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THE PAID AND VOLUNTARY FIRE SYSTEMS —
 The Committee of Councils appointed to inquire into the cost of supporting a paid fire department in Boston and other cities, made their report to Councils on Thursday evening. The statements they make are taken from official documents, and therefore to be relied upon. Boston and Cincinnati are the only cities in which a paid fire department is in operation. The composition and expenses of the respective fire departments are given as follows:

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First, the Boston Fire Department is composed as follows:	
Hand Engines,	12 Chief Engineer, 1
Hose Carriages,	35 Assistant Engineers, 9
Hook and Ladder,	3 Officers & Members, 543
Total Apparatus, 50 Total No. of Men, 553	
Leading Hose, 22,350 ft.	
Expenses for last year, ending Sept. 1, 1854:	
Salary of Chief Engineer and Clerks,	\$2,200 00
“ of Assistant Engineers, Officers	“ and Men, 54,114 07
Incidental expenses for repairs, &c.,	14,592 35
Total,	\$71,906 42
Number of Fires, 153	
Loss, —————	\$150,772
Insurance, —————	106,850

The Cincinnati Fire Department is composed as follows:—

Steam Engine,	1 Chief Engineer, 1
Hand Engines,	27 Assistant Engineers, 5
Hose Carriages,	29 Officers and Members, 529
Hook and Ladder,	2
Total number of men, 535	
Total Apparatus,	59
Leading Hose, 24,750 feet.	
Expenses for year ending April 1, 1854:—	
Salary of Chief Engineer and Assist'g.,	\$272 05
Officers and Members,	50,857 36
Incidental expenses,	23,616 22
Total,	\$77,275 63
Number of Fires, 160	
Loss, —————	\$608,906 00
Insurance, —————	330,089 00

Boston and Cincinnati are the only cities from which reliable information can be obtained in reference to the paid system. I now add our own, the volunteer system.

The Philadelphia Fire Department is composed as follows:

Hand Engines,	38 Hose,	60,000 feet.
Hose Carriages,	42 Active members,	2550
Hook and Ladder,	5 Hon. and Con. do.,	5000
Total apparatus, 85 Total members, 7550		

Of the above apparatus, there is in the former city, 27; districts, 53; and supported at an expense, by appropriation from former city, of \$7,500; districts, \$15,300; total per annum, \$23,000. The number of fires cannot be correctly ascertained, as no public record is made.

The Committee says that a majority of the apparatus of Philadelphia has been incorporated individually, and forty-eight of the number incorporated jointly by the Legislature of Pennsylvania, and known as the Fire Association of Philadelphia. They are fully authorized to insure houses, merchandise, &c., &c., located in the city and county (now Consolidated City) of Philadelphia.

This Association has insured since the commencement, say 1820, of houses alone, 23,000; and paid losses by fire, \$211,000; dividends to companies, \$49,000; and now have a capital of over \$400,000. This Association commenced without any capital other than the apparatus of the companies first organized—and which was pledged for the payment of any losses that could occur prior to sufficient funds being accumulated by premiums received—and restricted by the charter not to declare any dividends, until after the capital amounted to a sufficient sum for the payment of losses by fire, independent of ordinary contingencies. Hence, the dividends to companies have only been within the last few years, and none since 1850, owing to the loss by the disastrous fire of that year, but will no doubt resume the payment of dividends the coming year.

The department has also another body incorporated by our Legislature, and known as the Philadelphia Association for the relief of disabled firemen. This was organized December, 1834, and chartered March, 1835; this, as also the Fire Association, originated with and has been conducted entirely by firemen, without any salaries to the officers, excepting to the Secretary of the Insurance Department, and who acts as such for both organizations. The latter Association has for its object the providing for all who become disabled while performing duty as firemen, and not confined to members only of the department. They also grant aid to the widows and orphans of deceased members, who have died from disease contracted or accident while engaged as firemen. The funds of this Association was raised (with few exceptions) by firemen, and had, January 1, 1854, a capital invested of \$18,500, and granted relief since the commencement, \$13,219 88. Number of members, 430. Loss by death, 53.

I have entered into details of our own department more particularly, for the reason that many persons, both in and out of Councils, are entirely unacquainted with the character of a very large majority of those persons who compose the Fire Department of Philadelphia. It is not denied by any that evils of a serious nature exist in the department, but none are more ready and willing to aid in correcting those evils than the firemen.

Having given you the cost of the paid and volunteer system, it will rest with Councils to determine which they will adopt. If the former, the cost will be very great, to wit: while Boston and Cincinnati have two thirds less apparatus than Philadelphia, the cost for support, without including apparatus, is over two-thirds more; hence, a

Robert Morris will take her place.

Nearly Completed.—The wharves commenced below the Navy Yard, on the grounds of the Greenwich Land and Building Association early this year, are nearly completed. They are two in number, 350 feet long, and 80 feet wide, with a dock between 100 feet wide and 370 feet long on one side, and 350 feet on the other. At the west end, the wharf is 50 feet wide and Delaware avenue, which is soon to be opened, is to be 100 feet wide. The wharves have been constructed for coal, and already leases have been executed with the Schuylkill Navigation Company for them. The depth of water in the docks will be sufficient for vessels of a larger size than any now trading with the port. To facilitate operations in this quarter, the Greenwich Company has graded a bed for a Plank Road from the wharves to the Point road, a distance of 2000 feet, and as soon as it has sufficiently settled the plank will be laid and the road prepared for travel. The Point road is also to be planked from the paved streets in the First Ward, to a point some distance below the Greenwich property. Arrangements have already been made for the construction of two more wharves immediately north of those so rapidly approaching completion. They are to be 375 feet long, 70 feet wide, with docks 100 feet wide, and a similar depth of water with the one above referred to. One is to be finished by the 1st of January, and the other early next year.

