

SENATE...No. 79.

Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

IN SENATE, February 26, 1852.

ORDERED, That the Committee on the Library be instructed to consider the expediency of erecting, at Provincetown, a monument, commemorative of the landing of the Pilgrim Fathers at that place, on the eleventh of November, 1620, and of the political compact which they there framed,—the first political organization on this continent in which was incorporated the right of the people to govern themselves.

Sent down for concurrence.

F. H. UNDERWOOD, *Clerk.*

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, February 27, 1852.

Concurred.

LEWIS JOSSELYN, *Clerk.*

Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

IN SENATE, March 29, 1852.

The Joint Standing Committee on the Library, to whom was referred the order of the 26th of February, instructing them "to consider the expediency of erecting, at Provincetown, a monument, commemorative of the landing of the Pilgrim Fathers at that place, on the 11th of November, 1620, and of the political compact which they there formed, the first political organization on this continent in which was incorporated the right of the people to govern themselves,"

REPORT:

That the erection of monuments commemorative of great *events* in its history would seem to be one of the first duties of a State which has taken its place among established communities, and is possessed of abundant means for the accomplishment of all proper purposes. Such works serve to keep alive the highest and purest sentiments, upon the ascendancy of which, in every community, must in no small degree depend the welfare of mankind. They encourage the exertion of the noblest faculties of man, by showing that the deeds of the good and the great are appreciated in after times at their proper value. Every such monument is a visible type, not merely of the excellence of those whose acts have caused it to rise from the earth and point heavenward, but also of the aspiring character of the people whose labors and outlay have been the occasion of its existence. It commemorates the virtues of those by whom it was erected not less than those of the men

in whose honor its erection was undertaken. Nor is there any manifestation of egotism in the conduct of those by whom it is built. That conduct has its origin in far higher motives than can be connected with mere selfishness. It is the tribute of gratitude warmed by admiration, and a pledge that good deeds shall live forever in human recollection.

To express in some definite manner their sense of the importance of the labors and sacrifices of the men who made the first settlement within the boundaries of their ancient Commonwealth, would seem to be a solemn duty on the part of the people of Massachusetts. Were the circumstances of the early history of the *Old Colony* of an ordinary character, the committee would not have ventured to recommend any action in the spirit of the order of the 26th of February; nor is it probable that any such order would have been offered, in that event. But the circumstances of that history were all of an extraordinary character, such as are not to be found in the annals of any other State, and therefore are deserving of some especial notice at the hands of an intelligent and opulent people, who owe so much to the exertions of those of their predecessors who first asserted the rights of man in New England. It is well known that the Pilgrims, properly so-called, were men in some respects different from those who afterwards laid the foundation of the colony of Massachusetts. They were an earlier race of Puritans, and belonged to different classes of society from those from which proceeded the master-spirits of the greater colony. They were more republican in their ideas, and left England years before the "better sort," who founded the colony of Massachusetts Bay. Their peculiar spirit it is that has spread over the country, animating the people of the Union, and causing enlightened republicanism to have the first place on the American continent. Many years before the settlement of Massachusetts proper was commenced, and not long after the first settlement was made in that territory which now constitutes the time-honored State of Virginia, the Pilgrims left England and took up their residence in the city of Leyden, then one of the towns of the republic of the Seven United Provinces, which had established their freedom and nationality at the expense of the Spanish

branch of the house of Austria. In 1620, ten years previous to the foundation of Boston, they left Europe, proposing to settle in America. The circumstances which attended their arrival here are too well known to need recapitulation in this place, beyond what is necessary for the elucidation of the committee's purpose. On the 9th of November, and after having endured a more than ordinary share of the perils of the sea, the Pilgrims saw the land of Cape Cod. Two days later, on the 11th, they anchored in what is now the harbor of Provincetown, and soon after a detachment of their number landed. Before leaving the *Mayflower*, and after having invoked the blessing of heaven on their undertaking, they drew up a compact of government, universally admitted to be the first instance mentioned in history of the assertion by an organized body of the doctrine of popular sovereignty. The instrument thus adopted was very brief and very simple, but it may be doubted if any mere human document excels it in value and importance. All that has since been done in America in vindication of the now almost universally received opinion of the right of the people to rule can be traced to the action of the Pilgrims in Cape Cod harbor, two hundred and thirty-one years since. That is the fountain, the spring from which waters so fertilizing have flowed for six generations. "This brief, and comprehensive, and simple instrument," says one of the historians of the Pilgrims, "established a most important principle, a principle which is the foundation of all the democratic institutions of America, and is the basis of the republic; and however it may be expanded and complicated in our various constitutions, however unequally power may be distinguished in the different branches of our various governments, has imparted to each its strongest and most striking characteristic. Many philosophers have since appeared who have, in labored treatises, endeavored to prove the doctrine that the rights of man are unalienable, and nations have bled to defend and enforce them; yet in this dark age, the age of despotism and superstition, when no tongue dared to assert, and no pen to write this bold and novel doctrine, which was then as much at defiance with common opinion as with actual power, of which the monarch was then held to be the sole fountain, and the theory was universal, that all popular

