

Spring Returns to Harsen's Island

By Lenore S. Smith

On the banks of the St. Clair River stands a home I can see with my heart. To the summer resorter, a winter on Harsen's Island is a challenge and the experience of it will mean nothing but dreaded isolation unless accepted philosophically. With the passing of the last freighter and the last flock of ducks, your theme song will be: "if winter comes can spring be far behind."

You will find yourself looking for every sign that points toward spring – in the sky and on the earth one day in May you stand looking across an expanse of green field and lifting yours eyes you behold the miracle of budding trees and then you know why May is the most beautiful month of our northern year – the fulfillment of everything that has been promised since the sun started its ascendance the latter part of December.



JANUARY and the first big snow fall covers the earth. The landscape takes on the appearance of a Grandma Moses winterscape – the gaunt trees, the old red barn, the picket fence and the river frozen now, except for an airhole here and there. The old, honest, well-built house stands stoutly against the wintry blats, and the roaring log fire in the fireplace is a magician casting his spell over all, with a sense of well-being and drowsy contentment. It takes something really important to lure you away from this winter scene. The harsh call of the bluejay is a familiar sound at this time of year, and there are days when the flight of a gorgeous red cardinal across your window is the one bright spot of your day. You feed them and learn to love these two beautiful birds who remain with us over the cold winter months.



FEBRUARY – Something happens in the February sky and while not as distinct as the solar turn in December, when Old Sol starts his climb, the days grow brighter and longer. Nevertheless, it is there that the effects of the sun's oblique rays on the earth cause a stirring and reawakening of the forces therein. Old man winter has lost his icy grip, his back is broken and even though we have weeks of cold weather ahead, spring is beckoning us on. It is at this time of year you notice the color variations of winter sunlight – the color depending on the light and time of day. The blue of winter shadows on snow is a color the artist tries vainly to capture on canvas.



MARCH and the battle is won; winter is over. You recall the Indian legend of the Robin Woman standing in the bow of the her canoe at winter's end sending her beautiful song across the frozen river to wake the southern winds and melt the fields of snow, calling the robins home to this barren land. Often in March your eyes will search the sky to sight a flock of migratory fowl, and the "V" formation of Canadian wild geese flying over is a sight that will stop you still and breathless in your tracks. The call of the outdoors is very insistent in March; the earth begins to take on a beautiful green. The birds are looking for homesites and there is an awareness in all growing things as the bright warming sun climbs higher and higher over the tree tops.



APRIL and a whole world of little creatures comes to life in the swamp, the swale and the ponds. The night air rings with their ecstatic song – the "he did-he didn't" of the Katydid, the musical trilling of the toad and the "jug-o-rum" of the bull frog seem an exultant chorus of joy for being created. Spring is at your very door, you are watching for the first boat and whether it be a sleek freighter or a little sandsucker, your heart will come up in your throat because this is another unmistakable sign of spring. The April rains take over but nothing can dampen our spirits now because everything proclaims the season of rebirth.



MAY and the full glory of a northern spring is upon us. Words fail when I try to describe the blue of the sky, the green of the fields, the tender blossoms on the trees, the songs of the birds and the call of woodland creatures. You know that a miracle is happening right before your eyes and you are too awed to describe it. Nature has combined all her forces to make May a symphony of song and beauty, and you know that spring is God's forgiving smile on man.

You, the city dweller, who would winter happily on the Island must have a stout heart, a keen ear, the wisdom to take pleasure in little things and an artists' eye for the ever-changing picture that nature unfolds before us as the months move along. Granted these, you will find here a greater peace of mind than you will find anyplace else on earth. ■

*Editor's Note: This wonderful article first appeared in the 1951 issue of **The Delta News** and is reprinted here at the suggestion of **Patty Bain**, a current life long Island resident.*