

FALL RIVER PLANT—The Firestone Industrial Products Division at Fall River, Mass., has a 2,000-foot frontage on the navigable Taunton River which allows ships from Liberia loaded with latex to dock right at the plant.

Industrial Products Plant At Fall River, Massachusetts

PERHAPS you picture the Firestone Industrial Products plant in Fall River as a place where only highly specialized goods for industry are manufactured. But surely you have traveled in a modern train, a new car, pedaled a bicycle, pushed a baby carriage. And didn't your son in service carry a gas mask?

You and everybody else have been close to Fall River and to the Firestone plant there—much closer than you think.

So here's a bit about the city and about the Company's factory there:

Firestone began operations in Fall River just 18 years ago this fall. The plant is young in the history of a company that has spanned more than half a century. It is young too in the history of Fall River—a place that once lay within the confines of Plymouth Colony and later was the site of a skirmish, since glorified with the title, "Battle of Fall River," in the Revolutionary War.

FOR YEARS Fall River has been identified with the cotton textile industry. At one time it was the nation's greatest textile center, and from its wharves and freight terminals went finished cloth for all parts of the world.

Today, in this city of 112,000 people, the textile industry has suffered greatly. Many of the larger mills have closed or moved to the south. But in their place has come a new industry, still identified with cotton. This industry is the needle trade. In dozens of small, large, and medium-sized needle trades shops, aprons, frocks, and other garments are made by skilled women stitchers. New York's bustling midtown garment center teems each day with trucks bringing Fall River products to be warehoused and sold.

OF COURSE, cloth and dresses are not the only articles produced by Fall River men and women. Here are just a few of the many more:

Barges, beverages, boats, brushes, chemicals, corrugated boxes, electrical equipment, furniture, jewelry, luggage, optical supplies, pharmaceuticals, plastics, rope, sausages, soap tallow, suits, venetian blinds and wooden novelties.

Then there is the array of products manufactured at the Firestone plant. Some 2,500 men and women are employed in this busy factory that in 18 years has become a bulwark for the city's economy.

They produce among other things, Foamex latex mattresses (at the rate of one a minute on the world's newest and largest automatic production line), topper pads, pillows, battery cases, industrial and caster wheels, hose resins, friction tape, juvenile and baby carriage tiring, rubber thread, gaskets, parachute parts and hundreds more.

IN FALL RIVER, Firestone has a history of continuous expansion and progress.

The Company purchased, in 1937, the 32-acre plant site, with 2,000-foot frontage on the navigable Taunton River, which flows broadly to the sea. At the time of purchase, there were 28 buildings on the tract, buildings that until a few years before had housed the world's largest textile

printing mill. This was the American Printing Company which closed its Fall River plant in the early thirties.

Operations at the new Firestone plant began with a small labor force and a handful of supervisory personnel from the Company's plants in Akron. The first article produced was a battery separator.

Growth was steady, and in the '40's millions of dollars in defense contracts began to supplement a flourishing business for civilian customers. The young factory became the nation's greatest producer of gas masks. When American soldiers waded ashore at Normandy on D-Day, each man was equipped with a gas mask made at Firestone in Fall River.

Signal recognition of the plant's progress came in 1944, when the award of the Army and Navy E was conferred on the plant. Firestone employees in Fall River were the first in the rubber industry to win this honor. Later they earned two additional E awards.

IN 1940 construction of a new dock at the plant was completed, and during that fall the first of many 10,000-ton tankers from Africa tied up to discharge a million pounds of natural latex from Firestone's Liberian plantations. Now several ships berth each month at the dock, located where clipper ships were once loaded, and just a stone's throw from the pier of the old Fall River Line. The now defunct Fall River-New York steamship service lives in the folklore of America.

The relative ease with which natural latex could be transported from Africa to Fall River was a factor in the Company's decision to locate foamed latex operations there. Today, Fall River is the home of Firestone Foamex.

There are many Foamex products: mattresses, pillows, automotive topper pads, slipper soles, upholstery for furniture, trains and buses, parachute backs, tractor seats, shoulder pads, just to mention a few.

A new building was completed in 1949 to house Foamex manufacture, and a warehouse was added the next year.

FOUR AUTOMATIC units function in the new building for the continuous production of mattresses, Foamex slab and toppers (on two lines). In one large area of the building, women workers conduct Foamex finishing operations.

