Marblehead Forever

With a past steeped in history and a present tied to the sea, this Massachusetts yachting town invites visiting boaters to share in its future.

BY BETSY FRAWLEY HAGGERTY

The first time I saw Marblehead Harbor, I was riding in the back seat of my parents' 1953 Buick. I was 11 years old, a landlubber girl from upstate New York, and I had never before seen a sailboat up close. Suddenly, there were hundreds of them in front of me, boats of all kinds and sizes, some of them run by kids my age and younger. I was wide-eyed.

It was hard to believe that this old town with a funny name, crooked streets, ancient houses and pretty harbor would soon be my home. What's more, my father said he was going to buy me a sailboat. I didn't know what to think. I wanted a cocker spaniel.

I got both, and by the time we moved away 10 years later (with the dog in the car and a boat in tow), I was a very different person. Marblehead had changed me forever.

Marblehead, Massachusetts, which celebrates its 350th anniversary this year, is a tiny town with a big spirit on Boston's North Shore. Famous for its always-active harbor and its large fleet of recreational boats, the town captures peoples' hearts with its natural beauty, colorful history and nautical ambiance.

I spent my years there scrambling over the massive rocks that gave the town its name, swimming in the chilly ocean and getting to know people whose lives centered on the sea. I learned to sail in a nine-foot plywood dinghy called a Turnabout, and later won some trophies racing a 14-foot Blue Jay. As a teenager, I spent day after day pounding through the swells and exploring nearby islands in my outboard-powered, 16-foot lapstrake Thompson runabout (something we'd call a classic now). Through Marblehead, I discovered the magic of the sea, and I fell deeply in love with the town that introduced me to it.

Moving away did nothing to dampen my enthusiasm. When we loaded the Blue Jay onto the trailer and drove down the coast to our new home in Connecticut, I vowed I'd return to Marblehead someday—on my own boat.

It took more than 30 years, but last year, I sailed home.

Denton Miller

Denton Miller

Manchester

Beverly

Manchester
Harbor

Salem Sound

Misery
Island

Bakers Island

Salem

Salem
Harbor

Marblehead

Marblehead Harbor

Childrens
Island

N

Swampscott

Tinkers
Island

Marblehead
Neck

Massachusetts Bay

Valerie Norris

Denton Miller

Betsy Frawley Haggerty

LOCAL LANDMARKS - *Marblehead Light (opposite) is a welcome beacon for boaters. The gravestones in Old Burial Hill (above, top) tell a poignant story about 17th- and 18th-century Marbleheaders.*

HERE'S LOOKING AT YOU - *A customer tries out some new binoculars (above, middle) at Fred L. Woods Nautical Supplies, while the captain and crew of the U.S.S. Constitution's captain's gig (above) salute the town during its 350th-anniversary celebration.*

350 Years of History

This year, Marblehead celebrated its 350th anniversary—for the second time. Twenty years ago, the town also commemorated a 350th. Is somebody's calendar out of whack?

Not at all. In 1629, a group of English fishermen established the first settlement in what they called Marble Harbor. (A misnomer, because the town's shores are made of granular igneous rock.) For the first 20 years of its existence, this rowdy fishing station was part of Puritan Salem. However, in 1649, at the request of several Marblehead families, the General Court of the Massachusetts Bay Colony ended this uneasy sociopolitical mix and incorporated Marblehead as a separate town.

Thus the explanation is really quite simple: two milestones, two celebrations. "You know," laughs Joyce Booth, a member of the Marblehead Historical Commission, "any excuse for a party." And what a party it was: from last December through June 13, Marblehead celebrated its heritage with a series of plays, lectures, concerts and parades—on both land and sea.

Marblehead's first residents were "rugged fishermen, enterprising merchants, skilled craftsmen and self-reliant women," says Judy Anderson of the Marblehead Historical Society. Known for their enterprising spirit, they quickly turned Marblehead into one of America's greatest Colonial fishing ports. "In the heady and prosperous years just prior to the American Revolution," Anderson says, "Marblehead was the sixth or seventh largest city in the colonies."

Betsy Frawley Haggerty

The town had several elite homes, including the Jeremiah Lee Mansion. Lee was a ship owner and patriot whose home was one of the town's most elegant. At the time, says Anderson, the Lee home, built in 1768, was the largest mansion in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Fully restored, it is now open for tours.

