

# Chapter XI

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## SOCIAL WELFARE AGENCIES AND CHARITIES

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### *Social Welfare Agencies and Charities Public and Private*

The Church was the provenience of education. From the same source arose charitable organizations and welfare associations.

The many and varied institutions under control of the Roman Catholic Church have been described or listed. The Boys' Club has been mentioned in its indirect relationship with the Pleasant Street Mission.

#### *Young Men's Christian Association*

A Fall River branch of the Y.M.C.A. was started in 1857, by a group of young men which included R. K. Remington, S. B. Chase, John C. Milne and Richard B. Borden. During the Civil War period their activities ceased but after the war there was a reorganization and the association continued with varying degrees of success until 1889, when under the leadership of Rev. Percy S. Grant, a successful effort to revivify the work was made. Mrs. Young granted the use of the "Slade House",<sup>1</sup> rent free, for a period of three years and George W. Stowell of Boston was elected General Secretary.

The building on the corner of North Main and Pine Streets was dedicated April 19, 1903. The local association continues under able leadership to enlarge and vary its activities. Howard B. Peck was elected President in 1940. Samuel F. Bumpus<sup>2</sup> is the General Secretary. The staff now consists of sixteen regular employees which number does not include those doing part time work. The Y.M.C.A. provides sleeping quarters and club privileges to service men.

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<sup>1</sup> See illustration Stone Church.

<sup>2</sup> Retired October, 1944. William E. Abbott succeeded him.

### *The Fall River Women's Union*

The Women's Union owns and occupies a large brick building on the corner of Rock and Franklin Streets, dedicated March 12, 1909. The building provides an audience hall and stage where entertainments, gymnastic classes and dances are held. A social superintendent has charge of this department. There are sleeping rooms, a well conducted public restaurant and an industrial exchange. In 1891 the Working Girls' Club was formed and their activities now continue in this building.

"About 1870 three ladies obtained permission from the School Committee to open a room in the Anawan Street School House Saturday afternoons, to instruct girls working in the mills, in sewing. This was the forerunner of the Women's Union." The first business meeting of the "Union" was held Dec. 15, 1873 and except for a few months in 1876, their activities have been continuous. Rooms were used in the Troy Building, in the Union Mill office building and in a house on Pine Street, where the exchange was established. Mrs. Abraham G. Hart was the first president. For many years Mrs. Jessie Flint Brayton served as president. Mrs. D. R. Ryder is now president and Miss Clara F. Davol, secretary.

### *The Fall River Children's Home and Home for Aged People<sup>3</sup>*

These two well endowed foundations provide real homes for the young and for the aged.

The "Children's Home" was organized in 1873 and then occupied a house on the northwest corner of North Main Street and President Avenue. A wooden building was later erected on Robeson Street which was replaced by the present brick structure, dedicated in 1895. James Buffington<sup>4</sup> is the President and Israel Brayton is Vice-President and Treasurer of the Board of Managers.

In 1891 a home was established in a dwelling house on High Street where aged people might retire under pleasant surroundings and amenities. In 1898 the brick building on Highland Avenue was dedicated. It has since been doubled in capacity. Edward S. Adams has for years been President of the Corporation.

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<sup>3</sup> The Hebrew Home for Aged People and the Polish National Home, Inc., have been organized. See also p. 33.

<sup>4</sup> Mr. Buffington resigned in October, 1944 and Norman S. Easton was elected President of the Board of Managers.

### *Hospitals*

Fall River is perhaps as well equipped for hospitalization as any city of its size in the country. All of the hospitals are open for the use of the public.

The "City Hospital"<sup>5</sup> on "The Highlands" occupies land formerly a part of the poor farm. It provides separate buildings for a general hospital, for contagious diseases and for sufferers from tuberculosis. It is managed by a competent staff and is a credit to the city.

The Union Hospital was erected on the corner of Prospect and Hanover Streets in 1908 and merged two previously established institutions; the Fall River Hospital which occupied the Valentine estate on Prospect Street, founded in 1885 and the Emergency Hospital which was in a house where the "Women's Union" now stands.

The Truesdale Hospital is partially endowed and privately controlled. It had its beginning in the former First Baptist Church parsonage, now the Sacred Heart Church rectory, on the corner of Winter and Pine Streets. The modern plant on "The Highlands" now covers several acres and has a national reputation. Two of Fall River's most eminent surgeons, Dr. Philemon E. Truesdale and Dr. Ralph W. French, performed their operations here.

St. Anne's Hospital, near the South Park, was dedicated Feb. 4, 1906 and is in charge of the Dominican Sisters.

