

**REPORT OF THE
COMMITTEE IN FAVOR
OF THE UNION OF
BOSTON AND ROXBURY**

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Report of the Committee in Favor of the Union of Boston and Roxbury by Various

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BOSTON:
1851.
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At a meeting of the Citizens of Roxbury who are in favor of uniting Boston and Roxbury under one municipal government, the Undersigned, having been chosen a Committee to consider what, if any, objections are made to this movement, beg leave to

REPORT:

That by Act of the Legislature of this Commonwealth, passed in the present year, the City of Roxbury was divided into two unequal portions. By far the largest area of territory was incorporated under the name of West Roxbury, and returned to the old form of town government; leaving the remainder still under the form of a City Government.

The area of Roxbury is now estimated at three thousand acres. Of this, about two hundred acres consist of marsh land, more or less improved, four hundred acres of marsh land wholly unimproved, and two thousand four hundred acres of upland.

The population of Roxbury is believed to be fifteen thousand; and of this number no less than fourteen thousand are located upon 700 acres, leaving only 1000 persons to occupy 2300 acres.

According to the statements of the City Treasurer, of the population of Roxbury,

3479 are Irish; 699 are English; 694 are Germans; 1921 are children of foreigners.

Thus we find that between *one quarter* and *one fifth* part of our population is Irish, and one third are foreigners, excluding from the computation the children of foreigners. Including these children in the class of foreigners, the Americans exceed the foreigners by about 1400.

The foreign population here is chiefly located upon the low lands adjoining Boston; the Americans principally occupying the higher lands.

The area of the City of Boston, proper, in 1722, was 592 acres, including what had been filled up at that date. About 626 acres have since been filled up, making in all 1218 acres.

Thus comparing Boston as it was in 1722, with Roxbury as she is, it appears that we have now nearly *four times* as much land (occupied only by 1000 inhabitants) as the entire area of the ancient metropolis. And it is believed that Roxbury contains about the same area as Boston, East Boston, and South Boston united, so that by the union, the territory of the Capital will be nearly doubled in extent.

In the lower and easterly part of the City, there are some manufactories, some wharves, and numerous shops and other buildings,

suited to various trades and manufactures; but Roxbury having been, by the various bridges, railroads, &c., so much curtailed in the trifling advantages she once had in bordering upon *salt water*, has now no chance of ever becoming a town of any importance, by reason of her being a seaport.

A portion of her population live and transact the principal part of their business in Roxbury; another very small portion still cultivate the land; but by far the largest, most active, most wealthy and influential portion of the population, are connected more or less intimately with Boston, in the various relations of business. Indeed, so intimate constant and thorough has the connection between these two cities become of late years, that, according to a statement of the proprietor of one of the lines of omnibuses, his line has transported between Boston and Roxbury more than *one million of passengers, per annum*.

From the close proximity of these cities, from the fact that there was a natural union between them by means of the "Neck," so that bridges or other artificial and expensive structures were therefore unnecessary—and from the fact that the people of these towns commingled in their daily business, and in the avocations of mercantile and social life—it was not unnatural that a strong desire should grow up in the minds of many, to draw still closer, the bonds of union between them. And this desire grew still more intense, when it was found that the people of West Roxbury were determined to separate from us, principally upon the ground that we were essentially a business population, having the wants, habits, and necessities of a city, while they were essentially rural in their habits, tastes and avocations. Their wishes were not ours; the government which would satisfy them, would not satisfy us, that we were destined to become a part of the great metropolis, while they desired only to remain a beautiful and rural, though flourishing country town.

If we had remained united, many of our citizens, attached to the ancient name of "Old Roxbury," proud of her territory, gratified with her political importance in the County of Norfolk, and looking forward to the time when her wide spread territory should be occupied by hundreds of thousands, would have been unwilling to take any measure, calculated to impair her influence, diminish her area, or to change her municipal relations.

But division has intervened, and now, many of those who opposed, are cordially friendly to annexation. The friends of the movement are growing more numerous from day to day; as time develops the wants of the people, and the inability of the Government to satisfy those wants within reasonable time.

Other circumstances also contributed to fill the minds of thoughtful men with apprehension for the future.

The foreign element of our population had begun to increase to an alarming extent, filling our alms-houses and places of punishment, and presenting a mass of hopeless pauperism, that seemed almost beyond our means of effectual relief. This unfortunate class, settled down upon the most unwholesome lands, without pure water, without under-drainage, encouraging by their numbers, the erection of the

most wretched and shabby tenements. Many of this class, having no regular occupation, but depending, chiefly, upon chance jobs and charity, for support, continued to immigrate into this town, so that the lower part of Roxbury was in danger of becoming another "Broad Street," the receptacle of the most worthless and indolent of the foreign paupers; while, at the same time, there was no public work going on here, which, by affording them employment, would justify their remaining among us.

