

# Harvard<sup>2</sup>

Cambridge, Boston, and beyond



I2H “Our American History”  
Viewing the “Golden Age” of Illustration



I2B Extracurriculars  
Events on and off campus  
during July and August



I2J Meju's Korean  
Fusion  
Bibimbap in Somerville



I2N Urban Forays  
Places to play and picnic  
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I2P Dedicated  
to Craft  
Dories, dinghies,  
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# Extracurriculars

Events on and off campus during July and August

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**The 33rd Annual Antique and Classic Boat Festival**  
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From left to right: *Wild Geraniums and Dawn Redwoods*, by photographer Philip L. McAlary, at the Arnold Arboretum; a still from Sam Fuller's *Pickup on South Street* at the Harvard Film Archive; and *A Wheatfield, with Cypresses*, by Vincent Van Gogh, at The Clark.

band music, a craft market, and children's activities. (August 22-23)

**The Farmers' Market at Harvard**  
[www.dining.harvard.edu/flp/ag\\_market.html](http://www.dining.harvard.edu/flp/ag_market.html)  
The weekly market (noon to 6 P.M.) at the Science Center plaza offers fish, meats, fresh-from-the-farm produce, breads and baked sweets, herbs, pasta, chocolates, jams, and cheeses—along with guest chefs and helpful cooking demonstrations. (Tuesdays through October)

FROM LEFT: PHILIP L. MCALARY/ARNOLD ARBORETUM; HARVARD FILM ARCHIVE; © THE NATIONAL GALLERY, LONDON 2014/THE CLARK

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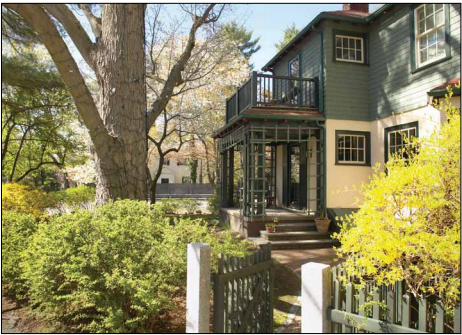
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## HARVARD SQUARED

### NATURE AND SCIENCE

#### The Arnold Arboretum

[www.arboretum.harvard.edu](http://www.arboretum.harvard.edu)

The arboretum is a treasure trove of native plants, old-growth trees, flowers, rare specimens, walking trails—and art exhibits. **Arboretum Inspiration: Image and Word** features poet Holly Guran and photographer Philip L. McAlary. (Poetry reading on August 2; exhibit is open through September 3)

### THEATER

#### American Repertory Theater

[www.americanrepertorytheater.org](http://www.americanrepertorytheater.org)  
Summer events at the A.R.T.'s second stage, Oberon, include **Heatwave**, a jamboree with poet Anne Champion, comedian Sam Jay, and Kennedy School lec-

**Crater, Mare Smyth II (1972)**, by Len Gittleman, at the DeCordova

turer and writer Tim McCarthy '93 (July 22), and **Thought Bomb**, an evening of eclectic performances by writers, comics, illustrators, and musicians (July 24).

### FILM

#### Harvard Film Archive

[www.hcl.harvard.edu/hfa](http://www.hcl.harvard.edu/hfa)

**The Complete Sam Fuller** celebrates the work of the director, screenwriter, novelist—and native of Worcester, Massachusetts. (Through August 30)

Screenings of *Nashville*, *The Long Goodbye*, *Thieves Like Us*, *Kansas City*, *3 Women*, and *Gosford Park* reflect **The Complete Robert Altman**. (Through August 31)

### EXHIBITIONS & EVENTS

#### Harvard Museum of Natural History

[www.hmn.harvard.edu](http://www.hmn.harvard.edu)

"Tropical Island Night at the Museum" is a party (for those aged 21 and older; advanced tickets required) on July 17 held in conjunction with **Islands: Evolving in Isolation**, an exhibit on hotspots of biodiversity across the globe.



Antique yachts, sailboats, and rowboats on display in Salem, Massachusetts

#### Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology

[www.peabody.harvard.edu](http://www.peabody.harvard.edu)

**Arts of War: Artistry in Weapons across Cultures** highlights the museum's most beautiful instruments of violence. The range of knives, swords, maces, spear-throwers, and guns date from 5,000 years ago to the twentieth century.

