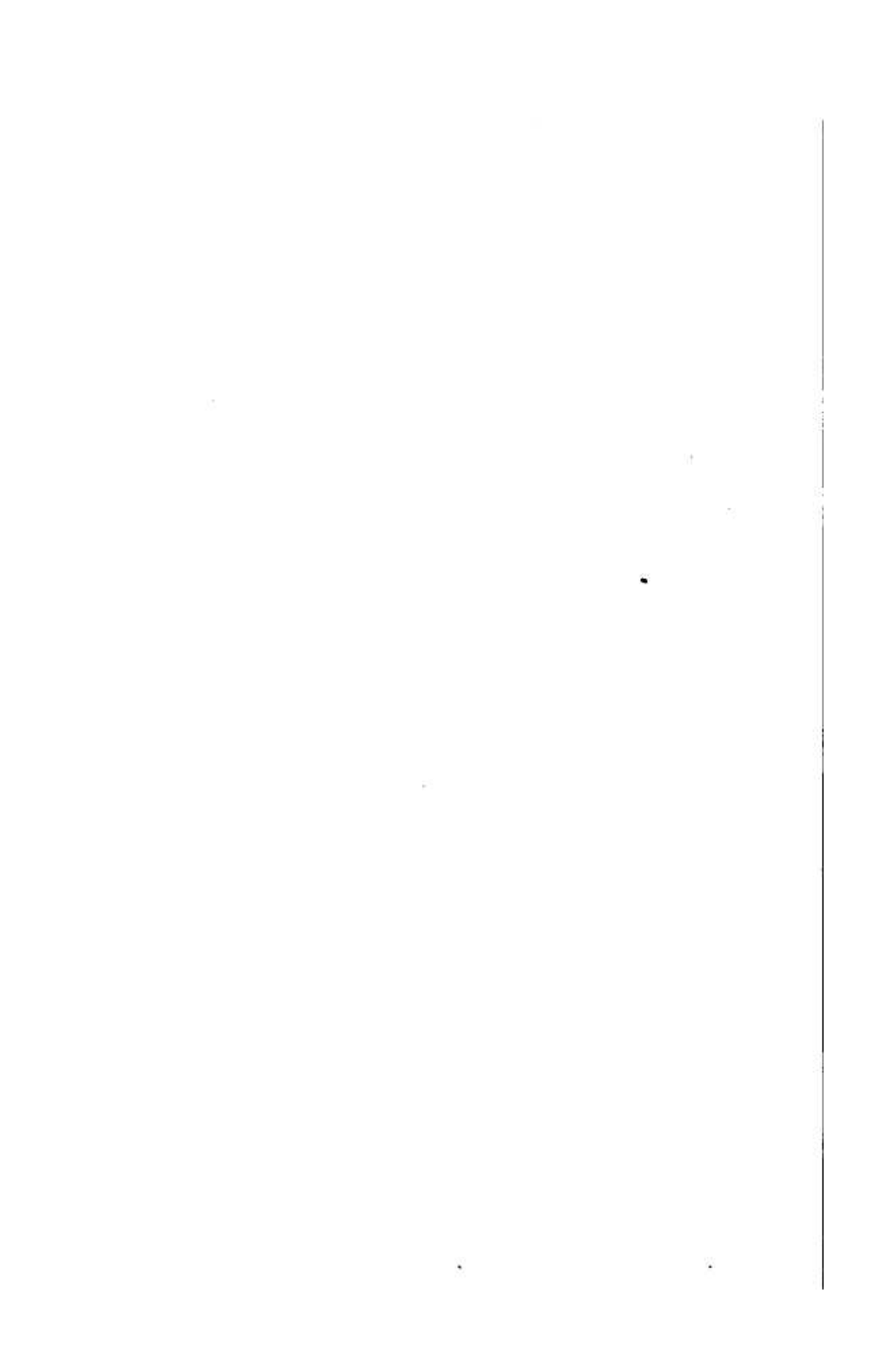
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OFFICERS.

Commissioners.

WILLIAM B. DE LAS CASAS, *Chairman.*

EDWIN U. CURTIS.

EVERETT C. BENTON.

ELLERTON P. WHITNEY.

CHARLES J. BARTON.

Secretary.

GEORGE LYMAN ROGERS.

