REPORT
OF THE
Special Committee
ON
PARKS,

RELATIVE TO LAYING OUT A

New Park in the Upper Part of the City.

Board of Aldermen,
DOCUMENT No. 83.—JANUARY, 2, 1852.

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DOCUMENT No. 83.

BOARD OF ALDERMEN,

JANUARY 2, 1852.

The following report of the Special Committee on Parks, in relation to laying out a new park in the upper part of the city, was received, laid on the table, and ordered to be printed.

D. T. VALENTINE, *Clerk.*

The Special Committee on Public Parks, beg leave respectfully to

REPORT:

That they were appointed under the following resolution of the Board of Aldermen, of August 5th, 1851, and that to them was also referred, on the ayes and noes, the following subsequent resolution of August 7th, 1851:

“ *Whereas*, The Legislature, at its recent extra session, passed an act, authorizing the Mayor, Aldermen and

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Commonalty of this city to purchase or take, through Commissioners to be appointed for that purpose, the ground lying between the Third avenue and East river, and Sixty-sixth and Seventy-fifth streets; and also that lying between Avenue A, and the East river, and Sixty-fourth and Sixty-sixth streets, to remain, and be used hereafter as a public park."

"*And whereas*, Public opinion seems to demand that the City Government, in carrying into effect the object contemplated by the act referred to, should adopt the most liberal and enlightened measures, in order to make the proposed pleasure ground, in its locality, conveniently accessible to all—in its dimension, equal to the present and prospective wants of a great and rapidly increasing city—and, in its future establishment, corresponding to the wealth and greatness of this commercial metropolis; therefore,

"*Resolved*, That it be referred to a Special Committee of this Board, to examine and report upon the advantages and disadvantages of the ground designated in the act of the Legislature; and also, whether there be not a better locality for such park, with comparison of size, capacity for rural embellishment, general topographical features, and probable cost of each; and, also, whether it be not advisable to include within the limits of such purchase, ground for the new reservoir; and, generally, all such facts and inferences as may enable the Common Council to proceed understandingly in a matter involving so large an expenditure of the public money, and so important in its influence upon the present and future growth and prosperity of the city.

“Board of Aldermen, August 5th, 1851. Adopted, and Aldermen Dodge, Dooley and Britton appointed such Committee.

(Signed) J. M. WILSON,
Deputy Clerk.

“*Resolved*, That the Counsel of the Corporation be, and he is hereby directed to take the necessary legal measures for the appointment of Commissioners of Estimate and Assessment, for the laying out of a public park, in pursuance of an act relative to the powers and duties of the Mayor, Aldermen and Commonalty of the city of New York, in the matter of taking possession of and laying out certain lands for a public park in the Nineteenth Ward of said city, passed July 11th, 1851, forthwith.”

“Board of Aldermen, August 7th, 1851, referred to Special Committee on a new park on ayes and noes.

(Signed) J. M. WILSON,
Deputy Clerk.”

In compliance with the directions of the resolution appointing said Committee, they have endeavored to make themselves fully acquainted with all the facts which have any bearing upon the matter committed to them, and they are fully impressed with the importance to the present and future inhabitants of the city, that they should present such a careful and comprehensive view of the whole subject, as may enable your Honorable Body to judge whether the opinions your Committee have formed are correct, and whether their suggestions should be adopted.

The city of New York is now, and probably will ever be, the metropolis of America; it is already one of the

first cities of the world in point of population, wealth, commercial importance and beauty ; and its geographical position, and other circumstances are such, as must continually increase its importance in all these respects. This island city, steadily increasing at a ratio of ten per cent. per annum in population, must soon be closely inhabited throughout its entire extent.

It has ever been considered, in all large cities, an important duty for those intrusted with authority, to provide for the health of present and future citizens, and their recreation, by setting apart for public grounds, even at considerable expense, certain spacious tracts, which may be laid out into extensive walks and drives, and from time to time beautified by the tasteful turning to account of the resources of the natural scenery and decorations of art. Accordingly, the most beautiful and useful features of the cities of the Old World are the extensive and ornamented grounds, to which large portions of the population daily (and more particularly on the public holidays,) resort for their healthful recreation. Our beautiful city is entirely unprovided with anything of this kind, on a scale at all commensurate with its wants or its grandeur in other respects ; and it is a remarkable fact, that it is the only large city on this continent which is thus destitute of these openings which are very appropriately termed the "Lungs of Cities."

Your Committee is directed "to examine, and report upon the advantages and disadvantages of the ground designated in the act of the Legislature ; *and also* whether there be not a better locality for such park, with comparison of size, capacity for rural embellishments, general

topographical features, and probable cost of each; *and also*, whether it be not advisable to include, within the limits of such purchase, ground for the new reservoir."

In the examination of these different points, your Committee find, in the second branch of their inquiry, a second proposition distinctly referred to, as probably presenting superior advantages of locality, &c., and identifying it as the plot of ground, including within its limits the site of the proposed new reservoir.

Your Committee therefore consider, that two distinct propositions are before them, and will proceed to make the required comparisons as faithfully and as briefly as their determination to do full justice to so important a matter will permit.

The first proposition is, for the city to purchase a piece of woodland known as "Jones' Woods," on the extreme eastern shore of this island. "The total area of this proposed park, bounded by Sixty-fourth street, from the East river to avenue A; by Avenue A, from Sixty-fourth to Sixty-sixth street; by Sixty-sixth street, from Avenue A to the Third avenue; by the Third avenue, from Sixty-sixth to Seventy-fifth streets, and by Seventy-fifth street, from the Third avenue to the East river: and by the East river from Seventy-fifth street to Sixty-fourth street, is 6,944,860 square feet, or $159 \frac{432}{1000}$ acres."

The Common Council propose to exclude from the above an irregular projection of six acres, between Sixty-fourth and Sixty-sixth streets and Avenue A and the river. This will reduce the area to $153 \frac{432}{1000}$ acres.

The second proposition is, for the city to purchase a certain tract of land, situated in the geographical centre of this Island, and bounded by the Fifth and Eighth avenues, on the east and west, and by Sixtieth and One hundred and sixth streets, on the south and north limits, containing a superficial area of $759\frac{3}{4}$ acres.

