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ST. JOHN, N. B., SATURDAY, AUGUST 6, 1887.

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THE HARBOR COMMISSION.

THE ASSESSED VALUE OF PRIVATE WHARF PROPERTY.

A Telling Statement Which Shows What the Harbor Costs the Citizens.

[THIRD ARTICLE.]

The meeting of citizens in the Institute to consider the harbor commission matter decided nothing. It is not saying too much to say that the subject was not discussed after all. No facts on one side or the other were presented and the people who went to the Institute for instruction came away knowing as little about the subject as when they entered the hall. In this respect the meeting did not differ materially from former meetings held to discuss other matters. Such meetings have always proved lamentable failures and decided nothing—notwithstanding the assertion of the Globe that in this case the public meeting had killed the project and the mild suggestion of the Telegraph that in the present divided state of opinion it would not be well to take any decisive step. The Telegraph does nothing to enlighten its constituents on this question while the Globe does everything it possibly can to kill the project. The question for people to ask themselves are Messrs. Weldon and Ellis opposed to a harbor commission because they believe it in opposition to the best interest of the trade of the city or because the scheme has been supported by the political party they are opposed to. Mr. Weldon says he does not understand the question. Such an admission is unpardonable on the part of a representative. Mr. Weldon should acquaint himself with the true meaning of the harbor commission and its effect on the trade of St. John at once.

The great bugbear has been the private property in the harbor. All are agreed that the interests of the private owners should be as carefully guarded as the public interest, but the interests of the whole public have no right to suffer while those of a few are being protected. All sorts of values have been placed on the harbor properties. They have been valued at \$250,000 to a million of dollars. In order that some genuine idea of the value of the properties the GAZETTE has taken the trouble to obtain what the assessed values of all wharf property in the harbor which statement is appended.

Table with 2 columns: Name and Value. Includes Estate Charles Hare, wharf and sheds, \$8,500; Estate L. H. DeVos, wharf and building, 7,500; Mary A. Lloyd, wharf and building, 10,000; George Robertson, wharf and building, 25,000; Estate John Robertson, wharf, etc., 67,500; W. W. Turnbull, wharf and warehouse, 32,000; Estate M. S. Firth, wharf, 8,000; Estate M. S. Firth, wharf and stores, 18,000; Robert Thompson, wharf, 5,000; W. H. McLeod, wharf, 5,000; John Wishart, improvements, 3,700; Hall & Fairweather, improvements, 7,000; Wm. Magee, wharf and brick building, 25,000; Estate C. Morris, wharf and building, 25,000; Estate J. U. Thomas, wharf and buildings, 10,500; Estate James Lawton, wharf, 18,400; Geo. K. McLeod, wharves and buildings, 24,000; Total, \$304,150.

From this statement it would seem that the assessed value of all private property in the harbor except the wharves on the Western side of the city, the wharves in Portland and those in the vicinity of Lower Cove slip is very little over \$300,000. But included in this list are a number of buildings which would be of no use to the harbor commission and which if that body acquired the private harbor rights they would not purchase. The estimated value of these improvements is in the neighborhood of \$150,000, at least. Therefore if the harbor were placed in commission the city would lose the taxes on say \$150,000 worth of property which at the present rate of taxation would amount to \$1,875. But which at the ordinary rate would not be more than \$1,600 and under the reduced assessment that would be possible were the harbor placed in commission would be further reduced to somewhere between \$1,000 and 1,500.

When the sub-committee of the Common Council and Board of Trade examined into the question of private rights in the harbor they made a careful compilation of the value of the harbor properties based on the present revenue derived therefrom and the result was that according to their calculation the private wharves in the harbor would pay 4 per cent. interest on \$300,000. Of course the committee were not able to get at the exact income of all the wharves, but they got some and estimated others so that the probability is they were not far astray and inasmuch as the private wharf owners were represented on this committee the presumption is that the properties were not undervalued. This is further proved by the fact that one property the assessed value of which is \$26,000 was sold the other day for \$14,000.

