

## Chapter XIX

CUSTOM HOUSE

POST OFFICE

PUBLIC UTILITIES

### *Custom House*

Soon after the Revolution the Federal Government established the first custom house, in what was known as the Dighton District. It was near the shore of Taunton Estuary, just south of Muddy Cove. The Fall River District replaced the Dighton District in 1837 and the custom house was located in the town hall on Central Street. When the new town hall was built, it was located there for a few years and then moved to the second floor of a building at the northeast corner of Anawan and Water Streets, where it remained until a Federal building was erected on Bedford Street in 1880.

### *Post Office*

The first general issue of postage stamps by the United States was in 1847. Stamps were used before that time in some localities but were issued at the expense of the postmasters. The price of letter postage was according to the number of sheets used; consequently letters were written on large sheets, then folded and sealed, leaving a space for the address. Envelopes and blotting paper did not come into general use until 1845.

The first mail was handled in Fall River, then Troy, in 1811. Charles Pitman was the first postmaster; at first located in the village, he moved his post office to Steep Brook in 1813.<sup>1</sup>

W. W. Howes, First Assistant Postmaster General reports that the first *United States Post Office* was "established in Fall River, Massachusetts, on March 14, 1816. The first Postmaster was Abraham Bowen. There is no record of a government Post Office in the town of Fall River, Rhode Island".

<sup>1</sup> See Fascicle I p. 90.

"The (government) Post Office at Steep Brook, Massachusetts was established on January 13, 1873, with Abiel W. Winslow as postmaster. The office was discontinued on July 1, 1900."

Through the instrumentality of Congressman James Buffington, in 1873, an appropriation of \$200,000, (later raised to \$285,000) was made for a Federal building, to house the Post Office and the Custom House. This beautiful, ornate (not rococo) building faced Bedford Street and covered a part of the land north of the stream, now occupied by the present Post Office Building. Two of the uprights which supported the arcade arches of the front, now form the pedestals of the Spanish American War Monument at the north end of Plymouth Avenue and the statue of Prince Henry the Navigator at the junction of Eastern Avenue and Pleasant Street, presented to the city by the citizens of Portuguese extraction. The four stone medallions, illustrating the communication systems of the time are stored in the vaults of the B. M. C. Durfee Trust Company.

The present two story structure which opened for business, July 18, 1932, with its surroundings, occupies a city block. It faces south with ample setback from Pocasset Street, offering space for a lawn and shrubbery. During the period of its construction, the E. S. Brown Building on North Street was used as a Post Office.

There are two sub-stations in the city; one called the Flint Station at 1200 Pleasant Street and the other the South Station at 1462 South Main Street.

Mrs. Grace Hartley Howe is at present the Postmaster and Gen. Harry A. Skinner the Assistant Postmaster. The receipts for 1940 amounted to \$377,386.85.

### *Steam Railroads*

The Fall River Iron Works established the first rail line out of Fall River. Passenger service began June 9, 1845. It began operations under the name of Fall River Railroad and the tracks at first extended to Myricks where connections were made with the Taunton-New Bedford branch of the Boston and Providence Railroad. The track was later extended to South Braintree where more direct connections were made with Boston.

The first local depot was just south of the Central Street "underpass". In 1847, when through service from Boston to New York via Fall River and the Bay State Steamboat Company was inaugurated, the station was moved to the Steamboat Dock.



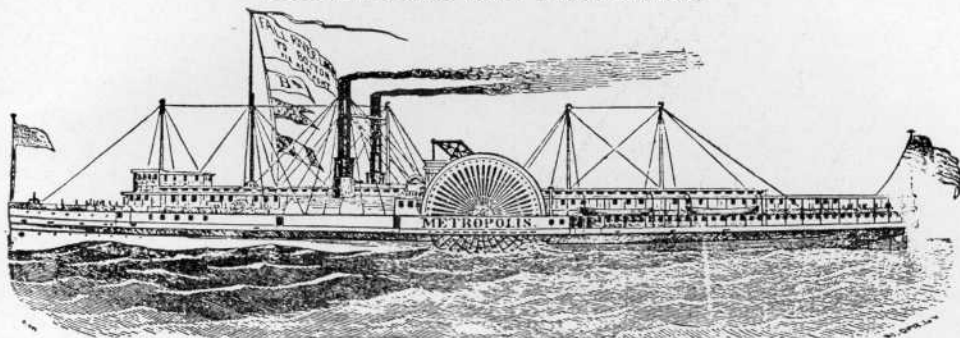
OLD POST OFFICE  
*Old Tanyard Building at left*



NEW POST OFFICE



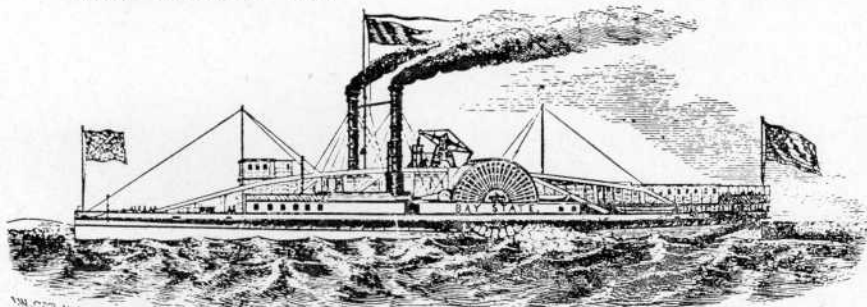
# BOSTON AND NEW YORK, VIA NEWPORT AND FALL RIVER.