Both these plots are well adapted to the uses proposed, and are the only plots of any considerable extent convenient for the purpose, that are at all available. But, as it is not proposed for the city to purchase and improve both these plots, your Committee have prepared a careful, and they believe a just comparison of the advantages of each, in discussing which, for the sake of convenience, the first will be spoken of as "*Jones Park*," and the second as "*Central Park*."

The comparative advantages of each of these sites, will be shown in respect to the following considerations, viz:

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EXTENT.

When a city proposes to itself an improvement of this kind, involving a very considerable expense, it is important that the ground secured should be sufficiently spacious for the purposes, not only of the present generation, but of a very numerous posterity.

The superficial area proposed to be enclosed in *Jones' Park*, is $153\frac{4\frac{3}{10}}{10}$ acres. It is nearly square, and about half a mile in extent on each side. If we deduct the space to be occupied by streets and avenues, there remains about 105 acres to be purchased.

The superficial area proposed to be enclosed in *Central Park*, is $759\frac{3}{4}$ acres. It is in form an elongated parallelogram, about two and a quarter miles long and about a half mile wide. It embraces the present Receiving Reservoir of 33 acres—the grounds of the State Arsenal and of the St. Vincent Academy, about 24 acres—and ground now owned by the Corporation, 135 acres; in all, $566\frac{3}{4}$ acres, including streets and avenues, deducting for which $190\frac{1}{2}$ acres, leaves an area of $376\frac{1}{4}$ acres to be purchased.

Central Park will therefore have a superficial area four and three quarter times as great as *Jones' Park*.

This city, increasing in population at the rate of ten per cent. per annum, must, before the end of the present half century, number several millions, a small proportion of which will throng a place so limited as *Jones' Park*, but be very amply accommodated in *Central Park*, of nearly five times the extent.

Central Park would probably be one of the largest city parks in the world, but not too large for the use of a city destined, in all human probability, to equal, and perhaps to exceed in population every other. It must be noted that the City Government has already appropriated about one fifth of this tract for purposes of reservoirs, which, being artificial lakes, contribute perhaps as much

as any other feature to the beauty and value of public grounds.

The most beautiful feature of a large park, and a most important advantage over a small one, is, that the large park is capable, from its extent, of being laid out into a very great length of serpentine road, which a judicious engineer can so contrive as not only to produce startling effects of the distant landscape, and also to bring the peculiar natural and artificial beauties of the place into the best points of view, but, at the same time, to turn and wind this road through the place, so as to allow a very long drive through constantly varying scenery. A serpentine road of more than twenty-five miles in extent can be wound through the spacious grounds of *Central Park*, as your Committee is informed by competent engineers. This important consideration does not, however, apply to *Jones' Park*, which is, in itself, too limited to allow of any great length of drive under any circumstances. The Second avenue is now being opened, and must, for several reasons, be carried through Jones' Woods. This will divide the grounds into two small and unequal portions, and so cut them up as to prevent the introduction of serpentine roads to any considerable length.

Another important consideration depending upon the extent of a park, is the fact that ornamental grounds attract upon their borders ornamental structures in the way of public buildings for institutions of learning, academies of the fine arts, buildings devoted to geology, botany, astronomy and other sciences, monuments of national greatness and patriotism, &c.

This is found to be the case in London, where, in addi-

tion to the public institutions, rows of elegant private houses, the residences of wealthy citizens, have added to the architectural beauties of the borders of St. James', Regents' and Hyde Parks. This principle will apply here more particularly, where fine sites for public and private buildings are in demand.

This latter consideration is of more importance, when we consider that *Central Park* is of sufficient size to permit the selling off for the above purposes of portions of its border. These sites being desirable, will command large prices, and reduce the expense of the original cost, and furnish, from time to time, by sales or by leases, a sufficient sum to pay, if desirable, a portion of the expenses of the keeping and decoration of the park. The great extent of boundary of *Central Park* favors this view of the matter, presenting, as it does, five miles and a half for such improvements—while *Jones' Park* presents a comparatively small border of a mile and a half, deducting the river front, and is not in a part of the city where such improvements would seek sites: whereas, *Central Park* is in that part of the city where such institutions would be favorably located, and on its borders are already to be found the State Arsenal, Mount St. Vincent (young ladies') Academy, &c. The importance of this consideration is further discussed under the head of Cosr.

The situation of *Jones' Park* is such, that it would be a special benefit only to the property in its immediate neighborhood on three sides, of about half a mile each. Should such property so benefited, be assessed, as provided in the act of the Legislature for taking such park, in proportion, say one-third of the whole purchase money,

the quantity of such property specially benefited and specially assessed being very limited, the amount of assessment would be very onerous upon that small neighborhood, and probably more than the property could bear; therefore, the difference between what should be assessed and what could be borne would have to be added to the amount paid from the city treasury, which would be equivalent to a tax upon the whole city, to improve the value of the property of a few individuals, by making a park in a one-sided, out-of-the-way locality, where it would not be generally accessible.

Apply the same considerations to *Central Park*, and it appears that, owing to its greater extent and central position, the quantity of property that would be benefited and enhanced in value by the making of the park is so great, that an assessment to pay one-third, one-half, or even the whole of the purchase money, would scarcely be felt. The special benefit would be sensible to property around the *Central Park* for a great distance in all directions, and owners of property would probably come forward themselves and cheerfully subscribe a large portion of the purchase money and not feel it, if such a proceeding could be permitted in a case where the benefit would be general to the whole city.

This view of the subject, which your Committee is assured is correct, shows most conclusively that considerations of justice, as well as of economy, decide against the location of *Jones' Park* as strongly as they uphold the location of *Central Park*. This consideration will be found noticed under its proper head of *Cost*.

In view of all these considerations, your Committee

find that the proposition of *Central Park* is greatly to be preferred, as not only the most extensive, but because *Jones' Park* is not sufficiently extensive for present and future purposes.

CONVENIENCE OF LOCALITY.

The city limits embrace the entire island of New York ; its population will undoubtedly before many years cover the whole extent of its surface.

In providing a park, the convenience of those who will live here, after ourselves, must be considered. For a place of public resort, the most central locality is most unquestionably to be preferred, other considerations being equal.

