

Municipality of Portland Compared With Twelve Other American Cities.

A. L. Mills, chairman of the Charter Commission, and president of the Taxpayers' League, has been making a study of statistics of cities issued recently by the National Department of Labor. For the purpose of comparison he has taken six cities immediately about Portland in point of population and six immediately below. After extracting all the light possible, Mr. Mills finds:

First—The area of Portland is too great for a satisfactory and economical administration of government.

Second—The most popular pavement for heavy travel is granite or Belgian blocks, with wooden blocks decidedly unpopular.

Third—Portland is well lighted at reasonable cost and incandescent lights are not popular.

Fourth—Portland's police force is totally inadequate to the needs of the city, but is maintained at a reasonable cost.

Fifth—That neither high license nor low license checks the number of arrests, and that Portland could raise the liquor license to \$500 per annum and not be above the average of other cities.

Sixth—The fire department has been handled efficiently and economically and the question of insurance rates in Portland should be agitated.

Seventh—Pure water and good drainage make Portland one of the healthiest cities in the country.

Eighth—Portland has been derelict in guarding its rights and franchises in the past, but it should establish a public market at once for the health, convenience and revenue of the city.

Ninth—Portland is behind the procession in the matter of public kindergartens and libraries.

Tenth—Portland cannot pay the interest on its debts and maintain a respectable government, furnishing the inhabitants with clean and sprinkled streets, fire, light and police protection on 8 mills with a low basis of assessment.

Eleventh—The citizens get value received for the taxes collected for city purposes. If it is expected that Portland should furnish anything like the protection and advantages of like cities elsewhere, and that should be furnished if Portland has any self-respect, it should be recognized as a modern city, its citizens must provide a much greater revenue to conduct the government. One cannot travel first class on a steamer ticket, and Portland cannot pass as a first-class city on a village income.

Mr. Mills' report follows:

THE MUNICIPALITY OF PORTLAND.

To those who have not had the opportunity of examining the bulletin on "Statistics of Cities," issued September, 1901, by the Department of Labor at Washington, D. C., it may not prove uninteresting to see how Portland compares with other cities in the United States of like population in the cost and conduct of its municipal government.

By the census of 1900 Portland was by population the 43d city in the United States, and the tables here given include the 12 cities next to Portland in size; the comparisons become more interesting in that the cities tabulated are situated in 12 different states; four in the South, three on the Pacific Coast and five may be classed by us as Eastern states.

Street Area.

The first table covers the subjects of population, area and streets. On examining the figures on area the most superficial observer must appreciate how consistent the people of this Coast are in their approval of the theory of expansion. They practice what they preach, and Los Angeles, Portland and Seattle are cities of magnificent areas. Portland in area is the 20th city in the United States, larger than Baltimore, Pittsburgh, Cleveland and nearly the size of Boston. To maintain, sweep and sprinkle the streets, to give the inhabitants adequate fire, police and light protection in cities of such great area requires a most plethoric municipal purse; Portland has one of the leanest and the results are known to all.

On the contrary, note how the thrifty Easterner cuts his garments to suit the cloth; Scranton and Grand Rapids are not one-half, Lowell and one-third, Dayton about one-fourth and Richmond and Cambridge not one-sixth the area of Portland, but Cambridge has every mile employed of its 120 miles of streets, employs 31 men and expends nearly twice the amount Portland does in sweeping and sprinkling. Seattle, on the other hand, a Pacific Coast city of magnificent area and vast aspirations, has 14 miles of improved streets and expends one-sixth of the outlay of Cambridge in sweeping and sprinkling. It may be urged that Portland is a comparatively new city and should not be compared with some of these Eastern cities. Portland was incorporated in 1851, Cambridge in 1846; Scranton in 1836; Grand Rapids in 1830, and Dayton in 1830.

Paving.

In view of the present discussion about proper paving material for Portland an examination of the statistics of the 12 cities tabulated is not uninteresting. Of the higher class of paving materials granite and Belgian blocks are easily first (34.5 miles), asphalt is second (64.0 miles), brick is a good third (21.2 miles), cobble-stones fourth (31.3 miles), with wooden blocks (15.1 miles), distanced in the race for popular favor. Of course cost of material and climatic conditions are large factors in the consideration of the kind of material to be used by each city, but with the general introduction of rubber tires, Belgian blocks, properly cut and laid (as has been done on the block about the Thompson Fountain), will continue to be the most highly favored pavement, especially on streets subjected to heavy and constant travel. Of the cheaper classes of paving material popular favor seems about equally divided between macadam and gravel, dependent, probably, upon cost and quality of material. Portland has about an equal amount laid of each, but if it is not too early to judge of the streets laid last year in Albina, gravel is the best material for light travel in Portland. The second table covers the subject of "protection" given by the 12 cities.