### *Community House — Social Index*

A valuable aid to the local welfare organizations is the Community House on the corner of Green and Bank Streets. On the initiative of Richard B. Borden a century old brick residence was converted to provide central headquarters for welfare societies. The following are now located therein: Red Cross, S.P.C.C., Anti-Tuberculosis Association, Family Welfare Association, District Nurses Association, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts.

The local Social Service Index was established by Miss Alice Wetherbee of the Community Welfare Association in 1890. This index is an aid to the various charities and churches in preventing duplication of effort. This work was taken over during the depression and made of great value by Miss Alice Brayton. During this period over twenty thousand persons had to be fed and clothed.

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<sup>5</sup> The first city hospital was on city farm land near Brownell Street.

### *City Home*

We no longer speak of paupers or the poorhouse in relation to those unfortunates who have been unable to save sufficient funds to care for themselves when old age and feebleness approach. It is a "far cry" from the time when it was voted in town meeting (1803), that the unfortunate poor of the town should be sold to the lowest bidder who would care for them.

In 1835 a farm of one hundred and seventy-five acres was purchased and the "dwelling house thereon" was used as an Alms House. Later a large stone house and barn were erected. "The expense of supporting and relieving the poor in 1840, including interest on Alms House establishment, was \$1,800."<sup>6</sup>

On September 27, 1917 the inmates of the old alms house on Stanley Street were moved to the commodious City Home at 1591 Bay Street. This building was originally built by the County for a jail. By the time it was finished the probationary system was in operation and the building was never so used. It is ideally situated near the shore of the bay and the interior has been reconditioned to meet its present use.

### *Parks and Playgrounds*

In 1901, the voters, by a large majority accepted an enactment of the Legislature allowing the appointment of a Park Commission. The members were appointed by Mayor Grime, with Reuben C. Small, Jr. as chairman. Previous to this time little had been accomplished.

Land for the South Park was purchased in 1868 and in 1871 the area between South Main Street and Broadway was laid out and improved. The area, then known as Ruggles Grove, a part of the old Rodman farm was also purchased in 1868. In 1883, the western portion of the poor farm was set aside for park purposes but very little was done to improve it.

The newly appointed Park Commissioners, with an authorized loan of \$182,000, engaged Olmstead Brothers, famous landscape architects and made extensive improvements in the South Park, developed Ruggles Park, the lower stretches of North Park, Durfee Green, Albert Bradbury Green and the parkway on Eastern Avenue.

The Maplewood Park has been developed since 1910 principally as a playground but there is ample opportunity for extension eastward, providing a view overlooking South Watuppa Lake.

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<sup>6</sup> Fowler's History p. 36.

The beautiful and practical Lafayette Park, in the northeast corner of which stands the equestrian statue of General Lafayette, presented to the city by residents of French extraction, was landscaped from a boulder covered acreage, in an otherwise thickly settled neighborhood.

Howard Lothrop, the present superintendent of parks and cemeteries, who also acts as tree warden, was appointed in 1904. He has met all requirements and has been a highly valued executive. Since his appointment, the number of parks and playgrounds has increased out of all proportion to available funds that can be provided for their supervision and upkeep. There are now twenty-two plots used as parks or playgrounds. The smaller and less important are not listed here:

South Park — 54 acres, North Park — 25 A, Ruggles Park — 9A, Maplewood Park — 15A, Lafayette Park — 11A, Rev. John Kelly Park — 5A, Thomas Chew Playground — 4A, John H. Abbott Playground — 8A, Pulaski Playground — 3A, Columbus Playground — 1A, The R. A. Wilcox Playground on Canal Street and the W. E. Turner Memorial Playground at the foot of Cherry Street.

Incidentally, there is no place in the world where more beautiful sunsets may be observed than from the upper reaches of North Park or from the esplanade at the South Park.

### *Cemeteries*

The North Burial Ground at the corner of North Main and Brightman Streets was purchased by the town in 1825 and long continued the principal place for interment. A small burial ground adjoining was known as Oak Tree Cemetery. There is an old cemetery no longer used, at the foot of Hood Street, belonging to the Fall River Preparative Meeting of Friends. In the early days the business of an undertaker was generally carried on as a sideline of the furniture dealer; a public hearse was provided, locally kept in the "hearse house" located on North Main Street near the cemetery.

By 1855 the present Oak Grove Cemetery was established, originally of forty-seven acres, but since enlarged by various purchases. The first land was purchased at a price of \$200 an acre, for which the city traded part of a tract of land between North Main Street and Highland Avenue, lying on both sides of Lincoln Avenue, which had been purchased in 1853 for a park site. It was decided that this location was not just what the city desired for a park. Improvements have been made in the cemetery from time to time and it is one of the most beautiful places for burial of the dead. The

following is an excerpt from the inaugural address of Mayor Edmund P. Buffinton:

"Col. Richard Borden, with his accustomed liberality, has had constructed an appropriate monument to be placed in that section of the cemetery grounds set apart for the burial of those soldiers of the city, whose lives have been or may be sacrificed on the battle field in defense of their country; or such as may die in consequence of wounds received or of diseases contracted in the service. Many a child or friend of some departed soldier, whose remains may rest beneath that monument, will in after years bless the memory of its founder."

