PROGRESS IN CIVIC IMPROVEMENTS IN BOSTON: BY FRANK CHOUTEAU BROWN

IMPORTANT and noticeable in the bettering of Boston, and encouraging to record at this time, is not merely definite acts of civic improvements, but the change in public opinion that has taken place since the time, about ten years ago, when the Boston Society of Architects issued their "Report on Civic Improvements." That pamphlet, issued without any public authority whatsoever, so appealed to the imaginations of the public that its effects have been more far reaching than even its most earnest advocates presumed possible. The "Boston Nineteen Hundred and Fifteen" Campaign was probably awakened by this very report. The newspapers—which ordinarily lag so far behind, rather than prelude, any change of public opinion—have since come to register in Boston the rising tide of public interest in topics of physical betterment. The Boston Sunday Post for nearly a year gave space to special illustrated weekly features presenting plans for civic improvements.

As a matter of fact, many improvements suggested in the pamphlet either have since actually been accomplished or are now under way. One of the schemes contained in that report was the extension...
of Arlington Street to Castle Square. As this article will show, one section of this improvement, the most difficult, has been made.

The large dockage scheme, forming so important a part in the Boston Society of Architects Report has widened out at the present time in the Port of Boston Commission which has nearly completed the construction of two docks. It has in contemplation the construction of one of the largest dry-docks along the coast, all this in South Boston; while it is also contemplating important dockage improvements in East Boston. And finally, it is compiling important data in regard to the necessary "Belt Line" railroad connecting up all of the freight lines entering Boston through the suburbs, in such a way as to make the trans-shipment of freight easy and to deliver freight from all the lines entering Boston directly upon the docks alongside the holds of waiting ships.

The last improvements achieved in intramural transportation in Boston were the extension of the elevated structure south from Dudley Street Terminal to Forest Hills, in one direction (A on plan), and the completion of the Washington Street tunnel (B) which permits running the elevated trains underground directly through the center of the city connecting Dudley Street with the Charlestown Terminal.

A new elevated bridge structure (C) or viaduct in concrete has been completed along the dam enclosing the Charles River basin at the Harbor end.

A recent improvement in actual operation, is the subway extending from Park Street to Harvard Square; at which point connections


SKETCH OF THE NEW "OFFICE-BUILDING ADDITION" TO BOSTON'S OLD CITY HALL: WHILE SIMPLE ALMOST TO THE POINT OF SEVERITY, THE SURFACES ARE PLEASANLY BROKEN BY THE EFFECTIVE GROUPING OF THE WINDOWS AND THE WELL USED DECORATION.
are made with a number of surface cars transferring passenger traffic to the northeast and northwest. The opening of the East Boston tunnel (G) extending under the harbor to East Boston is of almost equal importance.

The tunnel constructions now under way include an extension of the recently opened tunnel under Beacon Hill from Cambridge and one from Park Street under Summer and Winter Streets to the South Station (H).

The old surface-car "subway" is also being extended (I) and the construction is well along, the contract on the final portion having been recently let—although no attempt has yet been made to undertake the station work.

These three new subway tunnels will, together, aggregate about four and one half miles, bringing the total mileage of subway and tunnel construction to about nine and a quarter miles—practically doubling the present resources of the city in this direction.

The terminal point of the Boylston Street Subway, now building, having never been definitely determined, the Boston Elevated Company this month undertook an interesting experiment—particularly significant for its recognition of the existence of a traveling (and thinking) public, and the necessity of creating favorable public opinion and even of attempting to ascertain "what that public wants."

Since the first of May the Elevated Company has offered to travelers upon the cars that will approach Boston through the new Boylston Street tunnel, the chance of voting for either Park Street or Post Office Square as its final city terminus. The result of this popular "referendum" vote seems to have encouragingly corresponded with the opinions of the experts interested in advocating the Post Office Square route, on account of its greater public convenience and greater benefits in tying together the present far too unrelated lines of trans-
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portation; for out of sixty-nine thousand three hundred and twenty-nine votes cast, thirty-seven thousand eight hundred and forty-eight voted for Post Office Square against thirty-one thousand four hundred and eighty-one in favor of Park Street—a good working majority.

In this connection should be recorded the agitation for the removal of overhead elevated structures—a means of rapid transit that is admittedly behind the times, and was so even at the date when this construction was first undertaken in Boston.

In street improvements there is less general progress, except a few particular improvements that have long been fought for by those realizing the necessities of developing important business sections. The section known as “old Park Square property” (L) has finally been laid out and streets constructed; and there is in progress work upon a new theater near the apex of the property on Park Square.