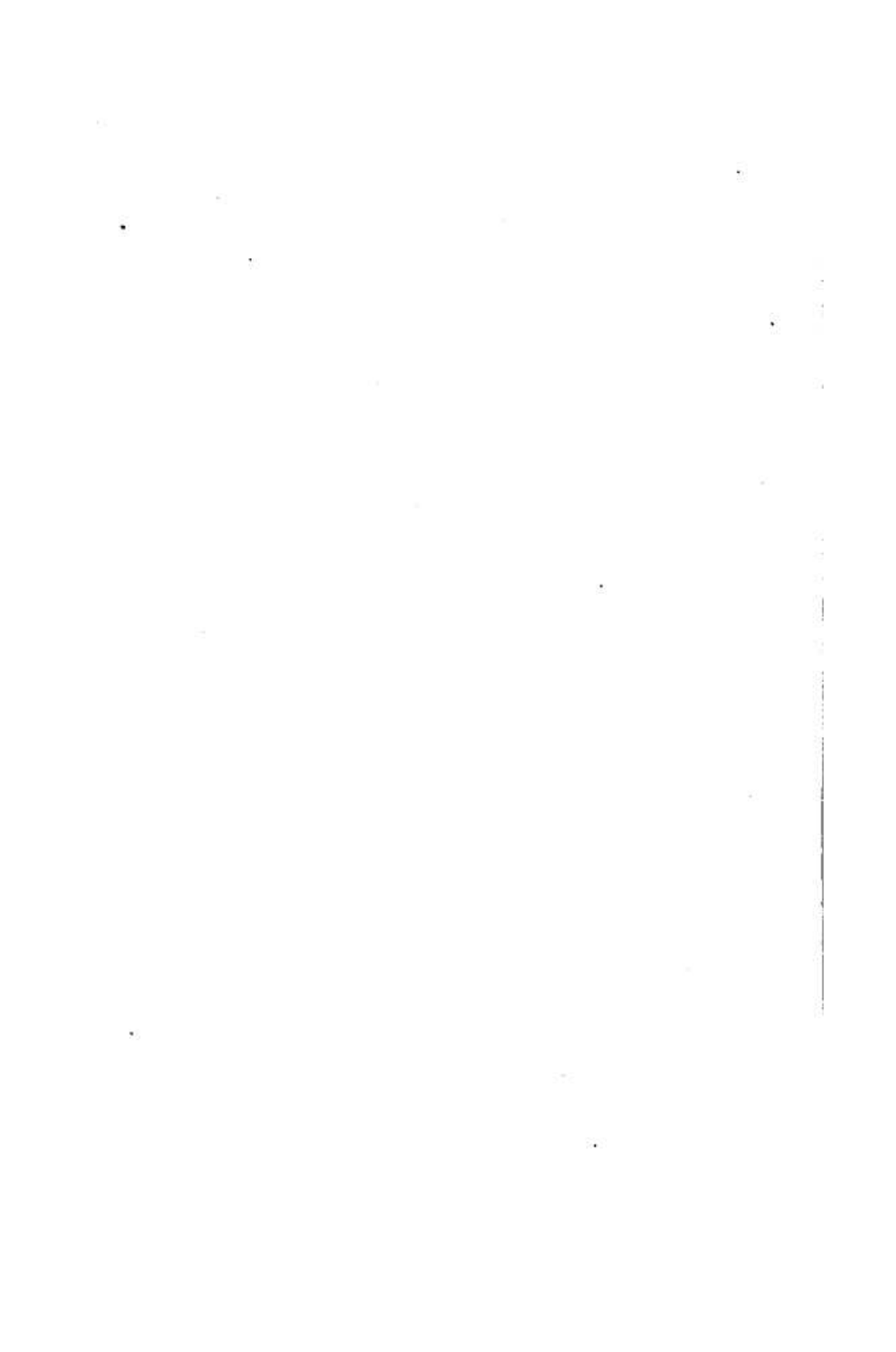
Assistant Secretary.

WILLIAM H. GOWELL.

Engineer.

JOHN R. RABLIN.

OFFICES, 14 Beacon Street, Boston, Mass.



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

REPORT.

The Metropolitan Park Commission presents herewith its twenty-second annual report.

The most dramatic occurrence of the year 1914 has been the burning of Wellington Bridge on the fifth day of June, and the attendant and following circumstances. This might alone be the text of the principal part of this report.

When this Board was established in 1893, the report of the Preliminary Investigating Commission of 1892 was thought to be a sufficient compendium of the work and procedure to be entered upon. That report has proved a most remarkable one, and in no way more than that after twenty years it is still looked to as the authoritative outline of the Park System now so far advanced. It is no lessening of its value to say that it did not fully estimate the extent to which it would rouse public interest, or the rapidity with which that public interest would advance not only the acquirement of lands but their development, and would even turn to this Board as a convenient agency for the accomplishment of incidental public works, which could not be so easily accomplished by co-operative action of separate municipalities.

The preliminary report of 1892, while suggesting in general form the acquirement of the land desirable for a completed Metropolitan Park System, expressed the opinion that the land when acquired might be held for many years without much development or expense for maintenance. This Board has always regarded that suggestion as in effect one of the terms of its trust, and has endeavored to follow it as far as possible. The experience of each year, however, has demonstrated that public ownership had brought a responsibility and public

expectancy and legislative requirement for greater protection and care of the lands acquired than had been exercised in general by private ownership. At the outset, effort was made to meet this in the simplest way by building mere woods paths, and by utilizing for administration and other public uses the buildings which were upon the lands at the time they were acquired, and when new buildings were required it was deemed best to build in less permanent forms from a fear that the necessities of public use were still so little understood that greater expense was not yet warranted. This feeling may have communicated itself also to the public. At all events appropriations for such structures as Wellington Bridge were made of an amount sufficient only to provide for the less permanent forms of construction even where, as in that case, the more permanent form and increased expense were recommended by this Board. In later years, however, it became evident that the Metropolitan Park System had passed beyond its experimental stage, and the Board felt justified in urging that all development and incidental construction should be, as far as possible, most carefully planned for with reference to future as well as present needs, and constructed in such permanent and indestructible form as would keep down the cost of maintenance and renewal. This policy is now more than ever warranted by a reasonable confidence in the future of the Park System, by watchfulness for the public safety, and by the fact that the Commonwealth neither allows insurance of its property nor provides an insurance fund against fire losses. That the northerly half of Wellington Bridge caught fire and was entirely consumed in broad daylight, and that provision for rebuilding has been made sufficient to provide for fire-proof construction, may be taken to be an endorsement of the policy of the Board, and to establish it as the policy of the Commonwealth in regard to the Metropolitan Park System.

The cause of the Wellington Bridge fire cannot be stated with certainty, as the experts who investigated it differ in their conclusions, but it appears to have been caused either by a defective arrangement of the electrical appliances for operating the street cars, or by a burning cigar or cigarette dropped between the planking of the sidewalks. The bridge was a wooden