

GRATZ DEFENDS UNDERTAXATION

Revision Board Head Admits Blankenburg and McNichol Assessment Cuts

SAYS REYBURN ASKED IT

Granted Request So City Could Get Parkway at Lower Figure by Condemnation

Admission that the residence of State Senator James F. McNichol, former Mayor Rudolph Blankenburg and Dr. Samuel Bartain in West Logan Square are undervalued and have been since the Reburn administration was made today by Simon Gratz, president of the Board of Revision of Taxes.

Mr. Gratz pleaded that he had not assessed these properties up to their full value because Mayor Reburn had "begged" him not to.

"Why did Mayor Reburn 'beg' you not to assess these properties up to their full value?" was asked.

"IT WAS LIKE THIS" "You see it was like this," he said, withdrawing the cigar and digging at the band with a fingernail. "Mayor Reburn came to me and begged me not to increase the assessments in that section through which the Parkway was to go."

"I remember perfectly by his very words," Mr. Gratz said, "let those assessments alone. If you keep your hands off I will be able to buy those properties at ten percent above the assessed valuation, but if you boost the assessments the city will have to pay a night more money for the properties."

"In all probability, if Mayor Reburn had not asked me to keep my hands off, I would have raised the assessments. But when the Mayor explained his plan to me I agreed to it, as I would agree to anything which is for the public good."

Public attention was called to the wide difference between property assessments and property valuations of West Logan Square last Tuesday, when former Mayor Blankenburg testified before the Board of Board Reviewers in the matter of damages to be awarded him for his home, 214 West Logan Square, which has been condemned for the Parkway. The residence is assessed by the city for the present year at \$49,000, but Mr. Blankenburg puts a valuation of \$82,000 on it.

Benjamin E. Welch, J. T. Jackson and Frank H. Massey, real estate experts, valued the property at figures from \$74,500 to \$82,000. The same experts valued Senator McNichol's home at 222 West Logan Square at from \$124,500 to \$123,000. The McNichol property is assessed at \$65,000. Testimony was also taken as to the value of the residence of Dr. Samuel Bartain, at 213 West Logan Square. The doctor values his property at \$69,000. It is assessed this year at \$35,000.

OTHER OWNERS SUSPICIOUS "When the discrepancy between the assessments and valuations of these properties became public property, the suspicion arose among thousands of small property holders all over the city, who are assessed right up to the 'handle,' that all was not right with Philadelphia's system of property assessment. Charges were made that it was a case of 'playing favorites' and that the little holders were being forced unjustly to bear the greater part of the burden of property taxation."

Asked if it was true that numerous property holders, such as McNichol and Blankenburg, were being "let off easy" in the matter of assessments to the disadvantage of small property holders, Mr. Gratz replied:

"It is no such thing. The situation as regards McNichol and Blankenburg in West Logan Square does not hold true in other sections of the city. It is true that I would have raised those assessments in the Reburn administration, but I have explained why I did not do so."

"The small property holder is not being discriminated against, nor are there any property holders, big or little, who are being favored. If you will talk with some of the big property holders in the central part of the city you will soon find that they feel that no favoritism is being shown them."

"But, Mr. Gratz, Mr. Blankenburg's residence is assessed at \$49,000 and Mr. Blankenburg has testified that his home is worth \$82,000. Three real estate experts have testified to its greater value. How do you account for such a discrepancy between the amount of the assessment, \$49,000, and the valuation of \$82,000?"

"Nothing to it," replied Mr. Gratz, rolling his cigar from one end of his mouth to the other, "nothing to it, I say."

BLANKENBURG HONEST FELLOW "Now Mr. Blankenburg is an honest fellow all right; I give him credit for that. He may value his property at \$82,000 if he wants to, or he may say it is worth \$200,000 if it suits him. No doubt he may think his residence is worth \$82,000, but it doesn't make any difference what he thinks it is worth; what counts is the market. I don't doubt that McNichol has put enough improvements in his residence to make it worth \$123,000 to him, but the question is, as I say, what it will bring under the hammer."

"But, Mr. Gratz, experts have testified as to the value of these properties, and they put it at near the owner's figures."

The veteran president of the Board of Revision of Taxes smiled one of those dry, nervous smiles which are characteristic with him.

"Experts," he remarked contemptuously, "who can't have experts? Say, I don't care what your proposition is, you can get an expert to 'go up' on it if you are able to pay his fee. Expert advice doesn't amount to anything."

Mr. Gratz slapped the desk with a lean

hard to give emphasis to his remark concerning experts.

"How would it do, Mr. Gratz, to adopt the system used in Chicago of publishing every year a complete list of the tax assessments? Would this not enable householders to compare notes and find out how their assessments compare with those of other residents in this vicinity? Would not publication of the lists do away with much of the present misunderstanding concerning assessments?"

Mr. Gratz made a very wry face and then he shook his head vigorously.

"Tried it once," he said, "and it didn't work. We published the lists in one of the Philadelphia daily newspapers. What did the readers of that newspaper do? Didn't even take the trouble to read them. Crumpled them up and threw them into the waste paper basket."

"Here Mr. Gratz made a motion with his hand to show how Philadelphia taxpayers tossed the tax lists into the waste paper basket."

"No," said Mr. Gratz, "I don't approve of publishing the lists. The records are here; they are available to the public. If taxpayers want to know how their neighbors stand they can come here. It is true that we have had complaints from persons who said that they were assessed unjustly, but after we had talked with them they withdrew their complaints. We made them see that they were wrong."

