

Chapter V

THE TOWN OF FALLRIVER, 1803

THE TOWN OF TROY, 1804

THE TOWN OF FALL RIVER, 1834

It was twenty-four years after the Freemen's Purchase that Freetown was incorporated; eighty-eight years before the line was extended south to the "buttonwood tree" and one hundred forty-four years, when the town of Fallriver was separated from Freetown and incorporated.

"1802, CHAPTER 89 OF THE ACTS OF 1802. JANUARY SESSION CHAPTER 51, AN ACT TO DIVIDE THE TOWN OF FREETOWN AND TO INCORPORATE THE SOUTHERLY PART THEREOF INTO A SEPARATE TOWN BY THE NAME OF FALLRIVER."

"Section 1. Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembly and by the authority of the same, that the southerly part of Freetown in the County of Bristol as described within the following bounds, that the inhabitants thereof, be and they are hereby incorporated into a separate town by the name of Fallriver, viz: beginning on the Taunton Great River so-called and thence running southerly 70° east on the line dividing the lands belonging to the heirs of William Valentine and so continuing the same course about 1860 rods till it intersects a line running from the town of Dartmouth North 12° East at the east end of the twenty acre lot owned by Thomas Borden and Richard Borden; thence on the line last mentioned to Dartmouth line; thence by the line of the towns to Dartmouth and Westport to the State of Rhode Island; thence on the line of last state into said river; thence by the channel of said river to the bounds first mentioned. And the said town of Fallriver is hereby vested with all the powers and privileges, rights and immunities to which other towns are entitled by the constitution and laws of the Commonwealth.

"Section 2. Be it further enacted that the said town of Fallriver shall pay all arrears of taxes, which have been assessed upon them, together with their proportion of all debts owed by said town of Freetown prior to the date of this act, and all questions relative to property already existing shall be assessed and settled in the same manner as though this act has not been made; and that all property rights and credits of said town of Freetown be received and enjoyed by the town of Fallriver according to their proportion of the taxes of said Freetown, assessed in the last tax bill.

"Section 3. Be it further enacted, that the said town of Fallriver shall take upon itself and support one-half of all the poor now entirely chargeable to said town of Freetown and shall also bear and pay one-half of the expense of supporting such poor persons as may be sent back upon said town of Freetown from other towns who removed from said town of Freetown prior to the passing of this act.

"Section 4. Be it further enacted that all state county taxes which shall be levied and required of said town previous to a new valuation, the said town of Fall river shall pay four-tenths.

"Section 5. Be it further enacted that Charles Durfee, Esq. be and he hereby is authorized to issue his warrant, directed to some suitable inhabitant of the said town of Fallriver, requiring him to notify and warrant the inhabitants of the said town, qualified by law to vote in town affairs, to meet at such time and place as shall be expressed in the said warrant to choose all such officers as other towns within this Commonwealth are required by law to chose in the months of March or April only, and the officers so chosen shall be qualified as other town officers are."

"Approved February 26, 1803."

The meeting was duly called by Charles Durfee for April 4, 1803 and was held at the home of widow Louisa Borden.¹ Here, in town meeting, the nearest possible approach to a true democracy, the few citizens qualified to vote constituted the legislative branch and proceeded to choose three selectmen as the chief executives. Thomas Borden, Benjamin Durfee and Robert Miller were the first to be so honored. Seemingly each section of the town, with the exception of the region east of the pond was represented on the board. The first general school committee was not elected until 1826. It is interesting to note that during the first ten years, nineteen of the voters of the town were given an opportunity to serve on the board of selectmen. Beginning in 1824, the members were more frequently re-elected. William Read, Enoch French and Hezekiah Wilson each served comparatively long terms. The following minor town officers were elected at the first town meeting: — Surveyors of Highways, — Simeon Borden, Pardon Davol, Capt. Luther Winslow, Jonathan Dodson, Aaron Davis, Jr., Nathaniel Boomer, David Miller, Philip Lee, George Snell and Gardner Thurston. Surveyors of Lumber, — Robert Miller and Thomas Borden. Fence Viewers, — Charles Durfee, Elijah Blossom and Jonathan Dodson. Tithingmen, — Norton Brightman and Cornelius Davis. Hog Reeves, — Simeon Borden, Jonathan Read, Ephraim Boomer and Elijah Blossom, Jr. Pound Keeper, — Edson Valentine. The list is given, not because of its importance but to present a mental picture of the first town meeting where so many familiar Fall River names are recorded. Walter D. Chaloner was the first town clerk.