#### Harvard Art Museums

[www.harvardartmuseums.org](http://www.harvardartmuseums.org)

Jesse Aron Green's installation **Ärztliche Zimmerymnastik** ("Medicalized Indoor

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## HARVARD SQUARED

Gymnastics”) features video and associated sculptural and photographic works and drawings that are based on an 1858 exercise manual by German physician Daniel Gottlob Moritz Schreber that promotes “the maintenance of health and vigor of body and mind.” (Through August 9)

### MIT Museum

[www.mit.edu/museum](http://www.mit.edu/museum)

**Photographing Places: The Photographers of Places Journal, 1987-2009.** The journal of “contemporary architecture, landscape, and urbanism” was founded by faculty at MIT and the University of California, Berkeley; the exhibit offers art by Maria Cox, Curtis Hamilton, and Joel Sternfeld, among others. (Through August 16)

### DeCordova Sculpture Park and Museum

[www.decordova.org](http://www.decordova.org)

**Integrated Vision: Science, Nature, and Abstraction in the Art of Len Gittleman and György Kepes** explores the relationships among Gittleman’s serigraphs—explosively colored screen prints based on black and white photographs taken during the Apollo 15 mission in 1971—and Kepes’s subtler abstract paintings. (Through September 6)

### The Clark

[www.clarkart.edu](http://www.clarkart.edu)

**Van Gogh and Nature** includes oil paintings and drawings that explore the artist’s evolving relationship with the natural world, from seasonal landscapes to detailed renderings of rocks, insects, and leaves. (Through September 13)

## MUSIC

### Harvard Summer Pops Band

[www.hcs.harvard.edu/~hub/events/summerband.shtml](http://www.hcs.harvard.edu/~hub/events/summerband.shtml)

The ensemble performs its popular annual concerts (check the website for program details). (July 23 at 4 P.M. in Harvard Yard; July 26 at 3 P.M. at the Hatch Shell in Boston)

### Sanders Theatre

[www.boxoffice.harvard.edu](http://www.boxoffice.harvard.edu)

**The Harvard Summer School Chorus** performs Handel’s oratorio *Esther*. (July 31)  
**The Harvard Summer School Orchestra** plays Carl Maria von Weber’s Concertino for Clarinet and Orchestra and Brahms’s Serenade No. 1. (August 1)

## RECREATION

### Sunday Parkland Games

[www.thecharles.org/projects-and-programs/parklandgames](http://www.thecharles.org/projects-and-programs/parklandgames)

Meet at Riverbend Park for fun—from bocce and badminton to soccer, hula-hooping, and roller blading. (Through September 28)

Events listings are also accessible at [www.harvardmagazine.com](http://www.harvardmagazine.com).

## Spotlight



NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION/ART RESOURCE, NY.  
© BENTON TESTAMENTS TRUST/SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION/ART RESOURCE, NY.

A stint as a set painter for the silent film industry helped Thomas Hart Benton develop his signature, cinematic-style paintings, many of which mythologize modern American history. “He wanted to capture the feel of motion pictures on canvas: the illusion of three-dimensional space, rhythmic motion, and the glow of projected light,” notes Austen Barron Bailly, curator of American art at the Peabody Essex Museum. *American Epics: Thomas Hart Benton and Hollywood*, the first major exhibition of Benton’s works in more than 25 years, explores that theme through *Portrait of a Musician* (1949), above, and more than 100 other paintings, murals, drawings, and prints. Film clips accompany the works and elucidate their still-savvy depictions of a national character that is often in flux.

### Peabody Essex Museum

[www.pem.org](http://www.pem.org)

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# “Our American History”

Viewing the “Golden Age” of Illustration • by Nell Porter Brown



**A**RT DEALER Judy Goffman Cutler began collecting American illustrations in the early 1970s with a few pen-and-ink drawings by Charles Dana Gibson. His “Gibson Girl,” created in the 1890s, was a well-born, statuesque, “ideal woman” who helped sell magazines and fashions for two decades—until he fell out of vogue. Gibson’s exquisite renderings, like other popular illustrations that followed, says Cutler, were “denigrated as ‘commercial art’: if you were paid for your

work, you were not considered a real artist.”

