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## Boston of the Future

MY UNITED STATES

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ILLUSTRATIONS (FRONTISPIECE) BY N. C. WYETH

Hurt because Mr. Stimson, a tried and true native, criticised Boston in his previous article, the Boston *Herald* called for "literary boosters" who would offer constructive suggestions. Mr. Stimson makes no pretension to boosterism but he accepts the challenge and tells Boston what it can do.

IF the closing sentence of my recent article, "Boston—the Ebb Tide,"\* does not disqualify me to write about the rest of the United States, I will now approach New York—New York City—if, indeed, it be part of them. But in 1861 it was. In 1886, when I lived there, it still was. And New Yorkers were delightful people in the eighties. To one coming from the critical, belittling atmosphere of Boston the cheerful open-mindedness, open-heartedness, take-you-at-your-own-value,-come-on,-we'll-all-get-rich-together spirit made of them, if sharp competitors, most agreeable folk to live with and do business for. Why then did the whole country beyond the Orange

Mountains consider New York a foreign city?

Well, to begin with, it was British throughout the Revolution. When Washington went into it he had to get out in a hurry; and, though Washington, on the eighth anniversary of the battle of Lexington, proclaimed the end of the war which Massachusetts had begun, it was not until seven months later, November 18, 1783, that he ventured to cross the Harlem River as Clinton was leaving Wall Street. And, before the city could be fumigated and Americanized, Astor and other European proletarians or international financiers began to throng in.

But "Wall Street" is really the answer. No country likes the counter through which all its wares and works,

\* See "Boston—the Ebb Tide," SCRIBNER'S MAGAZINE, March, 1928.

its labor and its dreams, its inventions and its discoveries, must be sweated and sold. To the Westerner the New York banker or jobber was simply a man who sat and got his rake-off on all they did—and then turned up his nose at them. And we were told—travelling in private cars over our railroads in those wide-open spaces where men are men—to pull down the shades of our dining-car over the oysters and champagne lest the native take a shot at them.

New York seemed to stand for economic centralization and monopoly. And there was some basis for the prejudice. Even more than now the fate of any enterprise big enough to need New York's assistance—or attract New York's notice—lay in very few hands. The American people gave their savings to the life-insurance companies; they put them in their own banks and trust companies; thus the whole financial energy of the country was wielded by very few men. Hughes's reforms did a little to remedy this abuse; the Federal Reserve Act (against which New York is already kicking) did more; but your honest Westerner, coming to New York for money for his railroad or his mine, would go from the A Bank to the B Trust Company, from C Brothers to D & Sons, from Mr. G. G. H. to Mr. J. P. M., from Mr. J. S. to Mr. G. F. B.—and back to the Gotham Bank, on whose executive committee was Mr. G. G. H. again—and only then begin to realize that he was meeting the same man all through. They agreed on everything, even to the size of the rake-off.

Then New York had no American individuality. It had no public spirit such as Boston had—civic spirit in plenty, very sharp to the main chance, the fortunes of its port, its commerce—

but little sense of national duty. The Dutch farmers grew rich by keeping asleep; they never did anything, nor thought it a duty to educate their children. Nothing struck a New Englander so much as the absence of books from their houses. When they woke up it was to horses—or making money. Yankees were thought sharp; but a whole book could be made of extracts from writings or diaries of outsiders, before and after John Adams, describing the solely commercial attitude of the New Yorker—and very funny it would be. This time lasted from the Dutch till the Civil War; to-day the New Yorker is of course different—but then, he is now a synthetic being.

Yet no one could live in both cities for the twenty years beginning 1884 without seeing why it was that New York had so outdistanced Boston. True, it was bigger, and it had the Erie Canal, and we had lost our railroads, and the tariff took our ships; but it was bigger principally because of this spirit—which I should describe as enlightened public self-interest conjoined with enterprise, big vision, and unity of action. Size did not alarm it. When one of our Boston & Maine railroad presidents was approached with a plan to consolidate that system with the Maine Central, the Fitchburg, the Nickel Plate, and so through to Chicago, he objected that it was too large! Then in all things—business, antislavery, literature, politics, art—Boston was critical, New York (when it knew anything about them) constructive. It really seemed as if its blood of the old days of commercial supremacy had been transfused to the brain of New York (the fact that a vast preponderance of them came from New England, the South, and later the West, is immaterial; for the very first