Jones' Park and *Central Park* are in position nearly equally central with respect to the northern and southern points of the island, but *Jones' Park* is on the extreme eastern shore, and to the eastward of the Third avenue, which is the farthest east of all the thoroughfares in the city. It is about a mile distant from the great thoroughfares of Broadway and Eighth avenue.

Central Park, on the contrary, is centrally situated between the two rivers, and between the four great thoroughfares of the island, viz : Third and Fourth avenues on the eastern side, and Broadway and Eighth avenue on the western side. Between *Central Park* and both rivers there will be about three quarters of a mile on each side.

People from the northern portion of the island would, to reach the northern boundary of *Jones' Park*, be obliged

to travel more than a mile further south, and a mile further east, than would be necessary, to arrive within the limits of *Central Park*.

Again, *Central Park* is but half a mile wide, and is situated about midway between the east and west shores of the island, having about three quarters of a mile on each side of it for ordinary city purposes, leaving sufficient space for a large population on each side, which the advantage of the proximity of the park would attract, and induce them to build up that part of the city, probably as densely as any other part.

In view of the above considerations, your committee think the location of *Jones' Park* is out of the way, and very inconvenient, while, for convenience of locality, the site of *Central Park* is shown to be all that can be desired.

AVAILABILITY.

Under this head will be found comparisons of "capacity for rural embellishments," and of "general topographical features."

The plot of land proposed for *Jones' Park* is $153\frac{1}{2}$ acres. The Second avenue must be extended through this plot, otherwise all intercourse between the part of the city north and south of it must be by way of the Third avenue, a very roundabout course. If this avenue is not opened, the public is deprived of an important thoroughfare; if it is opened, it injures the park by preventing an extension of serpentine road with any advantage. The opening of that avenue also takes from the park five acres, thus reducing its extent to $148\frac{1}{2}$ acres.

This plot of ground is nearly square in form, and about half a mile on each side ; it borders on the East river, on its eastern side, which forms a bold shore, and from which can be had a very pretty view of the river, of Blackwell's Island and the opposite shore.

Its surface is gently undulating, and does not present any variety of scenery within itself, nor any landscape view, except that abovementioned.

It is covered with a very thick and heavy growth of forest trees, most of them exceedingly lofty, except on the western border and part of the southern side, where there are some good shade trees.

The plot of ground proposed to be included in *Central Park* embraces the land between Sixtieth street on the south, One hundred and sixth street on the north, Fifth avenue on the east, and Eighth avenue on the west. It contains a superficial area of $759\frac{3}{4}$ acres, embracing the present receiving reservoir of 33 acres, and the grounds of the State Arsenal, and also of St. Vincent's Academy, of 24 acres ; the proposed new reservoir to cover an area of 98 acres. The surface is exceedingly diversified ; all the lands within its limits are among the most uneven and rocky on the island. In some places the elevations rise from 100 to 140 feet above tide water, in others being only a few feet above the same.

The topographical map accompanying this document shows very numerous abrupt and rocky elevations, intersected constantly by ravines and gentle valleys, through which run several small streams of living water. As a general rule, and with the exception of the northern ex-

tremity, this plot of ground forms a basin with a very uneven bottom, lying between the Eighth and Fifth avenues. From the Eighth avenue there is a natural sloping grade to the North river; and from the Fifth avenue, a general corresponding slope to the East river. The northern portion attains an elevation of 140 feet, commanding an extensive view of all the surrounding country.

Notwithstanding its great extent and central position, there are very few improvements, such as private dwelling houses, for the reason that it is not desirable to own the lots on which assessments for grading the streets will be very heavy, and sufficient to effect a forfeiture of the property. The value of existing improvements will be found under the head of *Costr.*

Central Park will include grounds almost entirely useless for building purposes, owing to the very uneven and rocky surface, and also to its lying so far below the proper grade of the streets as to render the grading very costly; for instance, to extend Sixth avenue from Sixty-fifth street to Seventy-third street it would be necessary to build an embankment, principally of masonry (with culverts to discharge the water) from 20 to 40 feet in height. This would leave the lots on either side utterly valueless for any purpose of ordinary improvement, unless it should be built up in the same way, or filled in to nearly the same level. The expense of grading the streets through these grounds will be found under the head of *Costr.* From it will appear that the grading alone will cost more than twice the present value of the lands.

This expense of grading, in the event of the land being appropriated to a park, will be wholly saved, as the very

circumstances, which render the grading so expensive are an advantage for the purposes of a park. It must also be considered that the lands can be purchased at a very low value for the causes above stated, and will be not only valuable for park purposes, but more valuable for those purposes than good smooth building land.

There is no section on our island, of equal size, so well adapted by nature, or so susceptible of improvement and adornment, for purposes of a large park, as the one now under consideration; and none so diversified in surface, abounding so much in hill and dale, and intersected by so many natural streamins. The elevations, in some parts, rising to 140 feet above tide water, and the valleys, in some parts, being 40 feet below the grade of surrounding streets. These valleys contain running streams and numerous springs, and at a small cost can be converted, where desirable, into artificial lakes, and supplied with water to any extent, from the never failing source of the Croton aqueduct, which will also supply fountains in any part of the grounds with a profusion of water, which will render fountains a distinguishing feature, and one in which this park will have a superiority over all other parks, owing to the unequaled supply of water from the greatest aqueduct of ancient or modern times. The great, and at many points abrupt, difference of level of the surface, and the projecting points of rock, render these grounds peculiarly adapted to the construction of the most beautiful and varied roads,—now winding around the base of a projecting rocky hill, now traversing the bottom of a valley, now climbing a gentle hill,—again descending to the low lands, passing along the margin of a beautiful quiet lake; leaving this, and ascending above Eighty-

sixth street, the road will pass along what will be one of the greatest of modern works of art,—the proposed new reservoir, a picturesque, irregularly shaped artificial lake, containing nearly 100 acres of water in one placid sheet. Continuing to rise, gradually winding around elevations through gentle valleys, the serpentine road will reach the top of Harlem heights at about One hundred and fifth street, having attained the highest land on the island south of Fort Washington, and from which a magnificent view is presented to the beholder in every direction. From this point may be seen nearly all the present city lying to the south, and the bay beyond it; the intervening district rapidly improving to the southern margin of the park, and when it is finished,—the park itself extending from its southern border two miles to the feet of the beholder, intersected by beautiful artificial lakes of various sizes; by small streams, crossed by numerous marble or rustic bridges; by beautiful groves of trees of every variety, indigenous and exotic; by serpentine roads winding through velvet lawns decorated with sparkling fountains, and the whole surrounded by architectural works of every order and variety. Looking to the west, will be seen the noble Hudson, extending from the bay (which can be seen as far as the Narrows) up to the Palisades in the distance, and the mountains in the interior of the state of New Jersey, in the extreme west. Looking in a northerly direction, can be seen, across the Harlem river, the High Bridge, a magnificent structure, which brings the Croton water to this island, and the other bridges, which connect New York with the county of Westchester, which presents to our view its fertile farms, beautiful gardens, and tasteful villas, and thriving villages.