Now the owner of the American Illustrators Gallery in Manhattan, Cutler is an expert on the genre and has nearly 5,000 original oil paintings, watercolors, and drawings by artists ranging from Gibson and Howard Pyle to N.C. Wyeth, Maxfield Parrish, J.C. Leyendecker, and Norman Rockwell. More than a hundred of the best are on display at The National Museum of American Illustration, which Cutler and her husband, Laurence S. Cutler, M.Arch.

**Clockwise from left: Panels from *A Florentine Fete*, by Maxfield Parrish, loom over the museum’s lobby; Judy and Laurence Cutler with J.C. Leyendecker’s elegant *Arrow Collar Couple* (1932); N.C. Wyeth reportedly considered *The Doryman* (1933) one of his best works; the art shines even amid its Gilded Age setting.**

’66, M.A.U. ’67, co-founded and run at their Newport, Rhode Island, mansion.

The collection reflects the “Golden Age of American Illustration,” from the 1880s to the early 1950s, when these artists’ handiwork

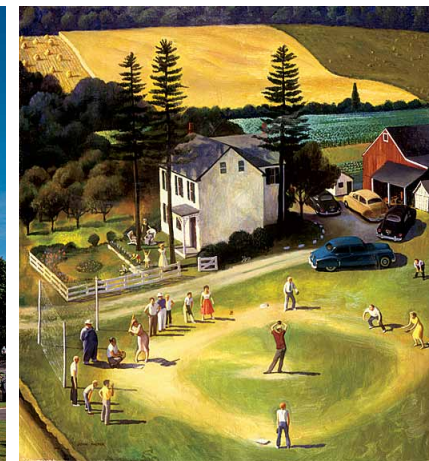


**Modeled after a French country house, Vernon Court was restored and now houses an array of original works, such as *Family Picnic* (1950), by John Falter (top right), and *Mary Reed* (1929), by Norman Price.**

was reproduced in books, periodicals, and advertisements. The age marked not only the birth of commercialized graphics, but a seismic industrial and cultural shift that presaged the marketing and branding industries and, in fact, the era of mass-media communications. It was also a boon for easel-trained artists who, for the first time, could be assured of lucrative and steady work.

“People don’t know what illustration was,” asserts Judy Cutler, “or that most of these artists were classically trained as fine artists.” The museum addresses both points—and provides the grandest of settings to show off the (still-growing) collection. “She’s a hoarder,” Laurence Cutler says of his wife, who laughs and nods. The Cutlers grew up in Woodbridge, Connecticut, and have known each other all their lives; actress and comedienne Whoopi Goldberg (a friend, and longtime illustrator collector herself) calls their banter “the Laurence and Judy show.” Each married and divorced others before tying their own knot in 1995.

Cutler says he “lucked out” with a hoarder who saw the art’s intrinsic value despite the fact that people “were selling original Gibson drawings by the stack, by the pound. Judy recognized that these illustrators were important because they tell our American history—in images. The interesting question,” he allows, “is whether the illustrators reflected American society, or whether they, in fact, shaped and influenced society, along with our perceptions of it.”



The museum fills two floors of the couple’s regal manor, Vernon Court—itsself an American artifact. The Beaux-Arts adaptation of a French château on Bellevue Avenue was designed and built in 1898 by Carrère and Hastings, the architects of the New York City Public Library. The Cutlers bought it in 1998 and, following repairs and restoration work, opened the museum to the public two years later. “Visitors here,” claims Judy Cutler, “get two for the price of one: a tour of a beautifully restored Gilded Age mansion and a close look at the greatest illustrators of the Golden Age.”

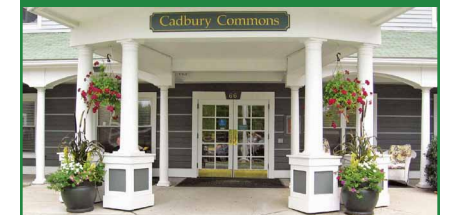
Ideally, a visitor would take at least a week to absorb what’s on show. The art is hung, salon-style, amid gilded moldings, marble floors and fireplaces, chandeliers, and carved and brocaded period French furnishings. “It’s all the stuff we were taught to hate at the Graduate School of Design,” jokes Laurence Cutler, a retired architect and former assistant professor at Harvard who has since come to love it. The Rose Garden loggia, with arched glass doorways leading outside, features sections of Maxfield Parrish’s largest and most extensive work, the 18-panel mural *A Florentine Fete*. Painted between 1910 and 1916, the panels were first displayed in the “Girls Dining Room” at Curtis Publishing in Philadelphia, then-owners of *Ladies Home Journal*. Parrish put himself into the *Fete*, and

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a close look reveals that nearly every woman is a version of his longtime model and mistress, Susan Lewin. “She appears 166 times,” Laurence Cutler notes. “I counted.”

