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CONSERVATORY OF ART AND SCIENCE.

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HOUSE....No. 260.

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Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, March 30, 1859.

The Joint Special Committee to whom was referred a Memorial from a committee of citizens representing various interests of the Commonwealth, in relation to establishing a Conservatory of Art and Science on the Back Bay lands, also Petitions in aid of the same from associations devoted to Agriculture and Horticulture, Natural History, and the Fine Arts; and from numerous citizens in all parts of the State in favor of the general plan, have attended to their duty, and submit the following

R E P O R T :

The memorial alludes to the suggestion made by his excellency the governor, in his address, to increase the educational fund of the State from the proceeds of sales of the Back Bay lands, and suggests as an educational measure, that the legislature reserve from sale four squares of land as divided on the commissioners' plan, and set them apart for a Conservatory of Art and Science; the fee of the land to remain in the State, and grants for the use of it to be made to Scientific, Industrial and Art Associations for specific purposes, subject to reversion

to the State whenever the grantees cease to use it for the purposes specified in the grants.

The memorial specifies a variety of scientific and industrial institutions, classified under four sections, and proposes that each section shall occupy one square of the reserved land, the object of classification being to locate kindred associations near each other, that they may, if desirable, co-operate in erecting a building or buildings for their respective uses, and also that they may receive mutual benefit from the aggregated collections.

The memorial urges the advantages of establishing these institutions in one locality, one great object being to unite those which now exist in widely separated places; and to establish them in Boston, the capital, and in point of convenience of access nearer than any other point to the whole people of the State. Though the State be asked to reserve this amount of land, of comparatively little value unless improved by some such plan as this, the private munificence of Boston will doubtless erect the structures, the benefit of which will be enjoyed by the people of the whole State. It is evident that the interests of the country towns and the city are the same in this movement, and that the former are asked not in reality to give, but to receive; its educational design being to establish institutions of practical utility to all classes in the Commonwealth. A leading feature in the plan being the opening of extensive museums of natural and artificial objects, freely open to all, a large space is asked for in the memorial. It is safe to say that in no other place in the State than in Boston, could the funds necessary to create such a conservatory be raised.

The advantages of the plan suggested in the memorial have been ably sustained before the Committee by many of our most active and intelligent citizens, both those who have been instrumental in initiating the movement, and those attracted by its intrinsic merits which seem to commend it to the minds of all interested in the educational progress of Massachusetts. The testimony brought to the notice of the Committee is unanimous as to the necessity of such institutions,—to the apparent readiness and willingness of the people to give their active co-operation, and to the actual existence among us of the materials for their successful establishment on a scale worthy of the intelligence and liberality of the State.

The Committee would refer to a previous Report by them, in relation to the importance of the Back Bay lands to the State in a financial point of view; and to the action of the present legislature in regard to these lands in connection with the subject of education, and especially to the suggestions that have been made to devote their entire proceeds to educational purposes. On the principles thus set forth, the objects contemplated in the memorial under consideration assume a position of great importance as an educational measure; and, in the opinion of your Committee, the plan, considered merely as a financial measure, should not be regarded with indifference by the State. Her future industrial progress will be greatly influenced by the practical educational facilities which these institutions by their union are designed to afford. The existence of such grand practical schools in Europe requires of us to take all possible advantage of our resources in this direction, under the penalty of taking a second rate position among the nations; and this no true American will be content to do, without a struggle for the supremacy. In this view, not only the State, but the whole country, is interested in the establishment of the institutions contemplated in the memorial.

The active interest manifested throughout the State, in this and kindred movements, among which may be mentioned the Agassiz Museum of Comparative Zoology, we regard as the star of hope in the future destiny of Massachusetts; and the fact that the people appreciate the value of purely abstract investigations in science as distinct from and equally important with those designed to develop more directly our material wealth, we consider one of the most striking evidences that, as a community, we possess the true elements of progress, both in intellectual and material prosperity.

Your Committee would briefly allude to some of the numerous arguments which have been brought forward in favor of the reservation asked for in this memorial, with especial reference to its useful employment by the institutions of the four sections which propose to occupy the land.

