

The Gifts of Henry H. Rogers

HENRY HUTTLESTON ROGERS was born in Fairhaven in 1840, the second of three children of Rowland and Mary (Huttleston) Rogers. As a boy he delivered newspapers, worked as a grocery clerk and was baggage master for the Fairhaven Branch Railroad. At the age of twenty-one, he left Fairhaven for the oil fields of Pennsylvania, where he and a partner, Charles Ellis, started their own oil refinery. Later Rogers became manager of the Charles Pratt Oil Co., which merged in 1872 with the Standard Oil Company. Rogers eventually became president of six and vice-president of thirteen of the Standard Oil Trust companies. He was also part of U.S. Steel, Amalgamated Copper, and several gas companies and railroads.

Rogers married his high school sweetheart, Abbie Gifford, and summered in Fairhaven with his five children. In 1895 he built an 85-room mansion near Fort Phoenix in the southern part of town overlooking the bay. (The mansion was dismantled after Rogers' death.)

In 1885, with the building of a grammar school, Rogers began a series of benefactions to his hometown, giving Fairhaven some of the most beautiful public buildings in the country. Besides the spectacular architecture gracing the town, Fairhaven has Rogers to thank for its public water system, roads, and Cushman Park, which was a boggy pond before Rogers had it filled and landscaped.

Rogers was a close friend of author Mark Twain, who often visited the Rogers family in town, often arriving on Rogers' 225 foot steam yacht *Kanawha*. At Twain's suggestion, Rogers gave financial assistance to Helen Keller, who dedicated one of her books to him. Rogers also provided Booker T. Washington with funds for the establishment of schools for southern blacks.

At the time of his death in May of 1909, Henry Huttleston Rogers was worth between 100 and 150 million dollars, making him one of the wealthiest people in U.S. history.

A monument, which now stands on the west lawn of Fairhaven High School, was dedicated to Rogers in 1912.

Following is a list of buildings donated to the people of Fairhaven by Rogers, with a map to help locate them.

1. Rogers School (1885)

100 Pleasant St. at corner of Center St.

The first gift of Henry H. Rogers, this elementary school is the town's oldest public school still in use. Built at a time when greater interest in education was sweeping the country, the school incorporated the best features in schoolhouse design, including a spacious auditorium on the third floor. Originally the building had living quarters for the custodian, assuring security and the uninterrupted operation of the furnace on cold winter nights.



When the building's exterior brick began to discolor just five years after the school's construction, Rogers had all the brick removed and replaced. Fairhaven did not have electric service when the school was built. It was wired for lights in 1890. With an addition and two portable classrooms added to the rear, the building was used as an elementary school for 128 years, until June 2013.

2. The Millicent Library (1893)

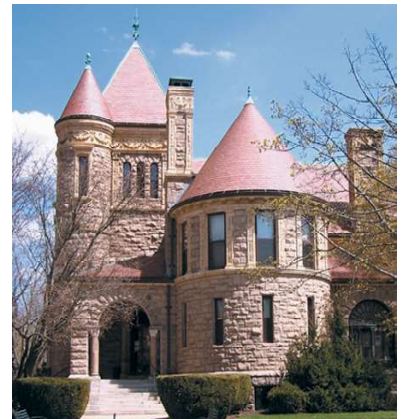
45 Center Street

Fairhaven's Italian Renaissance-style library is named for Rogers' daughter Millicent, who died in 1890 at the age of 17. Designed by noted architect Charles Brigham, the library is ornamented with molded terracotta reliefs, red slate roof and a large stained glass window by Clayton and Bell of London, depicting Millicent as the Muse of Poetry.

After giving a speech dedicating the Town Hall across the street,

Rogers' friend Mark Twain visited the library. "I'm glad to have seen it," Twain wrote to the trustees. "It is the ideal library, I think." Twain sent the library an autographed set of his books with a note commenting, "They are not instructive, but I feel sure you will like the bindings."

The Millicent Library, open Monday through Saturday, houses a collection of memorabilia relating to Captain William Whitfield's 1841 rescue of Manjiro Nakahama. The guest book has been signed by former Emperor Akihito of Japan, who visited in 1987.



3. Town Hall (1894)

40 Center Street

Financed by Rogers as a gift to the town from his first wife, Abbie, this French Gothic building was the second of Rogers' buildings to be designed by Charles Brigham. Originally, it housed all of the town government offices, as well as the Post Office and the police station with three iron-barred jail cells. It is still home to several municipal offices.

The interior features quartered

oak paneling, solid brass fixtures and leaded, stained glass windows. The tower houses a four-faced clock. The magnificent auditorium on the second floor, restored in the 1990s, has been the sight of many town meetings, dances, concerts, plays and theatrical performances. Humorist Mark Twain, a close friend of Rogers, appeared on stage here on February 22, 1894, as the keynote speaker at the building's dedication ceremony.

