

VILLAGE VIEW

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If, this time of year, a wanderlust springs to life and sets your toes atapping, you're not alone. Something in the air, once Labor Day has come and gone, carries a call from mountains and valleys, from high hills and broad rivers.

Why else, in these weeks of mid-to-late September, do so many thousands of people go forth? Perhaps, in these shortening days, we sense apple trees are heavy-laden with ripening fruit. Maybe golden pumpkins in heaps along roadsides call us to join in harvest-time. Or is it simply that when fall comes, winter is sure to follow?

Whatever the cause, the response to the call is strong. Each section of New England that's lain somnolent through summer braces itself for visitors, much as Cape Codders ready themselves for their own influx in spring.

Some people head for New Hampshire, Vermont, Maine, or eastern Canada. Some enjoy the gentler scenes of Rhode Island's pastoral farms and Connecticut's soft-rolling countryside. Others remain within the borders of Massachusetts.

A busy season in all parts of New England, autumn vacations are best enjoyed when reservations for places to stay are confirmed. This time of year, parents transport college-bound offspring to campuses and schools bring alumni back for Homecomings. Football games are scheduled well into November and fall foliage-lovers join the stream. Some people don't need any reason: victims of wanderlust, they take off for any place within a day's drive to release those pent-up feelings September brings.

Our home state owns much beauty; if its exploration has been neglected, consider its possibilities. Spread wide your road map and chart a course across Massachusetts. You may find surprises waiting.

The Bay State is not large; there's no need to rush from place to place. A leisurely pace is more refreshing than a hurried one. Take time, as you leave the Cape, to spend an hour at Plimoth Plantation. How long has it been since you allowed yourself that luxury en route to or from Boston?

From Kingston, follow byways northwest through small towns all the way to Wayland and into Sudbury where you might have a late lunch or early dinner at Wayside Inn. Then turn north to Concord and Lexington for a visit to the Minute-man Historic Park. You might spend your first night nearby.

From Concord drive northeast, skirting Boston's traffic, to Marblehead and Salem, allowing time in each to renew history lessons. Then on to Gloucester, almost a neighboring community, gateway to Cape Ann, and less than 50 miles from Provincetown, as the gull flies.

The two Capes differ markedly; while Cape Cod's shores are sandy, Cape Ann's run to rocks. Spectacular stretches of rugged white-surfed headlands protect this northern peninsula from onslaughts by the sea. Although Cape Codders are accustomed to seaport activities, the atmosphere among Gloucester's fishing fleet and around Rockport's colorful harbor is a different dimension.

After a good night's rest at Cape Ann, turn west toward Worcester where, a short distance south of that city, you find Sturbridge. The entire town, outside as well as within its houses and shops, is a museum illustrating the American way of life in the earliest days of the Industrial Revolution. The knee britches and tri-corner hats of Plimoth Plantation and the years leading to the War of Independence are out of style in Sturbridge, but the day of railroading has yet to dawn. Foundries, which later will produce parts for locomotives, are turning out cast iron stoves and making open-hearth cooking obsolete.

The good citizens of Sturbridge argue abolition of slavery and weigh pros and cons of educating daughters as adequately as sons. Prison reform and care of the handicapped are also important social issues. Problems still unsolved today!

Spinning wheels have given way to water-powered machines to meet demands for textiles by growing populations. Factory-made glass, wrought iron implements, clocks and lighting devices can be purchased from retail outlets, but most people still grow their own vegetables and herbs, and sheep and depend on their horses for transportation. Weekly newspapers and word-of-mouth provide communication. The most widely-read book is still the family Bible.

A visit to Sturbridge is stepping through time to an earlier century, just as your stop in Lexington and Concord took you back two centuries, and at Plymouth more than 300 years.

Go further afield to Stockbridge; in this typical western Massachusetts village nestled in the Berkshire foothills, Norman Rockwell made his home and painted pictures illustrating American life during the present century's early decades.

A center of literary and artistic activity in the late 1800's, Stockbridge today displays 250 years of history. Here, the Indian Mission House dates to 1739; it was the home of the Rev. John Sergeant who preached to the Indians. The house, restored and authentically furnished, is surrounded by colonial gardens. Visitors are welcome.

Chesterwood, home and studio of Daniel Chester French, celebrated American sculptor whose Lincoln Memorial in our nation's capitol is familiar, stands but a short drive from Stockbridge center. Models and plaster casts of his work are on display. From Chesterwood's broad verandahs, woodland walks, and gardens mountain views refresh the spirit.

Nearby at Lenox is the Nathaniel Hawthorne Cottage, a replica of the noted author's home. Tanglewood's music festival is closed for the season and only the song birds' sweet sounds float on the air.

In the heart of Stockbridge village stands the Old Corner House, a handsome 18th century Georgian structure. Inside on permanent display are Norman Rockwell's paintings and other memorabilia.

Turn eastward if your time grows short, but pause in your flight home long enough to drive north through the Connecticut River Valley at least as far as Amherst. Ease back into the latter half of the 20th century at the University of Massachusetts. Nine months of the year this campus is home to more than 35,000 college students. As its architecture attests, it has its own history spanning more than a hundred years.

Presuming you've survived the time-shock, come along back to our sandy shores, bringing with you into the present images of the past and promises of the future. You need not leave the Commonwealth to satisfy your wanderlust.