Some years ago Miss Elizabeth H. Brayton and Mrs. Leah W. Maloney made a survey of the family burial grounds within the limits of Fall River. These records are in the files of the Fall River Historical Society and contain some interesting data.

The only plot remaining near the center of the city is on Purchase Street, north of the "Franklin Street Christian Church". "This cemetery was undoubtedly on the farm of Abraham Bowen, Sr., whose house stood on the northeast corner of Main and Bedford Streets."

The Valentine-Read Burial Ground is on the west side of North Main Street near Mother's Brook.

"Simon Lynde, born in London 1624, who came to Boston 1650, became possessed of 3 of the original 36 lots into which Freetown was at first divided. These three lots Simon gave to his son Samuel." His (Samuel's) daughter Mary married John Valentine and their eldest son Samuel settled in Freetown. "It is not known where Samuel was buried, but his sons x x x and many of their descendants lie buried in the old Valentine family lot." His son William served on the "Freetown Committee of Correspondence and Safety" during the Revolution. William built the house now occupied by Roy C. Athearn, 5105 North Main Street. His brother Samuel built on the site of the Read homestead, 5254 North Main Street, and brother John built the old Barnaby house recently destroyed which was over the line in Freetown.<sup>7</sup>

Across the road from the Valentine-Read cemetery stood the old colonial church.<sup>8</sup> The land on which it stood, although within Fall River belongs to the town of Freetown "to which it was given by Samuel Lynde of Boston".<sup>9</sup> A few years after the deed was passed another part began to be used for a burial ground and many of the old settlers were buried there.

There is an interesting story connected with the burial place on the Bradford Bennett farm on Meridian Street, now the home of Mrs. O. H. Jackson. At the time of the smallpox epidemic, Mrs. Jackson's grandfather gave permission to parents, too poor to provide burials for their children,

<sup>7</sup> See Fascicle I, p. 89.

<sup>8</sup> See p. 4, Fascicle II.

<sup>9</sup> "Neglected Graves of Early Settlers" by C. E. Boivin, *Fall River Daily Herald* for June 17, 1903.

permission to bury them in his lot. This accounts for the number of unmarked graves.

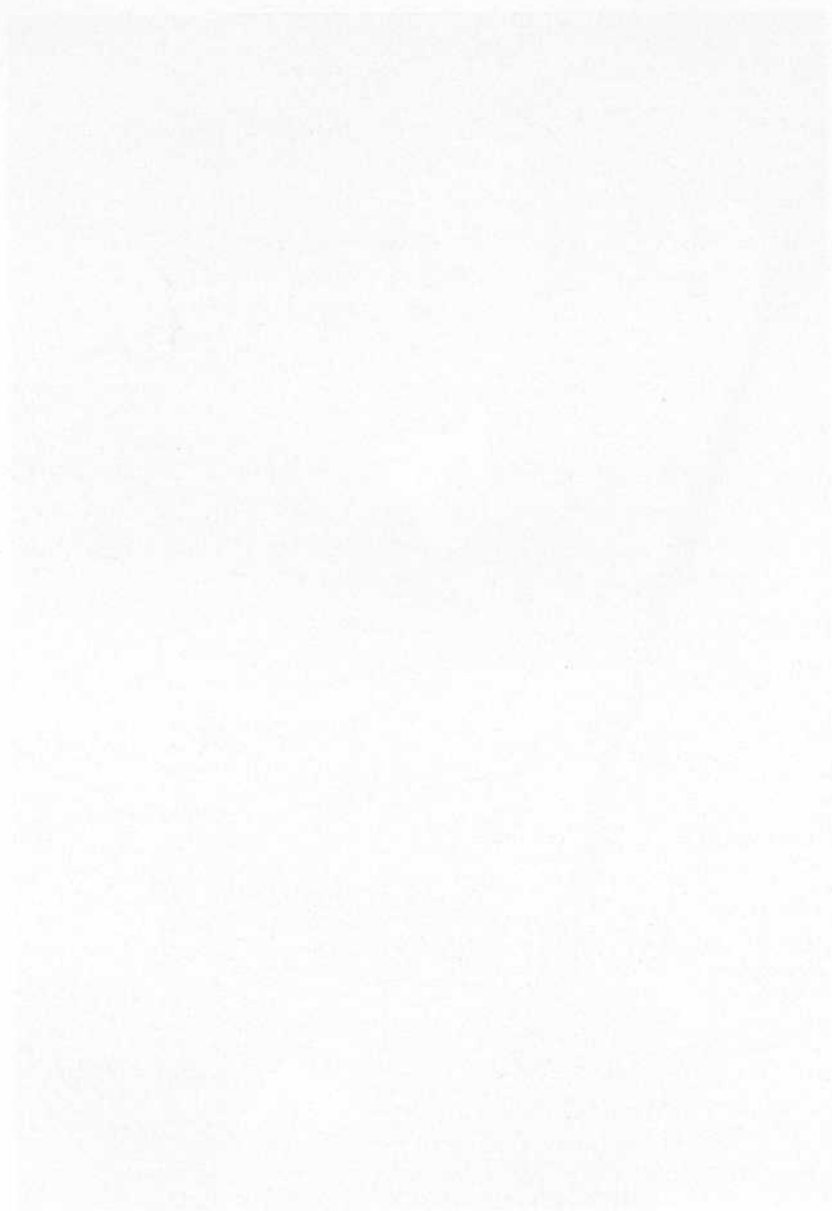
In addition to those mentioned, the following cemeteries are in use today: Beth-El, 4561 North Main Street; Hebrew Cemetery, McMahon Street, corner of Amity; Jewish Cemetery, 306 Newhall Street; Notre Dame French Cemetery, 1540 Stafford Road; Our Lady of Light Portuguese Cemetery, 547 Newhall Street; St. John's Cemetery, 258 Brightman Street; St. Mary's Cemetery, Amity Street; St. Patrick's Cemetery, 2233 Robeson Street.