Town Hall is open to the public Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.



4. Masonic Building (1901) 20 Center Street

Rogers' effort to boost business in the center of town resulted in the construction of the Masonic Building, the third floor of which contains the ornate meeting place of the George H. Taber Lodge, A.F. & A.M., named for Fairhaven and Massachusetts' oldest living freemason, who was related by marriage to Rogers. Originally named Concordia Lodge, the group was given the building under the condition the lodge be renamed to honor "Uncle George."

Rental of the first floor for business use helps the lodge maintain the building.

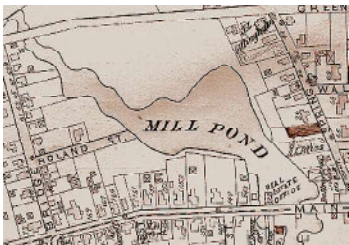
5. Unitarian Memorial Church (dedicated 1904) 102 Green Street

The bell tower of this English perpendicular Gothic "cathedral" reaches 165 feet above its manicured green, a particularly inspiring sight from near or far. Dedicated in memory of Rogers' mother, Mary Eldredge (Huttleston) Rogers, the church was designed by Charles Brigham and built of local granite quarried near Fort Phoenix. European stone

cutters and craftsmen fashioned a multitude of limestone gargoyles and other figures inside and outside the building. The breathtaking stained glass windows were designed by painter Robert Reid of New York.

The lovely Tudor style manse, now used as a Sunday school, also graces the church grounds, bringing a touch of Old England to New England.

In July and August the church sanctuary is open for tours on some weekday afternoons. Check for up to date listings at the Visitors Center.

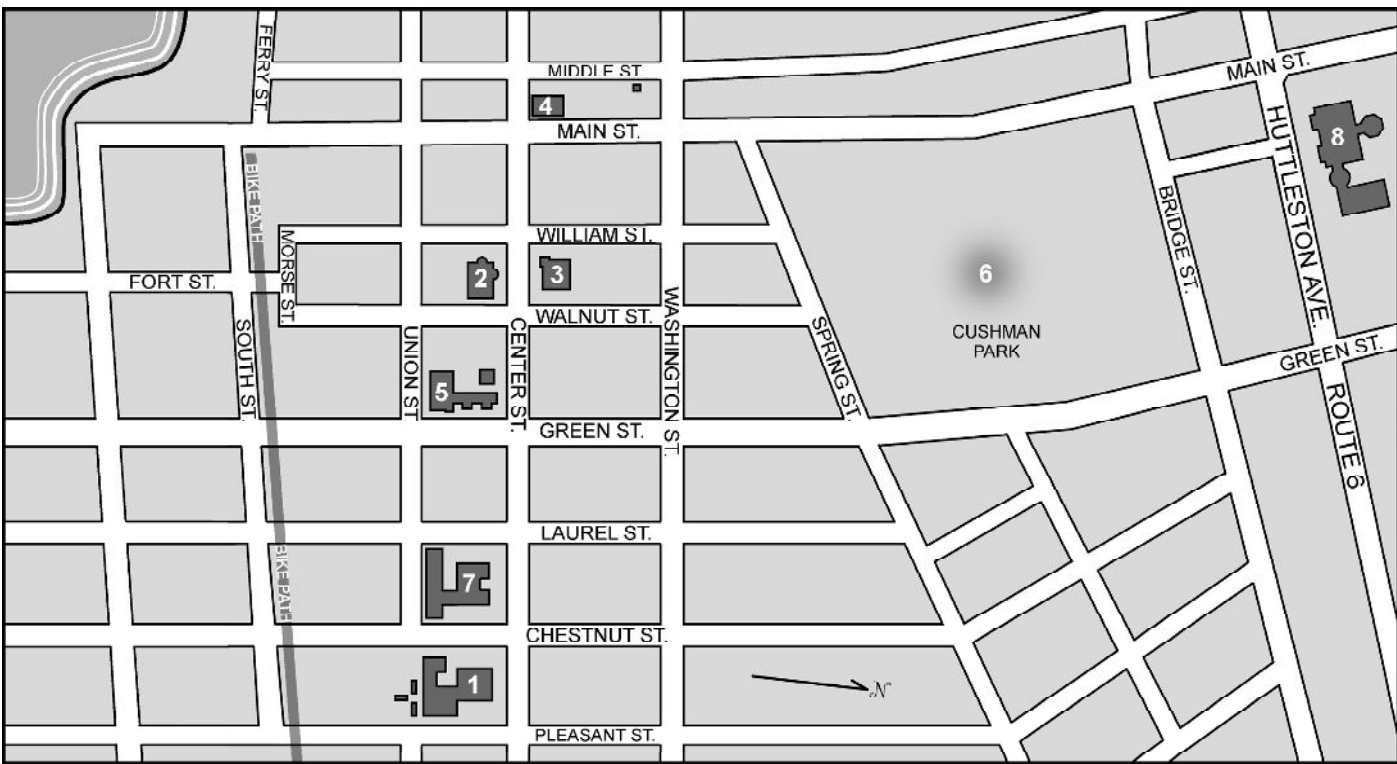


6. Cushman Park (1903)

The stagnant Mill Pond, which had connected to the harbor at one time, was considered to be an eyesore and a health hazard at the turn of the 20th Century. With financing by Henry H. Rogers, the five-acre pond was