Marbleheaders were staunch and early supporters of the fight for independence. At George Washington's request, Marblehead merchant and ship owner John Glover assembled a fleet, including his own schooner, *Hannah*, to participate in the campaign against the British. These ships gave rise to Marblehead's assertion that it's the "Birthplace of the American Navy" (a designation the Navy neither confirms nor denies). Glover and his "amphibious regiment" went on to participate in several Revolutionary War efforts. On December 25, 1776, they ferried Washington and his troops across the Delaware River.

Losses of men, ships and property were high during the Revolution and devastated Marblehead's economy. It was not until after the War of 1812 that fishing and trade again made the town prosperous. However, Marblehead's days as a prominent fishing port came to an end when an 1846 gale off of the Grand Banks destroyed half of the town's fishing fleet and claimed the lives of 65 fishermen. A monument to those lost fishermen stands today near the top of the town's Old Burial Hill.

In the 1880s, Marblehead gained favor as a summer resort and yachting center, bringing new wealth to the town and making it one of the East Coast's foremost centers for recreational boating—both sail and power. In addition to its pioneering programs in youth sailing and small-boat racing, Marblehead is the birthplace of the United States Power Squadron. In 1912, Marbleheader Roger Upton founded the Power Squadron of the Boston Yacht Club "to improve the education of power-boaters and to enhance their social activities." Two years later, Upton and the Power Squadron went national.

Today, Marblehead lives on as a residential community with a population of 20,000, a harbor town that's home to thousands of boats and a place where residents work diligently to preserve its vibrant maritime heritage.

—*Betsy Frawley Haggerty*

With three good friends aboard as crew, I set out from Norwalk, Connecticut, on a glorious, sunny Saturday in late May. The wind was behind us as we hoisted the cruising spinnaker on my 28-foot sloop, *Ariel*, and headed east. The 200-nautical-mile trip to Marblehead took four sailing days, which we spread out over two weekends.

The good weather abandoned us on the final day, and it was cold, rainy and windless as we motored through the Cape Cod Canal and cruised north through Massachusetts Bay.

I studied the monochrome gray seascape, looking for familiar sights as we passed to the east of Boston Light in a heavy downpour. The rain let up toward evening, and, in the distance, I could see the landmarks I'd known so well as a young boater. First, the large water tank in the center of Marblehead, then the distinctive spire of Abbot Hall, the seat of town government, and, finally, with the aid of my binoculars, Marblehead Light with its fixed green beacon standing above the rocks on Marblehead Neck.

As *Ariel* passed the lighthouse and turned into the harbor, I thought back to another homecoming. It was just before sunset on a warm Sunday evening in July 1962, and the Marblehead-designed, -built, -skippered and -crewed 12-meter *Nefertiti* was returning in triumph after clobbering the competition in the first round of the America's Cup defender trials in Newport.

My friends and I awaited her return with a crowd of fans on the porch of the Corinthian Yacht Club, near the harbor entrance. We saw her tender, *King Tut*, first. Then, *Nefertiti*, long, sleek and carrying just a mainsail, ghosted into view, followed by a welcoming party of local boats.

The town went wild. Cheers erupted from the people waiting along the shore and sitting in their boats. Horns honked, ships' bells rang and the town's three major yacht clubs fired cannons in a 21-gun salute to the Marblehead boat that, we were all certain, would be the next America's Cup defender.

I blinked back a few tears, hoping my teenage friends wouldn't see such uncool sentimentality, but then I noticed they were misty-eyed, too. We'd spent a lot of time in my runabout following *Nefertiti* and Marblehead's other 12-meter, *Easterner*, as they practiced on Massachusetts Bay. *Nefertiti* was our favorite, and we rooted for her with the same passion we lavished on our high school football team.

In the end, both 12s disappointed us. Neither got the chance to defend the Cup, but it was close in *Nefertiti*'s case, and we were proud of her effort.

It never occurred to me at the time that there was anything unusual about having the opportunity to spend every afternoon watching these skilled sailors and graceful sailing machines work out. It was just something Marblehead kids did.

No one blew whistles or cheered from shore as *Ariel* cruised past the lighthouse and entered Marblehead Harbor last June, but I didn't need a welcoming party to make my return feel special. I was happy to be home, and I savored the sights as we motored through the harbor.