day they walked down-town they *were* New Yorkers; how long does it take for a Howells or a Ford to get acclimatized in Boston? that is just part of New York's spell; its seal is so quickly impressed). And soon she began to emulate Boston's public spirit in charitable, artistic, educational things. When, in Boston, could you collect an audience of a thousand leading business men *and* their wives, "leaders in society," to crowd the Hotel Astor and listen for four hours to an abstract discussion of the advisability of federal incorporation of business companies? But now New York's business leaders were of a higher class, educationally and socially, than the "down-town" men in Boston; this abandonment by educated men of business, and so of them *by* business, I have spoken of in the earlier article. Yet together New York and Boston made a perfect blend.

Now it is obvious that you cannot be constructive without first discovering the faults, the past mistakes; some of them, of course, irremediable. Boston couldn't—nor should—prevent the Erie Canal or the barge lines; nor deprive the metropolis of its geographical situation or its wonderful harbor—but it might foster its own, in some ways better still. Metropolis—the dictionary gives it "a parent city, a chief city"; well, claiming the former, we must yield New York the latter. Philadelphia passed Boston in size in 1770, New York in 1820, Detroit—so the census says—in 1925. Centralization, of course, is inevitable, irremediable—especially since the "trusts" began. In 1880 there were ten thousand healthy local industries in New England; each little town had its own—a mill, or but a workshop, some trade begun by some clever Yankee in 1700, in 1800, car-

ried on by his children and great-grandchildren, supporting worthily a continuing family; making a little light of civilization, feeding a prosperous community where it was; now probably a small incorporation—it might be crackers, or whips, or pails, or hats, or pink jewellers' cotton—or shovels, locomotives, or battle-ships—the trust came down and swallowed them, to the vast profit of that henceforth idle family, with nothing left to do but to "get into society," and perhaps without much harm to the workers—but the company disappeared from Maine or Massachusetts, its offices were moved to New York, its lawyers lost a client, its banks their accounts, it was unlisted from the Boston Stock Exchange—but, worst of all, its home touch was gone. For practical purposes it had disappeared from New England. And, though there is a limit, even with skyscrapers, to the number of human bodies you can stack into New York, there is no limit to the number of corporation souls you can lodge there.

All this is unavoidable. We might improve things a little by lightening our corporation taxes—but Massachusetts is committed to a high civilization and we would have her stay there—it may cost more to live in the old Bay State, but it is worth more! Not, however, to a corporation, for all our social, educational, and æsthetic advantages; and it is possible for a legislature to impose reasonable taxes and philanthropic regulations without being a d— fool. But to the necessary consequences of centralization Boston must, like the provincial capitals of all other countries, reconcile herself.

Can anything be done about the railroad situation? Besides the practical impossibility of building a new railroad,

we are now controlled by the I. C. C.; and, even if we got one, it could not fix rates favoring Boston without their consent. But, if we really had a railroad, run in Boston and New England interest and not solely for the purpose of making what they could out of us, much could be done in the routing of freight-cars, in mere direction of business, to give Boston port its share. And we do not exert the financial power that we have, but are content to lie down and take our 4 per cent. About half of the New Haven stock is owned in New England; yet no railroad has been more inimical to its interests in the past. For many years it fought strenuously against the Cape Cod Canal—the greatest—nay, the only—internal improvement Uncle Sam has ever taken on in the interest of New England—and for several successive legislatures prevented its charter. The Boston & Maine, New England's only other remaining trunk line since the New York Central took the Albany (it has just received a dividend of fifty per cent in cash on one of its subsidiaries whose stock it owns, the Michigan Central, the very first road that Boston built), is still owned in New England; we all remember the political fight when the New Haven tried to swallow up that too; but it is, however, choked off by another New York Central subsidiary at Rotterdam Junction, N. Y. But something might be done there with the Delaware & Hudson, if not with the Nickel Plate; while the New Haven actually owns a line from Boston to the Great Lakes—the Ontario & Western—and makes no use of it. Then there is the Grand Trunk of Canada, and its competitor the great Canadian Pacific. No; it is not too late, even for the railroads, if Boston and New England get

together. But they must be managers, not mere investors.