## BAY STATE LINE.

This Route is by steamer from New York to Fall River, 180 miles, and thence by railroad, 53 miles; (one hour and forty minutes,) to Boston. On this route are the well-known steamers

METROPOLIS,	2300 tons burthen,	Capt. William Brown.
EMPIRE STATE,	1650 " "	" Benjamin Brayton.
BAY STATE,	1600 " "	" Thomas G Jewett.
STATE OF MAINE,	1000 " "	"



These Boats are not surpassed, either in strength or safety, by any other boats ever constructed, and are elegantly and substantially fitted up with every thing calculated to contribute to the ease, comfort and safety of travelers. One of them leaves New York every afternoon, (Sundays excepted,) at 5 o'clock P. M., (at 4 o'clock in the winter months,) and arrives at Fall River at an early hour in the morning, whence, after a comfortable night's rest, the traveler may proceed direct to Boston by steamboat train.

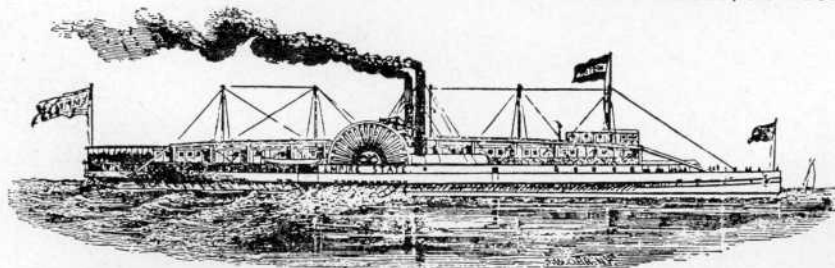
Passengers from Boston to New York take the steamboat train, which leaves the Old Colony and Fall River Railroad Depot, Boston, every afternoon, (Sundays excepted,) for Fall River, arriving at the latter place in time for an early supper on board one of the above boats, which starts for New York immediately on arrival of the train.

Providence passengers are forwarded to and from Fall River by steamers Bradford Durfee, Canonius, or Metacomb.

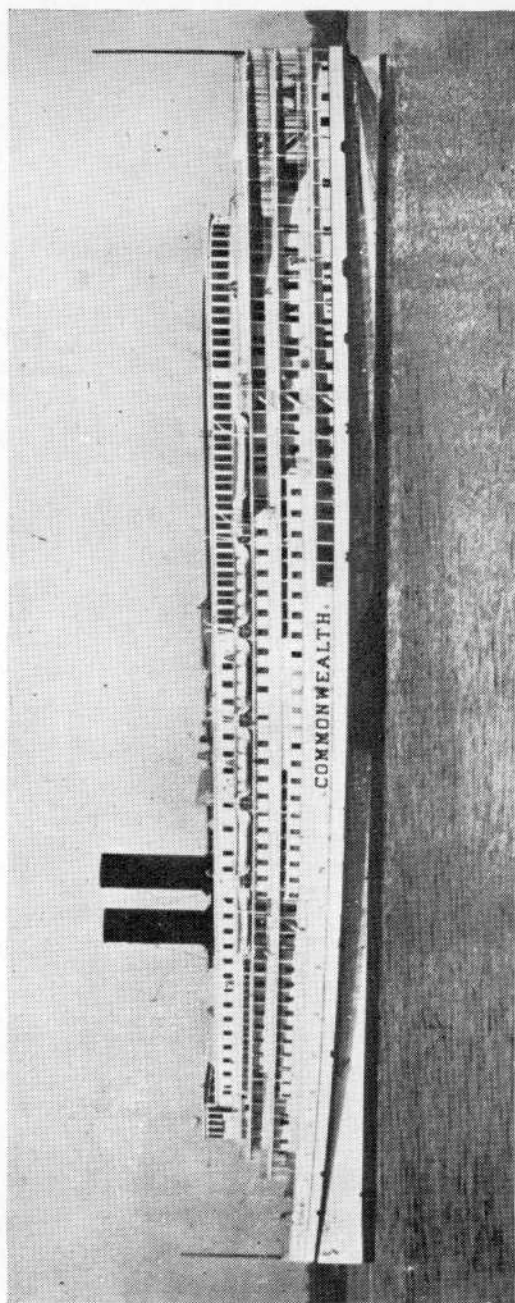
For all further particulars see bills and advertisements of the day.

**Wm. BORDEN, Agent,**

70 & 71 WEST STREET, NEW YORK.



FALL RIVER LINE



THE COMMONWEALTH

In 1863 the Old Colony Railroad which then controlled the Fall River Railroad extended the tracks to Newport and in 1865, laying tracks from Warren to the east shore of South Somerset operated a ferry from the foot of Ferry Street, connecting with the terminus, thus opening a direct route to Providence. This service continued until the Slade's Ferry Bridge was built and the first train ran across it on December 5, 1875.

