

Cleft Rock Dominated Central Street Corner

Cleft Rock, a huge granite outcropping once located at the northwest corner of Main and Central Streets, figured prominently in the city's history as a landmark.

Worn down over the years, it was nevertheless still visible in 1928. That's when Arthur Phillips, author of the three-fascicle History of Fall River, snapped pictures of the rock.

Fire had just ravaged the business blocks on both sides of Main Street, and Phillips, camera in hand, made his way into cellars of the burned out

structures, where the rock's remains were clearly visible.

He reported that Cleft Rock was particularly prominent in the basement of the Mohican Hotel, formerly located on the site where the B.M.C. Durfee Trust Co. now stands.

According to the historian, both the rock and the falls of the Quequechan River below were mentioned as early as 1600 in the records of the Plymouth Colony.

Legend has it that love sick Indian maidens would throw themselves

off the rock and into the falls below. Some said that was all the rock was good for, since its presence resulted in a rather narrow main street.

The ledge projected so far into what is now Central Street that there was only a narrow path between it and the stream. Both Bedford and Main Streets were laid out along prominent Indian trails.

The rock did serve several useful purposes. According to tradition, its shady sides sheltered the public fish market in the days when Fall River was still Troy.

Later, the rock proved to be the ideal, natural boundary between Fall River and Tiverton. And, it was at the granite ledge that travelers, bound for New Bedford or towns in that direction, turned off

to the east from the main road, up what is now Bedford Street.

The rock was quarried down over the years and yielded numerous chunks of granite that went into the building of homes for mill workers.

Early records show that the corner, now a prime parcel of real estate, was picked up for only \$200 in 1803 by William Durfee. Even though the site was at the busy Fall River Four Corners, Durfee was considered "crazy" by his relatives, for purchasing what amounted to a huge boulder.

Major Bradford Durfee, a founder of the Fall River Iron Works Co., eventually built a home just west of the corner. Because of the rock, the house was elevated and had double steps leading to its front door.

South End Was Once



The Mohican Hotel, one of Southeastern New England's largest hostleries, was situated at North Main and Central Streets, where Cleft Rock, a huge granite outcropping once served as a prominent landmark. The rock protruded so far into what is now Central Street that the roadway was only a

path. Quarried down over the years, the rock was nevertheless still visible in the hotel's basement after the 1928 fire that ravaged downtown business blocks. The Mohican, chief competitor of the Hotel Mellen, was opened in 1914 with 70 rooms. By 1923 it had been enlarged to 350 rooms.