Boston, half the year, is the natural port of Canada. Canadian reciprocity would be our greatest benefit. Yet we suffer the Republican party (and we New Englanders are mostly Republicans) to be against it. Even the sacred tariff is no longer in the interest of New England—what we want is free raw materials, trade with South America. A correspondent has pointed out to me that our industries to-day the most prosperous are precisely those which have no tariff protection. I would not touch politics; but here again we have not pulled together, exercised our legitimate power. We alone, with other older States of the North, ask for nothing at the national crib; yet it is common knowledge that we get nothing, even of those federal expenditures which are, constitutionally, legitimate. There are a score of harbors, a dozen inland rivers, on which Uncle Sam spends more than on the port of Boston.

But it does seem as if there were certain things which could be done by the Bostonians themselves, without the necessity of appealing to outside governmental agencies, which would go very far toward improving the competitive situation of the port.

The terminal situation itself puts Boston very seriously at a disadvantage in competition with other north-Atlantic ports. The petty rivalries between the Boston & Maine, New York, New Haven & Hartford, and Boston & Albany (New York Central) prevent any real railroad aid, without which no port ever gets very far.

On grain moving for export through the port of Boston, if the car moves for example over the Boston & Albany road consigned to the terminal of the Boston

& Maine, a charge is made to the consignee for switching. If, however, the car moves on consignment straight to the Boston & Albany terminal at East Boston and upon arrival there is re-consigned to the Mystic terminal of the Boston & Maine Railroad at Charlestown, the switching charge is doubled.

In no other port on the coast does the consignee have to pay any such charges, since the switching charges are absorbed by the railroads in the line haul rate. The railroads in Boston have been appealed to repeatedly to remedy this, but in vain.

From the New Haven freight terminals at South Boston to the Boston & Albany terminals at East Boston, the distance is less than three-quarters of a mile in a straight line across the harbor. Since there is no car-float service or lighterage service whatever in the port, freight arriving at the New Haven freight terminal destined for export via steamers sailing from the Boston & Albany terminals must move thirteen and one-half miles through the most congested part of the metropolitan district, via the Grand Junction Railroad, a small terminal line owned by the Boston & Albany. The railroads have all been repeatedly requested by various interests in the port to establish a lighterage service, but have always declined on the ground that there was not enough business to warrant such a service. One is prompted to ask how many transcontinental railroads would ever have been built if the same reasoning had been followed.

The New Haven Railroad has the finest terminals of any port in the country, absolutely free of all charge: viz., the army base, which cost the federal government \$24,000,000, the State Fish Pier, which was built at a cost of

\$1,100,000, and the Commonwealth Pier, built by the commonwealth of Massachusetts at a cost, up to date, of over \$4,000,000.

Despite these wonderful facilities the New Haven shows less interest in moving freight through the port than either of the other two railroads. It has no grain-elevator, in spite of the fact that through its ownership of the New York, Ontario & Western Railroad it has a through line from Oswego, N. Y., direct to tidewater at Boston, and could therefore of its own volition put Boston immediately on the Baltimore basis for export grain, which is essential to attract steamship-lines.

Since the development and improvement of the Welland Canal, Oswego has commenced to assume great importance among the lake ports.

Boston has no port authority as such, since all the public-owned port works are under the control of the Department of Public Works, which is the largest of the State departments, having charge of the maintenance and construction of highways, registration of automobiles(!), and many other functions in no way related to port matters.

Every sizable port on the north Atlantic has a port authority which is concerned with no other duties than those relating to the regulation and development of the port and its facilities. Some if not all of these port authorities have very great authority and responsibility, such as the power to issue their own bonds for the purpose of building bridges, tunnels, etc., without the necessity of appealing to the legislature for permission—it is so in New York.

At present the port of Boston is in reality three ports, since there is no co-operation worthy of the name among the various terminals and no physical



connection except by the slender and antiquated Grand Junction Railroad and that anomaly the Union Freight Railroad, which runs along the public streets from the New Haven freight terminals to the Boston & Maine freight terminals.