How long it was necessary to appoint hog reeves, we cannot say. Fence viewers and pound keepers had duties to perform even in the present century. There was a pound on Town Avenue in 1849 and the estate of Clark Shove was paid ten dollars for the use of a yard for a pound. The writer remembers when the boys of his neighborhood found a stray horse or cow, they proceeded with great pride to lead or drive the animal to a pound kept by John R. Sullivan in the rear of C. V. S. Remington's residence on

¹ Fascicle I, p. 88.

North Street. For many years it was requisite to properly enclose property to protect lawns and gardens and to keep domestic animals from going astray.

Rock was always available and many substantial walls made of cemented roughly cut stones were erected. A number of these, such as are shown in the illustrations continue to mark boundaries. Foundries were near at hand and cast iron fences, some of elaborate design were used to enclose building lots and family burial grounds. At the same time that iron fences were in style, public buildings and houses were made ornate by the use of cast iron filigree work.

The family stable was never complete without its weather vane. Even if neighbors built their barns side by side, each must support its vane. One of the most elaborate of these weather-vanes, now the property of Mrs. E. K. Thompson, formerly stood atop the cupola of Spencer Borden's stable when he resided at the corner of Rock and Maple Streets. This gilded weather-cock, with crimson wattles and flexible tail continues to show the neighbors the wind direction, from its present position on the garage of Maxwell Turner at 511 Rock Street.

The Town of Troy

When Fallriver was incorporated, there were approximately one thousand inhabitants and less than a tenth of these lived near the "Four Corners". It was not strange that the majority of the voters were dissatisfied, when their town was given the same name as the rather insignificant little village near the falls of the "Quequechan". Consequently in a little over a year's time, by petitioning the General Court, the name was changed to Troy.

"CHAPTER 2 OF THE YEAR 1904. MAY SESSION.
AN ACT TO CHANGE THE NAME OF THE TOWN OF FALLRIVER
IN THE COUNTY OF BRISTOL."

"Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the General Court Assembly and the authority of the same, that from and after the passing of this act the name of the said town of Fallriver shall cease, and the said town shall hereafter be called and known by the town of Troy—any law to the contrary notwithstanding—and nothing in this act contained shall be construed to impair any rights of the said corporation, but the inhabitants of the said town shall have, enjoy and exercise all the powers, privileges and immunities as a corporation by the name of Troy, in as full and ample a manner as though the name of said town had not been changed."

"Approved June 18, 1804."

The trying times of the reconstruction period had passed. Conditions were approaching normalcy when the town of Troy came into existence. The chief occupations of the inhabitants of Mt. Hope Bay and Taunton

Valley settlements were farming and the building of small ships, frequently privately owned, to transport farm and forest products. From North Tiverton, along the shore to Steep Brook, there were few spots which were not directly exposed to the prevailing winds, so that, for the most part, ship building and shipping were carried on by the localities upstream.

Slade's Ferry was the chief connection with the towns on the other side of the water way. The Post Road from Boston to Newport ran through the town. Wilson and Yellow Hill Roads were the direct arteries from the hinterland to the east. These conditions made Steep Brook the center of business, social and political activities.²

The Town of Fall River

"FEBRUARY 12, 1834. CHAPTER 14 OF THE ACTS OF 1834
AN ACT TO CHANGE THE NAME OF TROY TO FALL RIVER.

"Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in the General Court Assembly and by the authority of the same, that from and after the passage of this act, the name of the town of Troy in the County of Bristol, shall cease and the said town shall hereafter be called and known by the name of Fall River, and by this name shall be entitled to all rights and privileges, and subject to all the duties and obligations to which it would have been entitled and subject if the name had not been changed as aforesaid."

"Approved by the governor February 12, 1834."

The introduction and continued growth in the manufacturing and finishing of textiles and to a considerable extent, the organization of the "Iron Works" in 1821 gave impetus to the town's growth and changed the mode of life of many of its inhabitants. This growth is verified by the figures of the federal decennial censuses.