Marblehead Neck, with its multi-million dollar homes and handsome, century-old yacht clubs, was to port. We passed the Corinthian, where I'd spent most every day of my teenage summers, and I shivered to think that I used to swim through the crowded, 60-degree harbor waters to visit the Eastern, a quarter of a mile away. (Riding a bike would have been much too simple.) Both yacht clubs were founded in the years after the Civil War when recreational boating was just

A Song to Remember

The song, "Marblehead Forever," is second only to the national anthem in importance to Marbleheaders. It is played and sung at virtually every public event, and its title is something of a mantra for many who love the town. (Recently, I heard about a fellow who had "Marblehead Forever" tattooed on his arm.) Its lyrics, however, have always been a curiosity.

I remember coming home from school, pleased as punch when I learned the words to the chorus:

Then Marblehead Forever, God Bless that dear old town.
May she never lose her noble ancestry.
She was first in Revolution, and first in '61,
And for whiskey bottles, we will keep her free.

Whiskey bottles? I had it wrong, my mother insisted. To prove her point, she later showed me a printed version of the chorus. Its last line was: "And from dishonor, we will keep her free." That made sense, but everyone I knew kept right on singing about whiskey bottles.

As it turns out, whiskey did figure in the original version, but not the way I'd imagined. Marblehead's proud anthem was actually a temperance song written in 1887 and sung to the tune of the gospel hymn, "Lily of the Valley."

A local minister, Reverend Marcia Selman, wrote it as part of a campaign to drive demon rum from the town and close its 84 saloons. The last line, as she wrote it, was: "And from whiskey bondage, we will keep her free."

Selman's efforts succeeded, and Marblehead was dry from the late 1880s until the end of Prohibition. Around the time of World War I, some locals revised the words and substituted dishonor for whiskey bondage.

Now, the original version is back in vogue, but, happily, no one is pushing for any kind of temperance revival.

—Betsy Frawley Haggerty

starting to become a popular pastime. The Pleon Yacht Club, which is adjacent to the Eastern, was the first junior yacht club in America, and still trains scores of young sailors every year. On the mainland side of the harbor, the Boston (founded in 1866), the Dolphin and the Marblehead complete the roster of the tiny town's six official yacht clubs.

Off to starboard, we saw old-town Marblehead looking much as I remembered it. Well-preserved, wooden Colonial buildings, painted in grays, whites, reds and yellows, stood proud along the rocky shore. The crane at the boatyard where *Nefertiti* was built stood empty above the water as if waiting to go back to work. As always, a handful of fishermen sat on the State Street pier watching the water and shooting the breeze.

Fort Sewall, now a public park near the mouth of the harbor, was quiet that evening. But I've been there when townspeople, intent on keeping history alive, fired muskets and cannons to reenact one milestone event or another. I always like to give it a wide berth.

Built in the mid-17th century, the fort protected the town during the French and Indian Wars and the American Revolution. It distinguished itself during the War of 1812 by providing protection for the U.S.S. *Constitution*. Noting the guns at the fort and the then-unmarked, rock-strewn waters, the British ships that were pursuing her turned back, and *Old Ironsides* remained unscathed. *Constitution*'s return in 1997 was one of the fort's and the town's proudest moments in recent years. Pictures of her visit to the harbor are still on display in stores and restaurants all over town.

As we threaded our way through the fleet and headed toward the Boston Yacht Club, we admired several beautiful wooden Concordia yawls, scores of sleek, one-design sailboats, the 12-meters, *Heritage* and *Valiant*, lobster boats and lobster yachts, a couple of Hinckley picnic boats, hundreds of Boston Whalers, runabouts and mid-sized powerboats and a magnificent motorcruiser named *Kittiwake*.

Marblehead calls itself "The Yachting Capital of America," a self-appellation so bold that one could imagine a challenge for bragging rights from Newport or Annapolis boaters. But, then again, there is that fort to consider, and Marbleheaders have a reputation for defending their turf.

There is a chance, too, that Marblehead could win on merit. In the early days of yachting, from the 1870s to the 1930s, Marblehead was *the* hub of recreational sailing. It was the first place to popularize small-boat racing and was home to several America's Cup boats and sailors. And, it's no slouch now. The town regularly hosts world and national sailing championships, and its horseshoe-shaped harbor, just one-mile long and a-third-of-a-mile wide, is home to 1,500 boats, two-thirds sail and one-third power.