A unified terminal in Boston is imperatively needed, and it is immaterial whether it is publicly or privately owned. It should own all the freight-terminal facilities in the port and have the duty of handling all freight on a uniform basis as to charges, without reference to the piers at which the freight arrives or departs. These functions are all performed by one unified terminal at Montreal and other ports, profitably, whereas, with three terminals operating independently, the cost to the shippers is high and the return to the railroads is little or nothing. An examination of the unified freight terminals of Chicago and Kansas City (which, if memory serves, were both largely financed in Boston) would repay.

Furthermore, the burdensome switching charges current in Boston are not the only reason for complaint, for the delays which occur in moving any volume of freight over these narrow lines of communication are so great that shippers whose plants are located within easy railroad distance of Boston often-times find it much quicker to send their freight direct to New York than to try and move it across the city.

In New York freight arriving on one side of the river to be exported by steamer departing from the other side is lightered free of all charge to the consignee, since the lighterage is absorbed by the carrier.

It should be noted that if a shipment originates on the Boston & Maine Railroad, having for its destination some

point in New York harbor within the lighterage limits, a stated charge is immediately deducted from the total freight to be received, for the purpose of paying terminal charges at New York, and the balance of the freight is apportioned between the two roads; but on freight originating on the New York Central Railroad, destined for some point on Boston harbor, no charge is deducted for terminal service, thereby penalizing the Boston shippers by the amount of the terminal costs.

Railroad differentials operating in favor of Baltimore and Philadelphia as against Boston have existed for many years, but prior to the war the foreign steamship-lines operating to the port of Boston absorbed this differential in their own freight-rate. This practice was, however, discontinued during the war and has never been resumed. This in itself is not so important as might be imagined, except in so far as it is the practice of the railroads to maintain a differential on ex-lake grain for export in favor of Baltimore and Philadelphia against Boston. This rate could be changed by any railroad of its own volition without violating any differential agreement, since the grain rate is always open, but the New York Central and the New York, New Haven & Hartford decline to make this adjustment.

Since it appears from the financial reports that nearly 40 per cent of the New Haven Railroad is owned within the commonwealth of Massachusetts, it would seem as if the stockholders might, if they cared to, have something to say about the policies of the road.

In all these matters Boston must wake up if it intends to develop and progress as its population and natural facilities warrant. For every dollar that has been spent by the public authori-

ties, State or municipal, in improving the port facilities of Boston, many thousands have been spent by much less important ports in other localities.

How many people realize that, for instance, Houston, Texas, is to-day a thriving seaport, made so entirely by the enterprise of the State authorities in making a deep-water ship-channel out of what was a muddy little river incapable of floating anything except small river craft?

The city of Philadelphia has created most important port works in the shape of piers and grain-elevators at a cost of many millions; and the same is true of Baltimore.

The port of New York, which certainly does not appear badly in need of business at the present time, since it conducts approximately 65 per cent of all the commerce of the country, has spent and is to-day spending many millions in the improvement of its port facilities.

The writer does not recall any port expenditures by Massachusetts or the city of Boston since the creation of the two Commonwealth Piers at South and East Boston respectively and the Boston Dry Dock. In connection with the latter it is worth while noting that at its completion the commonwealth apparently lost its nerve and sold it to the federal government. This has practically destroyed its usefulness to the port, since it is entirely without machine-shops necessary for doing work on steamers which may use the dock, and, under the paternal administration of the naval department, presumably the construction of any private enterprise in that vicinity would not be permitted.

The Lord helps those who help themselves, and Boston should get busy and give the matter of port-development