Street Lighting.

In the matter of lighting and amount of light furnished, Portland compares favorably with the 12 other cities, though six cities have a smaller light bill than Portland. On study of the table some curious facts are developed. Los Angeles, with nearly three times Portland's mileage of streets, depends upon 934 area miles for light and expends about \$300 per annum less than Portland. On the other hand, Grand Rapids, owning its own plant, having nearly 100 miles more of streets than Portland, makes shift to get along with 200 less area and no incandescent lights. Possibly, the shade trees have all been cut down in Grand Rapids. Only three cities besides Portland make use of incandescent lights, Seattle leaning largely to that style of light. Only three cities use Weibach lamps, and Lowell, Albany and Cambridge, with sixty odd less miles of streets, pay half again as much for light as Portland does. Portland seems to get a fair return for the money expended in lights and to furnish the inhabitants as much light as do the other cities.

Police Protection.

In the matter of police protection Portland and Scranton are far below the average both in number of policemen and cost of the department. Judged by "number of arrests made" Portland's policemen are by no means idle and their record compares favorably with that of other cities, even if they have not caught the Mayor's assailant. Roughly speaking, the cost of the department in the different cities seems to be about \$1000 per man employed. The relation that the number of saloons and amount of license paid bear to the number of policemen employed, number of arrests made and cost of the department, presents some peculiar features. Cambridge, with no saloons, requires 307 policemen at a cost of \$12,715 to keep the peace. Portland and Scranton, with 231 and 302 saloons, with licenses of \$60 and \$50, require but 23 and 53 policemen at a cost of \$2,337 and \$4,894 respectively, to keep good order; but then possibly in Scranton as in Portland every man is his own special policeman or perhaps Scranton like Portland is an orderly, well-behaved city. On the other hand, Lowell, with high license (\$300 and \$300), and Atlanta with \$100 license require 121 and 121 policemen respectively, at a cost of \$123,525 and \$142,137, and the number of arrests in Atlanta were five times those of Portland. Low license, again, as evidenced by Nashville (472), demands 55 policemen at a cost of \$85,382. If any deductions can be made from these figures it would appear that Portland is inadequately policed for the miles of streets to be protected in deduction that every citizen will incur in without looking at the tables; that neither high license nor low license checks the number of arrests, and that the cost of license in Portland could be made \$500, as in Los Angeles and Seattle, and the additional revenue well spent in additional police protection.

Fire Protection.

In regard to fire protection the figures speak well for the economical and efficient administration of Portland's department. With but two cities, Scranton and Dayton, administered at a lower cost, the property loss in Portland was lower than any of the cities reported. With this in view it would be interesting to know how insurance rates of Portland compare with those of other cities. It has been stated that they are much higher than in like cities in the East, but the bulletin on "Statistics of Cities" throws no light on the subject.

Health.

The third table covers the subject of health and public utilities. Of the 12 cities tabulated, Seattle has the lowest death rate (0.71) and Portland next (10.21). The four Southern cities have all a high death rate, Richmond having a rate of 23.68. The number of miles of sewers bears no direct ratio to the death rate, though Richmond has the least number of miles. Probably the large colored population in the South raises the death rate percentage while the good climate of our coast may tend to keep ours down. Apparently a so-called rainy climate is healthier than everlasting sunshine, since Los Angeles has a death rate of 15.81, considerably higher than Portland and Seattle.

Water.

From the water statistics little comparison can be made between Portland and the other cities. The percentage of receipts to cost varies from six to eight per cent, and Portland averages with the other cities. But distance from source and charge for service are such factors in any comparative consideration that no deductions can be drawn, favorable to Portland or otherwise.

Public Parks.

In the matter of area of public parks, the breathing places of the poor, Portland stands well, but like many another department of our municipal household but a niggardly allowance is doled out for maintenance. However, four other cities think that the public health and happiness require only a small expenditure, and it is but recently that the great City of New York has awakened to the necessity and appropriated considerable sums of money for the purchase of land in the crowded districts; turning it into small parks for the poor as a matter of good municipal political economy.