Practically as a part of this improvement, comes the extension of Arlington Street (M) across a part of this property, to connect with Ferdinand Street, running in a direct line to Castle Square from Columbus Avenue; which latter street, though at present narrow, it is proposed eventually to widen to agree with the new thoroughfare and thus connect the Back Bay and Beacon Hill districts with the important teaming traffic that enters Boston around Dover Street. Another street to be widened connects Broadway Extension (a natural teaming thoroughfare that runs to the South Boston district a little farther downtown than Dover Street) with Cambridge, Somerville and East Boston, through Charles Street at Park Square.

The widening of Avery Street (O) and cutting through of Dix Place (O) between Tremont and Washington Street will also give two new cross connections between two important downtown thoroughfares. Work on Dix Place connection is finished, and the act authorizing the Avery Street improvement has been passed this spring. All these streets are concerned with relieving conditions in the center of the city.

The long considered project of uniting the North and South Stations by a direct route through the business, wholesale and market sections and crossing State and Summer Streets (P) has not yet been authorized; although active study of several possible routes is being made. It is the intention to combine the construction of this street across the city with a tunnel trackage construction to connect the two railroad stations (Q-R) so that passenger traffic can be sent directly through Boston. The use of this tunnel is of course largely dependent upon the electrification of the roads entering Boston, and

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MODEL OF THE NEW BOSTON CUSTOM HOUSE IN WHICH PART OF THE OLD DORIC BUILDING IS INCORPORATED, AS SEEN IN THE SMALL ENTRANCE PORTICOS AT THE BASE OF THE STRUCTURE.
Peabody & Stearns, Architects.

TWO VIEWS OF BOSTON'S NEW ELEVATED VIADUCT ALONG THE NEW CHARLES RIVER DAM: THE LONG SPAN OF CONCRETE ARCHES SHOWS HOW EFFECTIVE A SIMPLE USE OF THIS MATERIAL MAY BE.
THE LARGE AQUARIUM BUILDING AT SOUTH BOSTON, WHICH IS ALMOST COMPLETED AND WHICH WILL ADD CONSIDERABLE ARCHITECTURAL INTEREST TO MARINE PARK, IN WHICH IT STANDS.
there yet seems to be determined opposition to this improvement. The use of such a cross-town tunnel would necessitate a new station (S) on the opposite bank of the river, which may easily be built without inconvenience to the traveling public on account of existing facilities. This would eventually mean the release of the present station property (Q) and permit the space to be utilized as some sort of a public square upon the water-front, making a watergate possible that would be of considerable aesthetic and practical value to the port, if only because it would remove existing unsightly structures and give the city an adequate "public landing"—which at present does not exist.

This brings us naturally to the matter of the improvement of the port, where actual progress is also at last to be recorded. An expenditure of over a million dollars on the structure for the Commonwealth pier at South Boston, will give Boston publicly owned and controlled dockage facilities at a point as central to the city as can be found, and with an arrangement with the transportation interests that should be of exceptional benefit to those using the dock.

This dock, one of the largest in the country, twelve hundred feet long, has already been opened for use, the Hamburg-American Line having sent from Hamburg on May twenty-fourth the first vessel to land there. Already three steamship lines new to Boston are planning to make use of the added convenience of this new landing, while it is anticipated that certain new large steamers, building abroad—too large to find a dock in New York City capable of accommodating them—will find this dock to be their only available Eastern landing place. During the past spring, Government engineers have also gone over the question of the ocean channel in Boston Harbor with the port directors—and it has been decided to increase the depth uniformly to forty feet over the entire course, so as to make the port and docks available for the largest vessels likely to be constructed for many years.

Still more recently the port directors have set aside three million dollars for the construction of a dry dock on a ledge which lies between the two large piers that are to be run out into the harbor in a direction diagonal to the Commonwealth and the new Fish pier adjoining—the latter having been recently built to take the place of old "T wharf" on Atlantic Avenue, long used to house the fishermen, and long outgrown by this local industry, Boston being the second largest fishing port in the country. The directors expect to begin the two big new piers contemplated on each side of the dry dock, and work upon the latter will probably start as soon as plans can be prepared. It is the
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purpose of the board of port directors, by the construction of this
dock, to announce to the world that Boston is at last equipped to
take care of first class shipping business.

As a matter of fact, this dock will be the largest in North America,
and the only one capable of taking in the large new steamships which
are coming to be operated in the transatlantic service. Already
there are running to New York thirty-seven steamers which cannot
be dry-docked there, even in a naval dock, and eighty-nine vessels
which cannot be housed in any of the commercial dry docks in New
York—nineteen of these vessels being too large to be docked in any
port of the United States. This does not include the six extremely
large ships now under construction for New York trade, which also,
of course, far exceed any present available dockage facilities.

Then, aside from the business of building vessels in Boston—many
of which are too large to enter any dry dock in Boston and vicinity
—and the trial course for naval vessels off Rockland, Maine, there are
the shipping interests at Quincy and Fore River, now forced to send
their battleships to Norfolk, Virginia, prior to a run over the Maine
course.