Parrish’s splashy party-goers, draped in medieval-style gowns, robes, and costumes, are lounging under lapis lazuli skies, amid classical archways, stone staircases, and the odd Grecian vase. The layering and luminous effects of color, the painstaking details, and the sense of playfulness and freedom are enchanting. The viewer’s attention roams among laughing faces, couples talking tête-à-tête, and a handful of characters dressed in striped and checkered garb. In one setting, a provocative Lewin stands front and center dressed in a Robin Hood-esque outfit, albeit with a short skirt and boots. Three panels that failed to fit in the loggia fill the walls above a graciously winding staircase to the second floor (see page 12H).

The *Fete* stays put. But Judy Cutler rotates other works, curating a few special exhibits

each summer. This year, along with a July 30 gala to benefit the museum (tickets are on sale through the website), she has organized *Rockwell and His Contemporaries*. His famous *Miss Liberty* (1943) will be on view, along with art by Stevan Dohanos. Another veteran *Saturday Evening Post* illustrator, his precise realism—as well as a winking sense of irony—often rivaled Rockwell’s. Also in the show is the oil painting for a *Post* cover, *A War Hero Telling Stories* (1919), and other works by J.C. Leyendecker, an artist especially dominant in men’s fashion advertising, whom Rockwell consciously emulated; after finishing his own art studies in 1915, Rockwell even moved to Leyendecker’s town, New Rochelle, New York. The two corresponded for years before Leyendecker’s death in 1951. “Just as Rockwell ‘obsessed’ over Leyendecker, in a positive way, to learn how he painted,” Cutler says, “so did Rockwell’s contemporaries ‘obsess’ about Rockwell—like John Falter and other illustrators who then followed Rockwell around.”

Elsewhere around the museum, works are often grouped by themes. Depictions of pirates, trappers, and adventurers, for example, include N.C. Wyeth’s *Archers In Battle* and Norman Price’s *Mary Reed* (1929), both created for books, and Frank Schoonover’s *To Build a Fire* (1908) for the famous Jack London story published in *The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine*. Many of the same artists were enlisted to build support and funding for wars: *Freedom Is Your Business* (1950), by Howard Chandler Christy, was turned into a U.S. Army recruitment poster and *Disabled Veteran* (1944), by Rockwell, promoted war bonds. Rockwell’s *Love Ouanga* (1936), on the other hand, headlines the museum section on “race relations,” while his *Russian Schoolroom* (1967), which ran in *Look*, falls under “education.”

“THE MAIN JOB of these illustrators,” Laurence Cutler explains, “was to sell magazines and books and other products—which all sold more when they were illustrated.” This explosion of commercial graphics was made possible primarily by technological advances that enabled increasingly detailed images and an expanded color palette to be transferred from original fine art. Meanwhile, the rise of railroads allowed products and periodicals to become truly “national.” In 1872, according to Laurence Cutler, the country had roughly 800 newspapers, but by 1893 “there were 5,000. And then magazines started to proliferate, like *Harper’s Weekly*, *Hearst*, *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper*/*Leslie’s Weekly* and, most popular in its day, *Century Magazine*.”

By the late 1870s, the “father” of American illustration, Howard Pyle (1853-1911), was contributing to *Scribner’s Magazine* and

*Harper’s Weekly*, and was especially known for illustrating (and sometimes retelling) fairy tales and adventure stories. More importantly, perhaps, late in life he founded and taught at the country’s first school for illustrators, thereby launching the careers of scores of students, such as Wyeth and Parrish, and influencing every generation of illustrators since.

Among those was the German-born, Paris-trained Leyendecker. Instrumental in the then-novel idea of an “advertising campaign,” he designed and defined an endur-

## STAFF PICK: Meju’s Korean Fusion

**Exposed brick walls**, wood furniture, and mod chandeliers give a rustic-sleek vibe to Meju in Somerville’s Davis Square. The Korean-fusion restaurant (sister to Bibim in Allston) opened earlier this year; it offers traditional dishes with a few twists, along with potent libations. (Imbibers, beware the “Korean Pear Smash”—fruit, bourbon, syrup, mint, and lemon—and the cocktails made with Korea’s signature, vodka-like, *soju*.)