The eastern view embraces a considerable portion of the state of Connecticut and of the Sound, separating it from Long Island, also the East river, studded with islands, running from Hellgate to Governor's Island, and separating this city from the shore of Long Island, which shows us Flushing, Astoria, Ravenswood, Greenport, Bushwick, Williamsburgh, Brooklyn, &c. Having completed the view, of which only some of the most striking points are here noted, we return to the road, which takes us to the lower end of the park by a different, but not less varied route, having travelled a distance of not less than twenty-five miles.

The above is a very imperfect and inadequate description of the kind of park which may be constructed on the ground selected for *Central Park*, or in other words, its *availability*. The availability of *Jones' Park* has also been considered: it possesses very few of the advantages of *Central Park*, and where it possesses these advantages, it is to a very limited extent.

The fact of *Jones' Park* bordering on the river for half a mile, and having a fine water view, is certainly a very great advantage; but your Committee think, that is more than counterbalanced by the lake scenery incidental to, and which forms so important a feature in *Central Park*, which must have a water shore of at least one and a half miles of reservoir margin. Besides, it must be recollected that the very same view that occurs from the bank of *Jones' Park*, is also had from the high grounds of *Central Park*, which command a greatly additional water view.

The great feature of *Jones' Park*, however, is its mag-

nificent forest, which almost entirely covers it, which is peculiar to itself, and a supposed advantage not possessed in any degree by *Central Park*. These forest trees, it is stated, can be thinned out into a grove, and the whole laid out in roads, and be immediately available as a park, while the trees to ornament *Central Park* would require many years to grow. This question of time will be considered under its proper head, and with respect to the advantages of the existing forest, they appear to be somewhat overrated.

Your Committee is of opinion that, so far from Jones' Woods being immediately or very soon available for a park, it will take many years before it can be made so, and nearly as long as it will take to grow or transplant trees upon the ground of *Central Park*, which is by no means entirely destitute of trees at present.

In the first place, the thinning out of the trees of *Jones' Park* must be gradually and carefully executed, to prevent the falling timber from destroying those trees which are intended to be preserved. They now stand so thick that probably eight out of every ten must be cut down; to remove them properly will require much time and expense.

Secondly.—When the excess of trees is removed, it will be found that lower branches are wanting to nearly all the trees, to the height of from 40 to 60 feet. These lower limbs will immediately commence growing, as is desirable for shade. This new demand for nourishment nearer the root of the tree, cuts off the supply of sap which sustained its top, and the tree-top must be cut off to prevent it from dying off. This will leave a not very

beautiful or desirable grove of long poles and trunks, from 30 to 40 feet in height, and without shade for some years.

During the same time *Central Park*, which has already some beautiful trees, can be furnished, by transplanting, with all the desirable additional trees, except those which should be raised from nursery saplings, which will attain, in from 8 to 12 years, a very vigorous growth, sufficient to give as much shade, where shade is desirable, as in nearly the same time could be given by the new growth branches of the *Jones' Park* trees.

Central Park will be furnished, of course, with a very choice assortment and great variety of new trees, much more ornamental, and casting a more agreeable shade than the natural forest trees. It must also be remembered that very large trees can be transplanted, at the proper season of the year, and, if properly taken up and replanted, never fail to thrive in the new ground successfully.

It is the opinion of those who have laid out new parks and ornamental grounds, that a natural forest is no advantage whatever; and all new parks should be furnished by growing or transplanting such trees as are required in different parts of the grounds, which may generally be cultivated in almost any shape required, by proper care, and cutting the branches. Besides, a proper variety of park scenery requires that certain large portions should be improved as sloping lawns, or mounds for statuary and monuments, and points of view for distant landscapes—all of which allow of no trees whatever.

The consideration of the health of the public, requires that the low ground and unhealthy ponds, situated in the district to be included in *Central Park*, should be rendered innocuous by some improvement; whereas, *Jones' Park* being high ground and open to the river, is perfectly healthy as it is.

It must be noted, as an objection to making *Jones' Park*, that half a mile of valuable river front will thereby be forever abstracted from commercial uses. The rapid growth of this city, and its commercial character being its distinctive feature, it would seem to forbid the diminution of its river front, which will eventually, and probably very soon, be in demand along this part of the city.

It is also to be noted that, should it be desirable to open certain streets across *Central Park* for the public convenience, the city government will always have the right to do so, and it will not injure the park in the least, nor is there any objection topographically to opening Seventy-second, Seventy-ninth, (Eighty-sixth is open,) and Ninety-sixth streets, those being all 100 feet wide, which will divide the park into five equal parts.

From the above, it appears that on every consideration of availability *Central Park* is superior to *Jones' Park*.

PROBABLE COST.

The cost of a public work is a matter of the first consideration; but, on reflection, it will be conceded that few public works can be of more importance, at the same cost, than public parks, and that, when a public park is wanted, it is cheap at any reasonable price, money being

well expended on a place devoted to the general health, exercise, innocent recreation, and to the elevation of the mind by the cultivation of a fondness for the beauties of nature, and appreciation of the appliances of art.

To appropriate land from the midst of any city's limits, must always be a somewhat expensive proceeding. It is more especially so in the city of New York, as all the lots have a market value, based upon their presumed future availability for business, or for dwelling purposes.