Regarding it, in the first instance, wholly as an educational measure, we have in Section I., the societies devoted to Agriculture, Horticulture, and Pomology, in which the great majority of the citizens of Massachusetts are directly interested. It

is proposed here to have collections of agricultural machinery and of farming implements, and models of every thing important to the husbandman; to illustrate the natural relations between soils and their products, the value of special fertilizers, their adaptation to various crops, and the perfection to which the same may be brought; models of fruits from all parts of the globe, and all processes by which the dominion of man over the stubborn soil may be rendered more certain. In order to enable our farmers to compete with more naturally-favored producers, we must prove and disseminate improved methods of cultivation, such as would be scientifically explained and practically tested in the halls and grounds of such an institution. It is this kind of knowledge, disseminated among the people, which will make *New England*, like *Old England*, one continuous garden. Societies, with ample means, are ready and willing to make such good use of Section I., whenever the land shall be filled up. In this most vital interest of the State, the agricultural, the people, from Cape Cod to the Berkshire hills, would reap incalculable advantages from this department of the institution.

On Section II., it is proposed to place the societies devoted to Natural History and Practical Geology, whose ample collections would require a large space. The Committee need only allude to the arguments, yet fresh in the minds of the legislature, so fully and forcibly presented by Professor Agassiz, to show that nothing tends more to expand the minds of the young, and to exalt those of adults, than the study of the Creator's works. Their beauty, endless variety, and admirable adaptation of means to ends, appeal to the hearts and understanding of all, and must lead, more or less, according to the calibre of each individual mind, to the ennobling religious belief that "God is Love." The tendency of present education is toward nature, and the practical aspect of life, in contradistinction to abstract theories and unreasoning belief in self-constituted authority; and it becomes the interest and the duty of the State to provide the means for satisfying this intellectual hunger, especially as, in the present instance, the materials are freely offered. One of the greatest advantages of the study of Natural History, and that upon which the noble Cuvier particularly insisted, is its tendency to impress habits

of order and precision upon the minds of the young; being able to replace in a pleasing manner the dryness of abstract mathematics and the logic of the schools; of the value of the study of natural objects in disciplining the mind, few educators have a proper idea. This study is also of great use in enabling man to make use of all the powers of animate and inanimate nature; to protect himself and his property from destructive creatures; to discover and make use of the mineral and vegetable wealth of a country; to subjugate animals to his will, and to avail himself of many principles of divine mechanism in the various pursuits of life.

The Boston Society of Natural History has already a large collection, which is opened freely to the public; it needs greater space to display its treasures to the people; it is ready to build, whenever the land is prepared, and could, in a suitable structure, increase its cabinets ten-fold in a few years, so as to occupy, profitably for the public, as large a space as Section II.

Section III., it is proposed to devote to mechanics, manufactures, and commerce, with their characteristic collections. In this age of invention, the importance of an institution where the people may see models of machines, witness the processes of manufacture from the raw material to the perfect fabric, and examine the practical application of science to the arts and to navigation, cannot be overestimated. Institutions of this polytechnic character have been found, in Europe, to be of the greatest advantage in stimulating the inventive spirit of the people, and have led to some of the most important discoveries by persons who otherwise would have remained obscure and comparatively useless. The various inventions concerned in navigation are of the utmost importance to us as a commercial State; a place where the models of naval architecture may be studied by all workmen, as in the polytechnic institutions of Europe, would soon show its fruits in a more rapid commercial intercourse and increased prosperity.

For popular education in these departments we must have representations of the things studied, for the masses of the people learn from observation and experience and not by abstract study. Increased educational advantages in this direction would not only add to the material prosperity of our own State, but by drawing strangers from all parts of the

country would become the means of diffusing knowledge to an extent which can hardly be estimated at the present time. Such collections would require large space, and would usefully fill a great part of Section III.

Section IV., it is proposed to devote to the Fine Arts, and the History of the Human Races. As we wish to have in Massachusetts institutions like the Garden of Plants, the Kew Gardens, and the British Museum, where the treasures of antiquity and the beauties of nature may be displayed, so we wish to have our free gallery of national paintings and statuary. We have been long enough tied down to the imitation of Greek and Italian art; we begin to appreciate the inspiration of American scenes and subjects; the taste for the beautiful in art being fully awakened, it now only remains to educate it. When we reflect on the great number of valuable works of art now belonging to our citizens, at home and abroad, which on the decease of their owners must be sold and scattered like many before them, we see the need of an art gallery, accessible, permanent, spacious, and safe, where valuable specimens may be deposited; were there such an one, works of art would flow into it, as books now do to the Public Library. The development and education of a love for the fine arts must tend to the moral and intellectual elevation of a people; men cannot be educated in an atmosphere of beauty in nature and art, without imbibing, in spite of themselves, something of its elevating and humanizing spirit. The plan laid down in the memorial proposes to establish such a gallery, to be freely opened to the public; the art materials are all about us, and the funds for a building will be cheerfully supplied from private munificence as soon as a suitable locality shall be prepared.