BUSINESS MEN PLEAD FOR P. R. T. REROUTING

Commission Asked to Order Changes on Three Lines

Hearing of the complaint of the United Business Men's Association and the Central Germantown Business Men's Association against the present routes followed by Germantown cars was renewed today before the Public Service Commission in Select Council chamber in City Hall.

The complainants requested the commission to order the Rapid Transit Company to reroute lines Nos. 8, 22 and 55. These lines run north from the central part of the city. They run up Eleventh to Glenwood and Clearfield and then turn to Germantown avenue. Those opposed to this route contend that the cars can be turned into Germantown avenue further south at York, Cumberland or Huntingdon street.

Five lines run down Germantown avenue between Germantown and York, but only two return between these points. The complainants want the cars to turn into Germantown avenue going north at the same point that they turn out going south.

It is also contended that the present route taken by the company is dangerous, illegal, confusing to passengers and harmful to business interests.

The complainants assert that when the company obtained the charter to run these lines it specified on what street they were to run, but in 1913 the lines were rerouted. Prior to 1913, the complainants said, Routes 22 and 55 were running as residents would like to have them run now.

Many residents of central Germantown attended the hearing.

Boyd Lee Spahr, counsel for the company, denied all the allegations and said the lines were not dangerous, confusing or contrary to law. He contended that if business was injured it was not due to the company.

Edward B. Martin, of the United Business Men's Association, represented the complainants.

Commissioner James Alcorn presided.

200 School Boys With Bad Teeth

GLASSBORO, N. J., Dec. 1.—The medical inspector has found 200 pupils in the public schools with defective teeth, tonsils and eyesight and similar ailments. The Parent-Teachers' Association will take up these cases with the Board of Education.

ASTOR PROTEGE PLAYS TRUANT

Led of Engaging Manner and Good Voice Lands in Court

NEW YORK, Dec. 1.—William Naumann, fifteen years old, musical protege of Mrs. Vincent Astor, was in Yorkville court wondering whether his love for adventure

had ended the brilliant prospects his engaging manner and soprano voice had won for him.

Watson Acquitted of Misusing Mails AUGUSTA, Ga., Dec. 1.—Thomas E. Watson, Georgia editor, today was acquitted of the charge of sending obscene matter through the mails.

NORRISTOWN FIRE PARADE

Local Companies March Five Miles, With Jefferson Fire Company as Guest

Turn Council, The Hancock Company, which turned out nearly 100 men, had as guests the Jefferson Fire Company, of Jeffersonville.

NORRISTOWN, Pa., Dec. 1.—The annual parade of the Norristown Fire Department, held over a five-mile route, was reviewed by Chief H. and members of



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Strawbridge & Clothier, 24th and Market Sts.
- NORTH**
City Line Pharmacy, York Road and City Line.
Dettler, John C., 1227 Rockland St., Lucas.
Futrell, Don, 146 North Eighth St.
Ideal Piano and Talking Machine Co., 1822 Germantown Ave.
Glaworski, 2522 Germantown Ave.
Grier Music Parlor, 6212 N. 24th St.
Philadelphia Talking Machine Co., 500 N. Franklin St.
Rosen, L. E., 218 Girard Ave.
Schaefer's Piano Company, 522 N. 24th St.
Schmid & Neuman, 1715 Columbia Ave.
- NORTHEAST**
Port, Edward H., 2425 Frankford Ave.
Central Music Shop, 2122 N. Front St.
- NORTHEAST—Continued**
Frankford Music Store, 1227 Orthodox St.
Goodman, L. L., 237 West Girard Ave.
Guthowski, Victor, Orthodox and Almond Sts.
Henny, Thomas M., 2124 Kensington Ave.
Kitty, E., 156 West Girard Ave.
Kryger, Joseph, 2112 Richmond St.
Mittinye, Samuel, 1124 North 21st St.
Ottavert's, 232 W. Lehigh Ave.
Philadelphia Talking Machine Co., 244 N. 24th St.
Sathlinger's Department Store, Front and Sansuannah Ave.
- NORTHWEST**
Carson, T. D., 2522 Germantown Ave.
Davis, Franklin, 2522 Wayne Ave.
Kewlans, Martin, 4222 Germantown Ave.
Keystone Talking Machine Co., 1201 North 22d St.
Moore, F. H., 2216 Germantown Ave.
Sedwinton, Philip, 214 W. York St.
Tompkins, J. Maurice, 217 Germantown Ave.
- WEST PHILADELPHIA**
Care, B. F., 212 Main St., Darby.
Davis, Geo. B. & Co., 2212 Lancaster Ave.
Rabin Piano Co., 221-22 & 22d St.
- PHILADELPHIA**
Fillman, W. H., 5124 Lansdowne Ave.
Lodame, Harry, 412 North 22d St.
Mehler, H., 422-42 Lancaster Ave.
Shull's Drug Store, 2923 Market St.
Universal Talking Machine and Record Co., 20th and Chestnut Sts.
West Philadelphia Talking Machine Co., 1 South 24th St.
- SOUTH**
De Bow, Louis, 1222 South 4th St.
Freed, Harry, 1227-28 S. 4th St.
Globe Talking Machine Co., 1227 N. Broad Ave.
Lampson, Antonio, 719 South 17th St.
Miller, H., 202 South 2d St.
Musical Echo Co., The, L. Kahan, prop., N. E. cor. 24th and Rindbergh Sts.
Philadelphia Phonograph Co., 212 South St.
Philadelphia Phonograph Co., 222 S. 24th St.
Sawmford, D., 121 South St.
Stoll, Harry, 412 South 24th St.
- CANBY, N. J.**
Dudley, H. J., 1122-21-20 Broadway.

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