

HOUSE....No. 62.

Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT, BOSTON, }
January 30, 1867. }

To the House of Representatives.

I have the honor herewith to transmit for the information of the general court, a report upon the defences of Provincetown Harbor, by the Commission appointed under chapter 70 of the Resolves of 1865.

ALEX. H. BULLOCK.

To His Excellency A. H. BULLOCK, *Governor of the Commonwealth.*

SIR :—On the 16th of November, 1865, the undersigned, having in charge the coast defences at Provincetown, under Resolves of the legislature approved May 16th, 1865, addressed a communication to His Excellency Governor Andrew, stating their action up to that time and the condition of things then existing. From that communication we make the following extracts :—

“ There are two points near Provincetown, one at the bridge on the road to Truro, and one at and near a ‘ gap ’ in the beach, at a place where a breach was made by the sea some years ago, which require protection. At the gap, it was manifestly necessary that immediate action should be taken ; and, at a meeting of the board on the 20th of October, it was determined, upon conference with Colonel Graham, to authorize Mr. Eben S. Smith, one of the board residing at Provincetown, to cause at and near the gap from six to twelve jetties, or lines of stakes, from fifty to one hundred feet apart, each stake from six to ten inches through and fifteen feet in length, to be sunk not less than six feet ; the lines of stakes to run from high to low-water mark, and the stakes to be wattled with spruce boards, with interstices of four inches ; the wattling to be at first not more than three feet high, and to be continued as the sand rises,—and, it was also determined, to begin the work with six jetties at one hundred feet apart. Mr Smith was also authorized to cause to be set at the gap above high-water mark, brush of pine, or other shrubbery, in lines oblique to the axis of the gap to catch the sand. The board determined to postpone any action at the bridge, until the report of Colonel Graham has been made to the war department.

* * * * *

“ We have reason to believe, that the Commissioners will be able during the winter to issue proposals for contract to complete the necessary work at the bridge, when such plan of operation shall have been matured, as will meet the approval of the proper officers of the government.”

The Commissioners now respectfully state, that as soon as practicable, after the conference with Colonel Graham, in October 1865, the work at the "gap" was done in the manner agreed upon, under the direction of Mr. Smith, who gave to it his personal attention. So much as was attempted *below* high-water mark failed to effect the end desired. But all that was done *above* high-water mark, has been effective and eminently serviceable.

It was found that the force of the sea was so great that the jetties, or lines of stakes, could not be permanently placed between high and low-water mark at points where they would be of service.

But above high-water mark, brush has been so placed as to catch successfully the sand, and beach grass so planted as to make the sand more compact, and the effect has been to strengthen the whole beach at points where it was weakest. A continuation of this work, adding other brush above that first placed, as soon as the sand has fully covered it, and a free use of beach grass, will complete the security of this beach against inroad from the sea. To some extent this work has been continued, under the immediate direction of officers of the general government; and in view of the desirableness of its completion, a letter was addressed by the Commissioners on the 20th of November, instant, to Brigadier-General Benham, U. S. A., who has succeeded Colonel Graham, and is now the officer of the government in charge.

A copy of that letter and of the reply of General Benham accompanies this Report.

The work at the bridge, on the road between Provincetown and Truro, has not been commenced, and cannot be done by the Commissioners under the authority conferred upon them by the legislature.

A plan was agreed upon after conference with Colonel Graham, and a report was submitted by him to the War Department.

Colonel Graham died soon afterwards, and his report did not meet the approval of the Engineer Department.

By the terms of the legislative Resolves, that approval was necessary before the Commissioners could act.

Of the sum appropriated by the legislature for the preservation of Provincetown Harbor, five thousand dollars were placed

at their disposal, and an account is herewith submitted, showing \$915.03 to have been expended, and \$4,084 97 to be returned to the treasury. The Commissioners have done all which it was in their power to do for the protection of this harbor, and they regret that they are not able to report the harbor to be as yet in a safe condition.

The work, however, is now under the charge of an officer of the general government, who is an able and experienced engineer, and although the action recommended at the bridge has not met his approval, and although the bulkhead erected by him at Beach Point, south of the bridge, has proved of no avail, (wholly disappeared,) the Commissioners are assured that General Benham fully appreciates the national importance of this harbor, and feel confident that he will do all in his power to protect and secure it.

Mr. Smith, under date of Dec. 3d, says, in writing to his colleagues :—

"I would here remark, that the gap on the outer beach, marked B on Colonel Graham's chart, (where the planting of beach grass and bushes was recommended in our communication to General Benham,) is in a good state of preservation, and may not need any further labor this winter; still it is in such an exposed situation, that constant care is required to guard against the blowing of sand through the gap, and to prevent the ocean from making inroads into it.

This duty I will attend to, and report to you if anything unusual takes place in that locality."

Our commission having this day expired, such information, if any, will be cheerfully communicated to Gen. Benham.

THOMAS D. ELIOT,
ALPHEUS HARDY,
E. S. SMITH,
Commissioners.

BOSTON, Dec. 31, 1866.

Commonwealth of Massachusetts, in account with the Provincetown Harbor Commissioners.

1866.