The comparative value of the lots to be taken to form *Jones' Park* and *Central Park*, respectively, is given in the tables annexed, by which it appears that the lots forming *Jones' Park* being useful for building and horticultural purposes, and having valuable timber on them, are worth very much more, respectively, than the lots to form *Central Park*, which, owing to their rocky and uneven surface, and being so far out of grade as explained more fully in page 1472, are generally of very little value, if any, for any other than park purposes.

Owing to these causes, and because these low grounds, intersected by pools, are unhealthy for residences, they are so little improved, and those improvements of so little value, that it is estimated that \$10,000 or \$15,000 will pay for such improvements.

The estimated value of the lots to form *Jones' Park*, according to table No. 2, annexed, is \$700,575, without the expense of grading the streets. Should the streets be graded, the cost of grading streets and avenues is estimated at about \$212,000.

These estimates have been prepared with great care by persons familiar with the subject, and perfectly competent to make them correctly. It cannot be supposed that the estimated value in this table may be too low, as all the details of estimates have been submitted to others, whose position requires them to be fully conversant with these values, and they have pronounced them high enough. No per centage of allowance for too low an estimate is therefore calculated, believing it to be now estimated at its extreme value.

The estimated value of the lots to be taken to form *Central Park*, including the ground to form the reservoir, according to table No. 1, annexed, is \$1,407,325, and without the reservoir, \$1,172,325. This is without the expense of grading the streets.

Should these streets be graded, the cost of grading streets and avenues is estimated at \$616,478.

It must here be noted that the Fifth and Eighth avenues are partly graded, and those parts excluded from this estimate; also, that there is no grading estimated for the ground proposed for the reservoir.

The value of the lots included in *Central Park* has been variously estimated by competent persons familiar with the value of real estate, at from \$760,000 to 1,172,000. We have taken the highest estimate, as fully set forth in table No. 1, in all its details.

This estimate of value is based upon the supposition that the streets and avenues are graded and regulated.

The expense of regulating the streets and avenues, as per table, is \$616,478, which should be assessed upon such property. This cannot, however, be done, because the law provides, that no lot shall be assessed for regulating and grading, more than one-half of its assessed value upon the tax-books; and the balance of the assessment upon that lot must be paid from the City Treasury.

The assessed value to form said park is \$446,000. By the law above quoted, only one-half, or \$223,000 can be assessed upon the land, and the balance, or \$393,478 must be paid from the City Treasury.

The details of the estimates of many of the lots in this table will show, that in very many cases the city will have to pay nearly the whole expense of regulating and grading these lots.

It must here be observed, that on adding the above \$393,478, which the city must thus pay to the lowest estimate of \$760,000, gives 1,163,478, not varying much from the amount of the highest estimate of \$1,172,000, as per table No. 1, thereby showing its general correctness, and also that it gives the full value of the lots.

The value of the lots included in *Jones' Park* has been variously estimated by competent persons familiar with the value of real estate, at from \$480,000, to 700,000. We have taken the highest estimate, as set forth in table No. 2 in detail.

This estimate of value is also based upon the supposition that the streets and avenues are graded.

The expense of regulating and grading the streets and

avenues as per table No. 2, is \$212,000. This should be assessed upon such property, which cannot be done for the reason just before stated.

The assessed value of the lots to form *Jones' Park* is, \$165,765, one-half of which only, or \$82,882 can be assessed for regulating and grading, and the balance, \$129,118, must be paid from the City Treasury.

It will be seen, that on adding this \$129,118 to the lowest estimate of \$480,000, we have \$609,118, varying from the estimate as per table No. 2, amounting to \$700,000 ; showing that the assessed value of the lots of *Jones' Park* is comparatively higher than of *Central Park*. It also shows, that the value of the *Jones' Park* lots has been over estimated in said table, and that \$700,000 is an extremely high valuation, and, no doubt, from \$80,000 to \$100,000 more than the property is worth, being about \$400 for each lot on an average.

The *Central Park* lots, though estimated in the tables at a high figure of value are, many of them, not worth their proportion of the expenses of grading, among which are very many, which would be utterly worthless, but for the operation of the present unjust law, which makes them valuable at the expense of the city.

In this connection, your Committee would call the special attention of your Honorable Body to the operation of this act, which is believed to be unknown to the great body of our fellow citizens, though it is the cause of a great annual augmentation of their taxes. If its operation, or even its existence, were generally known, your Committee believe that its immediate repeal would

be demanded by the entire community, with the exception of some persons who, having understood the operation of it, have realized large amounts, at the expense of the tax payers generally, and who have made their calculations to realize, in tenfold greater proportion, by the regulating and grading of new streets.

The operation of this law is as follows : An immense proportion of the surface of the central and upper part of the island of New York, is of the most uneven character. It abounds in immense ledges of rock, many of which project from the main level, in masses of many acres in extent. Interspersed among these tracts of rocks are occasionally deep ravines, and frequently valleys of considerable extent, varying in depth, lying mostly many feet below the projected grade of the streets. These ravines and deeper valleys having bottoms of rock, are generally the deposit of water, which stagnates, and are quite as impracticable for improvements of any description as the rocks. Until the passage of the act to which your attention is now directed, these lots had no value of any importance, nor have they now, except to the few who operate in them, because they understand the operation of this law, and because it is not generally understood. This operation consists in enabling the speculator to buy worthless lots, at a mere nominal value, and have them improved into very valuable lots, at the expense of the city, by providing, that no more than one-half the assessed value of any lot shall be taxed upon it for the regulating and grading of the street it is on. It happens, that the expense of regulating and grading is, in a very great many cases, greater than half the assessed value of the lots, and in many cases, forty, sixty and one

hundred times greater, so that the more from the grade of the street, or the more rocky or low such lot may be, the less valuable it is, and the less it can pay towards the expense of grading and regulating, which brings it immediately into market, at a nearly equal value with the lots in the neighborhood, which may have paid their proportion of regulating and grading.

