

**THE COMMITTEE ON FEDERAL
RELATION; ARGUMENTS IN
BEHALF OF PETITIONS FOR AID IN
THE PRESERVATION OF THE OLD
SOUTH MEETING - HOUSE**

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The committee on federal relation; Arguments in Behalf of Petitions for Aid in the Preservation of the Old South Meeting - house by Various

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VARIOUS

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Massachusetts Legislature.
General Court

THE COMMITTEE ON FEDERAL RELATIONS.

ARGUMENTS IN BEHALF OF PETITIONS

FOR AID IN THE PRESERVATION OF THE

OLD SOUTH MEETING-HOUSE.

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REMARKS OF GEO. O. SHATTUCK, ESQ.

Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen,—I appear here in support of more than fifty petitions, coming from all parts of the commonwealth, from Cape Cod to Berkshire, praying for the passage of this resolve. I propose to state very briefly what has been done by the public in this behalf, and leave the argument to others.

The Old South was built in 1729, and is older than the Old State House, older than Faneuil Hall, and is probably the oldest building in the commonwealth prominently connected with our history. In 1876 the society which owned it decided to sell it. The building was put up at auction and sold to be removed. In order to save it from destruction, an appeal was made to the people of the commonwealth and the nation. The appeal was answered by so many persons, not only in this State but in many other States, that the response was thought sufficient to warrant a deliberate attempt to save the building. As the society could not hold it, or were unwilling to hold it, certain parties purchased the building, and paid the Old South Society in money four hundred thousand dollars. It was then conveyed to Mr. Henry P. Kidder and Mr. Henry Lee, of Boston, subject to the claims of the parties who advanced the money. Since that time contributions amounting to more than two hundred and thirty thousand dollars have been paid in, so that the property is now held by Messrs. Kidder and Lee subject to a mortgage of two hundred and four thousand

dollars. The interest has been paid out of a part of the contribution.

The property has not yet been conveyed to the corporation which was chartered last winter, because it was not thought desirable to convey it to that corporation until it is absolutely secure. That corporation, as you will remember, consists of the Governor, the Mayor of Boston, the President of Harvard College, and several other persons named in the Act, who are authorized to hold the property for public purposes, and to make contracts with the commonwealth for the use of it for election sermons and for other public purposes.

We come here to ask the commonwealth to contribute what will amount to between ten and twelve per cent only of the cost. We ask for this with confidence, because it is in accordance with the established policy of the commonwealth to do whatever is proper, by preserving and erecting memorials or by celebrations, to perpetuate the remembrance of whatever is great and good in the history of the State. The State appropriated and paid seven thousand dollars toward Bunker Hill Monument. It paid nearly sixty thousand dollars for the centennial celebration in Philadelphia. It paid seventeen thousand dollars to celebrate on a single day the centennial anniversary of the battle of Bunker Hill. It paid seventy-five hundred dollars last year, or appropriated it, for a monument to commemorate the battle of Bennington. The State has not only done this itself, but it has encouraged taxation by towns for like purposes. In 1864 it authorized any town or city in the commonwealth to build soldiers' monuments, and under this authority hundreds of thousands of dollars have been appropriated. In 1874 and 1875 it authorized Concord and Lexington and many other towns to make large appropriations to celebrate the centennial anniversary of the battle of Lexington.

Mr. RUSSELL.—Didn't the State also make a grant of two thousand dollars for the Acton monument?

Mr. SHATTUCK.—Yes, sir. I find in the laws of 1851 that the sum of two thousand dollars was appropriated for a monument to Capt. Isaac Davis, of Acton, provided the citizens of the town raised five hundred dollars for the same purpose. The State, from the earliest period in its history, has been constantly taking steps,—by publishing records, by encouraging celebrations, by building monuments,—to commemorate, to preserve, and to keep alive in the minds of the people the history of Massachusetts,—of which she has a right to be proud. The town of Concord, gentlemen, under that act of the Legislature, appropriated eleven thousand dollars to commemorate the battle of the 19th of April, 1875. A proportionate tax, distributed over the commonwealth, would amount to more than six millions. Yet no man questions the wisdom of this outlay.

