

BOARD OF ASSISTANTS,

OCTOBER 24, 1831.

The Street Committee to whom was referred a petition to have the Five Points opened, having made a Report, on motion it was laid on the table and ordered to be printed.

B. CRANE, Clerk.



THE Street Committee to whom was referred the Memorial of nearly two hundred persons, owners and occupants of property in the vicinity of "Five Points," praying that a part of Cross and Anthony streets may be widened; and also, that the triangle of ground bounded by Little Water, Cross and Anthony-streets, may be appropriated to public purposes, &c.,

RESPECTFULLY REPORT,

That the place known as the "Five Points" has long been notorious in the annals of the police department, as being the nursery where every species of vice is conceived and matured; that it is infested by a class of the most abandoned and desperate character; where guilt from its first aberration from the path of virtue, through all its gradations in vice, till it terminates by the arm of public justice, or self-murder, stalks abroad in its most appalling garb of hideous, desperate wickedness; where the agent of the law can with difficulty reach its abandoned victim; where the innocent and unsophisticated, if unfortunately he ventures into this den of pollution, may scarcely hope to escape with life; in fine,

where, as its characteristic focus, vice of all kinds and of all hues, radiates as from a common centre; thus being identified as the most prolific source, from whence all the crime that infests the city takes its rise.

The nocturnal orgies of abandoned females, the disgusting spectacle of drunkenness constantly occurring, the loathsome sight exhibited by the uncontrolled passions of the victims of debauchery, the frequent riots, the frightful battles, and the horrid murders, which in all or in part, are of almost daily, or rather of nightly occurrence, mark this place as the abhorred and shunned of all beholders, having any respect for themselves, or for the opinion of the world.

Public feeling has long pointed out the "Five Points," as a great and increasing evil; corrupting the morals of the community, and a blot of the darkest hue, on the otherwise comparatively fair escutcheon of the city. Frequent efforts have heretofore been made to remove so foul a stain, to remedy so notorious, so gigantic an evil, both by those more immediately interested, as well as by citizens generally. But for some reasons with which your Committee are unacquainted, they have failed in every instance; the evil has thus been left to increase, until it has arrived at such a magnitude that longer to procrastinate in taking decided measures for its removal, would seem to argue a recklessness for the general good of the community, and an indifference to the opinion of the great majority of the city.

It is stated to your Committee as another reason in addition to those already mentioned, that females belonging to respectable families, who reside in this vicinity, are imprisoned in their houses after dark, from the impossibility of moving from their dwellings, without being subject to insult—their windows must be closed in the warm season, and the winds of Heaven excluded, and even then, they are not able to barricade themselves from the contamination, the oaths and curses, with which the *air* is pregnant—their servants cannot perform the ordinary duties required of them, without being compelled to witness the most disgusting scenes, and their children are abridged from enjoying themselves in their

sports, from the apprehension (which painful experience has too often and too fatally proved, eventuates in their ruin) that they may be enticed from the path of rectitude, by being familiarized with vice; and thus advancing step by step, be at last swallowed up in this sink of pollution, this vortex of irremediable infamy.

As protectors of the public peace—as guardians of the lives and property of the people—as conservators of the morals of the rising generation—your Committee are persuaded this petition will not be refused by *this* Common Council; so moderate as it is in its requisitions, and tending so directly to the public welfare in its results. Opposed in principle by none—on the score of sound policy by none—and on the more elevated ground of morality and religion by none—if any there are who should oppose, your Committee would fain hope they are not be found within these walls—they would hope that the cupidity of those who unblushingly are willing to convert their houses into receptacles of vice, debauchery and riot, will not be countenanced—will not be ministered to by any one holding a seat in this board.

The opinion of those who have thought most on this subject, and whose opportunities of judging are sufficient to enable them to arrive at a correct conclusion, goes hand in hand with that of the Memorialists, and of your Committee, that no other remedy can be devised to correct this evil than the one proposed, that in no other way can this Augean stable be cleansed, than by turning the torrent of public feeling, of a *moral Alpheus*, through its darkest recesses and most secret haunts.

It may not be irrelevant to the legitimate object of the reference of the memorial, if your Committee state a few of the many facts in relation to the “Five Points,” with which they have in this investigation become acquainted.

The name of “Five Points” has been given to that section of the city where Cross and Orange-street intersect each other, and from whence Anthony-street diverges, making five corners or “points”—three right and two acute angles. The triangle bounded by Little Water, Cross, and

Anthony-streets, is in this immediate vicinity, and is the place alluded to by the Memorialists, and which they wish to have removed.

This triangle is, on Cross-street 157 feet 9 inches in length, on Anthony-street 200 feet, and on Little Water-street 118 feet 3 inches, enclosing 9,328 square feet of ground. There are upon this block 9 houses; the buildings are all old and mostly built of wood, and of little value. In this number there are three houses, which are small and with brick fronts; the whole value of the buildings is estimated at about \$8,700—average value of each something more than \$900; the value of the triangle left, after widening the streets as contemplated in the memorial, is supposed to be about \$9,000. There are six of the nine buildings used for *secret* tipping shops, the occupants of which have no licenses; the whole number of inhabitants is probably about 175, of whom more than two-thirds are vagrants, having no visible or honest means of obtaining a livelihood; about 80 of the whole number are blacks, and 120 females, all of whom, with the exception of perhaps from 10 to 15, are proper objects for a Magdalen asylum and legitimate subjects for a Magdalen report.

Thus taking the above cited facts, we find there is an average of 19 persons to each house, 13 females and 9 blacks.

In conclusion your Committee remark, that this hot-bed of infamy, this modern Sodom, is situated in the very heart of your City, and near the centre of business and of a respectable population; in consequence of which, it not unfrequently happens that strangers wander there by accident, or are enticed by the designing, and before they are aware of their situation are perhaps insulted or robbed. From its location it is very easy for such cases to occur, and your Committee could furnish facts, if necessary, in corroboration of this statement. As at present situated, most of crime centres in this spot, the necessary consequence of which is that villainy (being analagous) becomes, by continual collision, more villainous, debauchery more depraved. Re-

move this nucleus—scatter its present population over a larger surface—throw open this part of your city to the enterprise of active and respectable men, and you will have effected much for which good men will be grateful, for which posterity will have reason to bless you.

In every shape that this subject presents itself to your Committee, they see but one way of remedying this evil—by complying with the wish of the Memorialists, that way is opened. With this view of the subject, your Committee offer the following Resolutions:—

Resolved, That Cross-street be widened 10 feet from Anthony to Little Water streets, and that Anthony-street be widened 10 feet from Cross to Little Water streets.

Resolved, That the triangle of ground bounded on Little Water, Cross, and Anthony streets be Opened and appropriated as a Public Square—and that the buildings thereon be removed.

All which is respectfully submitted.

WILLIAM W. HOLLY, *Chairman*.
 JAMES R. WHITING,
 WILLIAM MANDEVILLE.

