

## Mayor's Annual Message 1897

To the Honorable Common Council of the City of St. Joseph, MO.

Gentlemen:

In submitting my annual message or recommendations, I refer you in all matters of detail, to the reports of the city officers, and confine myself to a brief, but general statement of matters of general import.

Notwithstanding the general depression that has existed for several years, St. Joseph has withstood it, and made material progress.

Our bonded debt has been reduced \$96,000.00 and our judgment indebtedness about \$12,000.00; so that while new judgments of about \$5,000.00 have been obtained against the city, our net decrease in municipal indebtedness for the year has been in excess of \$100,000.00.

In many directions we have lessened expenses, prevented useless expenditures, and improved former service; so that if we have not accomplished all that was desired, on account of difficulties that could not be overcome, we may feel that we have substantially progressed, with genuine encouragement for the future.

More than ever should we be determined to give the people that which they have a right to demand; not only an economical, but an absolutely honest administration. It is only necessary that in the performance of our official duties we discard and forget all partisanship, and work harmoniously for the interest of the city that has honored us with our positions of trust.

Decreasing taxable values, together with the amount taken from our general fund to apply on outstanding judgments, has within the past 6 years, decreased our fund for general purposes, about \$50,000.

With a reasonable certainty that the revenue will be further decreased \$10,000, for this fiscal year, we face a situation compelling us to reasonably maintain the efficiency of our different departments on about \$60,000 less than required for the same purpose in 91-92.

While we may congratulate ourselves upon having successfully come within the revenue the past year, we must remember that it consumed every dollar of it. We therefore face an apparent deficit for the ensuing fiscal year, which must be met and provided for at the beginning of the year, as it is impossible to do so at the end.

We must not only economize sufficiently to come within the revenue, but to such an extent as will, if possible allow the commencement of permanent public improvements.

Notwithstanding the general depression that has existed for several years, St. Joseph has placed herself in an enviable position among her sister cities, and as the new year dawns, we find the prospects for the future of our city brighter perhaps, than ever before.

Through the zeal and untiring efforts of some of our citizens we have established in our midst great packing interests, which cannot but result in vast benefit to our city.

The same efforts have secured for us the assurance of a magnificent fireproof hotel, which together with the rebuilding and enlarging of those now open to the public, will give to St. Joseph, hotel accommodations superior to most cities in the west.

These improvements it is confidently hoped, are but the forerunner of many others of importance, which will soon result in the employment of all the idle labor and general business revival in our city.

St. Joseph needs public improvements, and with such prospects before us, we should do all in our power to encourage and urge upon our citizens the need of more paved streets and improvements of like character.

### **PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS**

In north St. Joseph, the Black-snake sewer should be extended. South St. Joseph is entitled to a viaduct or some other safe means of communication, as well as public sewers.

The work of filling the old beds of Black-snake and Liniment creeks should be continued, and many streets should be repaired and placed in better condition.

This is all necessary work, but rigid economy must be practiced in every department in order that we may obtain means to perform any part of it.

A city should always lead in improvements; not follow. It operates as an incentive to the taxpayer to do like-wise.

With the prospects already before us, a strong forward movement on the part of this municipality could but result in a general movement by the citizens that would end in prosperity and business revival.

The opportunity is now before us; let us by practical economy obtain the means to take advantage of it to the fullest extent.

### **RETRENCHMENT**

There are many ways in which economy may be practiced and expenses lessened, and it should not be confined to any particular department.

One thing to consider, and which should be seriously considered, is whether we can afford to gradually increase the expense of running our police and fire departments, while all the taxable values and the revenue derived therefrom is gradually and constantly decreasing.

While it costs more today to run these departments than 6 years ago, our general fund will amount to \$50,000 less.

This explains the absence of any sewer and public improvement fund, and it is recommended that before passing your apportionment ordinance, you thoroughly examine into the matter, with a view, if possible of replacing the sewer fund for present purposes. An examination will further disclose, lots of parcels of ground in various parts of the city purchased for fire house sites, which if not available for such purposes should be disposed of, and the proceeds used for present needs.

It is again strongly recommended that you make no farther appropriation for assistant to City Clerk, the revision of the city ordinances having been completed no further necessity exists therefor.