I looked up at the clock tower on Abbot Hall as we picked up a guest mooring at the Boston Yacht Club and shut down the engine. It was 7:15 p.m. Despite the cool, damp weather, we stayed topside to celebrate our successful passage with cocktails in the cockpit.

Sometime near dawn, the hum of a boat engine worked its way into my dream, and I eased into consciousness as *Ariel* began to rock from the passing wake. Then I remembered where I was and popped my head out of the forward hatch. I saw a lobster boat headed out in the morning twilight.

Despite its reputation as a yachting center, Marblehead has held onto its fishing roots, and it's still home to about 30 active, commercial fishing and lobster boats. They unload their catch most days at the town wharf at the bottom of State Street, something Marblehead fishermen have been doing for more than three centuries. Townies, as some locals call themselves, have been gathering there to watch for just as long.

Not to be outdone by the yachties, the old-timers and fishermen who hang out at the wharf formed their own "yacht club" sometime during the 50s or 60s. Though I've never seen it, I'm told they have a red burgee with the letters CBYC—"Cheap Bastards Yacht Club"—emblazoned in bright yellow. One townie assured me recently that the CBYC is still in existence. "My father is a member," she laughed.

As the lobster boat wake faded in the distance, I looked east and watched the sky turn pink, then gold as the sun rose above Marblehead Neck and cast a warm glow over the old town. She'd never looked prettier to me.

We took the club launch to town shortly after 8 a.m., and headed off for breakfast. Marblehead is a real walking town. Although some residential areas of the 4.4-square-mile town are car-dependent, the commercial and historic districts adjacent to the waterfront are best navigated on foot.

As we walked to the Muffin Shop on Washington Street, one of the harbor area's two great breakfast places (the other is the Driftwood on Front Street near the town wharf), I began reading small plaques posted on some of the homes. Each had a painting of a cod and a short inscription: "Joseph Morse, Baker, 1715," "Thomas Bodkin, Brewer, 1729." How does anyone know who lived there in 1715? I wondered. But we were hungry, so I postponed my investigation.

The Muffin Shop is a favorite morning meeting place where locals gather for coffee and gossip. I eavesdropped as a five-year-old and her octogenarian neighbor compared notes about their weekends. Their exchange was priceless, almost as enjoyable as my just-right bacon-and-egg sandwich.

After breakfast, we walked to the harbormaster's office, and I eagerly filed my application for a permanent mooring. Then, I got the bad news: the waiting list for a mooring in the main harbor is eight to 10 years long. Okay, so Marblehead isn't nirvana.

But since Marblehead is a peninsula, it has harbors on both sides. The harbormaster's staff told me I could get a mooring right away along the west shore on the Salem Harbor side of town. It's a beautiful area, but too far from the action to suit me. Since it was my only option, however, I paid for the mooring permit and consoled myself with the thought that until I moved up on the waiting list, I'd be able to pick up a guest mooring on the "right side of town" once in a while.

And that's the good news: despite its crowded harbor facilities, Marblehead has bent over backwards to welcome visit-

MARRIAGE, MARBLEHEAD-STYLE - *The 12-meter,* Heritage *(opposite, top), awaits bride and groom Ellie Schnabel and Patrick Doyle while the bride and bridesmaids model their wedding shoes (opposite, center). The couple tied the knot under sail last September.*

A CLASSIC UNDER WAY - *The motoryacht* Kittiwake *(opposite, bottom) cruises through the harbor.*

FRESH FISH - *Lobsterman Paul Crowell (wearing hat, above) sells lobsters by the beach. He's been doing business at that spot for 27 years.*

For the Angler

Rocks, ledges, hills and holes keep fish— and fishermen—happy in the waters off Marblehead.

There isn't much Marblehead Harbormaster Werner Hazell doesn't know about North Shore waters. Now 60, he began fishing around Marblehead when he was a youngster, and he spent more than 25 years working as a commercial lobsterman. As harbormaster for the last five years, he's been on patrol almost daily. But don't bother to ask him about the best spots to cast a line.

