

Chapter IX

HIGHWAYS

The development and maintenance of streets, sidewalks, street lighting and public drains in a progressive community calls for constant planning by those in authority. The increasing number of streets listed, extended or improved gives a mental picture of a real development, which is perhaps of more particular interest to the older inhabitants of a community. A knowledge of the changes of the names of streets and highways is of value in historical research and to those seeking clear titles on real estate.

The Map of Fall River in 1812 prepared by Cook Borden, which does not include the part of the town then north of what is now Brightman Street shows North and South Main Streets, often referred to as Main Road or Post Road; Ferry Lane, now Brightman Street; Central Street, even as late as 1844¹ called West Central Street; Bedford Street, once called Central Street; Anawan Street, earlier called Broadway and Old Bedford Road² which included the present Quarry and County Streets. Pathways plotted mark the general directions of some future public ways.

As we study the map of 1812, we may wonder why people built their homes so close to the highways, without regard to vistas or views. A clipping from an old newspaper may shed some light on the question. — “The answer to that query, (explains a Mr. Hall) is the custom of building with a southern exposure for a living room to take advantage of sunlight and the sun’s warmth.” He adds, “houses were built close to the road to avoid shoveling a long path and in more thickly settled centers very small house lots were apportioned.”

In “Our County and Its People” prepared by the “Fall River News” and the “Taunton Gazette” may be found a few records of expenditures for highways in the early days of the town:—“\$1.00 on each pole” was

¹ The name West Central Street is used in the town report for 1844.

² It is interesting to note that the adjective “old” is used. See Fascicle I, p. 88.

assessed for highways in 1804. The 1809 tax amounted to \$1,200; in 1826, only \$500 was expended. In 1827, \$1,500 was appropriated and the same year a committee was appointed to confer with the Pocasset Manufacturing Company concerning the building of a stone bridge across the stream. In 1832, the bridge was repaired at a cost of \$169.49. By 1830, Rock, Pleasant, Pocasset, Cherry, Anawan, Spring, Washington, Brightman and Turner Streets were in part or for their entire length usable highways.

At a town meeting held in April, 1835, Henry Chace, Philip Bennett and James Ford were appointed a committee "to name the streets in the village of Fall River — also Alleys and Lanes". It was at this time that Exchange Street officially became Rock Street; Slade Street, Pine Street; and Tasker Street, Cherry Street. An ordinance was passed forbidding ball playing and hoop rolling in the village streets or on the Post Road. "Furious driving" was also prohibited.

In 1837, Franklin Street was accepted from Main to Rock Street and Main Street was straightened somewhat. In 1839, Pine, Pearl, Second, Third, Fourth, Seventh, Eighth, Ninth, Elm, Hartwell and Borden Streets were laid out or improved and accepted. From then on, the highway taxes began to increase.

In 1842, the Board of Selectmen sought the permission of the Legislature to build a bridge over the creek at the mouth of the "Quequechan", in order that a road might be constructed connecting Slade's Ferry with the Steamboat Dock. The road was first known as Bowenville Road. At Bowenville it connected with the Ferry Road and the combined roads later became Davol Street. Money was appropriated for a "railing &c." for the bridge in 1844. In the town report for the year ending March, 1847, there is an itemized account of work done by Anthony Morse by contract, on the Bowenville Road and Danforth Street. One of the larger items was for the building of a sea-wall. The creek bridge was already in need of repairs to the extent of \$744.95.

The town treasurer reported that from March, 1842 to March, 1843, "the extraordinary expenditures were for roads and bridges, the sum of \$4,916.16. Isaac Millard's work on Copicut Road amounted to \$308."

The town was divided into eleven highway districts, each in charge of a "Surveyor", whose duty it was to estimate costs and maintain the roads in his district. The "village" was in district No. 1. The work in the village was largely performed by contract. The surveyors in the remaining districts must have provided the necessary paraphernalia for their work, for the

town, in its valuation of property, in 1843, amounting to \$18,397.60, listed only the following items on hand for use on the highways.

"Three wheelbarrows	\$ 6.00
Three Iron Bars	1.50
Hoes and shovels	5.00
Blocks	10.00
Rigging	2.00
	<u>24.50"</u>

In 1843, the year of the disastrous fire, the annual town meeting in March appropriated \$3000 for highways and in May an additional \$3000 was voted, half of which was to be used for the construction of sidewalks. This is the first mention of sidewalks in the town reports. After the fire in July, the town voted to borrow \$4000 to be spent on streets.