In this connection, it is also proper to call the attention of your Honorable Body, and of citizens generally, to a proceeding which has grown into a custom, (by the unfaithfulness of public officers,) more oppressive, because it involves greater annual amounts than the above. Your Committee refers to the practice of the assessors, who have been for years in the habit of assessing the up-town unimproved property at rates of from one-third to one-half of its real known value. This assessing of values so much too low, besides the manifest injustice of partial taxation, operates most unfairly in the matter of regulating streets. Since by the law above quoted, there can be charged upon these lots only *one-half of their assessed value* for regulating and grading streets; and the amount of *assessed* value is generally less than one-half the *real* value: it occurs that the amount so charged is really less than one-fourth of what the property could bear, and is so trifling as to cause the city to pay almost the entire expense of regulating and grading, and especially whenever the street is run through a deep cutting or a high embankment, when the expense is the greatest, and where the value of the lot is the least.

For these considerations, your Committee respectfully recommend and urge a repeal of the present law, or such

a modification of it as will require all property to be assessed at its real value, in cases where streets and avenues are to be regulated and graded.

The difference in the cost and extent of the ground for the two parks is—

\$1,407,325 for $759\frac{3}{4}$ acres for *Central Park*.

700,575 for $153\frac{1}{2}$ acres for *Jones' Park*.

Difference, \$706,750 for $606\frac{1}{4}$ acres more for *Central Park*, which includes the present reservoir and the Arsenal, and St. Vincent grounds, which need not be purchased, containing 57 acres, and also about 135 acres, now belonging to the city; which is, in fact, $414\frac{1}{2}$ acres more than *Jones' Park*, for \$706,750, which is about the cost of *Jones' Park*.

It is therefore to be borne in mind, that in purchasing *Jones' Park*, we pay for all the land included within the limits of the park; whereas, in the acquisition of *Central Park*, we enclose an area of $759\frac{3}{4}$ acres for park purposes, and have only to pay for $566\frac{3}{4}$ acres, *including ground for the new reservoir*, which the city will purchase in any event. This happens, because 57 acres to be enclosed belong to the State Arsenal, and to Mount St. Vincent Academy, and to the present receiving reservoir, which will all be allowed to remain, and will be improved in ornamental connection with the park, and because the city already owns 135 acres scattered in various parts within the proposed enclosure; 27 acres of which is on ground to be covered by the new reservoir.

By reference to page 11, under the head of *Extent*, it

is shown, that a larger portion of the purchase money could be paid by assessment on the surrounding property, if it should be thought expedient, for the purchase of *Central Park* than for the purchase of *Jones' Park*, which will reduce the amount of purchase money to be taxed upon property generally.

In case of such purchase, by tax upon property generally, by issue of stock or otherwise, the amount to be paid for *Central Park* will also be reduced, or returned into the City Treasury, by the amounts received from time to time, for sales of sites upon the borders of the park, which can be spared, with advantage, for ornamental buildings devoted to public purposes, &c., as explained on page 10, under the head of *EXTENT*.

Setting aside the greater economy of the purchase of *Central Park*, the numerous considerations of greater convenience of locality, general accessibility, better capacity for embellishment, superior topographical availability, and public health, as have been shown, would induce your Committee to recommend the purchase of this park in preference to *Jones' Park*.

Your Committee having fully set forth all "the advantages and disadvantages of the ground (known as Jones' Woods,) designated in the act of the Legislature," referred to in the resolution committed to them, and having also examined and reported as to "whether there be not a better locality for a park, equal to the present and prospective wants of a great and rapidly increasing city, and susceptible of future embellishments, corresponding to the wealth and greatness of this commercial metropolis;" and having, as they think, fully justified their opinion,

that the grounds proposed for *Central Park* should be purchased in preference to *Jones' Woods*, or to any other locality on the island, by a close and rigid comparison of the advantages of extent, capacity for rural embellishments, general topographical features, economy, &c., together with a great variety of facts and inferences bearing upon the subject, beg leave to say, that an additional reason for recommending the location of *Central Park* is, that it includes within its limits the site already proposed by the Croton Water Department for the new reservoir.

Your Committee finally beg leave to call the attention of your Honorable Body to the tables hereto annexed, showing, TABLE 1st. The cost of grading streets and avenues on the site of *Central Park*, and the present value of the lots. TABLE 2d. Present value of lots and cost of grading streets and avenues on the site of *Jones' Park*; and also to the MAP accompanying this report, showing the relative position, size, topography, &c., of *Central Park* and *Jones' Park*, all of which have been prepared under the direction of your Committee, and are herewith presented as necessary to a full understanding of the matters discussed.

In conclusion, it is a matter of congratulation to your Committee to know, and this report has shown, that it is within the power of our citizens within a very few years to possess, at a comparatively trifling expense, a public park of considerable extent, sufficient for the possible requirements of the present and future population of a rapidly growing city; a park superior in available resources and not surpassed in convenience of position or availability for tasteful embellishments; a park which our citizens can, with honest pride, favorably compare

with the most celebrated public grounds of the chief cities of Europe ; not excepting Hyde Park of London, the Champs Elysées of Paris, the Prater of Vienna, the Cascine of Florence, the Corso of Rome, the Prado of Madrid, or even, on the American Continent, with the spacious Plazas of Havana, or the lovely Botanical Gardens of Rio de Janiero. Indeed, your Committee confidently claim that it is within our power to combine the peculiar features and excellencies of each of these magnificent works in our own park, and even to excel them all by the availabilty of *Central Park* for artificial lakes, streams, cascades and fountains, by reason of its peculiar formation of surface, and the never-failing and unequaled supply of water from the largest aqueduct in the world.

It is scarcely necessary for your Committee to state, that these latter remarks will not apply to *Jones' Park*, but refer solely to the supposition that the idea of *Central Park* will be adopted, it being so far superior in every respect to *Jones' Park*.

Your Committee therefore report the following resolution :

Resolved, That the Counsel to the Corporation be, and he is hereby authorized and directed to memorialize the next legislature for the passage of "an act" to authorize the taking of lands in the central part of this city, for the use and purpose of a public park, as set forth in this report; said act to provide for the appointment of Commissioners of Estimate, to be appointed by the Supreme Court.

All which is respectfully submitted.

DANIEL DODGE, } *Special*
JOS. BRITTON, } *Committee.*

Table showing the excavation and embankment required to grade the streets and avenues embraced in the proposed Central Park; also, an estimate of the present value of the lots.

There is included in the above Table of Valuation of Proposed Reservoir, three hundred and twenty lots, or about twenty-seven acres, which is more than one-fourth of the whole plot to be embraced in said Reservoir.