"The smart fishermen don't tell," he grinned, adding there's pretty good fishing near the islands around Marblehead even if the supply isn't what it used to be. "You used to be able to catch flounder right here in the harbor," he said, "but they're gone now." But, the striped bass have come back, and local fishermen have no trouble finding blues when they are running, he said.

In fact, the waters around the rocks and islands outside the harbor provide dependable summer fishing that the whole family can enjoy. Small cod, pollock, cunner, cusk and other species gather over shallow, rocky areas such as Coney Ledge and Gooseberry Ledge.

For more mixed-bag bottom fishing, try the high spots east of Tinkers Island in 30 to 40 feet of water. The area between Tinkers Ledge and the "R4" buoy to the south is also loaded with humps that hold larger cod and possibly haddock, pollock and tautog, especially early and late in the season. A good depthsounder is a must for finding the productive pinnacles, though. Other bottom-fishing hot spots include Halfway Rock, and the 47-foot "hill" off the "C3" buoy, about four miles northeast of Marblehead Neck.

If you like flounder, you can find these flatfish off Salem Willows pier, and by fishing seaworms or mussels along the soft-bottom drop-offs at the mouth of Marblehead Harbor. The 10-foot contour line northeast of Eagle Island is another good spot, as is the channel edge west of Naugus Head on the Marblehead side of Salem Harbor.

Striped bass invade the rocky inshore waters in early June and stay through September. Large bass can be taken around virtually any rocky point or ledge, but proven spots include Gooseberry Ledge, Cormorant Rock, Childrens Island, Tinkers Island, Coney Ledge and Peachs Point. Use caution when fishing these rocky areas, and be sure to place your bait or lure as close as possible to the edge of the rocks. Night fishermen often score some noteworthy catches by soaking bait chunks in deep holes surrounded by structure.

If bluefish are your bag, a good spot is the area between Newcombs Ledge, the "N2" buoy and Halfway Rock. You can either troll back and forth here or look for baitfish being chased on the surface.

Another good trolling spot, particularly in a dropping tide, is the 60-foot line between Cormorant Rock and Satan Rock as well as the area between Bakers Island, House Island and Great Misery.

Many of the fishing areas listed above are highlighted on the laminated Capt. Segull's Sportfishing Chart for Portsmouth Harbor, New Hampshire to Boston Harbor, Massachusetts. Call (401) 683-0494 for more information.

Fly-fishing charters in the Marblehead area can be arranged through Captain Fred Christian, (781) 631-1262, Captain John Pirie, (978) 468-1314, or First Light Anglers, (978) 526-4477. For bait and tackle needs, call Lake N' Surf Sport Shop in Salem, (978) 744-2462.

—Tom Richardson

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ing boaters in recent years. Town officials are still steaming over a 1980s' magazine article (not in *Offshore*) that advised boaters to bypass Marblehead because the town was "inhospitable." Since then, they've created 300 feet of town-owned, transient dock space at Tucker's Wharf, a prime location in the center of the historic district. The yacht clubs, too, open their facilities, moorings and launches to visiting boaters.

This May, the town appropriated $300,000 to build showers, heads and laundry facilities at Tucker's Wharf. "We want people to come here," Harbormaster Werner Hazell said, noting that he hopes the new visitor amenities will be ready by summer 2000.

Just as we were leaving the harbormaster's office, a twenty-something woman came in to file her mooring application. "Well, at least I'm not last on the list anymore," I said in feigned cheerfulness to my friend and longtime crewmember, Jack. "True," he said, "but she has a longer life expectancy." Ouch!

Age—the town's at least—is something Marbleheaders like to crow about. Marblehead celebrated "350 years of democracy" on May 2, and history seems to be on everyone's mind these days.

"What we have here isn't some re-created Colonial village. It's living history," said Leslie Gould, executive director of the Marblehead Chamber of Commerce. With 200 Colonial homes and buildings, the town has one of the largest concentrations of pre-Revolutionary War buildings in the United States. Many later-18th- and 19th-century buildings have also survived, and approximately 1,000 Marblehead structures are now listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

As a young person, I thought the irregularly shaped, wooden buildings that crowded the narrow streets in what we called the

Marblehead at a Glance

Getting There

Marblehead is located on the northeast coast of Massachusetts, approximately 12 nautical miles northeast of the Deer Island entrance to Boston Harbor. It is nine nautical miles southwest of Gloucester. Marblehead Light (42° 30.3′ N, 70° 50′ W), a fixed green beacon atop a 130-foot-tall skeleton tower, is located at the tip of Marblehead Neck and is visible for 10 nautical miles.