The report of the auditing committee submitted at the annual town meeting in 1845 revealed that \$2,612.56 had been spent the preceding year "making new streets and widening old ones." Pocasset was widened in part and a new street (Union Street) was constructed. Main Street was leveled in front of the Market Building. The Pocasset Manufacturing Company contracted with the town and widened Main Street. For surveying and grading the streets, Harry Harden and Simeon Borden were each paid fifty dollars. The committee further revealed the expenditure of \$12,578.50 in the reconstruction period for awards and damage.

Awards and Damage

"Paid Fall River Man'ry for land taken to widen Main st. make Union st. &c.,	\$4,281.00
Clark Chace ditto to widen Pocasset street	6,125.00
Sarah Harris for raising Pearl street in 1843	30.00
Daniel Brown ³ for cutting down Anawan st. 1843.	30.00
Hannah Wrightington for altering street	37.50
B. B. Kingsley for upsetting stage in 1843.	62.50
William A. Burt for damages to wagon	6.00
H. Batelle for repairing wall on Rock street	7.00"

In 1844 it was voted in town meeting, that the assessors look into the matter of numbering the stores and dwellings. Favorable action must have been taken for the following expenditures are later listed.

"Cook Borden & Co., lumber for fitting Guide Boards	\$ 2.46
Daniel Leonard, Painting Guide Boards	1.37
Munroe & Guard, Numbers and signs buildings and streets	106.76
Daniel Stillwell & Son, tacks, &c.,76"

³ Daniel Brown lived on Anawan Street and in company with W. C. Durfee ran a grain and grocery business near the steam boat dock.

Edward Thurston was a "Surveyor of Highways" in 1851 and was paid on the basis of \$1.75 per day. The laborers, according to the town records received "5 shillings per day". Crossing stones were first billed at this time and a new road was in process of construction to the town farm.

At the time Fall River became a city and eight years before the present southern boundary was established, highway developments are made clear by a study of "Streets, Courts, and Places", in the "Fall River Directory and Almanac" published in 1853. At that time there were seventy-four named streets. The part of South Main Street within Fall River was north of Columbia Street which was in Tiverton. All the streets branching to the east and west from "South Main" within Fall River had been worked in whole or in part. Rodman Street was accepted sometime between 1861 and 1864. There were no streets running east from North Main Street between "Prospect" and Wilson Road. The streets extending west were much the same as today. Durfee Street was a cross road from "Pine" to "Cherry" and Danforth Street from "Pine" to "Cedar".

From Bedford Street, the western terminus of the Old Bedford Road, Rock⁴ Street extended north to "Prospect", "Oak" to "Bank", and Robeson, Tremont, Orange and Davis Streets had been developed far enough to receive names. High Street beginning at "Franklin" was the main way to New Boston Road via that part of what is now Highland Avenue, north of Walnut Street. Winter Street ran from "Franklin" to "Maple", "Hanover" from "Locust" to "Prospect". Grove Street extended only a short distance from "Locust" to "Walnut" and "Linden" from "Bank" to "Locust".

Pleasant Street extended as far east as the present Thirteenth Street. Troy, Sixth, Seventh and Ninth Streets connected Pleasant and Bedford Streets and Eighth Street ran from "Bedford" to "Bank".

South Main, Pearl, Union, Washington, Mulberry, Second, Third, Fourth, Hartwell, and Broadway continued south into Tiverton. The following well known streets were annexed to the city's highway system when Fall River, Rhode Island became a part of Fall River, Massachusetts. Columbia, South Bank (now Morgan), Brow, Cottage, Whipple, Eagle, Osborn Streets, and Stafford Road to the new state line. That part of the Stone Bridge and Fall River Turnpike which was in Massachusetts became Bay Street and soon after, the Fall River and Watuppa Turnpike became a part of Pleasant Street.⁵

⁴ About 1883, Rock Street was cut through the land formerly a part of the Nathan Durfee estate and by 1887 to its present terminus.