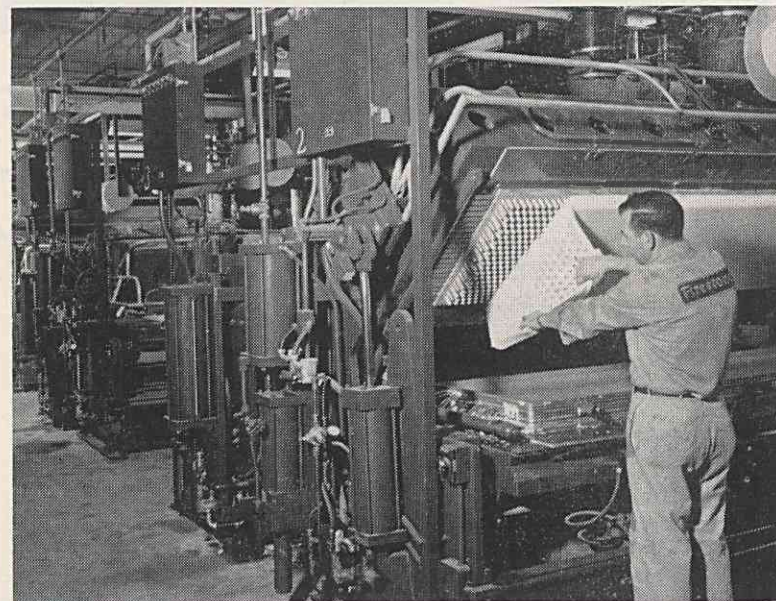
The people who make Foamex and the other Firestone products live in the city or in the surrounding countryside, which, because of its proximity to the ocean, is rated among America's loveliest regions.

The city of Fall River is governed by a mayor and a city council of nine elected members. It has railroad for freight and has bus lines for passenger service. Recently completed was an airport with 4,000-foot runways.

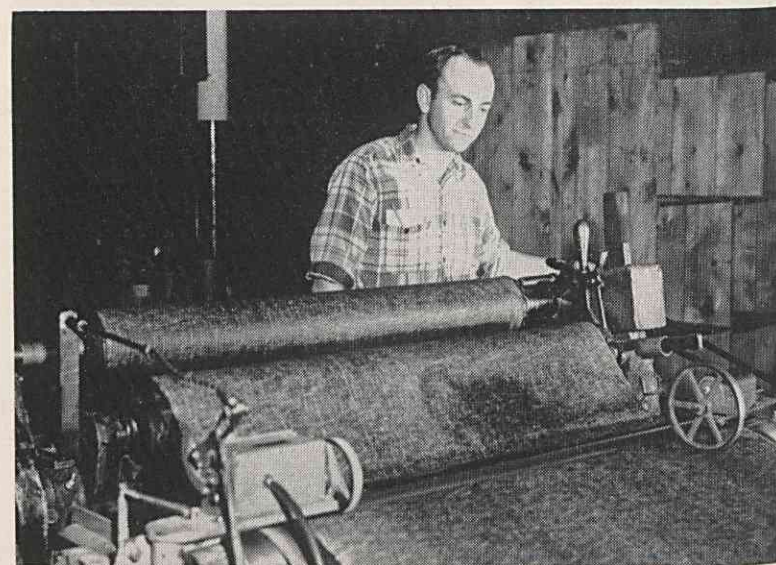
Of public schools there are 29, as well as many



THIS IS THE CITY—The scene above shows Fall River's South Main Street. The city has 15 4 acres of municipal parks, a symphony orchestra and is the site of Bradford Durfee Institute.



PRODUCTION INCREASES—Production capacity for Firestone Foamex furniture cushions and pillows was increased one-third with the installation of two lines of new equipment. Above, a worker strips a seating cushion from a mold.



OTHER PRODUCTS—The plant also produces topper pads, battery cases, hose, resins, juvenile and baby carriage tiring, industrial and caster wheels and rubber thread. Above, an employee, Adelbert Gifford, checks rolls of friction tape on a Cameron slitter.



SAILS IN THE SUN—Fall River residents enjoy boating, fishing, soccer and baseball, during their spare moments. Above is a picture of sailboats on Mount Hope Bay near Fall River.