Outside of the property on the easterly side of the harbor there is but three wharves on this side that in Portland that can properly be termed deep water wharves. These are Rankine's, St. Helena and the Long Wharf. The estimated value of these properties does not exceed in the total sum \$20,000. Therefore the present grant of \$750,000 would enable the commission to purchase at least two-thirds of the harbor properties besides the rights and property of the city in the harbor, and leave about \$50,000 for dredging and making such improvements as are immediately necessary.

Another question of some importance raised is the value of the city property on which the private wharves are built. The city owns all the property bordering on the harbor. In order to assist in wharf building many of these water lots were leased—the leases in all cases being perpetual—at nominal rentals. The total rental coming into the eastern lands fund from water lots is \$1060, of which sum the estate of Hon. John Robertson pays \$670. The next highest rental is \$160, but the majority are at \$1 and upwards to \$40 and \$60. It was claimed that were the harbor placed in commission these rentals would be lost to the

city. Such is not the case. There is nothing in the deed about the transfer of these properties. They were considered the same as private property, and the council did not take these lots into consideration at all. The land, rights and privileges to be transferred to the commission are clearly set forth in the deed. For a portion of these lands, the water front of a portion of the custom house, the Dominion Government pays an annual rental of \$20. The city would therefore still continue to own the real estate on which the private wharves are erected. Estimating the value on the same basis as that on which the other city property would be disposed of, the city would get an additional amount of \$15,000, if the property on which the private wharves stand were purchased by the commission. That the value of these lots is far in excess of their capitalized value is beyond question, but the advantage would be with the leaseholder rather than the city, to increase the rentals beyond the present rate. Summing up the value of private rights in the harbor it seems that the property would cost a commission about \$300,000, which is more by \$150,000 than the assessed value, and four times what the property would bring if forced in to the market—if any judgment of the present value can be formed by the sale recently made. At present the city derives a revenue of about \$3,000 a year from rentals and taxes of these properties. If the properties were purchased by a commission that body would still have to pay the rentals of \$1060; the taxes the commissioners, being the representatives of the Dominion Government, would not be called upon to pay.

In another and a concluding article on this subject we will review what has already been written, and deal exhaustively with the harbor commission matter in all its phases.

INTERESTING FIGURES.

Table with 2 columns: Description and Amount. Includes Interest old city debt, \$23,613.86; Rebuilding wharves, 1,000.00; Market wharves, 1,250.00; Pettengill property, 1,421.40; Public pier, 3,000.00; Pettengill wharf, 3,000.00; Total, \$33,735.26; Market Wharf Sinking Fund, 500.00; Rebuilding wharves, 722.56; Pettengill wharf, 600.00; Total in, \$36,557.82.

By this statement it will be seen that the interest charges and sinking fund appropriations for the harbor alone are \$36,557.84. When the cost of repairs and salaries are added it will be seen that the harbor costs the citizens fully \$12,000 a year.

RESULTS OF THE FIRE.

WHAT HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED IN THE PAST DECADE.

Nearly Ten Millions of Hard Cash Spent in Buildings in Ten Years.

On the twentieth day of June, 1887, a little after 2 o'clock in the day the fire alarm rung out its warning. The fire was soon discovered by the firemen and when they arrived at York Point Slip it was still confined to the building where it had originated—an old shed used for the storage of hay and other articles. A high wind was blowing at the time and in half an hour the fire had gained headway and it was evident to all on-lookers—and hundreds of people had already gathered at the scene—that a serious conflagration must ensue. The large boiler works of the MacLaughlin's were soon sending up a shower of sparks which alighted on the roofs of the old wooden buildings in the vicinity set them on fire also. Smythe, Union, Mill and Dock streets and Drury Lane at that time literally teemed with people. Hundreds of poor families had homes in the tumble down buildings in this vicinity. At first they looked at the fire with that curious always so noticeable among the on-lookers at a fire. But when it became evident that the fire would probably extend to their own dwellings they became panic stricken—the women and children at home. Realizing their danger the poor creatures rushed to their homes and seizing whatever they could find they again ran out on the street screaming for assistance. The cloud of sparks, cinders and flames that met them everywhere dazed them and they dropped whatever they were carrying, and ran for their lives. The few who witnessed these scenes will never forget them. Terror was depicted on every countenance. It was still possible for these people to have saved some of their belongings, but they dare not again approach the fire and contented themselves with looking on and wringing their hands. Soon it was too late even to attempt to save anything. The fire worked its way from house to house and from block to block. Brave and determined as the firemen were they could not stay the progress of the destroyer but were driven from one place to another until almost despairing they moved their stand to the Market Square. Scarcely an hour had passed since the first alarm was rung, but in that short time a dozen blocks had yielded to the flames. The heat everywhere was intense, the wind was rising and even the air seemed to be on fire. Men left their work and rushed to their homes to find them a heap of smoldering ruins. The flames swept on. Word reached the firemen that Trinity street was in a blaze, and that the military buildings on the Barrack Square were already gone. They fought nobly, but to no purpose. Down Dock street the fire came. Already it was