In 1874, the Bowenville Station,<sup>2</sup> located between Turner Street and Old Colony Avenue was built and remained in use until the present depot was opened in the early nineties. The name Bowenville was discarded and the new station was finally designated as the Fall River depot. At one time there were four stops for some trains within the city limits — Somerset Junction, Steep Brook, Fall River and Ferry Street.

Previous to 1875, passage to and from New Bedford was made either by stage or by rail via Myricks. A Fall River and New Bedford line was constructed by a transportation company advertised as the Fall River Railroad. This short, direct line (now used only for freight trains by the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad), with Watuppa Station on Plymouth Avenue as the Fall River terminal, was well patronized by passengers from Fall River, Westport, Dartmouth and New Bedford until a through line by trolley cars was established. The trains made direct connections with steamboats for Marthas Vineyard, Nantucket and New York and the ferry at New Bedford to Fairhaven, connecting with trains to towns on Cape Cod.

About 1900, the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad made elaborate plans to make direct connections between New York and Cape Cod, by constructing a tunnel under Fall River. Land was purchased for the project and some owners were paid for the land underlying their property. This part of the project was never completed but the elimination of grade crossings was begun June 28, 1902 and completed with the opening of the viaduct connecting Central and Anawan Streets on June 16, 1905, at the cost of \$1,580,051.16. The railroad paid sixty-five per cent of the cost, the state twenty-five per cent and the city ten per cent.

With the advent of automotive power, passenger traffic on railroads became less and less profitable. Many lines were abolished and schedules were reduced. The road to Newport is no longer operated for the general public. The Providence and Fall River branch, which was for a time electrified and ran trains every thirty minutes has been abandoned and tracks

---

<sup>2</sup> A passenger station was located at the foot of Cherry Street previous to, and for a brief period after, the erection of the Bowenville Station.

removed. There remains only a single track from the north into Fall River, connecting with Taunton and Boston. In 1876 there were seven passenger trains to Boston daily and in addition, a number of direct connections with other cities and towns. Today there are only two trains leaving the Fall River station each week day.

### *The Fall River Line*

For nearly a century, the "old" Fall River Line operated a fleet of steamships for passenger and freight service between Fall River and New York City. Passengers from and to Boston and other New England cities found the most convenient and restful travel to New York on the "boat train" which after a non-stop fifty mile run to Fall River, connected with the palatial side-wheel steamers of this line. Mostly, it operated through inland waters and reached either destination at an early morning hour and returned in the late afternoon or evening, thus allowing its passengers a full day for business or shopping at the other terminal city. Trains made quick connection with other cities and with summer resorts in New England and Canada. To a large percentage of the traveling public, this Fall River Line was the city's best advertising medium. It was widely known.

The raw materials used in our mills and our finished products (largely cloth) were delivered to Fall River or to New York warehouses before the beginning of business hours, even though contracted for on the previous day. Similarly fresh fruits and flowers from nearby farms and greeneries were available in the New York market district, within as short a time and usually in better condition than those which were grown in territory which adjoined the metropolis. The service was prompt and regular, and reserve steamships in Newport, the only port of call, were a safeguard in case of accidental delays. Private cabins, at graded cost, guaranteed a fine night's rest to the ordinary traveller, and an excellent cuisine and a good orchestra guaranteed satisfaction to the inner man. In warm weather there was ever a cool breeze on the bay and sound, and a little ground-swell to be enjoyed in almost any weather as "she rounded Point Jude".

Such was the Fall River Line, a convenience — and almost a necessity — for over four-score (ninety-two) years, and its discontinuance was a catastrophe, almost a dying blow, to the city, when (after connecting railroads were forbidden by Federal law, to own, control or operate connecting sea lines) the operation of the boats became unprofitable. As a coincidence the cotton industry in this territory began to fade. The line was discontinued and the steamers sold or junked under Federal Court order of July 27, 1937.



Perhaps the steamers would have continued to operate had not a seaman's strike interfered with the service. The unions demanded a wage increase, and this would have greatly increased existing operating losses. There was no dispute, no violence. It seems as though the owners were waiting for an excuse to abandon the service — they simply announced its discontinuance. As Mr. McAdam has stated in his story of "The Old Fall River Line" — "The Fall River Line not running? Impossible! ! It had always run. It was as permanent as Plymouth Rock, as dependable as grandfather's clock, as hospitable as a Colonial Inn. The Fall River Line was the cordial invitation luring one on to visit New England."



A Fall River Line began its century of operation by a propeller-steamer named the Eudora in 1845. Two years later, on May 19, 1847, when the Steamer Bay State, owned by the Bay State Steamboat Company, made its first trip, continuous through service from Boston and New York began. In addition to the Bay State that corporation also controlled the steamer Massachusetts, and these were the most pretentious steamboats of that age. It is believed that the "steamboat train", connecting with these boats, was the world's oldest train in continuous service. We remember it as the single "de luxe" train of our boyhood days and our recollection dwells with equal pride on the little, dapper Asa R. Porter, with his impeccable uniform and fresh boutonniere, who in affable manner and with a cheery smile, was the conductor on this run for over thirty years. The earliest locomotives burned wood and the cars were "candle-lit". As improvements in service were made the boat-train had preferential attention, but at the beginning the train hauled a flat car to carry the larger pieces of baggage.

