

# Editor's Note

**H**ere we are at our final issue of the year—one that focuses on boats. Boats have many uses, both practical and recreational. For people who don't rely on them for their livelihood, boats can be a luxury or a diversion, something out of the ordinary. Recreational boats take us away from solid land, rocking us into a relaxing rhythm and allowing our cares to drift away.

Living in Washington, D.C., on the Potomac River, I see boats almost every day. The Washington metropolitan area has many harbors and marinas that house a wide variety of boats. On nice summer days, especially on the weekends, the river is dotted with kayaks and canoes, small powerboats, and even sailboats when the wind is up.

In recent years, water taxis have become a popular way to ferry people from one harbor to another—passengers avoid the traffic on the roads while they enjoy a scenic view of the river and its monument-studded shoreline. Baseball fans can even take a boat to a game at Nationals

Park on the Anacostia River, which flows into the Potomac.

Besides all the privately owned recreational boats and public-serving water taxis, many other boats travel up and down the Potomac. Some offer sightseeing tours by day, while others offer evening dinner cruises. A favorite boat for many tourists is the *Spirit of Mount Vernon*, which transports people along the Potomac from Washington to Mount Vernon, the former estate of George Washington, near Alexandria, Virginia. The trip takes an hour and a half, offering scenic views along the way. When I was a teenager, long before I ever dreamed I'd live in Washington, I took the boat to Mount Vernon with an aunt I was visiting. I had not been on many boats at that age, so that journey was a novel and memorable one.

Another boat connected with Alexandria is the *Cherry Blossom*. Its name was inspired by the *Cotton Blossom* of the musical *Show Boat* (see page 45). Built in 1984, the *Cherry Blossom* is a replica of a 19th-century riverboat. Its decks are outlined by decorative iron railings, and its interior is trimmed with mahogany and brass. The *Cherry Blossom* docks at the Alexandria City Marina and is used for sightseeing tours and for private parties and wedding receptions. Seeing this elegant vessel cruising down the Potomac is a reminder of a bygone era.

You can read about “The Age of Steamboats” (see page 38) and find information about types of boats throughout this issue. Perhaps you and your students can plan an imaginary journey on the boat of your choice.

Happy sailing!

—MK



The *Cherry Blossom*