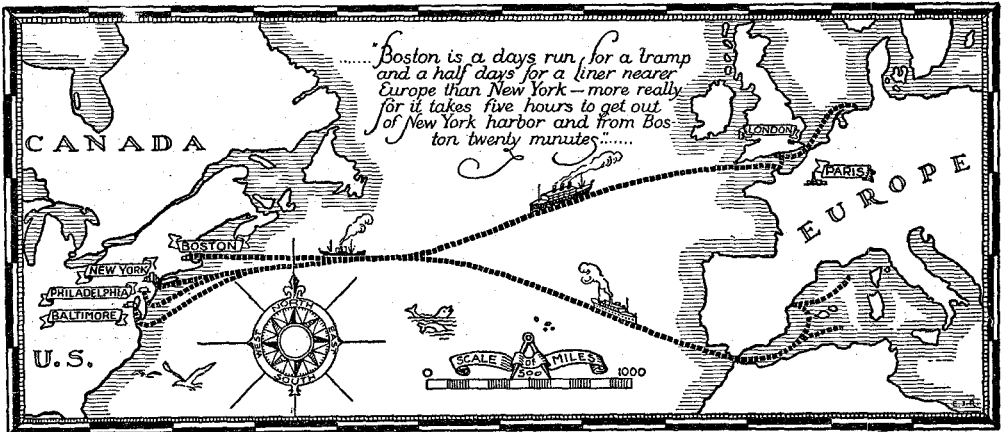
careful study without further delay, unless it expects to be relegated to the limbo of forgotten ports. My Boston readers complained that my last article was not "constructive"—let them be constructive here—and not forget the matter of ocean freight-rates. Until Boston gets consideration of its geographical advantages (being, with Portland, a day's run for a tramp and half a day's for a liner nearer Europe than New York—more, really, for it takes five hours to get out of New York harbor and from Boston twenty minutes) the present conditions will continue—when we see the New York liners landing every day at Boston to take or put down passengers but not a ton of freight. Closing the port of Boston by King George brought on the Revolution: yet now New York would leave it for Montauk Point! And we should get our differential—on ocean freight-rates—and suffer no Atlantic conference to force us up to the level of New York, Baltimore, or New Orleans. That city has posted on every billboard the legend "Second Port in the United States"—we are something like the twenty-third and don't seem to care a d—. That is the inferiority complex of which I complained in the article which some shortsighted critics complained was "knocking Boston!"

One kindly lady wrote that we could not call Boston at the ebb while we had the symphony concerts and the Arnold Arboretum. Well, she was quite right. The educational metropolis we still are; the literary, the artistic—we have no opera, and no baseball team (?), and you can't expect papers like *The Times* and *The World* to be published in a city of eight hundred thousand people—"Metropolitan Boston two million," you say? Yes, but you *don't* say so!

Boston has suffered materially from having ideals; while the country, as I said, has ebbed away from them. During a generation while New York and Philadelphia were making money and themselves solid at Washington, Boston was thinking of antislavery, popular education, belles-lettres, and civil-service reform. It was too introvert. And idealism has its peculiar dangers. It breeds cranks. Cranks in thought are all right; but cranks in government are dangerous. Still more when they hold the purse-strings; more yet when they pay themselves. Boston's, Massachusetts's, present danger seems from excessive local taxation. And as I write a law is pending in the State legislature to have the government own and operate the whole Boston street and elevated system. I shall not argue the point further than to say that it needs but the slightest observation of other cities and other experiments to show that such socialism is ruinous to a city not only financially but, far worse, to

the morale of its citizens, to the purity of its government. Without dwelling upon the cases of Australia, West Ham, Hamilton, Ohio, Poplar—Glasgow has done a little better; only a Scotchman can be trusted to save a sixpence—I would merely relate that, before the days of Mussolini, a leading Italian statesman assured me that it was now impossible to get pure politics or an honest election in Italy because in every precinct a majority of the voters received their wages directly from the government.

I have tried to be "constructive"—though it is hard to be constructive of things already destroyed—but the final remedies are, after all, very simple. They are largely psychological, consisting of a state of mind and of a mode of action. To New England one would say: "Get together! Assert yourselves!" And to Boston (speaking always only of materialities—in the spiritualities she is all right): "Get into business! And don't sell out!"



\* \* The four pages following and also the frontispiece, mural paintings by N. C. Wyeth, are reproduced by courtesy of the owners. The frontispiece and pages 10 and 11 are part of a group depicting the sea and some of its ships, painted for the First National Bank of Boston. On pages 9 and 12 are reproductions of two panels painted for the Junior Bankers Lobby of the Federal Reserve Bank, Boston, commemorating two outstanding events in the history of national finance.



## MURAL PAINTINGS BY N. C. WYETH



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Salmon P. Chase conferring with Lincoln in the cabinet room of the White House about the National Bank Act of 1863.