We started with spicy pork buns (\$8): surprisingly light and fluffy, they came with *gochujang* (red chili paste) aioli and crunchy alfalfa sprouts that nicely balanced the pork’s tang. Our gluten-free friend sampled the *dukbokki* (\$9)—traditional Korean street fare consisting of garlicky rice cakes, here made gooey and pasta-like by melted mozzarella. The pork-belly tacos were paired with a house-made kimchi that cut the richness of the meat. Entrées include bibimbap (\$16) served in a piping-hot black stone pot. The dish—enough for two people—offers a choice of protein (beef, tofu, octopus, or eel) layered among fresh steamed vegetables and rice and topped by a softly fried egg. Zingy

pepper sauce comes on the side. A southern BBQ-loving friend praised the beef bulgogi (\$19)—sweet-soy-marinated beef ribeye, scalions, and mushrooms—as the highlight of his meal. Although the desserts are limited, the green tea- and strawberry-flavored balls of mochi (short-grain glutinous rice pounded into paste) filled with ice cream ended a pleasurable evening out.

—LAURA LEVIS

Spicy rice cake topped with fresh vegetables



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## HARVARD SQUARED

Clockwise from right: Norman Rockwell's *Disabled Veteran* (1944) hangs in the "Grand Salon," while the Rose Garden loggia features more panels from *A Florentine Fete*, by Maxfield Parrish. J.C. Leyendecker's *Couple in Boat* helped sell Arrow shirt collars; Frank E. Schoonover's vision of the Yukon illustrated Jack London's story "To Build a Fire."

ing collective vision of rugged but genteel manliness, using figures typically modeled on his companion, Charles Beach. The alluring "Arrow Collar" man starred in advertisements for Cluett Peabody & Company Inc.'s detachable collar between 1905 and 1931; the 1927 *Interwoven Socks—Famous for Their Colors* (part of a series for that company) features a strapping Scotsman in highland regalia—and argyles. So pivotal was Leyendecker's work, adds Judy Cutler, that his 1914 *Post* cover *Bellhop with Hyacinths* almost single-handedly invented the tradition of sending flowers on Mother's Day.

Parrish was so successful, reports Laurence Cutler, that he referred to himself as the "businessman with the brush," and was the first artist to insist on the phrase "one-time use only" in his contracts. From 1918 through 1934, Parrish illustrated the hugely popular "Edison Mazda" calendars that advertised early light bulbs and lamps for General Electric. In the 1920s, Cutler continues, a Parrish calendar and/or copies of his most famous painting, *Daybreak* (1922), hung in a quarter of American households.

What's remarkable about the original works from which, in some cases, millions of copies have been made, is the depth of talent and creative vision that's not typically associated with commerce. Wyeth's *The Doryman* (1933), printed in *Trending Into Maine*, a tribute by Kenneth Roberts, is simply a beautiful painting: faint sunlight plays amid rosy clouds and a blue sky that's mirrored in the dark violet ocean waters; a stately white square farmhouse stands out on a distant green hill; and the rower's arms and a seagull's wings are cocked at the same angles, working in tandem as the day is winding down. "The whole Wyeth family has been on the coast of Maine for generations," says Laurence Cutler, "and to me he captures something essential about the place." Wyeth himself



reportedly considered it among his best works.

John Falter's *Family Picnic* (1950), created as a *Saturday Evening Post* cover, depicts a late afternoon baseball game on a field that's surrounded by a farmhouse, a river, and golden hayfields; the scene is more modern and Edward Hopper-esque than most of Rockwell's art. The single quiet image "says so much about the American experience," Cutler adds. Falter, who died in 1982, was among the last of the Golden Age illustrators. The advent of readily reproducible photography, and then color photography, slowly supplanted that era's pioneering art form.

Interest in Golden Age illustrators, however, is alive. Attitudes changed within the last few years, especially since Rockwell's *Saying Grace* brought \$46 million at auction. "But they should have looked at illustration long before, for the high quality of the painting and the stories they tell," Judy Cutler says. Abstract art doesn't move her. "I don't want to look at a Cy Twombly painting—can you image spending \$22 mil-

lion for a Cy Twombly and you see some gray paints running down a canvas?"