THE last few years have seen an unusual development in the
buildings and other improvements in the Boston Park system,
the immediate cause being the large Parkman bequest, to be
expended upon certain Boston parks. Boston Common has been
entirely re-surfaced and a new band stand erected. At South Boston
a large aquarium building is completed and in use; but the most
elaborate scheme has been the construction begun through a section of
ground on the southerly side of Franklin Park, of a large "Zoo," a
portion of which is now completed. This entire property is nearly a
mile long, concealed in the thickly wooded margin of a rocky strip of
land.

The land upon one side of the Charles River basin (U), for almost
its entire available length up to the Massachusetts Avenue Bridge,
has been taken by the Institute of Technology. The money for a
considerable portion of the required building is already on hand or
promised, and it is expected that within a year the actual develop-
ment will be commenced. The entire stretch of property from Mrs.
Jack Gardner's estate to the Brookline line is now taken up with
Institution Buildings, the largest remaining strip having been recently
purchased by a Catholic College. The land back of this Fenway
frontage, up to the Harvard Medical Schools, is developing as the
center of hospital and medical groups of large area and scope. The
section immediately back of the medical schools is now covered with
the buildings of the Peter Bent Brigham Hospital foundation, and at the present time they are finally ready for public use. Other schools, the Harvard Dental on one side of the Medical, and another hospital institution upon the opposite side, are either nearly completed or will open during this summer. One of the largest building developments in this section is at the back of the Art Museum (V) where it fronts upon the Fens; here a special bequest has made possible the construction of a large gallery for paintings, which will front out upon the Fens and will eventually be connected by other proposed galleries with the main body of the Museum back of it. Adjoining the Museum are the Boston Opera House (W), recently enlarged by new rehearsal rooms and scenic lofts, and nearly across the street from that building and next door to the Conservatory of Music is the large new Y. M. C. A. structure (X).

In the business center of the city, back of the present old-fashioned City Hall, is rapidly rising the new "office-building addition" (Z) which is intended to be extended over the site of the old building soon after the completion of the present structure. Indeed, a proposed development of the entire surrounding, as shown on the plan, is already imagined by those having the improvement in charge.

Another hard fought discussion has centered about the new Custom House near the Harbor (E), and this discussion has at last resulted in the towering building shown by the model illustrated, devised to enable the city to retain the old site, and even to incorporate a part of the old historic Doric Custom House into the new building, upon the surface of which it now appears as the small entrance porticos to be seen at the bottom of the structure.

Years given to discussion of the problem of enlarging the State House have resulted within the last two months in legislation that seems to assure the handling of that question in a way that will befit the dignity of the State and at the same time retain the architectural interest of the historic "Bulfinch front." Two wings (A-A) extending from either side of the Bulfinch building are now proposed, which will hide the unfortunate addition made some years ago at the rear of the old building, and will eventually mean the taking of additional property fronting on the Common on Beacon Street, alongside the present State House, and properly establishing the building in the center of a sightly park crowning Beacon Hill.

These are tangible evidences of the effect of "public opinion."
Tangible enough also is the altered point of view of every Boston newspaper. Hardly a single issue that does not contain, among some part of its featured news, items registering proposed
or actual improvements—as an example, one of the recent May issues of the Boston Transcript had two out of five headings on its front page devoted to topics of this kind. Or the paper records some action taken toward inaugurating such improvements as will benefit the entire community physically or—equally important—morally. This entire matter of physical civic betterment is so closely interwoven with political and social betterment that it is hard to locate any line dividing it from other modern movements, such as the “Progressive Party” in national and local politics; the active interest taken in matters of control of the liquor interests, and problems of public morals; even the wide universal interest for bettering conditions in the theater—all matters so widely and thoroughly spread throughout America that it becomes evident that local interest awakening in any particular direction is merely a small manifestation of this universal spirit of unrest. And Boston—a conservative, old-fashioned, “stand-pat” community—would naturally be one of the slowest to respond to such an awakening. The fact that it has mentally already “reacted” as freely as it has, is undoubtedly the most encouraging proof of the dominating insistence and widespread power of this awakening. That no greater realization of these improvements has resulted than is shown in this article, is to be attributed merely to the inertia of the political machine controling the destinies of American communities, and is not to be taken as a true measure of the awakening that the community itself has actually experienced. The slower that machine is in responding to these demands of the awakening public, the shorter will be its control of our American communities. The forward movement is actually started—even in Boston—and it will not be denied.

CAKE AND WINE

SHE took a pinch of pollen-dust,
A drop of moonlit dew,
And made the elf a magic cake
To help his vigil through:

And when the dawn crept up the sky,
With wine of clover pink
Spiced with heartsease, she brimmed a cup,
And gave it him to drink.

GRACE HAZARD CONKLING.