The Bay State remained in the service on this line until the close of the Civil War. She proved her speed to be superior to the flag-ships of other Sound lines. For comparison with more elegant and later steamers, I will say that she was rated at 1500 tons, was 315 feet long, forty feet beam, and that her hold was about fifteen feet deep; her engines developed 1500 horse-power; the cabins were not heated.

The steamer Empire State was built and added to the line in 1848, and served for a little over twenty years. She suffered misfortunes, viz: on January 13, 1849 her upper works were burned as she lay at her dock in Fall River. The damage was estimated at \$120,000. When rebuilt and again put in service, in 1856 a boiler exploded while she was off Point Judith. This caused fourteen deaths. In 1887 she was burned to the water's

edge at her dock in Bristol, R. I. After the Empire State came the State of Maine, a second-hand purchase which ran here from 1850 to 1863. The "Metropolis" was added to the fleet in 1854 and operated for twenty years. It is said that the added boats were paid for from earnings, which were sometimes in excess of fifty per cent per annum. The "Metropolis" was considered everything that was grand in steamboating. She completed her run in about nine hours.

In 1863 the Fall River Line steamboats were sold to the Boston, Newport and New York Steamboat Company, the railroad to Fall River was extended to Newport, and for a short time the rail connection to and from Boston was made only at Newport, but Fall River connection was soon reestablished and thereafter was continuously maintained, although there were several winters when the bay was so solidly frozen that it accommodated no water traffic. (In 1875, when there was an ice blockade in the Sound the steamers passed to the south of Long Island.)

The new owners immediately built two new steamers, the "Old Colony" and the "Newport", which were seemingly very similar. The new boats operated in the summer only, and were refitted as the older boats took over the winter schedules. The "Old Colony" was in the service for twenty years and the Newport for thirty years. During these years the competition of other lines became keen. There was a Neptune Line from Providence and a Stonington, Connecticut Line, but marine disasters due to a fire and a sunken reef made the Stonington Line unpopular and its successor known as the Bristol Line was soon merged with the Fall River Line under the name Narragansett Steamship Line.

In 1867 two new steamers came into the service — the "Bristol" and the "Providence", each with two hundred staterooms and fitted to carry forty carloads of freight. They were 360 feet long at the water line, eighty-five feet wide and with a registered gross tonnage of nearly 3000. "Jim" Fisk with some friends were large owners in the new company and when he became its President, he dubbed himself Admiral of the fleet. The "Bristol" was burned at her dock in Newport in 1888 just as she had completed her season's run. The "Providence" discontinued her services in 1900. In 1872 the line was completely reorganized and passed into the control of the Old Colony Railroad under the name of the Old Colony Steamboat Company. June 30, 1883 the "Pilgrim" was added to the line. She had a double hull to insure safety, and a full electrical lighting equipment with automatic alarms. A marine marvel at that time, she was the

first really modern steamer on the line — 375 feet long at the water line and of 3500 registered tonnage, with sleeping quarters for 1200 passengers. She consumed daily about eight-five tons of coal; she was a fast boat and made the trip of one hundred seventy-six miles in eight and one-half hours.

The "Puritan" served the Line from 1889 till the coming of the "Commonwealth" in 1908, when she was docked at Newport as a spare, with steam always up. She served "extra" over and around holiday periods till she was removed to Stonington, whence, after a gale battered some of her lines, she was sold on January 1915, with the "Pilgrim" for scrapping. "Like an old soldier, she simply faded away".

By 1894 the Fall River Line had brought into service the "Priscilla", the largest side-wheeler afloat, and Captain A. G. Simmons, a veteran in coast way service, was put in command. The "Priscilla" carried 1500 passengers and was often booked to capacity so that with prompt service, rich equipment and a rare cuisine she was soon most popular. Then came the "Providence" (the second of that name on this line), in all important particulars a sister-ship to the "Priscilla", but with telephone service in every room, and 20 feet additional length.

Then at last (in 1908) came the "Commonwealth", 450 feet long, the largest passenger ship ever operated on Long Island Sound. The dining room was on the upper deck, fifty feet above the water, so well glassed that the diners could, while eating, observe the surrounding country and the passing boats. This room had a triple dome with concealed lighting and was connected with the dance floor and grill. There were oriental rugs and the furnishings were elaborate.

A four-boat summer schedule was maintained for several years beginning in 1919. Frequent trips on the Fall River Line by Presidents Grant, Arthur, Harrison, Cleveland, the two Roosevelts, and its regular use by all the Vanderbilts, Astors, Belmonts and Rockefellers, caused a prominent Boston editor to write: "If you went on a trip to New York and didn't travel on the Fall River Line, you simply didn't go at all".

