

MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE,

Being the Name of the Park
for the Brighton District.

A Review of the Action of the City Council
With the Cost of it Estimated.

What Superintendent Meehan Says
About the Scheme.

A year or so ago, the residents of the Brighton district, thinking that they would never be able to get from the City Council a park for that part of the city, strongly advocated the extension of Commonwealth avenue, which proposed extension is now known as Massachusetts avenue. Their argument was that the City Council was giving every other section of the city a park, but would not appropriate the money necessary for a park in Brighton. If the city government would make this extension, and thus give them a parkway, they would never, they said, again ask for a park. The necessary action was taken by the city government, and it was decided to make the desired extension. The plan and profile were approved by the Board of Aldermen at their last regular meeting, and it is expected that the work will be commenced very shortly. It has been decided to do the work by day labor. A day or so ago a contemporary in an article headed "Is it a job?" severely criticised the proposed extension, and referred to it as a decidedly chimerical scheme, and one which, if done by day labor instead of by contract, would involve the city in an enormous additional expense. What is the history of this proposed improvement? Two years ago the subject was first considered by the city government. On June 8, 1882, Mr. Bigelow, a Republican member of the City Council from Ward 25, introduced an order into that body, requesting the street commissioners to report upon the expediency of extending Commonwealth avenue to the Chestnut Hill reservoir, and to submit an estimate of the probable cost of such an extension. This order was passed by the Council, and, on June 12, was concurred in by the Board of Aldermen. On December 14 of the same year, at the meeting of the Common Council, a report was received from the street commissioners upon this subject. The commissioners reported that in compliance with the order of the City Council they had considered the matter, and estimated that the extension on the line of Brighton avenue to Malvern street, widening that part of Brighton avenue to 200 feet, would cost \$200,000 for land damages, and that the further extension from Brighton avenue to the Chestnut Hill reservoir, at a width of 200 feet, based upon information given to the board by the proprietors of land, many of whom would give the necessary land, and upon a careful estimate of the small estates to be taken, would cost \$55,000, making the total cost of the entire extension \$315,000. The street commissioners added that the proposed extension would make a desirable opening through

A Valuable Territory in Brighton.

and would furnish an avenue from the heart of the city to its western extremity of unequalled beauty and convenience. The report continued: "From the representation of many influential citizens of the Brighton district, the board is led to believe that a section of the proposed avenue from Brighton avenue to Chestnut Hill would be regarded by the citizens of that part of the city as a very useful, ornamental substitute for a park in Brighton." The board concluded its report by saying that it would be expedient for the city to secure the necessary land at an early day and "while the property can be got at so low a rate." The report was referred to the joint committee on streets, and the reference was concurred in by the Board of Aldermen at its next meeting. In December, the whole matter was, upon the recommendation of the committee on streets, referred to the next city government. Early in 1883, the matter was, at the suggestion of Alderman Anthony, referred to the committee on streets. An appropriation of \$55,000 for the proposed Commonwealth avenue extension was included in that year's appropriations. In October, the street commissioners submitted to the City Council a resolve and order laying out and establishing the grade of Massachusetts avenue, at an estimated expense of \$45,202. The matter was then referred to Corporation Counsel Nettleton, and he advised the city government that the appropriation could be transferred from "Commonwealth avenue" to "Massachusetts avenue," if the order he submitted were passed. The order was passed, and what was originally known as the extension of Commonwealth avenue became Massachusetts avenue. The order passed the aldermen unanimously, and but one voice was raised against it in the Common Council. Such was the history of the work which will now shortly be commenced. The original order was introduced by a Republican, and the matter went through its successive stages with very little opposition in either branch. Land for the extension was given to the city by a number of citizens, among whom may be named John F. Squires, S. S. Learnard, H. W. Jordan, George A. Wilson, D. F. Ricker, Nathaniel Jackson and George Morrison.

The article referred to states that if the proposed work is done by the day, "nobody knows how much it may cost." Superintendent of Streets Meehan, when asked yesterday in regard to the matter, replied: "I certainly can bear testimony to the fact that we have got

The Pick of the Laboring Men

in the paving department, and that we don't allow any bummers or loafers to remain. Together with that, we are equipped with tools and machinery of every kind and description for this class of work. It is in our line, and we know all about it. We can do it more cheaply than can any contractor in the city; and, as the matter stands, the work can be better done by day labor than by contract labor. The contractor would want a margin for profit of from 10 to 25 per cent. Then, too, it is very hard work to estimate on such a job as this. Add to that that there is seldom a contract done that does not call for extra bills, and I think we are justified in having the work done by day labor. It is in contracting that all the jobs are. The laboring man gets nothing out of it beyond his pay."

"When the work is completed," continued Mr. Meehan, "it will be the pleasure drive of Boston. And it can be completed for a very much smaller sum than those fabulous sums which have been mentioned. There will be a turf drive there a mile in length where gentlemen can speed their horses without hindrance from the police or anybody else. That in itself will be an attraction that will entirely eclipse the Mill-dam road. It is something that has been very much needed, and something that has been urged for a long time. I see no good reason why this work cannot be completed in at least another year, and, when it is completed, there will be a continuous drive right from the State House around the reservoir." The laboring man will be employed on this work," added Mr. Meehan, "will and must be citizens of Boston, taxpayers, and men who have helped to build the city up and are here to stay. Non-residents will not be employed, only men who have a stake in the welfare and growth of the city and who help to pay its taxes. Contractors fish everywhere for cheap labor, and demoralize the labor of good citizens who want to stay here and pay their taxes, men with families who cannot get away even if they wished to."

City Engineer Wightman states that much of the territory through which the parkway will run is very desirable building land, very picturesque. A good many tasty detached houses are now being built upon parts of it. The work could not, however, be done in the ordinary way of building a street; it is practically engineering work, and should be laid out and built by a practical engineer. Mr. Olmsted, he said, was asked to make the plan as an authority upon the subject.

There is now some question as to which department should have charge of the work. It is in the hands of the street department, but some persons claim that it is in reality engineering work, and should be under the charge of the city engineer.