

HOUSE.....No. 79.

Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, March 3d, 1847.

The Joint Standing Committee on Towns, to whom was referred the petition of Charles S. Storrow and others, inhabitants of the "New City," so called, in Andover and Methuen, to be incorporated as a town by the name of Lawrence, have considered the same and

REPORT:

The town of Methuen occupies a territory between the north bank of the Merrimac river and the boundary line of the State of New Hampshire, about three miles in width, and extending upon the river from eight to nine miles.

It is proposed by the petitioners to take from this territory a portion lying upon said river, and opposite an angle in the above-mentioned boundary line, midway between the two extremes, about two miles in length and one and a half miles in width, and to erect the same, together with a portion of territory to be taken from Andover, into a town by the name of Lawrence.

The proposed town will contain an area of about six square miles, three and a half from Methuen and two and a half from Andover.

The principal reasons presented by the petitioners in favor of the establishment of said new town, are as follows:—

The necessity of strong police regulations for the government of the probable dense population of the proposed town.

The great want of schoolhouses for the present inhabitants, requiring the immediate expenditure of large sums of money for their erection, and which, it is proposed, should be upon a plan adapted to the future necessities of the town.

The necessity of establishing a large and expensive fire department.

The convenience of having the place designated by some name which shall attract public attention, thus securing greater certainty in the receipt of letters passing through the post-office.

The inconvenience attendant upon a necessary communication with the towns of Methuen and Andover for the transaction of municipal affairs.

The necessity of expending immediately, for the convenience of the citizens of the new town, (and of continuing similar expenditures hereafter,) large sums of money for sidewalks, draining, lighting and paving streets, night-watch, &c., which will not be required by other portions of the town, and the cost of which should not be borne by them.

A large majority of the legal voters of Methuen object to the division, not only on account of the singular and inconvenient shape—somewhat resembling an hour-glass—in which it will leave the town, but from the fact, that they have taken special pains to accommodate the petitioners, who are, for the most part, new settlers upon this territory, by selling to them their lands, together with a portion of the public property, upon very reasonable terms, for the purpose of offering inducements for enterprise and the investment of capital within their limits. This has been done in the expectation of realizing the incidental advantages which may arise therefrom, to which they feel justly entitled.

They also represent, that the proposed separation, if carried into effect, will operate very seriously against their interests by

increasing their taxes in consequence of the necessity for new roads, in addition to the seventy-two miles of road already constructed through the town of Methuen: and that the cost of keeping in repair the present roads will be greatly increased by constant transportation, over them, of granite and other heavy freight for the benefit of the "New City."

It is also thought that the expense of their pauper establishment will be greatly increased, from the fact that the suburbs of the new town will extend beyond its proposed limits, and thus secure to them such portion of the population as will, in all respects, be the least desirable.

It being at present very uncertain to what extent, in either direction, the village will be likely to extend; and, as the petitioners only desire to include within the limits of the new town so much territory as it may hereafter become necessary to incorporate under a city government, it cannot, at this time, be properly determined what should be the extent of those limits.

Another consideration urged by the remonstrants against the proposed change is, that no inconvenience can arise to the inhabitants of the new village from a continuation of their present relations with the town of Methuen. Its local position is such, that it is expected it will soon be the place for the transaction of the municipal affairs of the town; and should it increase in population as rapidly as is anticipated on the part of the petitioners, its voice will soon be potential in regard to the management of the town affairs.

The schools and the fire department, it is thought, can be conducted, under the district system, with as great efficiency and economy, under existing circumstances, as they could be, should the proposed change take place.

It is further stated, that many of the reasons offered by the petitioners are entirely imaginary, and that their application for the incorporation of a new town is premature, which suggestion is entitled to some weight in view of the following considerations:—

It appears from the investigation of the Committee, and from the evidence in the case, that, although there is, upon the territory proposed to be erected into a new town, a population of

about thirty-five hundred, it is, for the greater part, made up of transient persons, or those of so recent settlement, that, of this number, there are not known to be, at the present time, within the town of Methuen, but forty-five legal voters. Twenty-seven of this number are old inhabitants of the town, many of whom have recently moved to the village, and of these, nine are remonstrants.

The Committee have not been able to ascertain the exact number of voters in that portion of territory proposed to be set off from Andover; but, as about twelve hundred of the forementioned population reside there, and as it is not supposed the same ratio would be far from the truth, it may fairly be estimated not to exceed twenty-five or thirty.

Under certain conditions which, it is understood, will be accepted by the petitioners, the town of Andover does not object to parting with the portion of territory proposed to be taken from that town. It is, however, suggested by the remonstrants, that it may, with as much propriety, be annexed to the town of Methuen, and, in this way, secure to the New City all the benefits which would be derived from its annexation under the plan proposed.

Although the Committee have some doubts whether it will eventually be for the interest of the town of Methuen to continue its connection with the village of Lawrence, they do not deem it proper entirely to disregard its wishes so nearly unanimously expressed, especially as it does not appear that the proposed new town has thus far suffered in its interests in consequence of such connection.

The Committee, therefore, seeing no reason to apprehend that any serious inconvenience can result to the petitioners by a postponement of the separation, should it hereafter be determined upon by the consent of both parties, hereby recommend that the further consideration of said petition be referred to the next session of the Legislature.

For the Committee,

T. W. CARTER, *Chairman*,
on part of the House.