Street Railroads.

When one studies the street railroad statistics the small number of employees in proportion to the miles operated in Portland is startling. Cambridge with about one-third the mileage requires 424 more employees, while Atlanta with 20 miles less track requires 67 more employees. Possibly the greater area and wider distribution of population in Portland offers some explanation, but on the other hand our energetic neighbor on the Sound, Seattle, with 25 miles less of track, requires 40 more employees, and the area of Seattle is but little less than that of Portland. Possibly the more efficient management of Portland's street railroads enable them to do with less employees and again, possibly, other cities furnish a quicker service that demands more equipment and employees.

Suggests a Market House.

Portland, like Cambridge, Atlanta, Scranton and Lowell receives nothing from its public utilities. It is for the newest of the cities to lead the way in demanding something for its franchisees, with the Southern cities of Richmond and Memphis a good second and third. However, it is but lately that municipalities have awakened to the fact that they have lighted up the past with rights and privileges of great value; and it is in the recollection of middle-aged men how the New York Alderman gave a franchise to a surface road on Broadway

for nothing; though for it, if the writer has not forgotten, Sharpe, the manipulator, died in prison. Seven of the cities received a return from markets and Dayton, Richmond and Nashville quite respectable sums. Cannot Portland take a

lesson from them? There is a block given to the city of Portland for that purpose, at present incumbered by a great tumbling-down tinder box. The Mechanics' Pavilion, a dangerous fire hazard to all the property surrounding. Would it not be

economy and a benefit to the city to tear down this old wooden structure and build a good brick market on the block? Then by moderate rentals, make it advantageous to our fish, poultry, vegetable and meat dealers to congregate there and

thus rid some of our principal streets of the filthy nuisances that incumber our sidewalks.

Education.

The fourth table covers the subject of education. Portland ranks well in the number of school buildings, number of school rooms and number of teachers employed in proportion to the average attendance. Only five of the twelve other cities have more school rooms, but the ratio of about 35 scholars to a teacher in the regular day schools is about the same in all cities. Portland is one of five cities that do not maintain a public kindergarten system, and in Lowell, Cambridge, Grand Rapids and Dayton, the attendance at the kindergartens is nearly one-half that of the high schools, while in Albany it is nearly equal to that of the high schools.

Eight of the thirteen cities maintain municipal libraries, and Portland, with Albany, Atlanta, Richmond and Nashville deem it unnecessary.

Assessment in Tax Rate.

The fifth table covers assessment, tax rate and the more important receipts. Judged by its assessed valuation Portland, with the exception of Scranton, is the poorest city of the 12. But thought must be given to the basis of assessment, and in these tables Portland's basis is given at 25 per cent; however, it is doubtful if even twice as many on an average much less than one-third of true values. In the matter of personal property our Assessor has found a fair proportion in relation to the real property, although in Grand Rapids and Richmond more than half of the property taxed is personal. On the other hand in Los Angeles and Scranton most of the personal property seems to have escaped the Assessor's eagle eye. Portland and Seattle have the lowest city tax levy (25 per 1000) of any of the cities, and when our basis of assessment (25 per cent) is compared to Seattle's (50 per cent), Portland is far and away the lowest. When the much-abused tax-payer grumbles and complains bitterly through the press of the high tax levy he staggers under in Portland, let him take time to consider the following facts: For the year of this report the total tax levy in Portland was thirty-six mills made up as follows, viz:

State 5.5
Port. of Portland 1.5
State School 4.0
County School Dist. No. 1, 4 1.0
County of Portland 3.0
Road 2.0
Total 26.0

The basis of assessment was 25 per cent for every truly \$2.5 per cent. Compare this with Cambridge, where the basis was 100 per cent and the city tax alone was 14.7 mills. Were we assessed 100 per cent, as is done in Los Angeles, Lowell, Albany, Cambridge and Grand Rapids, and as our Assessor is sworn to do, a total levy of 12 mills would raise the same revenue in Portland as 26 mills did. Look at what Portland received from the property tax; almost 55 per cent, less in amount than the lowest city of the 12 tabulated, barely one-fifth the amount raised in Cambridge.