⁵ See Chapter IV

Mayor Buffington, in his inaugural Address on April 2, 1855 said:—

“An important item of expenditure is that of streets and sidewalks. This has always been an expensive branch of municipal outlay, and one which our citizens are greatly interested in, as every city and town is held by the strictest legal obligations to keep its streets in good condition, and in a state at all times safe for public travel. The amount appropriated last year for this department was five thousand dollars, which was an increase over the former year of one thousand dollars. I would recommend that you increase the appropriation this year to six thousand five hundred dollars.”

In 1857, the city ordinances were revised and consolidated, placing with the city council the powers to accept, name and determine the width of streets and the numbering of buildings thereon. It prescribed regulations for owners of land who lay out streets within their property limits. It prescribed that new streets must be at least forty feet in width “provided the land through which it runs, and the estate adjoining said street will admit of such width without materially injuring same.” In this same revision strict rules and regulations “relating to hacking carriages” were enacted with stiff penalties for offenders. Mayor Blaisdell in his “inaugural” said — Our streets and sidewalks will compare favorably with the best streets and sidewalks of any city or town in the Commonwealth.

Globe Village and Mt. Hope Village, developed because of the opportunities for employment in mills and shops, were some distance from the business center of the city. Similar conditions arose, when new manufacturing plants were erected in outlying locations to the north and east, originating Mechanicsville, and Border City, Flint and Chace Villages. A somewhat modified map is produced by permission of “King’s Crown Press” from “The Cotton Textile Industry of Fall River, A Study of Industrial Localization”, by Thomas Russell Smith, showing “the evolution of the mill pattern”, which settlements followed closely throughout the period of expansion. This manner of growth left intervening spaces of open meadows and brush land, later to be occupied by homes.

A tract of land, not far from the city’s center, between it and the populous Flint Village section, belonging to the B. M. C. Durfee Trust Company remained vacant for many years.⁶ A portion of this area just west of the Brown School was fenced in and known as the “Ball Grounds” where athletic contests were held and games played. The well known “Circus Grounds” between Broadway and Bay Street, have not, up to the present time, been developed to any great extent.

⁶ It was not until about 1900 that this land was made available for building constructions.

Danforth Horton was elected Superintendent of Streets in 1859 and on July 24, 1860, an ordinance was passed establishing the office. With the exception of one year, he held office until 1877. This included a period of growth when many new streets were accepted and improvements made on the city's main arteries. At the same time the ordinance creating the office of Superintendent of Streets was passed, another was enacted forbidding the pasturage of animals upon "the common lands, public squares, highways, streets or alleys of the city." This did not include the outlying areas, north, east and south.

After the Civil War, the demand for new streets and the improvement of those already accepted increased rapidly. The wear and tear on the important streets was considerable, caused by the carting of granite for the construction of new mills. Mayor Fairbanks, in his inaugural, said, "The amount of travel and heavy teaming is now thrice what it was a few years since; and the expense for labor, teams and material of all kinds has greatly increased so that the appropriation must be liberal or we cannot have good carriage ways for the teams nor smooth paths for our feet." Mayor Brown in 1869, realizing it would be impossible to meet all demands suggested that "particular attention should be given to those streets traveled by our school children and by female operatives in our mills." It was at this time that concrete was first used in place of flagstones in sidewalk construction.

Thirteen thousand dollars had been spent on the partial construction of Highland Road in 1869. The citizens living in the vicinity of Eight Rod Way (Plymouth Avenue) thought they were not getting their share of the appropriation for highways and could see no reason why the broad proprietor's way in their district should not receive equal attention. Consequently, Mayor Brown recommended that Eight Rod Way be worked and extended by means of a bridge over the "Quequechan" to Pleasant Street. Both roads were completed in the early seventies and it was the original intention that at some time the two would be connected.

About the same time, several other important projects were initiated. Sections of North and South Main Streets were widened as was also Pleasant Street between "Third" and "Fourth", in preparation for widening to the "Narrows". Quequechan Street was accepted and worked including the bridging of the stream, thus connecting with Warren Street, a more direct route was opened between the south and east ends of the city. In 1874, over \$163,000 was expended by the highway department. The main thoroughfares were in use and with the opening of the Slade's Ferry

Bridge in 1875, there were good highway connections with all neighboring towns.

