

**REPORT OF THE BURNT DISTRICT
COMMISSION CREATED BY ACT OF
GENERAL ASSEMBLY, APPROVED
MARCH 11, 1904, TO HIS HONOR THE
MAYOR FOR THE SIX MONTHS ENDING
SEPTEMBER 11, 1906**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649340446

Report of the Burnt District Commission created by act of General Assembly, approved March 11, 1904, to His Honor the Mayor For the Six Months Ending September 11, 1906 by Various

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VARIOUS

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OF THE
Burnt District Commission

CREATED BY ACT OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY,
APPROVED MARCH 11, 1904.

TO

His Honor the Mayor

FOR THE

SIX MONTHS ENDING SEPTEMBER 11, 1906.



BALTIMORE, MD.
WM. J. C. DULANY CO.
CITY PRINTERS

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The Burnt District Commission

SHERLOCK SWANN, CHAIRMAN.

E. CLAY TIMANUS, MAYOR, *ex-officio*.

CHARLES K. LORD.

JOHN T. GRAHAM.

JOHN W. SNYDER.

JAMES R. BREWER, JR.,

SECRETARY AND CLERK.

REPORT

BALTIMORE, MD., September 11, 1906.

HON. E. CLAY TIMANUS,

Mayor of Baltimore.

DEAR SIR: In accordance with Section 1 of the Burnt District Act we herewith beg to submit our report for the six months ending September 11, 1906, with a recapitulation of the whole work from its inception—March 12, 1904.

We have endeavored to make this report as full and complete as possible, in order that every detail may be fully set forth, and with that end in view have had prepared certain plats and tables which are self-explanatory. As this work began with that of the Emergency Committee, and as no complete publication of the result of its important deliberations has so far been made we have considered it proper to now do so, together with a list of its members and a short history of the work.

First in this report will be found a full list of all appeals from the Light street condemnation (Pratt to Lee street) and a list of certain matters still awaiting settlement. Next, our financial statement, showing the actual disbursements to date. Approximately, the gross cost of all the work, as closely as we can estimate, will be \$7,229,695.93; the amount of benefits assessed, \$1,125,596.42, making the net cost \$6,104,099.51. Deducting the gross cost from our appropriation of \$7,400,500, leaves a balance of \$170,804.07, and deducting the net cost, a balance of \$1,296,400.49.

The next is a table showing the cost of each improvement in detail, with other information concerning it. Next, a table showing that out of 918 damage awards there were 231 appeals,

and out of 3,024 benefit assessments there were 128 appeals; or, taken together, out of 3,942 awards for damages and assessments for benefits combined, there were 359 appeals, or about nine per cent. of the whole number.

Next, an explanatory table of the percentage of floor space removed by the improvements, etc.

Next, a plat showing the Burnt District before and after the improvements, together with the actual fire line and the fire line as established by law, without which one of the most important improvements—the widening of Light street, from Pratt street to Lee street—could not have been made by us.

Next, a plat showing the area of benefit assessments for the various improvements.

Next, a plat showing the progress of rebuilding up to August 7, 1906 (two years and a-half after the fire), and last, a plat showing certain street improvements that this Commission, after a thorough study of the matter, think advisable to be some day made. Of course, with what has already been, or is about to be accomplished, the Burnt District presents today, or will soon present, an excellent system of modern highways; but we cannot ignore the fact that it is somewhat cut off from other sections. This should be corrected, so that eventually the whole city will present one concrete system without any intervening congestive points or sections that it must be necessary to take round-about ways to reach. For the present enough has been done in a large way, but in the future an improvement should be added from time to time, so that finally the desired result can be attained. By reference to the plat the necessary changes become apparent, for it will be seen that there are no proper connecting links between the business section and East Baltimore, for Pratt street, 120 feet wide, stops at Jones' Falls, and all the streets from that point are narrow and run at angles. By a coincidence, Gough street is on almost a direct line with Pratt street, and by cutting through a few blocks a straight highway can be made almost to the eastern city limits; then, when it is

desired, as it surely will be some day, to add to the Municipal Docks and Piers, there can easily be an extension of that system by adding Piers 7, 8, 9, etc. It is worthy of note that Gough street, near Central avenue, presents a splendid distributing point to almost all parts of the eastern section, and by the widening of one block of Exeter street all points of possible congestion will be removed. The cutting through of Lombard street into Baltimore street, an ordinance for which is now before the City Council, is also shown, and if the extension of Pratt street, as suggested, does not open a sufficient artery, this would.

Next, are the southern and western sections. Charles street, 80 feet wide, should unquestionably be extended from Lombard street to Barre street, where it becomes a good width, and Pratt street should be extended 120 feet wide to Howard street, if not beyond it, thereby removing two serious points of congestion. One great reason, even if no other existed, for widening Pratt street west and extending it east is because it is the only available parallel street to Baltimore street, which, as everyone knows, is greatly overcrowded and becomes more so every day. It is almost level and cannot fail to become the great thoroughfare between the eastern and western sections.

The northern section west of Charles street is well connected up, but east of Charles street such is not the case, and two propositions are presented—one, the widening of Calvert street from Lexington street to Madison street, with the one narrow block of Centre street widened, between Calvert street and St. Paul street. The other is that of elevating the steam car tracks on North street and putting the trolley car tracks on the ground, where they should be. When the ordinance was passed permitting the construction of this elevated road a provision was inserted so that this change could be made when desired. The traffic at present on Calvert street is tremendous, from the fact that it is out of the question for a heavily laden wagon to attempt to go north on St. Paul street, Charles street or Liberty street, on account of the heavy grades, and the steam cars close North street; at present, therefore, Calvert street

only is used, the traffic usually distributing at Centre, Monument and Madison streets. The widening of this street would be a most important improvement, and should the street and steam car tracks exchange places on North street, Centre, Monument and Madison streets would be safe for travel where they intersect it.

The widening of St. Paul street, between Saratoga and Franklin streets, would complete a good north and south street for the greater part without car tracks, and if it were possible to overcome the grade between Hamilton street and Monument street would make it one of the most attractive in the city. The ugly turn it now has at Saratoga street would, of course, be eliminated. The widening of Holliday street, from Lexington street to Saratoga street, is worthy of consideration. Why, when Cathedral street was cut through from Mulberry street to Saratoga street it was not continued straight into Liberty street, instead of leaving two sharp turns at Saratoga street, is hard to say. It should unquestionably be so continued.

In the widening of German street this Commission proposed that it be made from Light street to Liberty street, but it was only authorized from Light street to Hopkins Place, leaving the same kind of an ugly turn that Cathedral street has, and already is seen what a point of congestion it must eventually become. The property necessary to be acquired to straighten it is not yet built upon and it is still possible to correct the error, if it is done at once. We would strongly urge Your Honor to make every effort to do so before it is too late. The quickest way would be to follow the same procedure that was adopted in cutting off the corner of Lexington street at Charles street by empowering the Mayor, Register and Comptroller to make the purchase. It might, perhaps, be cheaper, as the city requires land from time to time for public purposes, to acquire all of this property, use what is necessary for the street and the balance for fire engine houses, etc.

An examination of the topographical map of Baltimore discloses the fact that from Central avenue to Calvert street there