

*(Forwarded in a Motion of Comity, text **submitted to the Newburyport Daily News as a Viewpoint column, with publication anticipated on Monday, August 16, 2010.** This month's Viewpoint is less a "point of view" and more a review (and preview) about history and "history in the making" --- serving as a "conversation piece" [of sorts] to prompt further discourse [and of course, course of action].*

The published article can be found online at the NewburyportNews.com [hyperlink](#); the full [con]text of the unabridged, annotated version can be found at the Comity.org webpage at this [hyperlink](#).)

(WORD COUNT: 750)

While the native Algonquin people who were planters and foragers might consider this to be the Green Corn (or Grain or Red Berries) Moon --- those who made way to the Mouth of the Great River Merrimack for seasonal fishing were wont to call this the Sturgeon Moon. These indigenous people highly valued the Sturgeon as animal totem, from whom it is said one learns leadership, determination, teaching, knowledge and depth. Let us channel these attributes to review (and preview) some select accounts of the many moons of August --- past, present and future.

With the Sturgeon Moon of 1633 --- William Wood would set sail for England on August 15 --- having completed his exploration of the New World. An excerpt from his exposition, published the following year, appraises (and praises) this region as such: "... In a word, it ... is the best place but one, which is *Merrimacke*, lying 8 miles beyond it, where is a river 20 leagues navigable: all along the river side is fresh Marshes, in some places 3 miles broad. In this river is Sturgeon, Sammon, and Basse, and divers other kinds of fish. To conclude, the Countrie hath not that which this place cannot yeeld. ..."

With the Sturgeon Moon of 1998 --- the sultry Sunday afternoon of August 9 offered an occasion to remark this amongst other milestones in history and "history in the making" --- and help gather momentum for moons to come. Seeking the perfect vantage point to view the moonrise as well as carry on a "gam" (a nautical term for social exchange afloat or ashore) resulted a serendipitous encounter of three generations of the Waterside people.

Two self-proclaimed "old salts" came down from the deck of the partially restored boat house to join in the "gamming." Offering a brief tour, we were told that the owner was in the process of selling the property to an interested party, therefore all work on the building had been suspended until negotiations and real estate transaction were completed. It was easy to surmise who the players were, although the confidantes were not free to confirm such details.

From an earlier generation of Newburyport "wharf rats" --- the two waxed on about the Waterside of their youth, their adventures on both land and water --- complimenting some changes since then, and lamenting others. When the talk turned to watercraft, some former students of now retired Nock Middle School science teacher John Halloran mentioned that they had constructed a dory at the Lowell Boat Shop back in 1996.

As if on cue, a huge cigarette boat which had been circumnavigating the harbor all afternoon sped by on its way out to sea. The deafening sound suspended all goodly conversation, and as we paused we all watched the boat negotiate the Mouth of the Merrimack. The name "Never Satisfied" inscribed on its helm and a "For Sale" sign mounted on its side offered the perfect touch of irony.

Soon thereafter, standing on the banks of the Waterside --- we searched the horizon for any sign of the cresting Full Sturgeon Moon. Altogether exclaiming the wonder as the moon rose resplendent -- claiming our part in the bountiful cache of memories --- the "gammers" mused about the shared experience: In the end we remained individually and collectively "ever satisfied" with our adventures on the afternoon (and eventide) of the Full Sturgeon Moon.

Moons before, William Wood's prospects concluded that "the Country hath not that which this place cannot yield." Inevitably, this place must yield to change. For those of us who are not deeded "stakeholders of this fortune," indeed, there still is much at stake. Some charge that our bounty is best reckoned with the idealized American proverb: "The best things in life are free" (and include free parking in that inventory.) Others despair of any changes to private and public properties and resist compromise or "deals" between parties, even if it means an ideal partnership.

In the moons and months ahead, there will be opportunities to make forward progress (to lift an uplifting phrase from Mayor Holaday's inaugural address) --- commencing with the modest milestone of implementing a downtown paid parking plan. Which could (in part) help pay for the Paradise.

(The unabridged and annotated version of this Viewpoint [conversation piece] can be reviewed at Comity.org , where the reader is invited to SMILE [Seek More Information/insight Logged/linked Electronically] and join the ongoing conversation at the [Virtual Wolfe Tavern](#) and upcoming "gams.")