On this same section would be placed the collections illustrating the history of our State, of the country, and of the world; the habits and customs of the American Indians, so rapidly passing away, merit a large space in such a gallery, both as perpetuating the history of a remarkable race, and as affording invaluable materials for the progress of American art.

It needs no arguments to prove that the intrinsic value of the Back Bay lands is wholly in the fact of their immediate proximity to Boston, and that the profits that will accrue to the State from their sale will depend on the enterprise and future

progress of Boston. It is quite as evident that, in order to facilitate this progress, it is the true policy of the State to co-operate in any measures which can be reasonably shown to have such tendency. The memorial now under consideration contemplates a plan, which amounts practically, if carried out, to establishing a great State Institution, though from the necessity of the case located in Boston. The city, in common with the country, will derive benefit from the establishment of such institutions, and her citizens will freely contribute their money and time to render them the pride of the State as well as of the capital. It is, in fact, the peculiar location of these lands within the centre of population, wealth, and refinement, which leads the advocates of the plan to have any hopes of success in what may seem at first sight too extensive a scheme; but its real magnitude consists not in the creation of new organizations so much as in the novel aggregation of old ones.

The Committee will venture an opinion, proved by all experience, that the surest way of increasing the value of unoccupied land, is to leave open spaces for public buildings, like those proposed in this plan. The very fact of the location of these structures there, would bring the land more rapidly into the market at increased prices, and secure a first class population from the beginning. Unless some such plan be adopted, few persons would be likely to purchase except in the immediate vicinity of the Public Garden.

The Committee are of the decided opinion that the reservation from sale of the land asked for in this memorial will tend greatly to enhance the value of the remaining lands, and in their judgment this increase will equal the sum which the State would receive from the sale of the reserved portion.

In conclusion, the Committee would allude to the value of an Educational Museum on one of the Sections, like that at South Kensington, England, which should contain models of school-houses, school furniture, and all the educational apparatus of this country and of Europe. This would prove of immense advantage to both teachers and scholars, and from its direct application to the details of education would commend itself to every person in the State.

Ample space is necessary in the beginning, in order that the various associations disposed to profit by it be neither crowded

nor amalgamated. Space is the more important, as it is desirable that every county of the State should there have a space for the display of its products in every department of industry; so vastly superior would this advantage be to each county, compared to the small sum of money each would receive from the sale of the proposed reservation, that could the people of the State be made to understand this, not one foot of the whole tract would probably be sold except for such educational and industrial purposes.

It is important too that the land should be reserved in contiguous lots, as the aggregation of the societies in one spot is one of the great practical features of the plan which aims at union and co-operation, instead of the present widely scattered and often opposing organizations.

The land should remain open for some years, to allow associations, industrial and commercial, yet unformed, to avail themselves of the reservation.

The locality should be as near the centre of population as possible, that the societies may be encouraged to build upon it, and that the greatest number of the people may be accommodated.

Finally, your Committee would state, that as the societies are ready to unite, so are the people apparently prepared and eager for such an association of institutions as would be established by their union. This practical age demands practical, as well as theoretical education. We are assured that there are active existing organizations which are ready to build whenever the land is prepared for occupancy. And your Committee are of the opinion that the reservation of the land prayed for in the memorial committed to them should be made, believing it will be of advantage to the State, both in an educational and financial point of view.

The Committee, however, notwithstanding an entire unanimity in these views, are united in the feeling that the present is not a propitious time for action in the premises, and therefore request to be discharged from the further consideration of the subject.

For the Committee,

THOMAS RICE, JR.