When in 1889 the Thames River drawbridge was completed and through rail service began between Boston and New York over the Shoreline, it made a big cut in the business of all the Sound lines. When in 1892 the New Haven Railroad system purchased the Stonington Line and in the following year leased the Old Colony Railroad, there was a further cut in revenue.

In September 1889 the Joy Line was in competition with the Fall River Line from Providence, with the fare between the cities one dollar. In order

to meet this competition the New Haven Railroad began a passenger service on their freight boats between these two cities and cut the fare to fifty cents. In 1902 the lines entered into a traffic agreement but the competition caused a great loss to the Fall River Line. Then in 1906 another company entered into the Fall River service under the name of Enterprise Line. It took both passenger and freight business from the Fall River Line and a large proportion of the Newport fishing business was trans-shipped to Fall River to take advantage of the reduced shipping rates. This was a large business, as many as 1400 barrels of scup having been shipped to New York on a single steamer. At another time the Stonington Line handled fish freight out of Newport, trans-shipping the fish from Newport to Stonington and then to New Haven by fast freight. The Enterprise Line went into the hands of a receiver in 1907 and the Joy Line was bought out by the New Haven in 1914. It was turned over by them to the United States Transportation Company.

In 1929 there was competition through the establishment of a passenger line to New Bedford at the price of three dollars for a single trip, which was about half of the New England's tariff, but the death blow to the steamer lines was when an act called the "Panama Canal Act" became effective and prohibited any common carrier by water through the Panama Canal or elsewhere where a railroad would compete. After Interstate Commerce Commission hearings in several states, decision was rendered against the steamers in favor of the railroads, but until 1937 the abandonment of the steamers was gradual. They did not surrender until the Eastern Steamship Lines had begun the operation of their all water line between Boston and New York. These boats would receive freight from Boston consigned to New York three hours later than the Fall River Line because it took three hours to ship the freight from Boston and put it aboard the steamers.

When the Cape Cod canal was opened in 1916 and the Boston and Metropolitan Line was not only able to shorten the distance of its New York trip but also to avoid all the dangers of rounding Cape Cod, and more than all when in 1924 the two magnificent liners "Boston" and "New York" were placed in the service with connections in New York for southern ports, the difficulties of the Fall River Line were gradually added to. It lessened fares and in 1927 began an all year service, on account of which, in the year 1937 the Fall River Line lost approximately one-fifth of its passenger traffic. After the two cents a mile passenger fare on the railroads was ordered by the Interstate Commerce Commission, the Fall River Line began to lose and continued to lose money, and this loss was greatly added to by the loss

of freight to and from Fall River, when the depression in the cotton business lessened by more than half, the total amount of cloth sent forward for delivery, until its final discontinuance, June 30, 1937. The fittings and furnishings of these boats were sold at public auction and some of their elegant furnishings passed as mementoes into the homes of those who had often been passengers on the line.

The New York terminus of the Fall River Line was at pier No. 14 North River. This pier was owned by the City of New York and was leased by it to the New Haven Railroad Company, which company operated the New England Steamship Company, which in turn owned the Fall River Line boats. After the steam boat service was discontinued the railroad used this pier for handling the freight which it handled for that point, but it had to be sent around the battery in car floats to the East River terminus of the railroad, which was at pier 35 in the East River. The railroad lease expired July 1st, 1940 and no more freight is delivered at pier 14; it is all delivered at pier 38 in the East River.

#### *Local Bus and Car Lines*

Before the advent of horse cars, James H. Wilson ran a bus line between Steep Brook and Globe Village, making five trips each day and Joseph Freelove who kept a livery stable on Tenth Street provided passenger service from City Hall to Flint Village, making nine trips a day.

Wilson sold his line to one of his drivers, John A. Clark and the service went under the name of Clark's Omnibus Line. In addition to the regular runs from Steep Brook to Globe Village, a bus connected with the Wilbur House and the Bowenville Station and special busses, at stated times, ran from City Hall to the Border City Mill.

For a few years there was a line of herdics which conveyed passengers over the Winter Street route to the corner of New Boston Road and Hanover Street and another starting from the other side of Market Square which went as far as Oscar Durfee's blacksmith shop on Stafford Road (near Globe Street), with occasional runs as far as Lawton Street. These herdics proceeded directly up Second Street and when traffic was heavy four horses were used. Chauncey H. Sears bought from the original owners, the Winter Street route and James B. Albert bought the Stafford Road line. All these lines were abandoned when their franchises were taken over by the horse car company.

The Globe Street Railway promoted by George Mellen and Edward Herbert was chartered April 16, 1880. Tracks were first laid on Main

Street connecting the "center" with Bowenville Station and were gradually extended from this beginning. Soon after the organization, William Jennings became president followed shortly by Frank S. Stevens of Swansea; F. W. Brightman was treasurer, Robert S. Goff bookkeeper and J. H. Bowker superintendent; men prominent in the street railway business for years after.

The horse cars were replaced by trolley cars September 3, 1892.

In 1895, the Dartmouth and Westport Railroad was organized with tracks connecting with the Globe Street Company at the "Narrows" with the Union Street Railway Company at Lincoln Park in Dartmouth. Frank W. Brightman was president and Robert S. Goff was clerk of this line, which was later consolidated with the Union Street Railway of New Bedford.