crossing the Market Slip, while Germain street and portions of Prince William street had caught. Three hours after the fire broke out Germain, Canterbury, Prince William and Dock streets were all burning and the fire was slowly working up King street. Every now and then above the roar of the flames one could hear sounds of falling walls. The streets were alive with men, women and children, none of whom seemed to know exactly what to do. The night was worse than the day. A change of the wind carried the flames northward from Lower Cove and when morning dawned all that was left of the city south of King street were about twenty buildings, heaps of burning rubbish and parts of broken walls. What had taken a century of patient labor to construct had been destroyed in a single night. Stores, residences and factories all were gone. Thousands were homeless. Hundreds had lost the savings of a life time. There was not a man who looked upon those blackened ruins who was not poorer than he was the day before. Every one had lost something—some everything, other much and more little. No such calamity had ever fallen on any city before.

It is not necessary for the purposes of this article to go into details as to the losses of the fire. That subject has been dilated on by others until it is worn almost threadbare. Ten years have elapsed since the dire calamity fell upon us. The city has arisen from its ashes. Let us look therefore on what has been accomplished since the fire. Blunders have been made but time will rectify these. Taken all in all St. John is a better city, more beautiful and in many respects greatly improved since we witnessed its partial destruction ten years ago. First let us look at what the corporation has done. Mill and George's Streets have been widened. Union and George's Streets have been opened up, and the public buildings destroyed have been rebuilt on a larger and better scale. We have a well appointed police building; two new fire houses; a magnificent City Hall all completed in that time. The cost has been great it is true—more than the taxpayers could afford. The completion of these buildings was one of the mistakes we made, but the evil has almost passed and a wise administration of the affairs of the city will soon wipe out this fire debt of \$190,557. Indeed that has already been done, for in 1877 we had only \$94,000 in the sinking fund which contains \$257,000. Deducting the sinking fund from the gross debt, and the net debt in 1877 was \$981,681, while in 1887, after expending over \$200,000 for improvements after the fire, the net debt is \$832,680.

The Dominion Government lost the Custom House, Post Office and Savings Bank. All these have been rebuilt at a cost of considerably over \$500,000, but the Dominion Government lost nothing by the fire as more than the cost of the buildings had been paid to the government for duties on the goods destroyed, and as fresh importations were made they realized directly. But it was not so with churches and buildings owned by private corporations. The Victoria Hotel, the pride of the city, was swept away with only enough insurance to pay the mortgage on the building. The insurance on the Academy of Music building was not sufficient to warrant the company in rebuilding. All the churches, Trinity, St. Andrews, St. David's, Presbyterian; Centenary, Queen Square, Carmarthen Street, Methodist; Germain Street Baptist; St. James, Episcopal; Lenister Street Baptist and Duke Street, Christian, have all been rebuilt. Many of them were comparatively humble structures. Now magnificent edifices have been reared on the sites of the humbler places of worship of a quarter a century ago. In all ten churches were destroyed, so that not less than \$600,000 has been expended on church building alone. This money mostly came out of the people of the city. The Victoria Hotel and Academy of Music are now about the only buildings we miss among the institutions of the past. The home for Aged Females, the Marine Hospital, the Protestant Orphan Asylum and the Wiggins Male Orphan Institution have all been rebuilt on the new. With the solitary exception of the Marine Hospital, the others went in the general calamity, but now they are upon as firm a basis as ever.