rights were granted by the crown, in this remote wilderness, amongst a small and unknown band of wandering outcasts, the principle *that the will of the majority shall govern*, was first conceived, and was first practically exemplified. The Pilgrims, from their notions of primitive christianity, the force of circumstances, and that pure moral feeling which is the offspring of true religion, discovered a truth in the science of government which had been concealed for ages. On the bleak shore of a barren wilderness, in the midst of desolation, with the blast of winter howling around them, and surrounded with dangers in their most appalling forms, the Pilgrims of Leyden laid the foundation of American liberty.* Not less pertinent are the words of one whose name is forever associated with the history of Massachusetts. "Within that poor tempest-tossed vessel," says Edward Everett, "there lay, on the eleventh of November, 1620, a moral treasure, of value wholly inappreciable; faintly conceived by us, its immediate inheritors, after two hundred years' possession; principles of social and moral growth and improvement, which for ages to come will not be developed in all their virtue and efficacy. There lay scarcely organized the elements of a pure democracy. On that day the first written constitution of popular government was drawn up and signed by the people assembled in convention for that purpose. Cycles of human history may pass before events of equal importance to humanity shall recur. And what a disaster to the general cause of freedom and truth, had this vessel and all she contained been lost! Embattled navies might contend and go down. Foundered galleons might pave the green floors of

* Baylies, *An Historical Memoir of the Colony of New Plymouth*, pp. 29, 30. Perhaps it is stating the point too strongly to assert that "no tongue dared to assert, and no pen to write, this bold and novel doctrine" of the sovereignty of the people in the early part of the seventeenth century. During the great contests that grew out of the Reformation, more than one writer asserted the doctrine of popular sovereignty, though under circumstances very different from those which marked the condition of the Pilgrims when they proclaimed it. The Pilgrims were the first to enter into a regular compact of government based on a recognition of the right of the people to rule. As Mr. Palfrey expresses it, "In the harbor of Provincetown, on the eleventh day of November, 1620, was executed that document, which, realizing, for the first time in the world's history, the philosophical fiction of a *social compact*, became the basis of the colony government."

the ocean with ingots of silver and gold, and the next generation be neither the weaker nor the poorer for the loss. But if this weather-beaten Mayflower and her company had sunk beneath the waves, which so often seemed opening to engulf her (decisive as the event would probably have been, for an indefinite period, of all further attempts to colonize America), there would have been inflicted a wound, which might never have been healed, in the great cause of conscience, free government, and truth."

It is in honor of the great event, the importance and grandeur of which have been so strikingly set forth by the authorities quoted, that the committee recommend the erection of a monument on the most elevated land near to the harbor of Provincetown. In the rear of the village,—which stretches along the inner curve of the shore two miles or more, a little above high water mark,—at a distance of a few hundred feet, rises what is known as *High Pole Hill*, to the height of upwards of one hundred feet. It is the highest land in the town, and overlooks the harbor, and the bay beyond. It may be reasonably supposed that this eminence, as the best point from whence to view their position, was the first spot visited by the Pilgrim Fathers after their landing on the shores of the new world. The committee recommend the erection of a monument on the eminence named, one worthy of the event which it is proposed to commemorate, and of the State of Massachusetts. Should their recommendation meet with favor, a column will rise that shall do honor to all parties, and from a spot among the most sacred of the many historical sites that adorn our continent. Towering to the heavens, it will be the last American object that shall meet the eye of the Massachusetts mariner as he departs for those remote and various regions to which he is conducted by enterprise and daring, reminding him of the early history of his native land, and reinforcing the ordinary motives that he is governed by to do nothing unworthy of that land. Returning, it will be the first object that shall greet his sight, the first palpable evidence that he has reached that home to the comforts and manifold endearments of which he is, in common with all his fellow citizens, so largely indebted to the heroic labors of the men in whose honor the

column had been raised. It would be seen far over those waters along which the *Mayflower* made her adventurous passage, and would be, as it were, a bond of connection between that age of iron and the golden age that has grown out of it. It would cheer alike the aged mariner and the aspiring sea-boy.