About the same time, the Fall River Street Railway Company was organized with Wendell E. Turner as president and John T. Robertson as treasurer. This line ran from the corner of Bank and North Main Streets to the "Highlands" covering a section not covered by the Globe Street Company and was soon taken over by them.

About 1902 the Globe Street Company was sold to another company known as the Old Colony Street Railway, with a handsome profit to the original promoters. By consolidations and financial dealings in 1912 the name became the Bay State Street Railway Company and in 1920 it became the Fall River Branch of the Eastern Massachusetts Street Railway Company.

A trolley line to Newport was opened in 1898 and one to Providence in 1901.

All trolley cars were withdrawn for motor busses in Fall River on September 20, 1936.

### *Pleasure Parks*

Pleasure parks were established on the old trolley lines to attract and increase patronage. The first one for Fall River was the Forest Hills Gardens, which was on the site now occupied by the St. Vincent Orphans' Home on North Main Street. A hotel, roller skating rink, clambake pavillion and other attractions were provided and for a time many pleasure seekers added revenue to the Globe Street Railway Company.

On suburban lines attractive localities were chosen and developed between cities. Lincoln Park in Dartmouth continues to be popular. Island Park, in Portsmouth, Rhode Island has become a summer colony. Dighton

Rock Park, on the shore of Taunton Estuary, between Fall River and Taunton ceased to be profitable and was divided into house lots.

### *Electric Freight Service*

Starting in 1903 electric freight service was maintained between Fall River, New Bedford, Taunton and Brockton and continued until busses replaced the trolley cars. A freight station was erected on the corner of Bedford and Sixth Streets which is now used by a chain grocery store.

### *Stage Lines*

In 1861, R. B. Kingsley was running four lines of stages from his office at No. 17 North Main Street:

For Adamsville and New Bedford.....	Daily at 1 P. M.
For Providence .....	Daily at 1 P. M.
For Newport .....	Daily at 1 P. M.
For Tiverton and Little Compton.....	Daily at 12:30 P. M.

The Providence stage connected with a stage to Warren at "Swanзей".

### *The Water Works System*

For many years Fall River's water supply had been from wells, but with the growth of population it was found upon analysis that the water in the wells had shown a dangerous condition. In January, 1870, Mayor Samuel M. Brown in his inaugural address called attention to the situation and asked that the city council at once take steps towards the establishment of a system that would insure the city a supply of pure water. A committee was carefully appointed and authorized to cause surveys to be made and analyses secured of possible sources of a new supply. A report from an expert showed that the water in the North Watuppa Pond was the most adaptable for the purpose desired. The city purchased forty-eight acres of land at the head of Bedford Street and engaged an engineer to prepare plans for the proposed system. In March, 1871, the authorizing act was passed by the legislature. It was accepted by the voters in April by an overwhelming majority. A board of water commissioners was at once elected and immediately work began on the project. A pumping station on the shores of North Watuppa Pond was erected in 1872; the work of laying mains was pushed forward as rapidly as possible and by September 1876, forty-five miles of pipe had been installed. On January 5, 1874, water was first conducted through the pipes available for general use. The cost of the water system to October 1, 1876 was \$1,328,456.

At once disputes arose with the Watuppa Reservoir Company as to their rights in North Watuppa Pond. This continued for a series of years, being taken to the Supreme Court for decision and the reservoir company claimed large amounts in payment for the water used. June 6, 1892 an agreement was entered into between the city and the reservoir company whereby all claims against the city were released; yet the city was not given full control over the pond. In 1920, another agreement was executed between the city's reservoir commission and the reservoir company which terminated the 1892 agreement and vested in the city full control of the pond. In consideration for which the city paid the reservoir company \$75,000 and agreed to construct a dam and pumping station at the "sand bar" so called.

In 1895 this reservoir commission comprising the Watuppa Water Board and other city officials was appointed and subsequently by condemnation took over all islands in the pond and the shores surrounding it, for the development of a water shed to insure the purity of the water. Strict regulations were issued against the use of the pond for boating, fishing or skating.

The water department was eventually self-sustaining and by 1908 had a surplus of over one hundred thousand dollars. The board of aldermen voted to transfer this sum to general revenue in spite of many protests. The dispute was taken to the legislature, which, in March, 1908 passed a law restoring the water ordinance relative to revenue to its former force and forbade any change by the city council until the entire water debt should be extinguished.

Subsequently many improvements were made in the system. There are now four large tanks with a combined capacity of over five million gallons, which is about one day's supply for the city.

The steam pumping station at the east end of Bedford Street in 1914 was equipped with a centrifugal pump. At the same time about five hundred feet to the north an auxiliary station was erected also equipped with an electric pump. In 1920, a second electric pump was placed in this station, which is now the chief station and the original pumping station is an auxiliary or reserve station.