Roxbury has been, at times, a flourishing town. Beginning about as far back as 1837 or 1838, she seemed to have received a new impulse; the number of her inhabitants began greatly to increase, her mechanics had plenty of work; in all parts of the town the signs of vitality appeared, and for a few years it would have been difficult to find a village which promised better for the future. In the mean time the City Government was instituted, and some things were done towards rendering Roxbury, in *certain parts*, an agreeable place of residence.

But within the last three or four years Roxbury has not advanced. Her American population has not increased according to the reasonable expectations of her friends. There have been few new buildings erected, few of our empty lands have been settled; few, if any, of our enterprising and wealthy citizens from Boston, have come out to live permanently among us.

The mechanic is obliged to leave us for want of employment; the laborer finds it hard to obtain work; the landholder cannot sell his land; and in short, we have become almost stationary, while the other towns around Boston are steadily advancing.

What is the reason of this decided change? What cause could exist, so powerful as to check the growth of a city which enjoys such advantages as we enjoy, beyond all other towns around Boston? We have four main avenues, connecting us with the Capital, and lines of omnibuses affording the cheapest possible means of intercommunication; we have a population abounding in wealth, intelligence and enterprize; we have on our hills, situations of varied beauty, unsurpassed in Eastern Massachusetts.

It cannot be, because our lands have risen to too high a price, as some persons have asserted, since lands in East Boston and South Boston have risen to a far higher price than ours, and yet these places are in the full tide of prosperity. And it is well known that before Division, land in Roxbury might be bought at any price from \$50 or \$100 per acre, up to \$1.50 per square foot, so that no town could afford cheaper lands than Roxbury; yet it is true, that in the thickly settled parts of the town, the prices of land had not advanced here as in similar parts of all the other towns surrounding Boston.

It cannot be the result of the annexation movement, because that is the *consequences* of these evils and difficulties; not their cause. Annexation was thought of after the blight had fallen upon us, and although its progress has since been rapid, the movement began less than two years ago.

Other causes must exist, and must have been deeply impressed on the public mind, in order to have produced such an influence

against Roxbury. And of these one of the most prominent is, that *the people of Roxbury, while paying taxes nearly as high as those of any other city in New England, have never enjoyed and are not likely to obtain those public improvements which are essential to the growth of the Town.*

Another reason is that *very large expenditures* must soon be made, in order *most prudently, wisely and economically to provide for the absolute necessities of the future.* Those who have gone before us failed to do much that ought to have been done, and we have now to perform the work which they left undone, at a very much greater expense.

Perceiving this, many persons who would otherwise come among us, are deterred from settling here, because they see but *two alternatives*—on the one hand a *large and disproportionate city debt and exorbitant taxation*; on the other, the *necessity of abandoning all public improvements, and giving up those things which are essential, in a crowded population, to the comfort and health of the citizens.* Other reasons might be added, but these are sufficient for the present.

Some of those who had the welfare of Roxbury at heart, anxious to restore her former prosperity, finding that, year after year, the City Government were *wholly unable and unwilling to do more than they were absolutely compelled to do, and that the hope of their ever adopting a liberal and wise policy, having due regard to the future, could no longer be indulged,* and finding that West Roxbury had determined to abandon what she thought to be a sinking ship, determined to make some effort to save themselves and their fellow citizens from the evils which thus threatened on all sides.

They could perceive but one escape; and that was by *uniting their fate and fortunes with those of the metropolis*; well knowing that if Boston should go down, Roxbury must inevitably follow, whether united or separate, and if Boston should prosper, her prosperity would be shared by us.

There are few intelligent persons in Roxbury, who do not believe that Boston and Roxbury will be united at some future day. It seems to be their "*manifest destiny.*" Almost all who are now opposed to annexation, are ready to admit this, the chief question with them, being, whether *the present is the best time,* or whether it is better to wait till some future period.

The division of this ancient town was with many persons, a turning point, and it brought over to the side of the annexationists, a large and influential body of our citizens. So that now, although there are still left those who are not yet quite ready for the change, yet the progress of the movement has been all that its most ardent supporters could desire.

And we believe it to be the opinion of a large proportion of our people that *the time for annexation has now arrived.* Further delay will deprive both cities of many important advantages which may and will be secured by *immediate union.*

Let us now state what seem to us to be the chief wants of Roxbury and Boston, which annexation is calculated to satisfy.

WANTS OF ROXBURY.

PURE WATER.

1st. There are nearly six hundred acres of marsh and low lands in Roxbury, where pure water cannot be obtained by means of wells. The introduction of this essential element into a locality destined, at no distant period, to be densely populated, becomes therefore a matter of absolute necessity.

