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CITY OF BOSTON.

REPORT ON WATER.

In Board of Mayor and Aldermen, Jan. 22, 1849.

Laid on the table and ordered to be printed.

Attest, S. F. McCLEARY, *City Clerk.*

HON. JOHN P. BIGELOW,

Mayor of the City of Boston.

SIR,

WE submit herewith a statement of the number of Hydrants which have been provided in every part of the City to afford means for extinguishing fires; together with a plan of the City, prepared under the direction of the Chief Engineer, indicating the position of each Hydrant. The number of Hydrants now laid down in the City, is 601. They are distributed in general at distances of 250 to 350 feet from one another, at such positions as were judged to be best adapted to ensuring their effective use. They are of the form known by the description of the *Surface Hydrant*, being placed entirely under the sidewalk, and covered except when in use, by an iron plate. They have several advantages over those in common use, in New York and Philadelphia; 1st, in offering no obstruction to foot passengers, and not being liable to injury from heavy vehicles; 2dly, from not admitting of being used except by the application of a hose or gooseneck, they will be used exclusively under the direction of the Fire Department, for the extinguishment of fires; and 3dly, by being enclosed in a large box, having a closely fitted iron cover, the surrounding air is made to protect the pipe and valve from frost; and to prevent the freezing of the Hydrant, the water is drawn off from it through a waste valve, which is opened for the purpose, by the same screw which closes the main valve, before the box is closed. To render the Hydrant secure against frost

in severe weather, care is required, to ascertain that the water is drained off, after it has been opened for use, before the cap is replaced upon it.

In most parts of the City, in case of an alarming fire, as many as four or five Hydrants may be made to act upon it, by the aid of a suitable quantity of hose. In the lower parts of the City, the water conveyed through a hose of the ordinary size of 2½ inches, attached to one of the Hydrants will throw a column of water, without the aid of a Fire Engine, by the force of the head on the pipe, to the height of 75 or 80 feet.

We beg leave to suggest the expediency of appointing two or more trusty and skillful persons, connected with each of the Fire Companies, who shall be entrusted with the exclusive right of opening and superintending the use of these Hydrants, in cases of fire. The officers so entrusted with the care of the Hydrants, should also have the charge of suitable hose, applicable to each, and with the wrenches and other implements necessary for opening them.

In addition to the number of Fire-Hydrants above stated, laid down in the City of Boston, the Water Commissioners deemed it expedient at the time of laying the main pipes through the streets of Brookline and Roxbury, to take advantage of the opportunity, to place a Hydrant, at a central part of the village of Brookline, and four others at convenient points in the City of Roxbury, to be subject to the future disposition of the authorities of this City. We supposed that they might regard it an appropriate courtesy, to the Municipal authorities and citizens of those towns, to place the use of those Hydrants for extinguishing fires which may occur in their vicinity, at the disposition of such officers as may be appointed to take charge of them, under such reservations, as may be thought proper.

We may be allowed to suggest the great importance of a careful and judicious selection of the officers of the Fire Department, who shall be entrusted with the use of the Fire-Hydrants, as well as of binding them by such instructions as will protect the works against injury, and at the same time ensure the greatest efficiency in the proper use of the water in cases of fire, and obviate the hazard of injury to property, from excessive waste.

From the ample supply of water which may be momentarily drawn from any Hydrant, and the force with which it is discharged from the hose in the lower parts of the City, by the mere hydraulic pressure, it is obvious that a much greater security against the conflagration of dwellings and property, in every part of the City, will be attained by a judicious regulation and use of the Hydrants, with the aid of a suitable supply of hose, in the hands of a small and well regulated body of firemen, and with a comparatively small number of Engines, than has been hitherto attainable, by the energetic services of a much greater number of firemen. The double advantage will thus be obtained, of a much greater degree of security, and a great saving of expense in sustaining the Fire Department.

Which is respectfully submitted,

NATHAN HALE,
JAMES F. BALDWIN,
THOMAS B. CURTIS.
Water Commissioners.

Boston, Jan. 22, 1849.