## M E M O R I A L

*To the Legislature of Massachusetts, in relation to a Conservatory of Art and Science.*

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The undersigned, a Committee appointed by citizens of the Commonwealth, at a meeting held February 18th, 1859, in the rooms of the Boston Society of Natural History, composed of individuals representing Associations of Agriculture, Horticulture, Art, Science, and various Industrial, Educational and Moral Interests of the State, were instructed to prepare a Memorial to your honorable body, in concert with a Committee representing the Boston Society of Natural History, setting forth the wishes of the various associations represented at this meeting, as well as to confer with others not present, in a general plan of co-operation, and to second and aid in carrying out the wise and liberal suggestion of his excellency the governor, in his Address, alluding to the propriety of appropriating for educational purposes the proceeds of sales of the Back Bay lands belonging to the Commonwealth, lying near the Public Garden in the city of Boston. The said Committee respectfully represent to your honorable body, that in our opinion a most effective method of making those lands available in promoting education, as well as directly developing the wealth of the State, would be for the legislature to pass a Resolve, reserving from sale a portion of said lands, and dedicating them as a space to be used in all coming time, for the erection of a building or buildings, by various institutions for public benefit, which in the aggregate would constitute and might be known as the Massachusetts Conservatory of Art and Science.

The Committee, without undertaking to specify in detail the extent of space to be reserved, or the specific purposes to which it should be dedicated, would simply suggest the character of a

few leading institutions, which, if once established on the grounds, would form a nucleus around which would cluster kindred associations of immense value to the people of the State. Taking the Commissioners' Plan of the lands as a basis for illustration, we would suggest the reservation of as much as four squares for this purpose :

Section No. I., might be devoted to collections of Implements, Models, and other objects pertaining to Agriculture, Horticulture and Pomology.

Section No. II., to Natural History, Practical Geology, and Chemistry, with ample room for museums of specimens.

Section No. III., to those institutions devoted to the development of Mechanics, Manufactures and Commerce.

Section No. IV., to Fine Arts, History, and Ethnology.

The space reserved for each section should be ample for these and all institutions of a kindred character, which the future progress of the State may develop.

By associating such institutions in one locality, they would be reciprocally benefited by means of a free and ready interchange and use of their respective collections of specimens, and thus avoid the inconvenience of having the same objects in several collections ; each one could confine its operations to a speciality. A still greater advantage would result by having these established at one point and in the metropolis, where they would be accessible to all the people of the State instead of being elsewhere, or scattered, as must necessarily be the case, unless we secure this rare opportunity to bring them together. It is not proposed to merge the different institutions in one,—the perfect individuality of each being retained in every respect, having nothing necessarily in common but the general fostering care of the State, in granting the use of the land, in return for which the people will have a common interest in the advantages to be derived.

It is not proposed that the legal title to the land be conveyed, but the fee to remain in the State, the various institutions enjoying only a grant of land for their respective specific purposes, subject to its reversion to the State whenever the grantees cease to use it for the objects specified in the grant.

The Committee have reason to believe that there are now existing several well-established institutions, which will avail

themselves of the privilege under the reservation, if made, and will erect a building or buildings thereon for their respective uses as soon as the land can be put in readiness for occupation.

It is also known to the Committee that there are at this time large collections of specimens of Natural History, Fine Arts, Models, and Designs of great public value in the possession of private individuals, and now not accessible to the public, which could be congregated here without purchase, provided suitable buildings were erected for their reception.

In conclusion, the Committee, while heartily sympathizing with the efforts now in progress to form a Museum of Natural History and Comparative Zoology, under the auspices of Professor Agassiz, at Cambridge, for the development of abstract science, desire to co-operate with such labors in the building up of institutions of a more directly practical character, which will enable the masses of the people, engaged in industrial occupations, more effectually to avail themselves of the advantages to be derived from the labors of those who are wholly devoted to purely scientific research.

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The Committee, named in the above Memorial, afterward increased, and now constituted by the undersigned, representing the interests of various Scientific, Commercial, Industrial, Educational and Art Associations, desirous of furnishing farther evidence to the legislature in favor of a reservation of land on the Back Bay for the associated Institutions, respectfully request the attention of the friends of these interests to the accompanying Report of the Back Bay Committee, and solicit the co-operation of the citizens of the Commonwealth, to enable them to present a more completely organized plan at the next session of the legislature.

The Committee are desirous of correcting a false impression which seems to prevail, that the plan has failed, and will state in explanation, that it was in their opinion inexpedient to press so important a subject at the close of the session, especially as, if favorable action had been then taken, the land would not be ready for occupancy this year. The Committee did not expect

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definite action during the last session, and feel satisfied with the progress made, confident that in the ensuing year they shall be able to present an array of facts and arguments to the next legislature, that shall secure the establishment of these much needed educational institutions.

Any communications on the subject may be addressed to Dr. S. KNEELAND, Jr., *Secretary of the Committee*, BOSTON.

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*Committee.*