

HARBOR HILL

Come sit by me on this park bench, my favorite, and inhabit the view. Though the water of the sheltered harbor is serene and sparkling, the bay beyond is choppy and that gray line in the distance is a fog bank. It totally blocks our view of the islands. Pristine clouds skitter across the summer blue sky. Bright sunlight warms me, body and soul.

Tides here run about 14 feet on average, and just now they are middling. Lovely clapboard homes line the hill on the bank to our left. To our right nestles the town's shops and restaurants. Behind rises a small mountain from which two waterfalls spill directly into the harbor. Going south, this is the last place on the Atlantic seaboard of the U.S. where mountains meet the sea. Only senior members of the Yacht Club can moor in the inner harbor. All others do so in the outer harbor and their dinghies line the pier next to town. Choice spots are reserved for working lobstermen (from 4 a.m. to 4 p.m.) and visiting yachts.

But the real stars of the show are the Windjammers that cruise for several days at a time. This is the home port for the Mary Day,

Angelique, Grace Bailey, Lewis R. French, and Appledore. Their masts dominate the scene. Sailing under their quietly ballooning sails is relaxing. Helping to pull lines, lower anchor and walk on a rolling deck is exciting. Their cooks make wonderful meals enhanced by the salt air and you are rocked to sleep at night in your bunk by the waves. Smaller schooners like the Olad, Owl, and Surprise take hourly day trips. As they back out into the shipping lane, they make beeping noises like trucks. Park benches, one donated by my husband and me, line the boardwalk beside the water. Boat and people watching attract both locals and tourists.

About midway along the boardwalk sits the small Harbor Master's Office. The state flag flies overhead. It is from here each Memorial Day that the name of each person from the town who died at sea is read aloud. In the 1800s some were just boys, lured by economics and the adventure of going to sea. Afterward a minister or priest from one of the churches in town blesses the fleet for the coming year.

Harbor Hill, on which we are seated, is a little gem of a park designed by Frederick Law Olmsted. The foliage is kept low to allow us this wonderful view. Directly in front of us grow beach roses (*Rosa*

rugosa.) What they lack in showiness they more than make up for with their strong rosy fragrance, long since lost by hybrid roses. Seagulls wheel and cry overhead. Cormorants swim about and then climb on rocks and spread their wings to dry. Near the docks you can spot small starfish as well as schools of tiny fish. As we sit, taking it all in, we hear the town clock in the Baptist Church Tower chiming noon. It is a pleasing small-town sound and yet strangely anachronistic in this timeless scene.

I remember hearing once about special locations on earth where there are intersecting magnetic lines. They seem to pull people like pilgrims to these almost holy locales. I have no idea if this is true, but I have no doubt that there is a strong force that draws me to this spot in Camden, Maine over and over again. Somehow it settles and soothes me and makes my heart sing, especially in this time of Covid. Do you feel it?

HARBOR HILL

by COLLEEN HUCKABEE*
JUNE 2021

*100 WILLOW BROOK WAY SOUTH, APT. 2007
Delaware, Ohio 43015
740-815-1820