The department maintains five tanks in various sections of the city, two on Bedford Street, one near Stafford Road at its highest elevation, one on Townsend Hill and one on Haskell Hill, to maintain the requisite pressure on the water in the mains. Their capacity is about six million gallons. Two of these tanks, the northerly one on Bedford Street and the Townsend hill



tank, which were at the time emptied for painting and repairs were blown down during the hurricane of September 1938. They have since been replaced. There are approximately one hundred and sixty miles of main pipe in the service; the average consumption of water is now about seven million gallons a day.

With the introduction of Watuppa water in 1874, typhoid fever cases decreased throughout the city. Illustrating the continued purity of the water supply, in 1940 medical statistics showed that no deaths from typhoid had been recorded in Fall River for three years.<sup>3</sup>

### *Fall River Gas Works Company*

This company, with its executive offices and display rooms at 155 North Main Street, with its distributive department at 36 Fifth Street and with its manufacturing plant on Charles Street, has, since 1896, been the sole manufacturer and distributor of gas in Fall River, and it also supplies the needs of Somerset and Swansea and sells gas to the Tiverton Gas Company.

The first urgent need for illuminating gas in Fall River was in its cotton mills where the use of kerosene lamps and of candles had proved very dangerous, so that gas was first manufactured here as a private department of the Fall River Iron Works Company, which owned several cotton mills. It built a gas building and tanks along the north shore on Crab Pond in 1846. Its location was east of Water Street, south of Anawan Street. In 1847 it extended its lines, and began to supply gas to other individuals and corporations, but the business was not incorporated until March 1867 when the Manufacturers Gas Company, with John S. Brayton as president and Charles P. Stickney as treasurer, took over this department from the Iron Works Corporation. Due to the financial depression of 1879 and the defalcation of its treasurer, the corporation was declared insolvent and all its assets were sold at public auction to the Manufacturers Gaslight Company, which was incorporated for that purpose. Thomas F. Eddy was president of the new corporation, and Joseph Baker was its treasurer. It continued business until April 1897 when its assets were sold to the Fall River Gas Works Company and the corporation was dissolved.

Meanwhile in 1870 Fall River Iron Works Company had built a plant for its gas department at the corner of Hartwell and Fifth Streets, and there it located two gas holders and two round houses. From these reservoirs it

---

<sup>3</sup> The pasteurization of milk was also largely responsible for this record.

supplied gas to eight nearby mill buildings and to a portion of the southern section of the city. It owned about six miles of surface pipe and supplied about three hundred customers.

Meanwhile the Fall River Gas Works Company, which was incorporated in 1880 and had been gradually increasing its patronage, had come to serve over three thousand customers and its pipe lines extended for thirty miles and entirely surrounded those of the Manufacturers Company. In November of 1896, it voted to purchase the Manufacturers Company and it has since that date been the sole manufacturer and distributor of gas in Fall River.

In 1894 Fall River Gas Works Company had its offices and fitting shop in the Anthony Building at 14 Bedford Street. It soon opened an annex at 15 Granite Street. Ten years later, needing larger quarters, it removed its offices to the southwest corner of North Main and Bank Streets and upon the completion of its newly constructed building at 155 North Main Street, it moved there in 1912. In 1903 it had secured the management of the Stone & Webster Service Corporation; in 1914 it built a coal gas plant on Charles Street, though the manufacture of water gas was continued at the Crab Pond location until 1922. Later, a tank with a capacity of 300,000 cubic feet was built to supplement the two million feet storage tank at the Charles Street location. In the same year it discontinued the use of its storage tanks at Crab Pond and discontinued the manufacture of gas at that point, but the 750,000 cubic feet storage tank which was erected there in 1896 is still in service.

#### *Fall River Electric Light Co.*

In the year 1883, which was the period shortly after the invention by Thomas A. Edison of the arc incandescent light, two electric light companies were formed in the city of Fall River, viz: the Fall River Electric Light Company on March 7, 1883 and the Edison Electric Illuminating Company of Fall River on October 1st, 1883. John D. Flint was the prime mover in the organization of the first named company, of which Marsden J. Perry was president and Henry T. Buffington was treasurer.

This company immediately leased land on Blossom Avenue, and constructed a generating station there. It did not then install any motive power for driving the generators, but purchased its power from a saw mill which was adjacent to the generating station. From the first this company supplied the City of Fall River with street lighting, and soon it began to serve stores with electric lights which were connected with the street circuits.

In 1888 the corporation acquired land on the east side of Hartwell Street, extending from the street to the shores of the Quequechan River and on this land it erected a brick building which housed a new electric plant and a new boiler house. The facilities of the corporation were not adequate to supply the demands of the outlying sections of the city, and as the merchants in Flint Village threatened to install their own electric plant if they could not be served by the existing plant, an alternating current machine was installed in 1894, and in the following year, when a similar shortage and demand for service occurred from the southern section of the city, a similar machine was installed to serve that area.

The Edison Electric Illuminating Company had been organized to furnish house and store lighting. Albert T. Dow was its president and William A. Dwelly, Jr. (who subsequently became the treasurer of the American Woolen Co.) became its treasurer. Its plant, installed under the Thomas A. Edison patents, was located adjoining the plant of the Fall River Electric Co. on the easterly side of Hartwell Street, and under its contract with Thomas A. Edison it was supplied and equipped with 1600 electric lights of ten candlepower each.