The harbor entrance is easily approached from any direction through marked channels. However, the generally deep waters of Massachusetts Bay are littered with shoals and rocky islands along the Marblehead and Salem coasts. Aids to Navigation mark all hazards, so boaters should have little difficulty provided they pay close attention to NOAA Chart 13275. The mile-long, 700-yard-wide harbor is 20-plus feet deep at low tide, but a crowded mooring field and constant small-boat activity can make passage tricky. A small, mooring-free channel runs close to the northwest shore.

Dockage and Moorings

Dock space at the town-owned *Tucker's Wharf* in Marblehead's historic district costs $1.50 per foot, per night. Electricity is available and public restrooms (without showers) are nearby at the State Street wharf. Advance dockage reservations, which are recommended since space is limited, can be made by calling the harbormaster.

Marblehead's yacht clubs maintain a handful of visitor moorings near the harbor's entrance, and also make privately-owned moorings available to visitors when resident boats are away. Guest moorings are available on a first-come, first-served basis and can be arranged through the harbormaster or directly through the clubs. Membership in a reciprocal yacht club is not required. The fee is $25 per night and includes launch service.

Note: Since transient mooring space is limited, the best time to visit is when no regattas or special events are scheduled. Call the harbormaster's office to find out when availability is likely to be best. There are no marinas in Marblehead. For additional information, contact:

Marblehead Harbormaster, (781) 631-2386 or VHF channel 16
Boston Yacht Club, (781) 631-3100 or VHF channel 68
Corinthian Yacht Club, (781) 631-0005 or VHF channel 69
Dolphin Yacht Club, (781) 631-8000 or VHF channel 68
Eastern Yacht Club, (781) 631-1400 or VHF channel 16
Marblehead Yacht Club, (781) 631-9771
Pleon Yacht Club, (781) 631-1076

Guest and seasonal moorings are available near Marblehead's west shore in Salem Harbor from *Mid-Harbor Marine, Inc.*, (978) 741-8141 or VHF channel 69. The fee is $25 per night and includes launch service to the Village Street landing on Marblehead's west shore; launch service to Salem can be arranged.

Anchorages

Although Marblehead Harbor is designated as a special anchorage, the tightly packed mooring field makes it impossible to drop a hook inside the harbor. Anchoring near the mouth of the harbor is possible, but, be advised, the waters in this area can be uncomfortably rough, particularly when the wind is blowing from the northeast.

Launch Ramp

The town of Marblehead maintains a public launch ramp at Riverhead Beach, which is located on the harbor side of the causeway between Marblehead and Marblehead Neck.

Marine Services

Gas and diesel fuel are available at the *Marblehead Trading Company*, (781) 639-0029, and at the *Boston Yacht Club*, (781) 631-3100. The town maintains a pump-out station and a pump-out

old part of town, were "really cool," but I didn't give them a second thought. I was much too busy being a 1960s' teenager. But when I looked at them through a visitor's eyes, I gained a new appreciation of the town I thought I knew so well.

After my first weekend in Marblehead last summer, I returned several times to stay on *Ariel*. Whenever I walked through the historic district, I thought about the merchants, landsmen, blacksmiths and ship captains from the 18th century who once lived in the houses where their names are posted now. I imagined them walking up to the pale yellow Town House, built in 1727 and still standing in Market Square, for boisterous debates about patriotism and loyalty. When I went inside and stood in the room where Marblehead fishermen organized the fleet that became Washington's first Navy, Colonial days became very vivid. I wanted to know more.