The chief expenditures in the past ten years have been by the citizens for dwellings, warehouses and shops. In the last ten years there have been constructed in this city no fewer than 2,440 new buildings, of which 491 were brick and 1,955 wood. The appended statement shows the number of buildings constructed each year:

Table with 4 columns: Year, Brick, Wood, Total. Shows data from 1877 to 1886, with a total of 491 brick and 1955 wood buildings constructed over the period.

Below we give another table showing the cost of the buildings erected in each year since the fire:

Table with 4 columns: Year, Brick, Wood, Total. Shows cumulative costs from 1877 to 1886, with a total of \$5,271,210 for brick, \$1,856,847 for wood, and \$7,128,057 total.

When it is taken into consideration that over seven million of dollars have been expended in rebuilding the city one ceases to wonder that money is scarce in St. John. The city must indeed have been on a sound financial basis to stand such a draw on its resources. That the figures are under rather than above the mark is beyond question as in many instances the full contract price is not stated to the building inspector. Besides buildings are being constantly improved at considerable annual expenditure.

In the next few years St. John will not need so large an expenditure for buildings and every new building erected will mean additions to the city in population and wealth.

Scaring Uncle Moses.

(Detroit Free Press.)

There was a half dozen of us sitting around the depot at Verbena, Ala., when an old darkey, evidently just in from the plantation after 'baccy or groceries, hove in sight.

"Now, boys," said the Colonel as we all remarked the old man, "you keep still and I'll scare that old nigger out of a year's growth."

With that he called to Sambo, and the old man came up, doffed his hat, and asked what was wanted.

"I'm Gen. D. Erastus Longfellow, and have been sent down here by United States Government to look up the marriage certificates of colored people. Have you got yours with you?"

"N-no, sah."

"You haven't! Then it is at the house?"

"N-no, sah."

"What! Have you no marriage certificate to show?"

"Deed I haven't, sah."

"Then, sir, let me inform you that the penalty is five years in the State prison. Did you lose your certificate?"

"Reckon not, sah."

"Never had one?"

"Nebber."

"Great snakes! but it will go hard with you, Uncle Moses! I hate to tear you from your family and send you to prison for the rest of your days, but duty must be obeyed. No certificate of marriage, never had one, and I don't suppose you can remember who married you?"

"No, sah, I can't."

"E Phiribus Unum! But won't you catch it! Where and when were you married?"

"Nowhar, sah! Nebber got mar'd 'tall.

Allus dun bin what you white folks call an old bach—haw! haw! haw!

Rich in Years.

William Williamson died on July 1, at Bethel, Me., aged 101 years.

When John Downey died recently in East Toledo, Ohio, he was 103 years of age.

At the Harlem Police Court a woman was recently brought up for drunkenness who is 102 years of age.

John Noah Baby of Plainfield, N. J., still supports herself by work, although she is believed to be 115 years of age.

Probably the oldest man in the State of Tennessee is Henry Cleary of Meigs County, who is 105 years of age, and still in the best of health.

One of the most interesting ladies of Cambridge, Mass., is Mrs. Charles Bradford, who is 94 years old. She is still a great lover of music and performs beautifully on the piano.

John J. Whipple of Rockland, Me., was 100 years old on June 18, and attributes his good health and great longevity to always eating and drinking according to inclination.

Ant Rachel Rutherford of Summit, Mo., is 91 years of age and has 57 grandchildren and 126 great-grandchildren. She is an inveterate smoker, and a wreath of smoke always encircles her head.

Mrs. Betsy Fairfield of Haydenville, Mass., is 102 years of age. Her mother lived to be 98, a sister 92, a brother 88, and another brother living is 87. She was a regular correspondent with friends of her earlier days until she was 65.

A Desirable Tenement.

"But why do charge such an enormous rent for a flat in such a—a well, plebeian neighborhood?"

"Good gracious, man, there's a saloon and a barber shop in the basement, and you can get into either on a Sunday by going down the back stairs."