By 1896 the demand made upon both the Fall River Electric Light Co. and the Edison Electric Illuminating Co. became so large and varied that it was thought wise to merge the companies, and this was done under a legislative act passed in that year. Frank H. Stevens became president and Albert T. Dow became treasurer of the merged companies.

By 1905 the capacity of the Hartwell plants had been reached and before the close of 1906 a large generating plant was completed on Hathaway Street. Its capacity was then 2500 kilowatts, but it was soon increased to 14,250 kilowatts, and when several of the Fall River mills decided to electrify their plants it was necessary, in 1917, to secure an added source of supply and this was done by connecting with the high voltage line which the New England Power Co. had installed between Providence and Fall River.

By 1922 the demand had grown to such an extent that the capacity of the Hathaway Street plant was reached, and the Company installed further capacity. After considering the possibility of enlarging the Hathaway Street station, it was found that the Blackstone Valley Gas & Electric Company of Pawtucket, R. I. and the Edison Electric Illuminating Co. of Brockton, Mass., were in similar circumstances, and they joined with the local company in constructing the Montaup Electric Company's plant, which was built in the years 1923 and 1924 under a four-party agreement.

At this writing, the city is provided with three sources of power, the Montaup Electric Company, New England Power Company line and the Hathaway Street station.

The first available meter record shows that in 1895 forty-five meters had been installed on the company's system. Thus the growth of the meters is a fair indication of the growth of demand.

In 1895 it was.....	45 meters	In 1920.....	11481 meters
In 1900.....	1131 meters	In 1930.....	34879 meters
In 1910.....	2388 meters	In 1940.....	39398 meters

As a further test of efficiency, and incidental to this increase in supply must be considered the cost of service to customers. The billing for 100 kilowatt hours was as follows: in 1892 \$15.00; in 1940, \$4.90. The reduction has been continuous, except during the war period when rates were temporarily advanced, due to the increased cost of fuel, labor and supplies. The growth of Fall River Electric Light Company is coincident with the development of the city and its electric service has been a very definite factor in that development. It now supplies practically all the energy which is used for industrial purposes in this territory.

Plans have been approved for a very large increase in the service capacity of the Montaup Electric Co. during the present summer (1940).

### *Telegraph and Telephone Companies*

In 1853, "The New York and Union Company<sup>4</sup> took over the Rhode Island lines, connecting Providence with Worcester, Bristol, Taunton, Fall River and New Bedford." In the Fall River Directory of 1855, an advertisement of this company locates the office in Sec. G, Granite Block with W. P. Potter as operator. There was also the Newport and Fall River Line at 17 North Main Street with George W. Dougherty as operator.

Fall River with its cotton and cloth business provided considerable revenue for telegraph companies and by 1885 there were four companies doing business here: The "Baltimore and Ohio", "Mutual Union", "United Lines" and "Western Union". The Western Union Telegraph Company was given legal birth in 1857 and by degrees absorbed all competitors in this region with the exception of the Postal Telegraph Company organized in 1881, which located an office in Fall River in 1888. The "Mutual Union" had an office here as late as 1889 but from 1890 on, only the "Western Union" and the "Postal" remained.

<sup>4</sup> "Old Wires and New Waves" — Alvin F. Harlow, p. 245.

There is evidence that two telephone systems were established in Fall River in 1879. W. K. Rice, an original "Bell" licensee received a license to operate an exchange, in July 1879 and he established one in Durfee Block, on the corner of North Main and Central Streets. The "Western Union" also entered the telephone field, thus the banks were compelled to install two telephones, in order to keep in touch with their clients.

John W. Chapman, News Supervisor of the New England Telephone and Telegraph Company informs us that the records of that company show that "Fall River's telephone exchange was established in 1879" and that "it appears that at the opening there were approximately one hundred twelve subscribers and four employees". The Southern Massachusetts Telephone Company was formed February 17, 1880 and very soon after combined the two local companies, retaining W. K. Rice as the operator who was in a short time succeeded by Charles Sylvester.

The local exchange in the Durfee Block was moved to a building on Bedford Street in 1890, then in 1895 to a building built and owned by the company on Bank Street. The Southern Massachusetts Telephone Company became a subsidiary of the New England Telephone and Telegraph Company in 1900 but continued to operate under its old name until December 31, 1912. The present central office, on the corner of North Main and Locust Streets was put in full operation when the dial system was established October 25, 1941.

The dial system had previously been in use by a competitor, the Fall River Automatic Telephone Company organized in 1904, with John W. Coughlin as President and Col. Bradford D. Davol as Treasurer. The company introduced itself to the public as "the new secret service telephone, in opposition to monopoly". From 1904 to 1917 it was necessary for business men to install two telephones. The automatic system worked smoothly and efficiently but lacked the quick connections with the constantly extending long distance lines of the American Telephone and Telegraph Company of which the New England Company had become a subsidiary. The exchange of the "Automatic Company" was on the south side of Bank Street near Rock Street. This company and its plant was purchased by the New England Telephone and Telegraph Company, November 10, 1916 and ceased operations.

