

Idylls of the Town

Welcoming crowds of crisping leaves accumulated along the road.

Leaving cornfield spills to turkeys, fascinated

I turned a corner, made a wish upon a load

Of hay, drawn by a tractor,

And found this place the benefactor.

Stone walls and maples framed the land

Where a couple, wearing overalls across at least one generous belly

Were raking hay by hand,

And picking Concord grapes for jelly.

Wallace Nutting could have stood his camera there,

Capturing the crisp fall air, the

Nineteenth century vernacular

White clapboard capes, and handsome bricks,

An arch of tree spectacular

For a quiet corner "in the sticks".

A library and church appeared, and the seat

(Though not the seating)

Of government. (The old town hall was

Much too small to chair a meeting.)

An intimidating safe, in black, immense,

Guarded the door with gravity, so intense,

It warped the floor beneath the station

Of our town clerk of fifty years duration,

Who answered questions.

“Go out the door, and down the step.

Turn hard right – it's painted blue.”

The visiting governor, a man who

Must have thought he knew

A joke when he had heard one,

Laughed.

I remember that I said

To my daughter's smiling head

Reflected in the mirror

“I want to live here.”

Our children grew up in a place

Where they could walk to school.

Our neighbors knew the golden rule.

The music of the river traced

The seasons in its bed...

Beneath its covers murmuring, on bitter nights,

A counterpoint to canid songs in praise of brilliance overhead

(Which etched blue shadows on the lawn's reflected light.)

Winter's thaw will swell the flow, eventually

Breaking the ice, then damming with tympany –

A symphony envied by overachievers

In Darling Pond – the resident beavers.

Then choirs of peepers in their vernal pools

Sing lustily to wake the sleepers,

And fisherman on opening day, as a rule,

Eat breakfast at the fire station,

Hoping for trout with their next ration.
With blossoms comes a drowsy hum
As tippling bees swig nectar from
The buds of trees, while making unreliable promises
That frost is past, to doubting Thomases.
When we replaced a bridge,
It started with a load of gravel
Enabling our cars to travel on a ford.
This rite of passage gave small quarter
To youngsters leaping from a tree
Onto a rope swing, which, hopefully,
Released them into deeper water.
In August, quilts were spread upon
The church's newly mown front lawn
To hear the Coast Guard Band perform.
First stilled by the miracle of sound,
The children, sitting on the ground
Rose, and marched in time and place – their norm
For Sousa. Then they spun
Until they staggered, and were done.
As music ends, the babies fuss,
Though Mom provides a homemade snack,
And Father loads the family bus
Where dog left slightly muddy tracks.
Those who came on foot at last
Begin to walk away,

While robins soften twilight
With their pleasant roundelay.

I've seen how this small town engages.
Permanence is found in pages
Of matching names, births, deeds, and taxes,
And on the gravestones, and mailboxes.
Yet the town is far from static
Sepia photos in an attic.
Eclectic tastes, creative minds
Enhance this place of natural beauty.
A sturdy sense of what is kind,
Of stewardship, and duty bind
Awareness
Of the rareness Of our Home.

Written by Adelaide Northrop and read at the Bicentennial Celebration on September 10,
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