Falter's *June Wedding* (1950), on the other hand, which hangs in the museum's library room, portrays modest backyard nuptials, with lilacs in bloom and an old man in suspenders, en route home from the grocery store, who has stopped to watch the proceedings over a white picket fence. The timeless tradition, a sense of regeneration, is rendered in "intricate detail and wonderful colors," Cutler says, "and you like it. It makes you smile."

🌀 JULY 30, 2015 🌀

# National Museum of American Illustration 15th Anniversary Gala & Benefit Auction

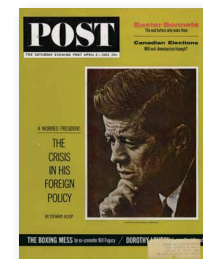
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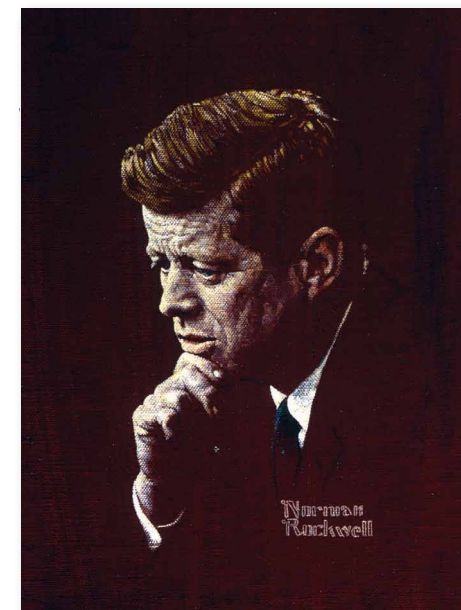
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SELECTED HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE BENEFIT AUCTION:



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• 1894-1978 •

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Saturday Evening Post, April 6, 1963 cover  
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# Urban Forays

*Playing and picnicking in Greater Boston*



COMPARED TO that vast metropolitan zone to the southwest where concrete environs pack in the summer heat like a giant beehive oven, Greater Boston is an airy, pleasant place to spend the summer. The student population ebbs and easy access to open space, parks, esplanades, and water—the Charles and Neponset Rivers, Boston Harbor, or multiple public sprinklers and fountains—allows those out and about to find a spot of shade and a breeze, often carrying a salty edge.

What follows is a selection of picnic spots accessible by foot, bike, and subway for anyone adventurously inclined to embrace summering in the city.

In South Boston, the 22-acre Castle Island/Pleasure Bay park lands offer pedestrian and bike paths, a sandy beach, and the pentagonal Fort Independence. The last, a granite behemoth built between 1834 and 1851 (although the site has included some form of defense structure since 1634), is a National Historic Landmark open for weekend tours. The surrounding grassy slopes offer clear views of a few fishing piers and of the Boston Harbor islands, some prime picnic

**Clockwise from top left: A view from Piers Park; Blue Heron Bridge on the Charles River; a path skirting the Neponset River; and the Pope John Paul II Reservation**

region-boston/castle-island-pleasure-bay-m-street-and-carson-beach.html.)

Castle Island is one in a series of trails and destinations (not contiguous, and still very much a “work in progress”) called the Boston HarborWalk. Worth exploring in its entirety, the park district runs through Boston’s waterfront lands, historic sites, and neighborhoods, from East Boston and Charlestown to South Boston, Dorchester, and along the Neponset River Greenway (www.bostonnatural.org/gwynep.htm).

The HarborWalk’s 2.4-mile Lower Neponset River Trail (www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/massparks/region-boston/low-

spots themselves. (For details, visit www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/massparks/

er-neponset-river-trail.html) offers numerous places for picnics, soccer and Frisbee games, or kite-flying. A mixed-use route for bikes and walkers, it extends from the Port Norfolk section of Dorchester, through marshlands, into the town of Milton. Spend some time in the 65-acre Pope John Paul II Reservation. Thanks to continuing restoration efforts, the site, which once held a dump and drive-in movie theater, is now slowly growing back into a semi-native habitat, and birds are rediscovering its flora. (Take the MBTA Red Line to Fields Corner and bike three miles from there, or board buses 201/202.)

