



# SOUTH WIND

By Heaton Vorse

The arrival of the boat from Boston for the first time this year was *nothing* to get excited about almost hardly. The people who came down the dock to witness its landing barely outnumbered the usual one o'clock gathering of those generally there on either business or pleasure. A few members of the press accounted for over half of the extra people present. Someone wearing a small child on his shoulder who, in turn, wore an oversized top hat represented the expected festivities we had come to report on.

There were no streakers.

It was too darned cold.

And the chill was aided and abetted by a gusty breeze from the nor'west. The below-par temperature probably accounted for the fact that the number of persons who had elected to venture across Massachusetts Bay for this first trip was considerably less than those who had arrived here on the Mayflower 354 years previously, even though it was blustery cold then, too, according to Elder Brewster's report.

As for myself, I stayed just long enough to take note that the motor ship *Provincetown* had a new coat of paint and looked as uncomfortable as ever and hied elsewhere.

I graciously admit that comparisons are *invid'jus*. But my first trip to the village which I have called home ever since was aboard a dumpy, cozy, double-stacked steamboat whose cabins were suffused with overstuffed sofas and armchairs upholstered with super-Victorian red plush; wonderfully comfortable and in horribly bad taste.

The trip across the Bay took almost five hours on the old *Cape Cod*, about twice as long as it takes the *M.V. Provincetown*, nor was there a bar on every deck at which to

wile away the time, yet I still remember very vividly how much I enjoyed every moment of that journey.

It wasn't just being aboard a boat that I found so exciting. My father was a roving journalist who sailed small yachts as a hobby. So I fully believed when I was a child that travelling by water was the way one moved from here to there. One walked or took a cab, (horse-drawn), to the gangplank perhaps, but one crossed Long Island Sound on a 60-foot schooner and crossed the Atlantic Ocean on a 600-foot liner.

And in Venice, incidentally, even the cabs floated. I spoke in Italian with the chap who rowed the *gondola*. I talked to my nurse Louise in French. With my parents I spoke both French and Italian, and sometimes English.

I've always liked the clear, smooth motion of a boat under sail. I still do. I like the fact there isn't a jiggling engine down there somewhere in its bilges.

So I was taught that if I wanted to go sailing with my father I would have to sit quietly and move about only where and when I was told to do so. Since my parents, like most journalists, were socially conscious and active in promoting legislation to prohibit child labor, I was generally planted next to an unused cleat, given a piece of waste moistened with brass polish and told to get to work.

When the family travelled abroad I was under the gentle, but fairly constant, supervision of Louise. Furthermore, we journeyed on class-conscious European boats; second class for'ard, steerage aft (hence its name), and the gentry amidships in the superstructure. So my childish curiosity was limited by social barriers that

were to me quite incomprehensible. (They still are.)

I was six years old when I took my first trip on the *Cape Cod*. Louise was more concerned with the problem of looking after my nine-month-old baby sister than with me. Everybody spoke English. And I was free to roam from hawse hole to flagstaff playing with the other kids aboard of my own age. It was a charming voyage.

There was one small event that puzzled. A group of adults stopped me on my ramblings and asked me a lot of irrelevant questions. They seemed more interested in how I answered rather than in what I answered. Perhaps they were intrigued with the idea of a child who spoke the American vernacular with a French accent.

The ground floor of the Standish cottage in the East End had been rented for the month of July. We, the family, stayed through August and most of September. What had happened was—but let my mother tell it.

Her book, "Time and the Town," starts: "Cape Cod is thrust out from the coast of Massachusetts sixty miles into the Atlantic like an arm with a fist on the end. Within the fist's shelter sits Provincetown.

"When we saw it first from the deck of a boat making the trip from Boston to the Cape, it seemed to rise out of the sea. It stretched out as we approached it, low-lying and gray, its sky line punctuated with a standpipe and the steeples of churches. (The monument was yet to be built.) Gray wharves ran out into the bay. It was a seafaring place that lived from the sea and by the sea and whose one crop was fish.

"When I drove around town in a horse-drawn accommodation, I knew that here was home, that I wanted to live here always.

Nor have I changed my mind in these many years, nor for one moment wished to live anywhere else, though I have been over half the globe."

So father and mother spent their first summer here looking for a house. They selected the one that had been owned by Kibbe Cook, a true Cape Cod cottage that had originally been built out near Lobster Plains on Long Point, then floated across the harbor on barrels at some time during the 1830's and rolled over the beach to its present location about halfway between Cook and Bangs Streets.

The next year the ground floor of the Standish was rented again for July while the house was fixed up. By August the carpentry and plumbing had been finished and we moved in.

Over the years the members of the family, all of 'em, have been practically foot-loose. Mother flew from here to Washington when she was 82. I've galloped from hither to yon and back again since before ever but, like mother before me, though it might have the majesty of the mountains, the calm of the plains, the sophistication of Paris, the inviting sin of Gomorrah, the beauty of Taj Mahal, no other place that I have stayed in have I ever thought of as being my home. Home is Provincetown.

You who have been born here have no choice in the matter. I came to Provincetown to make it my home.

I was planning to write a piece about the boats from Boston. How every factory whistle greeted its first rounding of the Point with joyous hoots till a person's ears began to ache. Well, I'll do that one some other time.

So for now, Good Sailing.