Eventually, I tracked down the man responsible for the house plaques, a 48-year-old executive named Bob Booth who grew up in a Marblehead house built during the 1760s. Booth remembers sitting in his bedroom on the house's top floor, looking out at a lighthouse on a nearby island and wondering about the kids
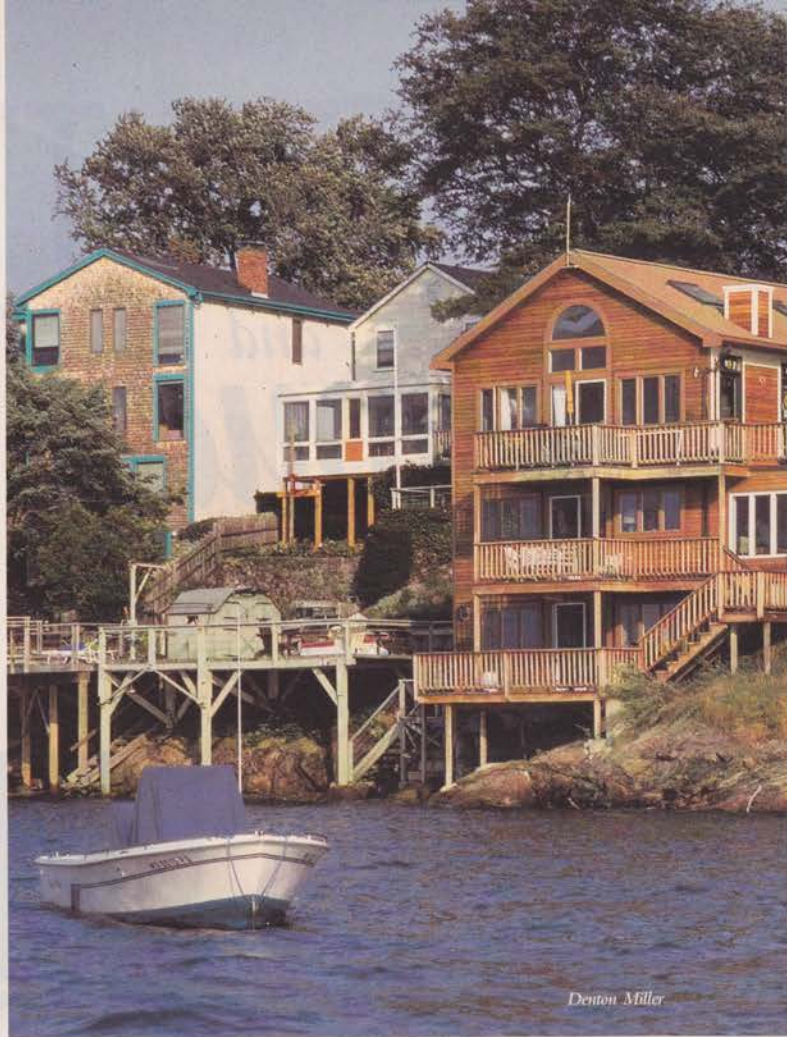
A BOAT IN THE BACK YARD - *A Whaler floats beneath the porch (opposite) of this Marblehead Harbor home.*

THE MAN WITH THE MOORINGS - *Harbormaster Werner Hazell (right) stands ready to help Marblehead boaters.*

THE OTHER SIDE - *Marblehead's west shore (far right) borders less-crowded Salem Harbor.*
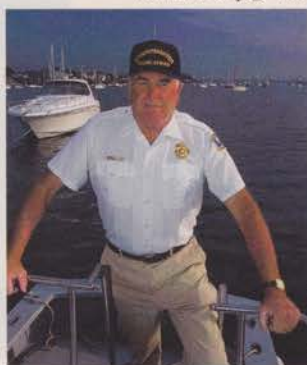
Denton Miller

Denton Miller

boat. Call the harbormaster for details. Marine supplies and services of all types, including engine, electronics, hull and sail repairs, yacht sales and design, sailboat rentals and sailing lessons are available in Marblehead. Contact the **Marblehead Chamber of Commerce**, (781) 631-2868, for a full listing.

Transportation

MBTA buses operate between Boston and Marblehead, with stops in Swampscott, Lynn and Revere. The ride takes approximately 45 minutes. Commuter rail service operates between Boston and Salem. Marblehead has no taxi service, but **North Shore Shuttle**, (781) 631-8660, will provide service to Salem, Boston and the airport. **The Salem Trolley**, (978) 744-5469, which stops at key tourist destinations in Salem and Marblehead, provides transportation between the towns during the summer. The cost is $8 for a full day pass. **Marblehead Cycle**, (781) 631-1570, rents bicycles.

Food

Crosby's Market, 118 Washington Street, (781) 631-1741, is a large, well-stocked market, within easy walking distance of the waterfront. It has a deli and bakery and sells a full line of groceries, wine and beer. **Haley's Package Store** is just two doors away.