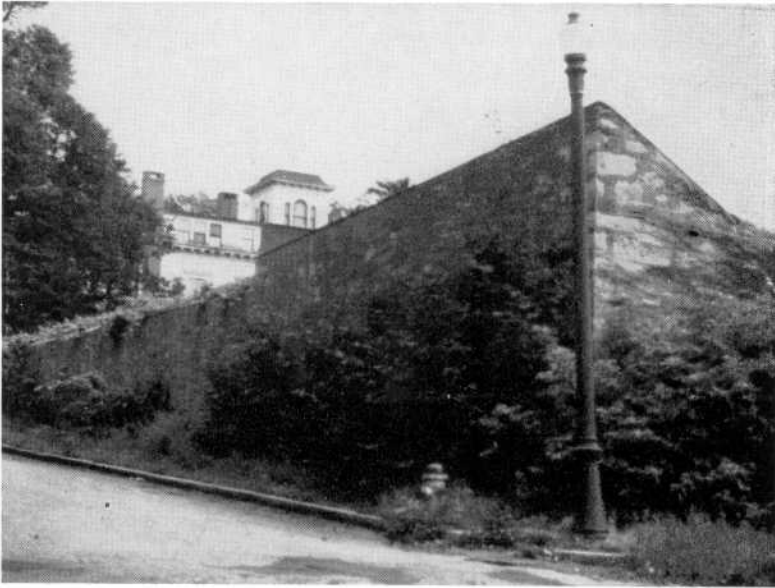
1810	1,296
1820	1,594
1830	4,158

The dominant center of the town shifted from Steep Brook to the village and the name Fallriver was probably better known to outside business and financial interests than was the name Troy. The petition of the voters of the town to the General Court was granted and the original name was restored with a change in orthography.

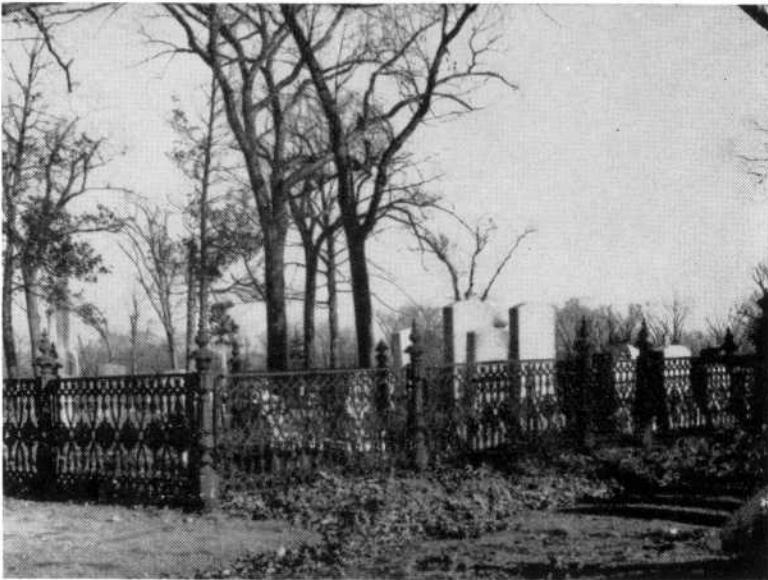
In spite of the financial panic of 1837 and the disastrous fire of 1843, the town continued to prosper and grow. Churches and schools were organized; commercial and savings banks established; police and fire protection provided and new streets laid out.

² See Chapter IV.