TABLE No. 2.

Showing the excavation and embankment required to grade the streets and avenues embraced in the proposed Jones' Park; also, an estimate of the present value of the Lots.

Block No.	Lot	Side	Between	Net Value	Net Total Value	Block No.	Lot	Side	Between	Net Value	Net Total Value		
A	2	East side of Avenue B.	72d and 73d streets.	400	800	146	16	North	Sixty-sixth street.	3d and 3d avenues.	\$506,975		
0	3	"	73d and 74th streets.	400	1200	270	16	South	Sixty-seventh street.	"	450	1200	
1	6	"	74th and 75th streets.	400	2400	8	East	Third avenue.	66th and 67th streets.	550	6800		
27	16	North	Sixty-fourth street.	Avenue A and East River		271	16	North	Sixty-seventh street.	2d and 3d avenues.	450	7200	
17	South	Sixty-fifth street.	"			16	South	Sixty-eighth street.	"	450	7200		
25	18	North	Sixty-fifth street.	Avenue A and East River		8	East	Third avenue.	67th and 68th streets.	850	6800		
19	South	Sixty-sixth street.	"			16	North	Second avenue.	"	600	4800		
29	20	North	Sixty-sixth street.	Avenue A and East River	400	8000	272	16	North	Sixty-eighth street.	3d and 3d avenues.	450	7200
20	South	Sixty-seventh street.	"	400	8400	16	South	Sixty-ninth street.	"	425	6800		
30	20	East	Avenue A.	66th and 67th streets.	400	3200	8	East	Third avenue.	68th and 69th streets.	800	6100	
21	North	Sixty-seventh street.	Avenue A and East River	400	8000	16	North	Second avenue.	"	550	4400		
21	South	Sixty-eighth street.	"	400	8400	273	16	North	Sixty-ninth street.	2d and 3d avenues.	425	6800	
31	21	North	Sixty-eighth street.	Avenue A and East River	400	8400	16	South	Seventieth street.	"	350	3600	
22	South	Sixty-ninth street.	"	400	8800	8	East	Third avenue.	69th and 70th streets.	750	6000		
33	22	North	Seventieth street.	68th and 69th streets.	375	3000	274	16	North	Seventieth street.	2d and 3d avenues.	350	5600
23	South	Seventieth street.	Avenue A and East River	400	8800	16	South	Seventy-first street.	"	325	5600		
33	23	North	Seventy-first street.	69th and 70th streets.	375	3000	8	East	Third avenue.	70th and 71st streets.	750	6000	
19	South	Seventy-first street.	Avenues A and B.	400	7600	275	16	North	Seventy-first street.	2d and 3d avenues.	325	5200	
31	19	East	Avenue A.	70th and 71st streets.	375	3000	16	South	Seventy-second street.	"	350	5600	
8	West	Avenue B.	"	400	3200	16	East	Third avenue.	71st and 72d streets.	700	5600		
19	North	Seventy-second street.	Avenues A and B.	400	7600	276	16	North	Seventy-second street.	2d and 3d avenues.	350	5600	
19	South	Seventy-second street.	"	400	7600	16	South	Seventy-third street.	"	325	5200		
33	19	East	Avenue A.	71st and 72d streets.	375	3000	16	East	Third avenue.	72d and 73d streets.	650	4200	
8	West	Avenue B.	"	400	3200	277	16	North	Seventy-third street.	2d and 3d avenues.	325	5200	
19	North	Seventy-third street.	Avenues A and B.	400	7600	16	South	Seventy-fourth street.	"	325	5200		
19	South	Seventy-third street.	"	375	7125	8	East	Third avenue.	73d and 74th streets.	600	4800		
36	19	East	Avenue A.	72d and 73d streets.	375	3000	278	16	North	Seventy-fourth street.	3d and 3d avenues.	325	5200
8	West	Avenue B.	"	400	3200	16	South	Seventy-fifth street.	"	325	5200		
19	North	Seventy-fourth street.	Avenues A and B.	375	7125	8	East	Third avenue.	74th and 75th streets.	600	4000		
19	South	Seventy-fourth street.	"	375	7125	8	West	Second avenue.	"	400	3200		
37	19	East	Avenue A.	73d and 74th streets.	375	3000							
8	West	Avenue B.	"	400	3200								
19	North	Seventy-fifth street.	Avenues A and B.	375	7125								
19	South	Seventy-fifth street.	"	375	7125								
33	19	East	Avenue A.	74th and 75th streets.	375	3000							
8	West	Avenue B.	"	400	3200								
93	16	North	Sixty-sixth street.	Avenue A and 1st avenue	375	6000							
16	South	Sixty-seventh street.	"	375	6000								
8	East	First Avenue.	60th and 67th streets.	475	3800								
8	West	Avenue A.	"	400	3200								
94	16	North	Sixty-seventh street.	Avenue A and 1st avenue	375	6000							
16	South	Sixty-eighth street.	"	350	5600								
16	East	First Avenue.	67th and 68th streets.	475	3800								
8	West	Avenue A.	"	400	3200								
95	16	North	Sixty-eighth street.	Avenue A and 1st avenue	350	5600							
16	South	Sixty-ninth street.	"	350	5600								
16	East	First Avenue.	68th and 69th streets.	450	3600								
8	West	Avenue A.	"	375	3000								
96	16	North	Sixty-ninth street.	Avenue A and 1st avenue	300	4800							
16	South	Seventieth street.	"	275	4400								
16	East	First Avenue.	69th and 70th streets.	400	3200								
8	West	Avenue A.	"	375	3000								
97	16	North	Seventieth street.	Avenue A and 1st avenue	275	4400							
16	South	Seventy-first street.	"	275	4400								
16	East	First Avenue.	70th and 71st streets.	400	3200								
8	West	Avenue A.	"	375	3000								
98	16	North	Seventy-first street.	Avenue A and 1st avenue	275	4400							
16	South	Seventy-second street.	"	275	4400								
16	East	First Avenue.	71st and 72d streets.	400	3200								
8	West	Avenue A.	"	375	3000								
99	16	North	Seventy-second street.	Avenue A and 1st avenue	300	4800							
16	South	Seventy-third street.	"	275	4400								
16	East	First Avenue.	72d and 73d streets.	400	3200								
8	West	Avenue A.	"	375	3000								
100	16	North	Seventy-third street.	Avenue A and 1st avenue	275	4400							
16	South	Seventy-fourth street.	"	275	4400								
16	East	First Avenue.	73d and 74th streets.	400	3200								
8	West	Avenue A.	"	375	3000								
101	16	North	Seventy-fourth street.	Avenue A and 1st Avenue	275	4400							
16	South	Seventy-fifth street.	"	275	4400								
16	East	First Avenue.	74th and 75th streets.	400	3200								
8	West	Avenue A.	"	375	3000								
182	18	North	Sixty-sixth street.	1st and 2d avenues.	375	6750							
18	South	Sixty-seventh street.	"	375	6750								
18	East	Second Avenue.	66th and 67th streets.	600	4800								
8	West	First Avenue.	"	175	3800								
183	18	North	Sixty-seventh street.	1st and 2d avenues.	375	6750							
18	South	Sixty-eighth street.	"	375	6750								
18	East	Second Avenue.	67th and 68th streets.	600	4800								
8	West	First Avenue.	"	175	3800								
184	18	North	Sixty-eighth street.	1st and 2d avenues.	375	6750							
18	South	Sixty-ninth street.	"	350	6300								
18	East	Second Avenue.	68th and 69th streets.	550	4400								
8	West	First Avenue.	"	450	3800								
185	18	North	Sixty-ninth street.	1st and 2d avenues.	350	6300							
18	South	Seventieth street.	"	300	5400								
18	East	Second Avenue.	69th and 70th streets.	400	3200								
8	West	First Avenue.	"	400	3200								
186	18	North	Seventieth street.	1st and 2d avenues.	300	5400							
18	South	Seventy-first street.	"	300	5400								
18	East	Second Avenue.	70th and 71st streets.	400	3200								
8	West	First Avenue.	"	400	3200								
187	18	North	Seventy-first street.	1st and 2d avenues.	300	5400							
18	South	Seventy-second street.	"	350	6300								
18	East	Second Avenue.	71st and 72d streets.	400	3200								
8	West	First Avenue.	"	400	3200								
188	18	North	Seventy-second street.	1st and 2d avenues.	350	6300							
18	South	Seventy-third street.	"	300	5400								
18	East	Second Avenue.	72d and 73d streets.	400	3200								
8	West	First Avenue.	"	400	3200								
189	18	North	Seventy-third street.	1st and 2d avenues.	300	5400							
18	South	Seventy-fourth street.	"	300	5400								
18	East	Second Avenue.	73d and 74th streets.	400	3200								
8	West	First Avenue.	"	400	3200								
190	18	North	Seventy-fourth street.	1st and 2d avenues.	300	5400							
18	South	Seventy-fifth street.	"	300	5400								
18	East	Second Avenue.	74th and 75th streets.	400	3200								
8	West	First Avenue.	"	400	3200								