As late as 1880, there were no streets between South Main and Bay Streets from Slade Street to Mt. Hope Avenue. Large scale developments in Flint Village were just beginning. The southeastern part of the city was mostly woodlands and meadows. There were no streets running eastward from Highland Avenue, north of Stanley Street.⁷

The most important change and improvement in the highway system since the turn of the century was made in connection with the abolition of the grade crossings on the main and former Providence lines of the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad, which began in June, 1902 and was completed June 16, 1905. The cost of the project was shared by the railroad, the state and the city; the railroad paying sixty-five per cent., the state twenty-five per cent. and the city, ten per cent.

Grade crossings within the city limits were abolished, including two on Brownell Street, where several fatalities had occurred, and one each on Ballard, Lindsey, Davol, Turner, Danforth, Pond, Water and Ferry Streets. Seven railroad and five highway bridges were built or reconstructed. The dark tunnel at the foot of Central Street was replaced by an underpass. The viaduct from Central to Anawan Street has been of inestimable value and is now a part of the main automobile route to Newport from the Somerset-Fall River bridges to the north.

Important changes were made when the present post office building was in the process of construction, in the early thirties. The old building and the fire stations east of city hall were demolished, Pocasset Street was widened as was also Third Street, which had previously been extended across the stream by an iron bridge to Bedford Street. The river was confined within a conduit and all semblance of a bridge was obliterated. Traffic conditions were much improved.

Pavements

The first stone crusher was purchased in 1877 and a steam roller the following year. Thereafter, a large amount of work was done macadamizing the city streets. In 1880, granite paving blocks were laid as an experiment on short stretches of South Main and Pleasant Streets, with satisfactory results and in the years that followed large sums of money were spent in

⁷ For ready reference, a list of important streets of the past may be found in the Appendix of this fascicle.

sections where the traffic was heavy. On the streets where there were rails, the car company paved between the rails with cobble stones.

When automobile traffic increased, the water laid macadam could not carry the load. The Superintendent of Streets in his report for 1910 wrote,— “The automobile being now here to stay, the city should turn its attention to the construction of roads not so likely to disintegrate.” He recommended that a tar preparation be used as a binder for macadam, which would not only give better results than water but would practically render roads dustless. Different types of surfacing were used.