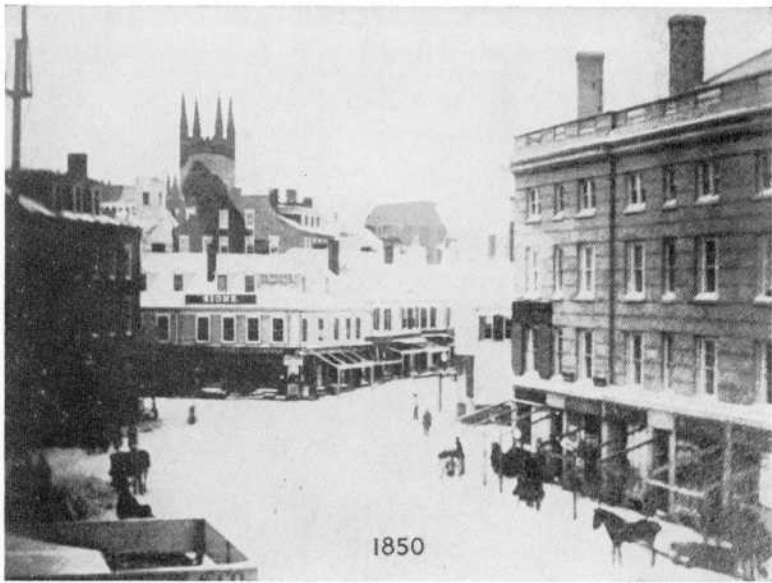
PROPERTY BOUNDARIES



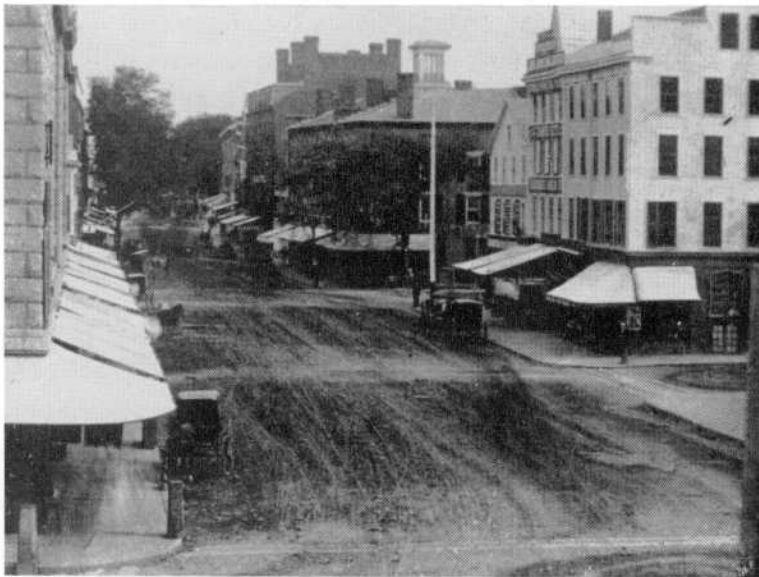
STONE WALL



CAST IRON FENCE



VIEW SO. EASTERLY FROM OPPOSITE TOWN HALL



VIEW NORTH FROM CITY HALL
About 1880

At first only native help were employed in the mills but new and larger establishments brought help from abroad and by 1850 the population had increased to 11,170. Before Fall River became a city, regular trips by steam boats between Fall River, Newport and New York and between Fall River, Bristol Ferry, Bristol and Providence were in operation. The Fall River Railroad (Fascicle II, p. 176) was running scheduled trips by 1845.

William M. Emery's paper, filed with the Fall River Historical Society, gives a picture of the center of the town after it had been substantially rebuilt after the fire. In 1845, the Market Building, described in a later chapter was built. The site of the present Borden Block³ was then occupied by a long wooden building bearing the same name, two stories in height. Granite Block, erected in 1843, was used for law offices and tenements on the second and third floors, with stores on the first floor. Pocasset Block was occupied by stores and offices. At the southeast corner of Town Hall was the town's water supply, consisting of a pump and watering trough. At the northeast corner of Borden and Second Streets was Columbian Hall, and on the southeast corner of Bank and North Main Streets there was a brick building which housed the Fall River Bank,³ it being said that Matthew C. Durfee, the cashier of the bank, kept the bank's money in a trunk under his bed.

South of this building was Borland Block, which in later years housed the Wilbur House and across Granite Street from this block was Anthony's Block. At the northwest corner of Central and Main Streets was Daniel Stillwell's hardware store and next north of that was the Exchange Hotel, later called the Richardson House. Next north was the block of Job B. French, which was built in 1843. West on Central Street and next to Stillwell's store was the National House, afterwards called the Central House and west from that the grave yard.

The Mount Hope House which still stands between Franklin and Bank Streets was a hotel, part of which was torn down when the "Five Cents Savings Bank" was built. The opposite side of Main Street between Elm and Bank Streets has been described in Fascicle I, p. 77.

Some Early Dwellings on "The Hill"

In the middle of the last century the New Boston Road and Meridian Street area was comparatively well populated by the forebears of well known Fall River families. In the intervening area, southwesterly to Cherry

³ See illustrations, Fascicle II.