filled with earth moved by a small steam train from an area north of Bridge Street. This major engineering project, overseen by Joseph K. Nye, also diverted the Herring River underground and raised the level of parts of Bridge Street. The original landscaping included many trees, flowering shrubs and flower beds. This public park, which now includes some of the high school's athletic facilities, is named for Rogers' ancestor Robert Cushman, one of the planners of the Pilgrim's voyage to America.

Officially given to the town in 1908, this was Rogers' last gift to Fairhaven before his death in May 1909.





7. Tabitha Inn (*Our Lady's Haven*) (1905)
71 Center Street

Built to accommodate an increase in visitors to Fairhaven, this well-appointed Elizabethan style hotel was named after Rogers' maternal great-grandmother, Tabitha (Crowell) Huttleston. At the time it was built, the Tabitha Inn was considered one of the finest small accommodations outside of Boston or New York. Mark Twain and other notable friends of the Rogers family stayed here. During WWII, the building housed Coast Guard cadets and was later purchased by the Fall River Diocese of the Catholic Church for use as a nursing home, Our Lady's Haven. The brick addition to the rear was added in 1953.



8. Fairhaven High School 1906)
12 Huttleston Avenue (Route 6)

A member of the first graduating class of the town's original wooden high school (demolished in the 1920s), Henry H. Rogers chose to build an educational palace to instill in Fairhaven students a sense of the glories associated with learning. He consulted with the top educators of the day while planning the new school.

It overlooks Huttleston Avenue, a road Rogers created when the new New Bedford-Fairhaven bridge was built in the late 1890s.

The Elizabethan-influence design is by Charles Brigham and includes marble floors, oak paneling, stained glass windows and a lovely auditorium with a beamed ceiling and carved wooden gargoyles. The library/media center was once an octagonal gymnasium that contained the first indoor basketball court in an American high school.

The school was built with its own electric generating plant, operated by a custodian who lived in an apartment located on the third floor. The basement level once housed industrial arts rooms and a home economics kitchen and facilities for agricultural studies.

The new wing, completed in the year 2000, added updated teaching and lab facilities and improved the high school handicap accessibility, continuing Rogers' aim to provide for the town's future.

Other Rogers-related sites

Henry H. Rogers' Boyhood home
(ca. 1769)

39 Middle Street (*private home*)

After the marriage of Rowland and Mary Eldredge (Huttleston) Rogers in 1833, they lived in this Middle Street house, which had been the home of Mary's grandparents, Ruby and Stephen Merrihew. Ruby, who had married Jethro Allen Jr. after the death of her first husband, lived until 1835 and the Rogers may have been her caretakers during her last two years. The home was deeded in trust to Mary Rogers through the will of her mother Rhoda Huttleston in 1841. Henry H. Rogers, along with his siblings Eliza and Rufus, were raised here. In 1888, a two-story addition was added to the home where Mary E. Rogers continued to live until shortly before her death in 1899.



Rogers Mausoleum (1893)

Riverside Cemetery, Main St.

Designed by Charles Brigham and installed in Riverside Cemetery in 1893, the mausoleum, modeled after the Temple of Minerva in Athens, is the final resting place of H.H. Rogers, his first wife Abbie, three of their children, Rogers' parents, sister, daughter-in-law Mary and grandson H.H. Rogers III.



Atlas Tack Factory (1902)

Only Office Building remains, South and Pleasant Streets

Little remains today of the Atlas Tack Company factory, built by Rogers in 1902 to house one of the nation's largest manufacturers of tacks, nails, bottlecaps and other small hardware. Originally the American Tack Co., located on the present-day wharf of Fairhaven Shipyard on Fort Street, Atlas Tack was formed by consolidating several tack manufacturing firms into one large firm.

It was the town's largest employer during much of the 20th century. The factory was closed in 1985 and most of its structures were subsequently razed.

Fairhaven Water Co. (*Fairhaven Water Dept.*) (1893)

Mill Road

Henry H. Rogers started the Fairhaven Water Company and had the town's first public water system installed in 1893. The design and operation of the water system was supervised by Joseph K. Nye, the son of Nye Oil Works founder William F. Nye. All of the company's stock was given to the trustees of the Millicent Library, who used the revenue for operation of the library until 1968. Since then, the town has run the water system under the Department of Public Works.