JOHN TUTTLE SWIFT



## JOHN TUTTLE SWIFT

I have chosen, in telling the story of certain well-defined branches of local history, to relate the activities of some one person who has been so prominent in that particular field of action that his life story, coupled with that of his associates, will give an accurate and connected story of that entire branch.

On my return to Fall River in 1890 after my college days, the prominent law offices in Fall River were headed by James M. Morton, James F. Jackson, John W. Cummings and Henry K. Braley. Mr. Braley was associated in business with Marcus G. B. Swift and Mr. Swift succeeded to that business when Mr. Braley was appointed to the Superior Court bench in 1892.

Mr. Swift was active in the courts, but was especially skilled as an office consultant and as an expert conveyancer. After his decease in 1902, his two sons succeeded to his business. One of them, when elected attorney general in 1910, removed to Boston, and the other, John T. Swift, is the subject of this sketch. Born in Fall River in November of 1877, Mr. Swift was educated in the local schools and at Williams College with the class of 1901. When his college education was completed, Mr. Swift had unusual business experiences. Before he studied law he became reporter on the staff of the Herald News, a clerk in the office which combined both a national bank and a savings bank, with a real estate and insurance office operated by George N. Durfee, and in the cotton and cloth brokerage house of Tuttle, Hurley & Co.

Upon the selection of Congressman William S. Greene as chairman of the Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries of the House of Representatives in Washington, he appointed Mr. Swift to be Clerk of this Committee. In Washington, Mr. Swift made many friends of national repute, studied law in George Washington University and graduated in the class of 1910 with the degree of Bachelor of Laws, whereupon he began the practice of law in Fall River in his father's office with his brother James M. Swift and George Grime as his associates.

From the first he handled important business matters with success, largely due to the fact that he was an indefatigable worker and gave close study to every branch of law and of evidence which he might expect to

meet in the courts. He was very successful in his jury trials and as attorney for and defending corporations and insurance companies, he tried a large proportion of the tort cases which our juries heard. Appointed and elected to many different offices of judicial, social and political importance, for fifteen years by appointment from four successive governors of Massachusetts, he served as a member of the local board of police. In 1919 Mr. Swift was elected Treasurer and later President of the Citizens Savings Bank and retired from active law work. He had previously had experience as a director and counsel for several banking institutions and his success in his new field was outstanding. The bank has earned and regularly paid dividends since it was incorporated in 1851 and for several years has regularly maintained a surplus as large as permitted by Massachusetts law.

Mr. Swift entertained the business men and bankers of Fall River at a meeting and dinner of the local Chamber of Commerce given in honor of concerns which had been continuously in business for fifty years, with the story of the development of banks in the city, and I have, with his consent, used his notes of that address as the foundation of my sketch of our banking history. I appreciate my business and social association with Mr. Swift. The fact that he was a 32nd degree Mason, member of the Congregational Church, a liberal Republican in politics, and was a member of all the prominent local social clubs; lieutenant in the volunteer coast artillery, lieutenant in the state guard during the world war and president of the local Council of Boy Scouts, brought him in contact with every branch of civil life but more important than all else he had a host of devoted and loyal friends who aided in bringing support and prosperity to each of his business and social endeavors.

Mr. Swift died June 17, 1940 in his sixty-third year.