Street few homes had been established. In 1853, John B. Hathaway lived in the house at the southwest corner of Rock and Cherry Streets. Across the street lived William C. Davol and the entire block now occupied by the B. M. C. Durfee High School was the estate of Walter Paine, 3rd.

In the early eighteen forties, Holder Borden built three houses, one for each of his sisters. Sylvia married Joseph Durfee. Their daughter married William Carr and the residence has long been known as the "Carr House". Fidelia married Matthew Durfee and their son, George B. Durfee married a daughter of Jefferson Borden. Not satisfied with the mansion built for his mother, he tore it down and erected the residence now occupied by St. Helena's Convent. The third sister Delane married Dr. Nathan Durfee. Rock Street ended at Prospect Street where was located the Dr. Nathan Durfee estate, occupying a greater part of the land within the bounds of the present Prospect, High, French and June Streets.⁴

On the east side of Rock Street at the corner of Prospect Street was the property of William B. Durfee (Gas Bill Durfee). The house now faces Prospect Street. Next south of this house, then facing Rock Street, was the handsome residence of Benjamin Wardwell which now faces High Street. Among other dwelling places in the neighborhood was that of Hale Remington, on the northeast corner of Rock and Maple Streets which was later occupied and remodeled by Spencer Borden, who, when he moved to Interlachen sold it to Justice James M. Morton. The house and barn have been demolished and grounds divided into house lots. William H. Hawkins, who owned considerable property in the vicinity, built his house and stable on the lot on Maple Street which faces Durfee Green. Mrs. O. K. Hawes, his granddaughter now resides in the modern residence erected on the site. Judge Josiah C. Blaisdell's house, now facing on Highland Avenue, formerly was the only house on the three cornered lot bounded by Maple Street, Winter Street and Highland Avenue. One of the oldest houses on "The Hill" is the John Jencks house on the corner of Highland Avenue and Maple Street.

In the early part of the nineteenth century, the finer residences were west of Main Street. Some of the handsome doorways, in which architects and builders once took great pride remain intact. Two of the larger residences which were moved are standing today. The William H. Jennings house now at the corner of High and Walnut Streets was erected on the corner of Canal and Anawan Streets with grounds extending to Crab Pond and was the home of Jefferson Borden.

⁴ See illustrated article prepared by Miss Alice Brayton in "Gardens of Colony and State," pp. 244 to 250.

The Fall River Historical Society Building

Andrew Robeson who came to Fall River, then Troy, in 1824 and established a calico printing factory purchased the tract now enclosed by Columbia, Washington, Hope and Mulberry Streets, a portion of which was then in the town of Tiverton. He erected thereon, where the Robeson School now stands, in 1842, a mansion of Fall River granite. Three-fourths of this house was in Massachusetts and one-fourth in Rhode Island.

In 1848, an assignment of the property was made to Thomas D. Eliot, et al and in 1849 the property was conveyed to Thomas T. Lea. If Mr. Lea occupied the premises, it was for a short time only for Samuel L. Thaxter, Collector of the Port of Fall River, lived there from 1850 to 1854. In 1854, Lea sold the place to William Hill of the firm of Hill and Buffinton, owners of a thread mill in Mt. Hope Village. Hill later leased the place to Robert Gibbs, Sr.

Robert K. Remington purchased the property in 1869 and in 1870 moved the house, stone block by block to its present location. The house which was then standing on the corner of Rock and Maple Streets was purchased by James T. Milne and moved to the southeast corner of Winter and Maple Streets.

In 1878, Mr. Remington conveyed the property to David A. Brayton, Sr. The house remained in the possession of his immediate family until the decease of Elizabeth Hitchcock Brayton, when the grounds and building were presented to the local historical society in her honor by her nephew.⁵

⁵ Data from an address of Oliver S. Hawes given before the Fall River Historical Society from facts obtained by Mrs. Leah W. Maloney.



WILLIAM H. JENNINGS RESIDENCE
Formerly on the corner of Anawan and Canal Streets



FALL RIVER HISTORICAL SOCIETY BUILDING
Formerly on Columbia Street



MAIN STREET. LOOKING SOUTH FROM COURT SQUARE — ABOUT 1857
Showing Granite Block