Some Running Comment.

Our grumbling tax-paying friend wonders where all the money goes that he contributes to the municipal purse; is it not more a matter of wonder that Portland, with its great area and heavy debt, maintains any sort of a municipal government and is able to maintain any kind of fire, light and police protection? Either all these other cities maintain most extravagant governments or Portland does not give its citizens the care and protection that other cities demand. In the matter of fire and light protection it has been shown that Portland compares favorably with other cities and we are forced to the conclusion that Portland has cut expenses down to the lowest notch, that is, if figures from the other cities can be relied upon. As a matter of fact the municipal government of Portland is conducted most economically, even to a degree that is nigardly, and some time we may awaken to the fact that by such parsimonious administration we have been penny wise and pound foolish. Were it not for the addition to our resources from liquor and other licenses (but three cities receiving more) Portland could not maintain a government, but as has been said before, this source of revenue could be increased by raising the liquor license to \$600. Of the revenue received from docks and warehouses, markets and cemeteries, but one city, Scranton, is like Portland in receiving nothing.

Debt, Interest and Maintenance.

The sixth table covers the charges on the city; debt, interest and expense of maintenance. Even one city, Cambridge, has a greater debt than Portland, though Seattle is close to us. As a large proportion of this debt is for the construction of the water works and for the blessing of Bull Run water, no citizen should regret it. The interest on the water bonds is met from the receipts for water, and like all indirect taxation is not appreciated as a burden by the average citizen. For the enlightenment of those who have not given the matter close consideration, let me give the sources of our other indebtedness:

By annexing Albina we assumed \$ 150,000
By annexing East Portland we assumed 300,000
Refunding outstanding bonds and warrants 480,500
The City Hall 670,000
Free bridges 700,000

Total \$2,251,500
The interest charged is about \$125,000 and our revenue from property tax was \$572,287! Does our grumbling tax-paying friend continue to wonder what becomes of the municipal fund?

Findings in the Case.

To summarize all of the foregoing:

First—The area of Portland is too great for a satisfactory and economical administration of government.

Second—The most popular pavement for heavy travel is granite, or Belgian blocks, with wooden blocks decidedly unpopular.

Third—Portland is well lighted at a reasonable cost, and incandescent lights are not popular.

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Portland one of the healthiest cities in the country.

Eighth—Portland has been derelict in guarding its rights and franchises in the past, but it should establish a public market at once, for the health, convenience and revenue of the city.

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COMPARATIVE TABLES OF TWELVE CITIES.

TABLE 1—POPULATION, AREA, STREETS.

CITIES.	Population, census 1900.	Area, acres.	Miles of streets paved with										Total miles of paved streets.	Average No. persons per acre.	Cost of street-sprinkling, per 1000 ft. and sprinkling.
			Cobble-stones.	Bricks.	Wooden blocks.	Asphalt.	Macadam.	Gravel.	All other kinds.	Total miles of paved streets.	Average No. persons per acre.	Cost of street-sprinkling, per 1000 ft. and sprinkling.			
(36) Los Angeles	102,427	27,096.85	1.71	4.6	1.1	11.59	4.10	206.56	6.53	231.34	244.66	69.135	12	\$82,000.00	
(37) Memphis	102,210	10,480.00	3.16	3.16	3.16	3.16	3.16	3.16	3.16	3.16	3.16	3.16	3.16	\$12,000.00	
(38) Scranton	122,028	12,331.16	3.19	1.53	3.33	11.61	1.61	20.23	165.91	212.52	165.91	69.135	12	\$12,000.00	
(39) Lowell, Mass.	94,929	1,811.60	15.40	15.40	15.40	15.40	15.40	15.40	15.40	15.40	15.40	15.40	15.40	\$12,000.00	
(40) Albany, N. Y.	81,151	7,198.40	10.30	10.30	10.30	10.30	10.30	10.30	10.30	10.30	10.30	10.30	10.30	\$12,000.00	
(41) Cambridge, Mass.	51,832	4,132.48	4.71	4.71	4.71	4.71	4.71	4.71	4.71	4.71	4.71	4.71	4.71	\$12,000.00	
(42) Portland, Or.	50,425	25,000.00	1.79	1.48	3.13	14.50	14.50	14.50	14.50	14.50	14.50	14.50	14.50	\$12,000.00	
(43) Atlanta	39,571	7,040.00	2.03	2.03	2.03	2.03	2.03	2.03	2.03	2.03	2.03	2.03	2.03	\$12,000.00	
(44) Grand Rapids	37,581	11,390.00	7.0	4.6	11.55	6.14	4.94	123.43	31.162	121.48	100	100	100	\$12,000.00	
(45) Dayton, O.	36,353	6,880.00	1.53	1.53	1.53	1.53	1.53	1.53	1.53	1.53	1.53	1.53	1.53	\$12,000.00	
(46) Richmond, Va.	33,612	2,828.00	21.00	21.00	21.00	21.00	21.00	21.00	21.00	21.00	21.00	21.00	21.00	\$12,000.00	
(47) Nashville	33,553	6,432.00	2.64	2.34	4.4	184.85	184.85	184.85	184.85	184.85	184.85	184.85	184.85	\$12,000.00	
(48) Seattle	30,671	12,217.00	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	\$12,000.00	