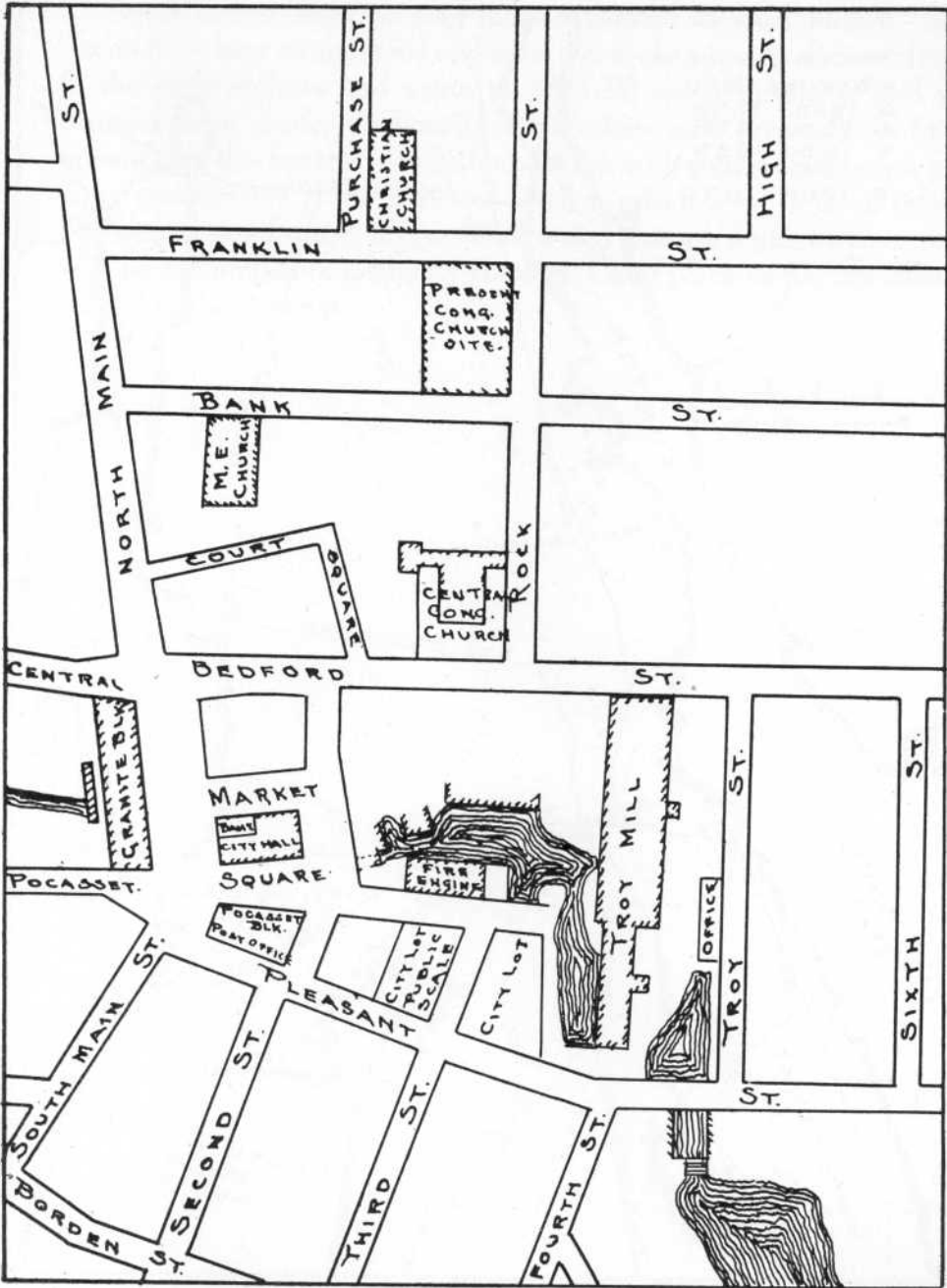
Bitulithic paving was first used in 1915 at the Narrows, Townsend Hill and Brightman Street, three entrances to the city. Finally practically all city streets were surfaced for automobile travel, cross walks and cobblestone gutters were eliminated. Mayor Kay was able to report in 1921, that the roads were in excellent condition and our main thoroughfares well paved. Since that time there has been deterioration because of lack of funds for up-keep.

In 1928, there were eleven forms of street covering, totaling 104.99 miles, of which 37.53 miles was bitulithic and 22.97 was granite blocks.