We come here, therefore, because the resolve is in accordance with the established policy of the commonwealth; and we also come here because the people of the commonwealth have by their contributions shown such an interest that we are justified in asking the State also to take some interest in this building. As I have stated, two hundred and thirty thousand dollars, and more, have been contributed. That money has come, directly and indirectly, from more than fifty thousand persons,—some of it, most of it, in large contributions, but a large amount from persons in all parts of the commonwealth, and from other States in the Union,—from Wisconsin, Iowa, South Carolina, New York, Missouri. Citizens of many States have contributed for this object, and probably every town in the commonwealth has done something in support of it.

We also come here supported by petitions, I think, equal in weight and force to any petitions that any measure pro-

posed in this commonwealth has ever secured. We have had, almost without exception, the support of the men of influence, as poets, as orators, as men of education, in the whole commonwealth. The men to whom the people of Massachusetts look as leaders in sentiment, in opinion, have, almost to a man, come forward to aid us. Longfellow, Whittier, Emerson, Lowell, have all of them written and spoken and contributed in this behalf.

We have here a petition signed by the president and many of the professors of Harvard College; by the president and some of the professors, including the venerable Mark Hopkins, of Williams College. We have the president and nearly every professor in Amherst College. We have the signatures — these petitions are worth preserving simply from the autographs they bear — of eminent scholars all over the State, asking for this contribution. But we have not only this class of men; we have the business men of the community. We have a petition from Boston, with the name of ex-Governor Gaston at the head, followed by a list of names of business men, which cannot be surpassed in weight and influence in Boston. We have a petition with the name of the venerable Peleg Sprague, one of the first of living judges and statesmen. In fact, the Legislature of Massachusetts is appealed to by the best sentiment and by the best intelligence in the State. And I venture to assert that the commonwealth of Massachusetts never has resisted such an appeal, and I hope she will not do it now. We have these petitions, I say, from all parts of the commonwealth, representing every class in the community. We have not attempted to secure large numbers. Persons to whom petitions were sent have repeatedly written that they could get every voter, or nearly every voter in their towns. I could quote letter after letter to that effect; but we have only sent for, and have desired only the signatures of representative men. And if you will run over the fifty

petitions presented here, you will find that they represent the wisdom, the intelligence and best sentiment of the commonwealth; and they present an appeal which I think cannot fairly be resisted.

The amount we ask for is not large. Boston spends almost every year \$20,000 for the Fourth of July,—the average expenditure is more than that. The sum we ask amounts only to about two cents and a half on each thousand dollars of the taxable property in the State,—no argument, I grant, if the object were not a worthy one.

We ask this aid further, because we need it. In these times this two hundred and thirty thousand dollars has not been raised without a struggle. The complaint has been made that this effort has interfered with other charities, and in a measure it has,—because the persons who contribute to this are the persons who contribute to other charitable objects. After the effort that has been made here by those persons,—this tremendous effort,—is it not the duty of the commonwealth to contribute to some extent to their relief? In a cause which has as strong claims upon the public as any other, the State ought to relieve its citizens from a portion of a burden like this. Although we should hope, by a protracted and painful struggle, to save this building without aid from the State, we cannot guarantee it. In these times, with the resources of many of its friends impaired, no man, without the aid of the commonwealth, aid which it can give us without inconvenience to any one, can promise that the Old South shall be saved. The responsibility, therefore, at this time, rests upon the commonwealth.

She should give this support because no State without a history will maintain a high public sentiment; and no State which has a glorious history, and whose citizens are educated and understand it and are proud of it, will ever repudiate a debt. It is from this feeling of responsibility for maintaining