Total 1000

The total amount of cutting on streets and avenues, to grade the same will be 663,919 cubic yards; of the above it is estimated there will be 250,000 cubic yards of rock cutting at 60c..... \$150,000
413,919 " " earth " at 15c..... 62,087

Or equal to \$111.62 per lot for regulation of streets and avenues.

Total area in Park, without streets and avenues, 111.29-100 acres
Total area in Park, including streets and avenues, 159.432-1000 acres.

Regulation of Streets and Avenues.

What Street or Avenue	Cubic yards Cutting	Cubic yards Filling
Third avenue.....	halt	Sixty-sixth to Seventy-fifth street..... 31,604
Second ".....	"	" "

The total amount of cutting on streets and avenues, to grade the same will be 663,919 cubic yards; of the above it is estimated there will be 200,000 cubic yards of rock cutting at 60c..... \$150,000
413,919 " earth " at 15c..... 62,087

Or equal to \$111 62 per lot for regulation of streets and avenues.

Total area in Park, without streets and avenues, 111 20-100 acres

Total area in Park, including streets and avenues, 159 432-1000 acres.

Regulation of Streets and Avenues.

What Street or Avenue	Cubic yards Cutting	Cubic yards Filling
Third avenue.....	21,604	6,643
Second ".....	7,842	19,324
First ".....	28,995	11,633
Avenue A.....	12,621	29,755
Sixty-fourth street.....	9,935	409
Sixty-fifth ".....	20,700	472
Sixty-sixth ".....	19,173	935
Sixty-seventh ".....	3,106	921
Sixty-eighth ".....	226	1,717
Sixty-ninth ".....	11,704	
Seventieth ".....	22,345	998
Seventy-first ".....	686	3,672
Seventy-second ".....	148	1,877
Seventy-third ".....	38,092	
Seventy-fourth ".....	13,613	1,358
Seventy-fifth ".....	13,001	1,132
Seventy-sixth ".....	1,859	3,375
Seventy-seventh ".....	25,078	
Seventy-eighth ".....	14,435	973
Seventy-ninth ".....	9,384	351
Eightieth ".....	6,444	1,412
Eighty-first ".....	18,517	
Eighty-second ".....	2,146	2,967
Eighty-third ".....	17,568	
Eighty-fourth ".....	15,247	3,133
Eighty-fifth ".....	18,762	
Eighty-sixth ".....	16,494	931
Eighty-seventh ".....	6,567	
Eighty-eighth ".....	14,553	4,572
Eighty-ninth ".....	22,393	
Ninetieth ".....	46,064	117
Hundredth ".....	26,033	
Hundred-first ".....	11,480	8,092
Hundred-second ".....	16,756	
Hundred-third ".....	26,033	999
Hundred-fourth ".....	8,966	923
Hundred-fifth ".....	3,068	11,569
Hundred-sixth ".....	7,132	811
Hundred-seventh ".....	12,135	354
Hundred-eighth ".....	3,649	3,121
Hundred-ninth ".....		18,795
Hundred-tenth ".....		16,918
Hundred-eleventh ".....		1,037
Hundred-twelfth ".....		1,104
Hundred-thirteenth ".....		1,198
Hundred-fourteenth ".....		26,300
Total.....	663,919	121,965