It is further recommended that the fee of 25 cents. now allowed the clerk for dog tags, be abolished, and that the city hereafter furnish these tags to the owner upon payment of the license.

### **CITY WORK HOUSE**

Your attention is called to the recommendation made one year ago regarding this institution, for it is still applicable.

The expense of running this institution is too great; Under the present state of affairs, we are compelled to maintain two city jails, one at the police station, called the hold-over and the other known as the calaboose.

At both places prisoners are housed, cared for, and fed, which of course requires two sets of officers and the consequent expense.

This should be consolidated and all place at police station under police protection, which would save almost the entire expense of maintaining the calaboose, aside from feeding prisoners.

It is recommended that you authorize the Comptroller to receive bids for the property upon which the city jail is now situated, and that when a suitable offer be made for same it be accepted, with a view of erecting such necessary building at the police station as will permit of this consolidation and saving of expense.

It is estimated that the amount saved to the city within two years by this change, would pay for the erection of all necessary buildings.

In the meantime it is recommended that the number of guards at work house be decreased from four to two, as that number together with the keeper is amply sufficient to perform all necessary duties.

### **CITY DISPENSARY**

Under the present system in use this institution is of doubtful benefit to the city. In order to be of practical benefit to those people for whom it was established, prescriptions should be filled and medicines furnished when called for, as that is the time it is needed.

If needed at night, before or after officer hours, or on a holiday, the institution is useless, for no service can be obtained.

As it is impossible to furnish this needed service without much additional expense, and as it already costs the city more than it would cost by contracting with reputable druggists, it is recommended that the whole thing be dispensed with.

If this be abolished, the necessity for an assistant city physician will probably exist, but said assistant should be required to have regular office hours in one of our public buildings where he can be readily found by those entitled to his services.

In this connection it is recommended that you require the city counselor to also remain during stated hours at the city hall.

There is hardly a day that some officer does not require advice, and as our counselor is well paid, they are entitled to have this advice convenient.

### **CHARITY**

It gives me pleasure to state that the recommendations made a year ago regarding this very important subject have been carried into effect by the passage of the bill creating a board of charities in this city.

The board will take full charge of all temporary relief work about the middle of June next, after which it is confidently believed that much better results will be obtained.

Hereafter this relief work will be looked after by one, instead of several organizations, which organization is empowered to furnish employment for a limited time to those entitled to assistance, and who are able to perform labor.

The ladies of the Associated Charities are entitled to much credit for bringing about this desired result, and it is to be hoped the city and county will heartily sustain the new board in a non-partisan effort to solve this difficult question.

During the past year the city has expended about \$1,500 in charitable effort, about \$900 of this amount for provisions, \$250 for fuel, and \$250 for transportation of destitute persons to friends or relations, and the balance for clothing, rent, etc.

About \$300 of this was repaid the city in labor upon our streets.

### **PARKS AND LIBRARY**

Two public interests deserving the highest consideration at your hands, are the parks and library.

From no other source do the masses of our people receive such substantial benefit/and no money spent reaches the fireside of so many homes.

It is to be regretted that the finances of our city will not permit of that substantial aid such interests deserve; but it is our duty, with the limited means at our command, to provide for, maintain, and advance their interests as best we can.

### **ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT**

During the past year over \$25,000 dollars has been used by this department for general street purposes, including repairs, cross walks, sewer inlets, surfacing of streets not paved or macadamized, etc.

This of course is necessary work, and while a marked improvement has been made during the past year, much remains to be done, and appropriations therefore should not be decreased.

But I am firmly convinced that much more can be accomplished with the same amount of money than has heretofore been accomplished.

Our laws contemplate that work of this kind, wherever practicable should be contracted to the lowest bidder; the following out of such a policy in the future would greatly cheapen the work in this

department and result in wiping out the enormous pay roll necessary under the old system and a consequent reduction in the amount heretofore appropriated for the engineer's assistants.

It is therefore recommended that you require all work heretofore mentioned, to be let by contract, and that the amount appropriated for the engineer's assistants be reduced for the ensuing year.