2d. *In the crowded parts of the city*, as the population becomes more dense; as the number of the drains, vaults, and other sources of corruption increase, the water of the wells will become less pure and wholesome.

3d. *In the rocky portions of the town*, where the expense of digging wells through the rocks is enormous, the water would be introduced at a great saving of expense. It is believed that no difficulty will arise from the occasional necessity of laying the pipes among the rocks, because the *upper* surface of the stone is generally quite seamy and easily broken, so that a channel a few feet deep, would be made at as small expense as in East Boston, where a hard clay pan under laid the soil, or in Boston, where the pavement must be taken up and relaid. The cost of sinking wells through the rocks varies according to the locality. We are informed of numerous instances where the expense of blasting has been from \$600 to \$800, and in some cases even \$1000 have been expended in the vain attempt to reach a reliable spring. It is true that there are some wells of pure water in different parts of the town, and that those who possess them may not be willing to give them up for the Cochituate. But many others *have not* good water, even though they have wells sunk through the rocks, since the surface water in rainy or thawy weather flows into and fills them up and the contents thus continue impure. Many others have rock-wells which fail in dry weather, as was the case last summer. Many others are deterred from building because of the expense of wells. Moreover, the *well* water of Roxbury is rarely, if ever, fit for washing, bathing and other household purposes; so that almost every comfortable house contains one of more brick-cisterns to catch rain water. When the cost of building cisterns adequate to the wants of a family, and the additional expense of pumps are taken into consideration it is very obvious that the *simple interest* of the capital thus invested for the purpose of getting *soft* water alone, will often pay all the annual rents for Cochituate water, besides affording a far more abundant supply in dry seasons, and saving the labor necessary to pump up the water to the various places where it is to be consumed.

A *good, substantial* brick cistern, of suitable size to accommodate an ordinary family with abundant soft water throughout the year, with a pump and pipe, would not be less than one hundred dollars on which the interest will be six dollars per annum. It will cost no less than one dollar per year to keep the pump in good working order. The rate of the water tax—

or houses valued at	- -	\$3,000, is \$7.00 per annum.
" " " "	- -	4,000, is 8.00 " "
" " " "	- -	5,000, is 9.00 " "

Thus, the owner of a *good well*, may add to his establishment the luxury of Cochituate water as economically as he can build and maintain his rain-water cistern and pump; and soft water is as essential as hard to household comfort and economy.

But granting that our city has a sufficient supply of water for its present number of inhabitants, would not the introduction of the Cochituate be an inestimable blessing when that number shall be doubled or trebled hereafter?

Every family that *settles* here must have water. On the low lands it cannot be obtained except by some aqueduct. On the rocky parts of the highlands it can be obtained only by sinking new wells. Suppose these wells cost, upon an average \$400 each. Every family must invest a capital which is worth, at least \$24 per annum. Cochituate may be obtained, supposing the average value of the houses to be at \$4,000 each, at \$8 per annum. Here will then be an annual loss of \$16 per annum to each family; enough to pay a large part of the tax on the house itself. The amount of money which would thus be *wasted*, is enormous.

In a Report entitled "A Word for Old Roxbury," and purporting to be signed by Samuel Guild and others, we find certain statements on the subject, which fill us with astonishment. We presume, however, that they were made inadvertently, and we are informed that some of the names appended to the Report were put there without the knowledge or consent of the gentlemen themselves; so that we are unable to ascertain who is, really, responsible for the statement thus published. But whoever the party may be, he cannot have taken the trouble to ascertain with sufficient accuracy, the correctness of the allegations made. The Report says (page 5th) that "some of us prefer water filtered through rocks and gravel to that which is gathered in Cochituate Pond—from a large tract of territory, "*pretty thickly studded over with dwelling houses and manufactories.*" It will certainly be *news* to most of the gentlemen of this vicinity, that the neighborhood of Cochituate Lake is *pretty thickly studded with dwelling houses and manufactories.*

The Water Commissioners have informed the public that they have purchased the land all around the margin of the Lake for the purpose of preventing the erection of buildings which would tend to corrupt the water. And furthermore, a guard is stationed there to keep off all persons who shall attempt to make an improper use of the water. It is well known that there are no dwelling houses or factories near enough to the Lake, to have the *least tendency* to render its waters impure. If the authors of this Report represent this water as so impure by reason of settlements in its neighborhood, how can they recommend the people of Roxbury to take Jamaica Pond water, when it is well known that *houses are situated on the margin* of the pond and that the wash of the streets is liable to flow into it with ever rain; and that no effectual means have been taken to prevent the pond from being the receptacle of many impurities? We think that it