

Column: Cobblestones, Coffee and Claw Foot Tubs ...



by Faust
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Firstly, I should tell you that I'm a Fall River boy, born and bred. But as I am, in the near future, moving to Mattapoisett, which I gather is part of the Greater New Bedford Area, I have been exploring that city recently. And I must say, the people of New Bedford are a strange lot.

And frankly, I'm worried about the New Bedford economy.

One thing that jumps at me – you people spend an awful lot of time drinking coffee in... buildings. Do your cars not have cup holders? Do you have so little to do that you can afford the time to sit, sometimes in groups of three or four, and sip coffee and coffee-like liquids while remaining stationary and conversing among yourselves? Is this a byproduct of high unemployment?

In Fall River, we get our coffee at drive-thru windows. From big, well-known coffee vendors. Because we just don't have time to sit around.

I guess.

But beyond coffee, I've noticed some other stuff that makes me think New Bedford is a very poor and backward city. For instance, it seems like everywhere you go, you see used stuff for sale. Entire mill buildings are chock full of old stuff.

Like that place where you can get a claw foot tub or a kitchen sink.

In Fall River, we rip claw foot tubs out and replace them with nice, new fiberglass units. Usually while sipping nationally-known coffee products. Usually while completely gutting old houses of their overly-ornate and difficult to dust woodwork. For all I know, these old tubs wind up in New Bedford, where you then buy them and put them in your squalid homes.

And what's with all the used clothing for sale? Can you not afford new clothes? That place with the old bath tubs. Right inside that building, there's a guy who sells old clothes. Some kind of Goodwill type place, I guess. Mostly out of fashion, impractical, outdated clothing. And he seems to be thriving.

Worrisome. To say the least.

But let's get back to Downtown. I understand the struggle, but where are the stores? Every other building houses a museum or some sort of "historic" site – buildings that would otherwise be vacant, I can only guess. I mean, does any city really need a "bethel?" Does anyone even know what a bethel actually is?

I'll tell you what you might want to do – pave some streets. Not to brag, but in Fall River, we've ripped out or paved over all the cobblestones. Cobblestones are not really very good to drive on. This is obvious to anyone in Fall River and has been for years. But New Bedford, ever the backwards community, seems not to have gotten that memo. It's pretty simple – cobblestones slow down traffic. And driving over them can even cause the lid to rattle right off your coffee cup. Trust me. Cobblestones went out with... I dunno – whaling. It's no wonder you have so many people who are forced to walk in your downtown, New Bedford. You just don't get it.

Look – I'm not trying to beat anyone up, here. I'm only trying to help. To pass on the lessons we've learned in Fall River.

It's a tale of two cities.

I'm just concerned. If you can't manage to fill your city with stores that sell new goods, you'll never get with the 21st Century. You used to have that great Star Store. Now? It's filled with listless, underachieving young people who have no intentions of getting real jobs. They want to be "artists". Good for them. But what do they do for your city? They paint, they sculpt, they do whatever "artists" do, but do they work? No. They sit around and drink coffee – that's what they do.

Ever wonder why so many people go to Downtown New Bedford at night? It's because, except for sipping lattes, there's nothing to do there during the day. How often is the Ziterion Theatre open in the daytime? Answer: not very. What are you supposed to do – visit a bethel? Seriously?

I guess what I'm saying is that New Bedford could take a lesson from Fall River. Our downtown is pretty much one street. You know where to find the dollar store, the nail salon and yes – if you must buy used stuff – the pawn shop. And except for the potholes, which can often be avoided, you won't ruin your car's suspension getting there. There's always a place to park in Fall River. So we don't have to walk.

Don't get me wrong – I'll give New Bedford another try. But I'm bringing my own coffee.

You can follow Faust Fiore on his blog:
<http://faustfiore.blogspot.com/>