At a different end of the city, the bustling community of East Boston is known for an array of Latin American restaurants, bakeries, and cafés (see “Food Fiesta,” July-Au-

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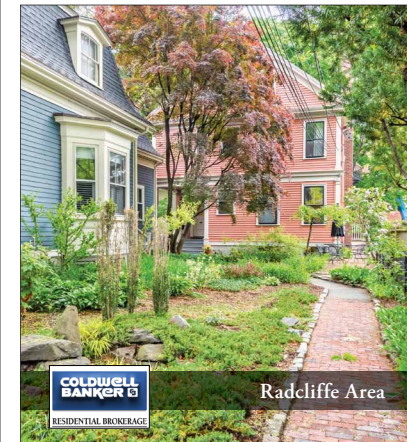
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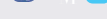
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**HARVARD**  
MAGAZINE



gust, 2014, page 12M). It's also home to several green corridors along the terrific and underutilized East Boston Greenway, a bike trail, and the stunning Piers Park. The park, owned and maintained by Massport (which also operates the adjacent Logan Airport), offers a pedestrian promenade with two pavilions, a community sailing center, an outdoor gym, and a playground with a fanciful sprinkler that even adults will want to skip through on a scorcher. Don't miss the wondrous views of the Boston skyline—especially just before dusk. (Take the Blue Line

to Maverick Station and walk, or bike, the half-mile to the park.) Also appealing is the nearby Boston Harbor Shipyard and Marina, a funky commercial and artistic enclave: do try the Australian-style “pie floater” at KO Catering and Pies ([www.kocaterinandpies.com](http://www.kocaterinandpies.com)).

Thanks to farsighted environmental activism, the Charles River is now a joy to explore, particularly during the summer. Take out any manner of boat, or walk or bike along the enveloping

green (and quite peaceful) “Upper Charles River” paths that hug the embankments in Watertown, Newton, and Waltham. Dotted throughout are wooden benches and viewing decks; consider lingering to eat near the beautiful Blue Heron Bridge, by Albemarle Road in Newton ([www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/massparks/region-boston/upper-charles-river-reservation.html](http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/massparks/region-boston/upper-charles-river-reservation.html)).

~NELL PORTER BROWN

## ALL IN A DAY: Dedicated to Craft

**Visitors** to Lowell's Boat Shop in Amesbury, Massachusetts, often find Graham McKay '01 hunched over a wooden sailing dory, perhaps hand-planing a gently bowed plank. The task, he says, like the tool and the craftsmanship, has not changed that much since the shop was founded by Simeon Lowell in 1793. Lowell's is, in fact, the oldest continuously operating wooden-boat shop in the country. The National Historic Landmark still produces between eight and 12 boats, on commission, each year—and thus also serves as a working museum.

“We demonstrate different stages of construction and the boats' components,” notes McKay, the master builder and executive director of the nonprofit Lowell's Maritime Foundation. A formal exhibit depicts the region's once robust boatbuilding industry and the shop's history using video and maritime artifacts; the vintage boats on display include an 1880 Swampscott dory. Year-round boatbuilding classes are offered, along with kids' programs. This summer McKay is teaching children to row on the Merrimack River—which flows by at the end of the shop's dock—echoing his own childhood pastime. Growing up in Amesbury, he lived two miles downriver from his best friend's house: “Before I could drive, I would row up to see him. The freedom was appealing.” Behind the shop's three red barn-like structures are grassy banks (a perfect spot for picnics). From there, “You look out across this beautiful river at the



In the wood shop, planks are transformed into boats using tools like the lathe (right); Graham McKay and co-workers on the Merrimack River



wooded lands,” he says. “These are the sort of structures and places that, if not preserved, would have long ago been turned into condos.” McKay truly cares. He apprenticed at Lowell's during high school, then studied economics at Harvard. Stints as a commercial fisherman, a marine-science researcher, and a captain of tall ships followed; then McKay earned a master's in maritime history and archaeology at the University of Bristol, in England, in 2007, and returned to Lowell's as a builder. He took over the helm last year.

Dories and skiffs are iconic emblems of early American industriousness; New England manufactured more than a quarter-million dories within 200 years, according to McKay. Lowell's was often the leading innovator and producer; in 1911, at its peak, the shop sold more than 2,000 boats, all built by hand. “In its heyday, every region in the U.S. and even, I would say, in the world, had a particular boat type that was characteristic of that region and the environmental conditions that existed there,” he says. “It's

now difficult to even find any store or business that is not a chain.” ~N.P.B.

Lowell's Boat Shop  
<http://www.lowellsboatshop.com>