The committee are aware that, in various quarters, objections exist to the erection of monuments; but they believe that the force of such objections cannot apply to the present recommendation. What is objected to is the building of monuments in honor of individuals, and this arises from the consideration that Massachusetts has had so many worthy sons that it would almost bankrupt her treasury were she to attempt to do honor to them all according to their deserts. Whatever force there may be in this objection, it is evident that it cannot apply in the present instance. The monument at Provincetown would not be erected in honor of any man; it would owe its existence to our reverence for a principle,—a principle through whose complete triumph Massachusetts has become what she is, second to none on the globe in all the essentials of a political community. It will not be asserted that to erect a monument in honor of the first formal assertion of the right of self-government can be construed into a precedent that will cause a regular demand on the treasury of the Commonwealth. There are various reasons why no such precedent could be involved in the proceeding. The event commemorated is without parallel in our history, or in the history, indeed, of any country. It was the first act of a political character performed within what is now the State of Massachusetts. It was performed by men who for generations the liberal portion of the world has delighted to honor. It was the commencement, in the spirit which has since marked its continuance, of the history and character of the State. It placed, as it were, upon Massachusetts that mental stamp which is destined to prevail over the whole of North America, and to affect the order of events in the old world. It would be difficult to find in history an event of equal importance to that of which we speak, apart from its peculiar character already referred to, and it may well be doubted if in any other country it would have been so long

without a monument in its honor, some striking evidence of the sense of the people of such country of their being aware of the greatness of that event. Undoubtedly much of the indifference that has prevailed on the subject is owing to the fact that what the Pilgrims asserted in 1620 has for a long period been a mere truism in America ; that what was done by them has so often been done since, that it requires something beyond a mere cursory examination of their labors to be enabled to do them full justice. It is not until we have fully reflected upon their action, and have compared it with the prevailing sentiment of their age, that we can clearly appreciate the distance between their opinions and those of the rest of the world. It is true that in the preceding century there had been a great deal of discussion on the question of the *sovereignty of the people* ; but this had originated from affairs widely different from those under which the pilgrims found themselves in 1620, and the doctrine had never been reduced to practice. It should seem, then, that the pilgrims are entitled to those honors which are the due of men whose conduct has had a marked effect on human affairs for good. Massachusetts has already evinced her sense of the importance of the first great battle of that revolution in which Americans contended for the universal application of the principle proclaimed by the pilgrims ; should she not show to the world that she fully appreciates the greatness of that victory which was won by those daring spirits, who, two hundred and thirty years since, triumphed over the highest worldly temptations, and were so elevated by the effect of the conflict as to be enabled to tower above their contemporaries in political philosophy as well as in religious devotion, and to give character to the future life of a continent ?

The people in whose territory the monument would be erected are descended from the founders of the Old Colony. In no part of the State is there to be found a better population, or one that contributes more to the State's well-being. It contributes largely to our seamen, the men of the Cape being in maritime official stations wherever American ships can be found. Enterprises of the most daring kind are familiar to its members when abroad, while they are quiet and industrious at home. Every branch of our fisheries finds among those who

follow it sailors of every rank from that region whose inhabitants had learned to capture the whale two centuries ago. The high character of a people is assuredly no reason for erecting monuments on their lands; but when in the midst of such a community as described there is a spot that is among the most celebrated in our history, it assumes almost in the light of an additional recommendation that the inhabitants are worthy of their locality, for it is the best assurance that we can receive that the proposed expenditure will not have been made in vain.

The Committee recommend the adoption of the following resolves.

For the Committee,

CHARLES C. HAZEWELL, *Chairman.*

Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

In the Year One Thousand Eight Hundred and Fifty-
Two.

RESOLVES

To authorize the erection of a Monument at Provincetown, commemorative of the first landing of the Pilgrims.

Resolved, That the sum of three thousand dollars be, and the same is hereby, appropriated for a monument to be erected on *High Pole Hill*, in Provincetown, in commemoration of the landing of the Pilgrim Fathers at Cape Cod, on the eleventh day of November, (O. S.) 1620, and of the political compact by them then and there entered into; the monument to be erected under the supervision of a committee of the town of Provincetown, of such imperishable materials, and agreeably to a plan which shall be approved of by His Excellency the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives,—*provided*, that the town of Provincetown, or any association, or individuals, shall execute good and sufficient deeds to the Commonwealth of not less than one acre of land on the summit of said *High Pole Hill* for a site for the said monument, and contribute not less than the sum of one thousand dollars to be appropriated to the erection of the same.

Resolved, That the Governor is hereby authorized to draw his warrant on the treasury for the sum of three thousand dollars, to be expended according to the provisions of the foregoing resolve.