While the general street work last year was necessarily small, yet it was deemed necessary to go to the extra expense, of hiring a steam roller for a period of time including the winter months and I am informed that hundreds of dollars has been expended in housing, repairing, and watching this useless thing during the winter months, and that it is still being guarded and housed for the owners, at the city's expense.

This is wholly unwarranted, and it is strongly recommended that you order this useless, but expensive piece of machinery returned to the owner, and thereby decrease this year's expense to that extent.

The condition of our streets paved with brick, is becoming deplorable, so much so that it already interferes with all attempts at cleaning.

It is to be hoped that arrangements will be made at once for their proper repair, and for the prompt repair of other streets in the city, many of which would be absolutely discreditable to a country town.

Your attention is again called to the condition of sixth street from Edmond north, to Francis, and thence west to second. If the street railway track is to remain thereon, on account of improvements to be made in that vicinity, then said tracks should be rebuilt so that the streets are safe for travel; otherwise the proper step should be taken to remove the tracks and compel the repair of the streets aforesaid: This was ordered by the Common Council over four years ago, and yet the condition remains the same.

Your attention is called again to seventh street, where proper repairs can never be made until the obstructions left there by Rail'y Co. are removed.

If we desire to be considered an enterprising community, strangers or visitors should be met with some evidence of progression.

Sixth street from the Union Depot north, should be perfectly lighted, and at all times well cleaned, and in perfect repair; especially, should we urge upon the Street Rail'y Co., the necessity of continuing north from depot, the splendid improvements recently completed on Edmond.

### **STREET COMMISSIONER**

The duties surrounding this office have been steadily transferred to that of City Engineer until that office is overburdened with work that should belong to the Street Commissioner, and the Street Commissioner is simply an overseer of street cleaning. In fact the Engineer is employing assistants at a salary as large or larger than that of Street Commissioner for the performance of duties, which should naturally belong to the Street Commissioner and which he could perform or oversee without any additional help. It seems to be generally recognized that the City Engineer has more duties than admits of his personal supervision, and the transferring of the care of all streets that have not been paved or macadamized to the jurisdiction and control of street commissioners would in my judgment result in benefit to the city and is so recommended.

During the past year the Street Commissioner has not confined his efforts to the paved streets in the city, but has endeavored to give proper service in all parts of the city, until marked improvement has been made in that direction.

There should be a sufficient amount appropriated not only to maintain any advance we have made in this direction, but sufficient to allow such systematic work on our paved streets as will keep them practically free from dirt at all times.

The improvement made in this direction in the past year has been made at hundreds of dollars less expense than heretofore, and for which our present efficient officer is entitled to credit.

Should this department be properly sustained, the experience of the past year warrants the expectation of a further advance in the direction of clean street.

During the past session of the legislature, a law permitting the license of bicycles and other vehicles at not less than one dollar per annum was enacted, and an ordinance to that effect may properly be passed. It has always seemed to me that a moderate vehicle license is just, for he who contributes most to the wearing out of a street, or who demands for his use better streets than would otherwise be necessary, should contribute most toward their maintenance.

And it also seems to me that one who uses our streets for pleasure is as much entitled to pay such a license as the drayman or expressman, who uses his vehicle to earn a livelihood.

The revenue derived from this source should be set aside and used solely for street cleaning and repair purposes, which together with the ordinary revenue appropriated would place our streets in better condition than ever before.

### **ELECTRIC LIGHTING**

At the commencement of the last fiscal year the fact that our street lighting was costing too much, and that the plant was in bad condition generally, was conceded by all.

The new Electric Light Committee and Manager Stewart at once proceeded, as practical men, to reclaim the plant and place the same in better condition to produce economical results.

Even while the work of repairing went on, a noticeable decline in operating expenses occurred; the end of the year disclosed a result even beyond our own expectation.

For the year 95-96 the cost of operating our plant was \$29,771.80 while for the past year the total cost of operating the same number of lights was reduced to \$22,125.08 an actual saving to the city of over \$7,000 in operating expenses.

This demonstrates what was asserted at the beginning of the year, that no reason exists why a city should not successfully manage and operate such a plant.