*Cleaning only. †Sprinkling only.

TABLE 2—PROTECTION.

CITIES.	Miles of streets.	No. of lights.	Cost of lights.	Police.			Fires.			Cost of department.
				No. of policemen.	Amount received.	Total amount.	No. of fires.	Property lost.	Cost of damage.	
(36) Los Angeles	31.24	924	\$44,408	108	\$300,000	\$300,000	130	\$156,427	\$124,217	\$6,196
(37) Memphis	24.66	250	699	46,276	52	450	5,988	98,073	87	82,382
(38) Scranton	126.15	626	\$43,522	50	550	550	210	54,984	57	90,461
(39) Lowell, Mass.	123.54	208	1,088	15,400	200	200	3,630	122,236	76	124,193
(40) Albany, N. Y.	133.82	650	3,000	20,147	162	162	2,719	154,539	124	154,539
(41) Cambridge, Mass.	121.00	540	431	288	38	38	3,807	127,737	57	90,363
(42) Portland, Or.	25.00	712	626	46,250	32	32	4,771	70,566	131	71,877
(43) Atlanta	200.00	712	626	78,721	161	161	10,013	153,197	108	110,670
(44) Grand Rapids	233.80	512	450	84	170	170	11,579	17,464	137	110,792
(45) Dayton, O.	211.58	431	724	48,300	122	122	4,800	67,512	51	21,083
(46) Richmond	116.30	548	158	21,753	104	104	3,860	100,082	69	19,362
(47) Nashville	118.00	332	320	45,468	85	85	7,795	85,882	131	12,545
(48) Seattle	118.00	130	110	29,202	70	70	9,175	65,928	26	26,714

Not reported. †Also 200 volunteers. ‡Owns its own plant. **None.

TABLE 3—PUBLIC UTILITIES, HEALTH.

CITIES.	Miles of streets.	Miles of sewers.	Municipal water works.		Public parks, acres.		Street railways.		Received from franchisees.	Received from docks.	Received from markets.	Received from cemeteries.
			Cost.	Receipts.	Owned by city.	Owned by private.	Miles of track.	No. of cars.				
(36) Los Angeles	16.87	163.00	In litigation.	3720.00	855,013	180	178	184	\$1,000,000	\$408	\$4,616	
(37) Memphis	21.66	142.10	private ownership.	12.26	2,000	700	500	100,000	\$408	\$4,616		
(38) Scranton	126.15	626	private ownership.	57.17	4,377	174	45	405	118,120	\$1,820	\$1,820	
(39) Lowell, Mass.	123.54	208	1,088	15,400	4,034,081	120	120	120	1,121,000	\$1,820	\$1,820	
(40) Albany, N. Y.	133.82	650	3,000	20,147	1,320,000	304,982	292	35	39,000	600	785	
(41) Cambridge, Mass.	121.00	540	431	288	16,810,000	484,100	20	20	3,944	1,000	1,000	
(42) Portland, Or.	25.00	712	626	46,250	4,034,081	28	28	28	151	131	131	
(43) Atlanta	200.00	712	626	78,721	161	161	10,013	153,197	108	108	108	
(44) Grand Rapids	233.80	512	450	84	170	170	11,579	17,464	137	137	137	
(45) Dayton, O.	211.58	431	724	48,300	122	122	4,800	67,512	51	51	51	
(46) Richmond	116.30	548	158	21,753								