Jan. 6.	To paid Eben S. Smith's bill,	\$610 34
11.	Expenses on trip to Provincetown,	9 15
May 11.	J. B. Smith's bill on "	71 40
17.	Sundry telegrams to and from Provincetown,	2 14
Nov. 20.	T. D. Eliot's bill,	150 00
Dec. 4.	E. S. Smith's "	66 00
	Copying report, &c.,	6 00
	Balance due State,	4,084 97

CONTRA, CR.

1866.

Jan. 4.	By cash from State treasurer,	\$5,000 00

		\$5,000 00 \$5,000 00
	By balance,	\$4,084 97

ALPHEUS HARDY, et al Commissioners.

E. & O. E.

BOSTON, January 25th, 1867.

BOSTON, November 20th, 1866.

Brigadier-General HENRY W. BENHAM, *in command, &c., &c.*

GENERAL:—In your report to the Chief Engineer, Major-General T. Delafield, dated Boston, April 28, 1866, concerning Provincetown Harbor, we find reference made to our action as State Commissioners, at a point near what is called the “Gap” in the beach, where a breach was made some years ago by the sea. You state in that report that “the point here most injured, the middle point ‘B,’ referred to on Colonel Graham’s sketch, has been thus repaired by the State Commissioners to a very considerable and satisfactory extent, since the time of the Colonel’s examination, and at an expense of only about \$300. And we agree with the opinion and report of Colonel Graham, as to the additional repairs expedient for this locality, that the judicious placing of brush and beach grass here affords the best protection available.” All that was done at this point was done under the immediate direction of Mr. Eben S. Smith, one of the Commissioners, who was authorized, with the approval of Colonel Graham, “to cause to be set at the gap, above high-water mark, brush of pine, or other shrubbery, in lines oblique to the axis of the gap to catch the sand.”

The beneficial effect of that work has been obvious, and, we believe it to be important, that it should be at once continued at the same place and in the same way. And we propose, with your approval, to do so, that is, to continue to place brush, and to plant beach grass at the places where the sands have covered the former work, so as to raise higher the beach where there is danger of breach. We shall be glad to cause this to be done without delay; but as our power to use the money appropriated by the State depends upon the approval of the proper officers of the government, we now address you, asking that such action may have your approval.

As it regards the repairs designed for the preservation of the beach at and near the bridge connecting Provincetown with

Truro, we understand, that the plan deemed at one time to be judicious, and recommended by us, has not continued to have the approval of the officers of the general government,—and we cannot, therefore, take other action in that direction. But we shall be glad to continue at the “gap” the work which seems to have been effective there.

We believe, that a few hundred dollars which we can expend at once, will be sufficient for present use at that point.

Respectfully, your obedient servants,

THOMAS D. ELIOT,
ALPHEUS HARDY,
EBEN S. SMITH,

Commissioners of the State.

BOSTON, November 20, 1866.

Messrs. T. D. ELIOT, A. HARDY and E. S. SMITH, *Commissioners of Massachusetts.*

GENTLEMEN:—I have the honor to acknowledge your letter of this date, which requests my approval as the United States Engineer in charge of the works for the preservation of Provincetown Harbor, of your expenditure of a portion of the funds appropriated by your State for that harbor, (under a limitation of such an approval,) in the planting of beach grass and brush fences, at such points as are especially exposed to injury or danger on the outward or seaward side of the isthmus at the head of East Harbor Meadows.

I have the pleasure of reporting to you, that during this past season, with the funds of the United States at my disposal, and under the direction of the engineer department, I have repaired, or strengthened, in the best manner I could devise—by the use of such beach grass and brush fences—all such points in that vicinity as appeared to me require such protection, to wit: the positions marked A B and C, on the sketch that accompanied Colonel Graham's report of November 28, 1865. At these points, and principally at the point B, I have had planted some six or eight acres of beach grass, and some hundreds of yards of brush fence—all such as appeared to be needed—and such, as I trust, upon examination, you will find entirely satisfactory, for the present necessities.

If, however, serious injuries have been since received in these or other adjacent positions of which I am not aware, I should certainly approve a further expenditure of money for similar means of protection, which, I believe, to be the best as yet found under the circumstances. And while I have the funds of the United States available, as is at present the case, to the extent of some \$5,000 to \$6,000 for this harbor, I shall feel it my duty to apply such repairs as soon as practicable,

whenever I can learn they are required,—of which I would respectfully request to be informed by you at any time that, in your opinion, this shall be necessary.

A farther reflection upon the subject, since my personal interview with you, gentlemen, this morning, has led me to consider that, as this grand harbor for the commerce of this whole country has been so often and so justly provided for from appropriation by the Congress of the United States,—although your own State has also so munificently cared for its safety by the large sums now made available,—yet, as any expenditures from such State funds might, or probably would, eventually form an equitable claim for re-imbursement from the United States, I fear I might expose myself to censure if I were responsible in any way for the expenditure of such State funds, even for plans that I approved, while I had in my hands the funds of the United States, which I was under orders to disburse, as the Commanding Engineer, whenever it should be necessary for the preservation of this harbor.

You will perceive, gentlemen, therefore, that, under the present circumstances,—although I may approve the *plans*,—I ought not to expose myself to official censure by approving *expenditures* for those plans from the money of the State, while I have the funds of the United States available for the same purpose.

Very respectfully,
Your obedient servant,

H. W. BENHAM,
Brig. Maj. Gen., Sup. Engineer.

