

To the Mayor & Aldermen & Common Council of the City of Portland:  
for 1869-1869.

In the great fire, on the 4th of July 1866, the greater part of my property was destroyed, saving only a part of the less valuable. My schedule given in amounted to \$849.75. I put the articles, at what I suppose to be the cost, having no bills to refer to. That amount was not near the worth to me.

On this the Committee awarded me \$100.00, a deposit in the 5 cent savings bank, with an order ~~with an order~~ to pay it out to me, in weekly allowances, not to exceed \$2.00 a week, on the supposition that I was not capable of taking care of myself. I went to the committee to have the order altered, & give me the money. Judge Fox, the Chairman, said it was out of the kindest motives, that it was put, in that way, because I had always spent my money, in ways, that did me no good. I told the committee that my money had not gone, in that way. That I had six times, in my life, laid a solid foundation, apparently, for an independent fortune, & that, in every one, by the unforeseen turn of times, I had had heavy losses, some times of hundreds & sometimes of thousands of dollars.

I stated also to the Committee, that they had given to others, from 40 to 50 percent, on the face of their inventories, cash in hand, & mine was not better than 10 percent, & under this condition; but mean as it was, if I could <sup>have</sup> the money, I would take it. Judge Fox observed that all my loss would not have brot \$100.00 at auction. That is not the true question. No second hand stuff will bring its worth at auction, & this schedule did not contain near all my loss, but I would have been content, with any thing like a fair average, as was given to others. I told that Committee that I would not touch one cent of that money under those conditions, if I staid to death. And I make the same statement to the city government. The government can do right, or wrong, by me, as they please. They can take the money, & give me an order, on the treasury, for what they please. Why I should be singled out, from every one in the city, to be treated, in this mean way, by the Committee, I do not know, except that I am poor, old, infirm & decrepid, & unworthy of decent treatment, I do not know.

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Contributed to Maine Memory Network by the Maine Historical Society  
(Coll. S-2057 Misc. box 99/12)

Date: 1869

Description: Jonathan Morgan letter requesting assistance from the City of Portland after the great fire of 1866.

After a refernce to a special committee, they report back that the petitioner might have have to withdraw, & accepted by unanimous vote, at each board.

If I am a citizen, why should I not be treated as other citizens? If not citizen, let the proper authority find where I belong & send me home.

I understand that the government say that they have confided the whole business of relief to the committee & have no controll over them, I wonder if a Committee of Congress has an absolute controll over Congress?

If the Government see fit to connive with that committee & wrong me out of my honest dues, they have the power to do it, & may have the credit of it. The money & property was not sent here, as a gift to the city; but to be distributed, in honest & equal proportions, to the sufferers, & on that ground, I have a just claim to my equal share.

As to the value of the property lost, I will state the value of a few articles.

My library could not be replaced for less than	300.00
My stereotype plates of my translation of the New testament, could not be replaced for less than	600.00
My loss on my mowing machine partly mad & patterns.	50.00
My English Grammars, the only true standard of the language ever published & sold slowly cost about 20cents a copy in shutes, about 700 remaining	175.00
About 2 cords of fire wood	16.00
Salt pork & other meat	12.50
Turning lathe & tools	50.00
A sowing machine, to sow broad cast, in drills, or hills & cover nearly done	30.00
Moddle of a diging machine	20.00
	<u>275.50</u>

This lot of articles was worth, to me, what is above stated, & could not be replact, for less, as prices are now, leaving out all the others, & a large amount of smaller articles, which were valuable to me.

I make this last statement, to the city government, & they can do what

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they please with the whole subject.

Men, in the prime of life, & able bodied, could go right to work, at 3, 4 & 5 dollars a day, & could have their beef, pork & bread & flour, & clothes of all kinds, & cash, on their inventories of losses, & ~~of~~ advances of cash to help of several hundreds of dollars, to assist in rebuilding, & poor, old, forlorn, ~~ed~~, housless & homless I, then in my 89<sup>th</sup> year & now in my 92, must be turn'd into the street, to famish, starve & die, on \$2.00 per week, whether I took that sum, or not, for it was not a living, at the bidding, of the great murderer, Fox & his 38 coadjutors. And the great curiosity is that the victim was compell'd to murder himself, by starvation, in the streets, & the murderers not ameanable to any <sup>law</sup> a circumstance before unknown.

Considering my advanced age, my broken down system, with chronic, incurable diseases, without house, or home, common humanity would have said that I ought to have had a comfortable support of life some thing like what others, in better circumstances had. But so it was & is, & have need, since the fire, from the city, a cook stove \$24.00, an old army, blue second hand coat & pants & 5 torn blankets, about worth mending, & one other coat too small for use, & no kind of provisions hitherto, I have been sav'd from death by starvations, & the dusee of Judge Fox & his relief committee & the dusee of the City government, by the kindness of particular friends.

What the present City government will do on this memorial, I know not. If I can have anything like what others have had, I will thankfully receive it. But, if I shall have another murderous award, as heretofore, I shall refuse it, with disdain. If I am unfortunately poor, by unforeseen misfortune & the adverse turn of times unforeseen & unavoidable, I am not bereft of all sense of honor & propriety.

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