While these extensive wharf improvements are progressing in a portion of the city more favorably located for a heavy shipping business than any other on account of the superior wharves, deep water and accessibility, the Company are preparing for opening streets through their property. The District Surveyors have made a survey of Oregon avenue from the Delaware to the new Gas Works, 150 feet wide, and we learn, the property owners have volunteered to give their ground free of charge to the public for that purpose, from the river one third of the distance to the Gas Works. Along this avenue, a railroad will be built from the Pennsylvania railroad somewhere in the Twenty-fourth Ward, and when finished to the Delaware admirable facilities will offer to extend the branch to League Island and other parts of the First Ward. It is said that some of the Coal Companies in Western Pennsylvania, in anticipation of this branch road to the Delaware, are endeavoring to procure wharves preparatory to the commencement of a heavy business next season. Whether this will be done or not remains to be seen, but certain it is that a railroad connecting the Delaware river and the Pennsylvania railroad will give a business impetus to that part of the city little dreamed of.

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Improvement in Safety Railroad Drawbridges.
 the recent patents issued

Laying of the Corner Stone of the Opera House.

—The corner stone of the Academy of Music was laid a little after six o'clock last evening, in the North East corner, that of Broad and Locust sts. N. E. Le Brun, Esq., the architect, fixed the stone in its place, with a silver trowel, and handed the trowel to his honor, Mayor Conrad, who completed the ceremony. The Mayor then delivered an eloquent speech. He began by alluding to the benefits which would accrue to our city by the pursuit of a liberal course of policy, attracting visitors from all parts of our great country. They were not the only ones benefited, however, but ourselves and our children will derive great advantages from the establishment of this much wanted temple of the muses, in the refinement of mind and manners, and the education derived from the drama. During the whole of a sudden and severe shower, the audience listened with marked attention.

The stone was a fine piece of brown sand-stone, from the Middlesex quarries, Conn., and contained a printed copy of the architect's description of the building, a copy of the charter and by-laws, with a list of stockholders, and all the newspapers of the day, the United States coins, and a metallic plate, containing the following inscription:

CORNER STONE 33-4

of the
AMERICAN ACADEMY OF MUSIC,
 Laid July 26th, 1855.

JNO. B. BUDD, President. . . C. H. FISHER, Treasurer.
 DIRECTORS—Geo. S. Kepper, Frederick Graff, S. Manson, J. P. Steiner, J. C. Hand, L. J. Levy, F. J. Dreer, S. T. Aquair, Isaac S. Waterman, Fairman Rogers.
 ARCHITECTS—NAPOLEON LE BRUN, GUSTAVUS KUNGS.
 CHAS. CONRAD, Superintendent. JNO. D. JONES, Contractor
 ROBERT T. CONRAD, Mayor of Philadelphia.
 JAMES POLLOCK, Governor of Pennsylvania.
 FRANKLIN PIERCE, President of the U. States.

The massive foundations of the building are already considerably advanced, and the greatness of the dimensions can now be appreciated by a view of the foundation. Notwithstanding the magnitude of the work to be accomplished, it is expected that it will be completed by the 1st of January next, sufficiently to roof in, and labor can be continued through the winter.

An Attempt to Blow down a

We also desire to refer to a report of experiments made at the instance of the Pennsylvania Railroad Co., at their machine shops, at Millin and Altoona, with a view to ascertain the most economical, as well as the most useful fuel for their purposes. These latter experiments were made under the direction and superintendence of a master machinist, of great judgment and experience, one whose report should be considered as positive testimony in support of our position.

In regard to the former reference, we have the statement of Mr. Lealey, the well known geologist, that "with a per centage from ten to twenty, we have the best steam-generating qualities, other things being equal." This per centage of volatile matter is found in the beds of the Broad Top Mountain, in Huntingdon county, as well as in the different seams which outcrop along the western slope of the Allegheny Mountain.

In reference to the latter, we quote from the above mentioned report of Mr. Pusey the following extracts, viz:

"Experiment first was made by running the engine three successive days on each kind of coal, which resulted in 33 bushels of bituminous coal, weighing 71 lbs. per bushel, running the engine 3 days or 30 hours; 43 bushels of anthracite, weighing 81 lbs. per bushel, ran the engine the same length of time as above." Again, "The last experiment was made by weighing 2000 lbs. of bituminous from Irvin's station, (Westmoreland Co.), which ran the stationary engine 33 hours, leaving 335 pounds of ashes; 2000 lbs. of anthracite, from Lylin's Valley, ran the stationary engine 15 hours, leaving 515 pounds of ashes."

The result of the above experiments proved most clearly that bituminous coal will generate very nearly 50 per cent. more steam than the same amount in weight of anthracite—the per centage in this case depending in a manner upon the quantity of bituminous matter in the coals experimented upon.

From the above reports, which were as sur-

The political fever is running very high at the present time. Much excitement prevailed, on Friday last, among the "Know-Nothing" party, on account of the defeat of the caucus nomination in Councils, for Chief Engineer of the Water Works, Mr. Frederick Erdman. Threats were freely made against the "bolters" and "dodgers," and a general "flare-up"