More than 30 restaurants, serving everything from snack food to gourmet meals, are packed into this tiny town. Among those near the waterfront are:

The Barnacle, 141 Front Street, (781) 631-4236, overlooking the harbor near Fort Sewall, is a cozy, rustic-looking eatery with a popular outside deck. It specializes in sandwiches, salads, chowder, fish and seafood.

The Landing, 81 Front Street, (781) 631-1878, is a large, waterside eatery next to State Street wharf. It reopened in May under new management after a complete renovation.

The Muffin Shop, 126 Washington Street, (781) 631-8223, and the **Driftwood**, 63 Front Street, (781) 631-1145, are breakfast and lunch favorites.

The King's Rook Café and Wine Bar, 12 State Street, (781) 631-9838, serves sandwiches, salads and light entrées and is best noted for coffees, teas, frappes and desserts.

Maddie's Sail Loft, 14 State Street, (781) 631-9824, is an unpretentious, small, often-crowded watering hole that, since 1946, has been known by boaters the world over for its big drinks, hearty food, sea stories and suffer-no-fools ambiance. No one gets special treatment here, and when a big regatta is in town, sailing "rock stars" like America's Cup winners Dennis Conner and Russell Coutts share bar space with town fishermen.

The Rockmore, located on a barge in the middle of Salem Harbor, (781) 639-1290, bills itself as the world's only completely floating restaurant. It's a fun spot for lunch, drinks and lobster dinners. Boaters can tie up alongside or take a launch from the Village Street landing. It's open Memorial Day through Labor Day.

Accommodations

Marblehead has 30 bed-and-breakfast inns. For information, contact the chamber of commerce.

Attractions and Diversions

Walking through historic Marblehead, such landmarks as the **Old Town House**, the **Jeremiah Lee Mansion**, **Old Burial Hill** and **Abbot Hall** are favorite visitor stops. The **Marblehead Historical Society**, 161 Washington Street, (781) 631-1768, runs guided tours on weekends during the summer, and the **Marblehead Chamber of Commerce** offers a brochure that outlines a self-guided walking tour. Shops and galleries selling antiques, artwork, crafts, clothing, jewelry and nautical supplies are located close to the waterfront.

For More Information

The Marblehead Chamber of Commerce, (781) 631-2868 or www.marbleheadchamber.org, and the town website, www.marbleheadcom, provide full listings of services and events.

—Betsy Frawley Haggerty

Marblehead Forever

who'd lived in the house before him. "I was the kind of little person who walked around the streets thinking about what it must have been like to live in the olden days," he said.

After he graduated from college, Booth researched the house where he grew up and satisfied his curiosity. He also discovered that it was both interesting and relatively easy to reconstruct house histories through property deeds, marriage, birth and death records. This research became his hobby, and, in time, a side business. He has completed about 400 detailed house histories, 250 of them in Marblehead. Every house with a cod name plaque is one that Booth researched.

I made other discoveries as well. Touring the Jeremiah Lee Mansion, an opulent home built by a prosperous Marblehead ship merchant in 1768, I was fascinated by its grand entranceway, large rooms, intricate interior carvings and original hand-painted, 18th-century wallpaper. Considered one of the country's best examples of pre-Revolutionary, Georgian architecture, it is a highlight of many visits to Marblehead, but I'd never been there before.

On the other hand, Abbot Hall, a stately red brick Marblehead icon that serves as both a government office building and a town museum, was one place I'd visited often. But this year, I got a big surprise. There, amidst the artifacts of Marblehead's history, was my picture (second row, 11th from the right) in a 1950s photo of the Marblehead Girl Scouts.

I sat on the porch of the Boston Yacht Club one afternoon last September looking out at the harbor. I could see my past: the Girl Scout in the Turnabout, the teenager in her classic runabout chasing 12-meters (and 12-meter sailors). Back then, I didn't know how special it was to live in a town where daily life revolves around the sea, and everyone walks around in boat shoes. I had to go away to appreciate it.

I can't move to Marblehead just yet, but I've done the next best thing. A few weeks ago, I notified the Coast Guard that I was changing *Ariel*'s hailing port. A graphic artist has already painted the words *Marblehead, MA* on her transom. I'm home to stay. ◣