While we have reduced the cost per lamp per annum during the last year from about \$89.00 to \$66.00 per lamp; this very positive reduction has not been made at the expense of the service rendered our people; on the contrary it is conceded that the best service ever received has been during this economical period.

It is confidently believed that for the ensuing year, even a better service can be rendered the public at less cost, and this should be our aim and determination.

In order however, that we may be better prepared for the future, it is recommended that a policy be inaugurated by which a gradual exchange of the oldest electrical machinery now used, for the best modern apparatus may be made, at the same time providing for a gradual extension of the capacity of the plant.

This gradual change may be made at a slight cost per annum, and will in a few years thoroughly equip our plant with the most modern machinery and give our people the very best of service, and year by year materially reduce the cost per light per annum.

It is estimated by competent authority, that with an appropriation equal to the amount that would necessarily have been paid by the city under recent contract offers (\$85.00 per light per annum) for a period of 3 years, the city would not only be enabled to operate the plant in the highest state of efficiency, but with the surplus be able to replace all machinery in the power house with the very latest improved machinery.

It is recommended that the street lights from Union Depot north to Messanie street, be increased so that there may be at least one light per block for the distance.

In this department all must concede we have made material progress, and not only are the officers in charge to be commended for their successful efforts, but we may say that the lighting question in this city has been solved by them.

## **LAWS**

Another matter to which the attention of all officers should be called at this time, is some of the laws governing city officers and which laws should, and will be strictly enforced during the ensuing year.

Section 1279:R.S. 1889, relating to cities of second class, provide as follows:

"If any city officer shall be directly or indirectly interested in any contract under the city, or any work done by the city, or in furnishing supplies for the city, or any of its institutions, he shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor;

And any appointed officer becoming so interested shall be dismissed from office immediately by the Mayor; and upon the mayor becoming satisfied that any elective officer is so interested, he shall immediately suspend such officer and report the facts to the Common Council, whereupon the Common Council, as soon as practicable, shall be convened to hear and determine the same; and if, by two thirds vote of the Common Council, he be found so interested, he shall be immediately dismissed from such office. No officer shall hold two appointments under the city government at the same time."

This section was called to the attention of all city officers during the last year, since which time the officers have cooperated in its enforcement.

Section 3865: as follows;

"Any municipal officer, who shall accept, use or travel on any free passes or ticket or passes or tickets at a discount; (of any railroad or transportation company) shall be deemed guilty of a

misdemeanor and punished by a fine not less than fifty dollars, nor more than five hundred dollars for each offense, and upon conviction thereof, forfeit his office, and if there be no provisions made by law for the removal of such officer by impeachment, the court trying the cause shall adjudge the defendant to have forfeited his office and declare the same vacant."

This section of course applies to street railways as well as other transportation companies; and it is thought best to call your attention to it at the beginning of this year, in order that no officer may innocently overlook the same.

### **SPECIAL MESSAGE**

Other matters of grave importance, not touched upon in this message will be especially called to your attention as occasion may require.

The funding of the 6% bonds is a matter that demands immediate attention, and the question of future water supply is of no less importance.

Special committees have had the water-works question under consideration for many months, and it is hoped will soon be able to report to you with recommendations.

### **TO THE DEMOCRATS**

And now a word politically, and I am done.

A year ago the Common Council was largely republican. At the late election the people changed this branch into a democratic body, thereby creating what should be an harmonious administration.

This change was not an accident; it was the deliberate intention of the people to place the responsibility of governing this municipality upon one party, so that it could not be shifted.

We are bound to accept that responsibility, and the future of your party in this city, should and does depend solely upon whether or not we so conduct the affairs of this city as to warrant the future confidence of the people.

The people of St. Joseph are ever watchful of an officers conduct, and quickly resent any neglect or evasion of duty; they know the difference between a promise of good government, and an actual economical and honest administration. They care not for promises, but demand results.

Let us then, at no time lose sight of the principle that "he serves his party best, who serves his people best," and we will find at the end of the year when our mutual duties are ended, that the result wished for by the people has been attained, and that neither party nor city has suffered on account of the conduct of those thus honored.

Yours Respectfully,

Lawrence A. Vories, Mayor