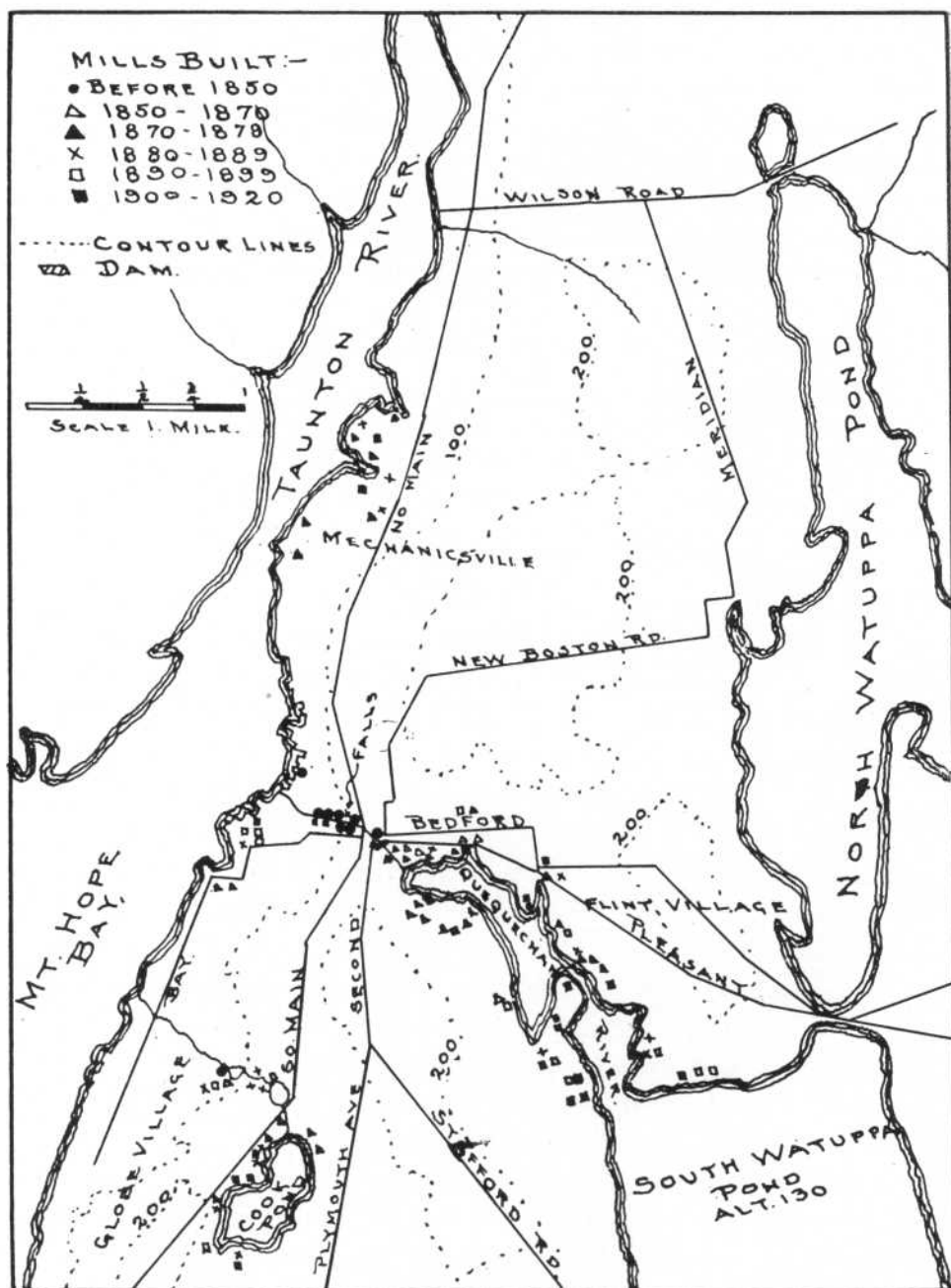


Before the days of automobiles and surfaced roads, the young man took his “best girl” buggy riding, and on pleasant summer afternoons, the father of the family hitched his horse to a carryall or surrey, for a drive in the country. Moving vans were fitted with seats the length of both sides, and often with a hitch of four horses conveyed picnic parties to their destination. Livery stables did a thriving business and owned hacks which were used for funerals and to convey patrons to evening dances and entertainments. William S. Mason and Francis W. Eddy were popular, independent hack drivers. Mr. Mason had his stand at the Wilbur House and Mr. Eddy near by, at the corner of Central Street. It was advisable to speak to them a few days in advance, to assure their services. They met incoming trains at the Bowenville Station and at the Steamboat Dock.

Occasional old time funerals held on Sunday were often attended by throngs of mourners. If the deceased was a member of one or more of the larger societies or brotherhoods, the cortege was headed by a brass band followed by members of the societies. At times every available hack in town would be employed and every driver was required to wear a “plug hat”. Double carriages followed the hacks and they in turn were followed by buggies.



FALL RIVER - BUSINESS CENTER - 1880.



EVOLUTION OF THE FALL RIVER MILL PATTERN
 1850-1920

Street names often perplex those interested in local history. Some names have long disappeared and more recent changes are often confusing. In the early eighties and again in 1895-'96 many beneficial and wise changes were made, eradicating duplications and perplexities. In the appendix of this fascicle may be found a list, with short notations, on highways and byways of the past and present, which seem to be of interest. The origin, significance, disappearance and change of place names might well be expounded in a lengthy chapter. Local place names are similarly treated in the appendix.

The first thing that I noticed when I stepped out of the car was
 the cold. It was a sharp contrast to the warm blanket of the car.
 I pulled my coat tighter around me and took a deep breath. The
 air was crisp and clean. It felt like a fresh start. I looked
 around at the people walking by, some in winter coats and
 hats, others in lighter clothing. I felt a little out of place.
 I had never before. I had always been in the city, but
 this was different. It felt like I had stepped into a new world.
 The people here were different. They had a different
 way of thinking. I had never before. I had always been
 in the city, but this was different. It felt like I had stepped
 into a new world.



THE END