

spirit

SOUTHWEST AIRLINES



FROM SEA TO SHINING SEA

America's extraordinary beauty has
inspired all kinds of greatness.
(Even some oyster heroics here in the Chesapeake Bay.)

JULY 2012

66 Inspiring Places

When Harper Lee and Stephen King opened their eyes to the world around them, greatness ensued. Behold eight everyday scenes that gave rise to extraordinary ideas and reshaped the American experience.

78 Heroes of the Half Shell

Sure, oysters are great on saltines. But they're good for so much more: These briny mollusks are essential to restoring our most prized waterways—and they need our help.

92 Your Adventure In Kansas City

The City of Fountains makes a splash with baseball, barbecue, and behemoth sculptures. **PLUS, LIFE ADVENTURE** KC natives give us 41 reasons the town is Royal.



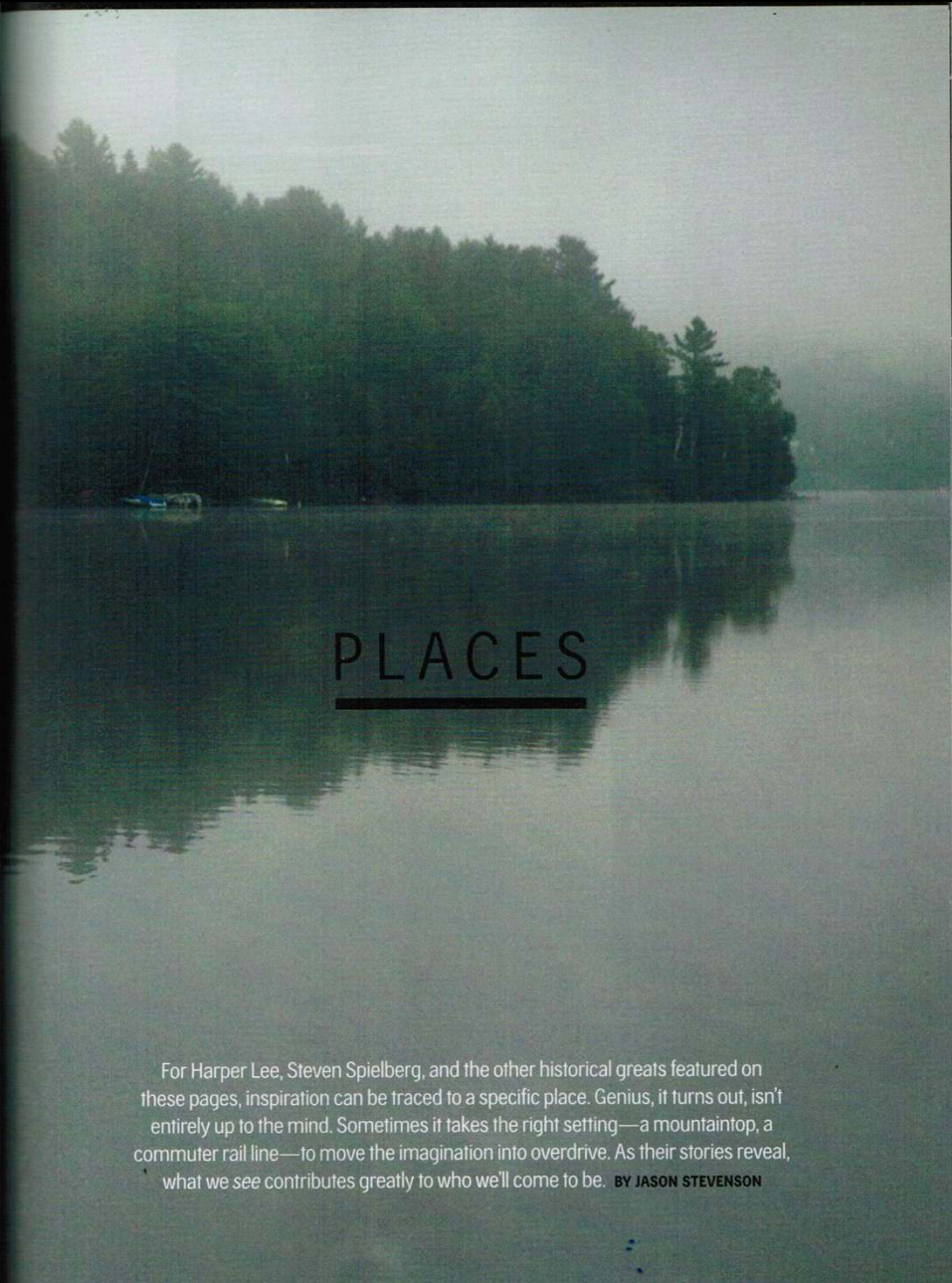
Chesa-peak
Mounds of cured oyster shells awaiting their return to the bay.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JODY HORTON

ON THE COVER / Once teeming with oysters, Chesapeake Bay is now a focus of restoration efforts. PHOTOGRAPHY BY JODY HORTON



INSPIRING



PLACES

For Harper Lee, Steven Spielberg, and the other historical greats featured on these pages, inspiration can be traced to a specific place. Genius, it turns out, isn't entirely up to the mind. Sometimes it takes the right setting—a mountaintop, a commuter rail line—to move the imagination into overdrive. As their stories reveal, what we see contributes greatly to who we'll come to be. **BY JASON STEVENSON**

(PREVIOUS SPREAD)

HARVEY'S LAKE

Barnet, Vermont, 1920

JACQUES COUSTEAU

Undersea Explorer

For 10-year-old Jacques Cousteau, a dislike for horses led to his love of underwater life. While attending a boy's summer camp in northeastern Vermont, Cousteau refused to go horseback riding. As punishment, the camp director forced the young boy to remove branches and other debris from the lake's swimming area. "It was a difficult assignment," Cousteau's son Jean-Michel wrote, "and in future years, my father would reminisce about his time in Harvey's Lake, diving beneath the surface, fantasizing about a way to breathe through the hollow reeds that accumulated by the swimming dock." That summer, Cousteau did learn to breathe through the hollow reeds to extend his time underwater, and 22 years later he co-developed the Aqua-Lung, the world's first successful SCUBA unit, before charming and educating the world through his books and documentaries about the hidden undersea world.

DID YOU KNOW?

Oregon replaced Maine as the setting for the 1986 film *Stand by Me* because the majority of its scenes were filmed there.

SMALL-TOWN NEW ENGLAND

Durham, Maine, 1960s

STEPHEN KING

Novelist

Small Maine towns like Castle Rock (*The Body*, *The Dead Zone*), Derry (*It*), and Chamberlain (*Carrie*) have borne the brunt of Stephen King's chilling imagination over the years.

Fortunately, they aren't real places—they're shadier reproductions of Durham, Maine, the gritty, rural community where King grew up during the 1960s and where he discovered the characters and plots for his first stories. As a young boy, King saw a friend struck and killed by a passing train. That event became the focal point of his novella *The Body*, better known as the film, *Stand*

by Me. Many of his stories cross-reference the same locations and characters, and they all share the closeness and weirdness of small-town Maine. "I guess when you turn off the main road," King wrote in 1977, in *Rage*, his first novel, "you have to be prepared to see some funny houses."

THE NEW HAVEN LINE

Connecticut. 1911

A.C. GILBERT

Toy Inventor

By age 25, Alfred Carlton Gilbert was already a gifted M.D. and toy inventor, plus an Olympic gold medalist in pole vault. "I've never worked at anything that wasn't fun," he once told a newspaper reporter. The energetic "Gilly" rarely paused to watch the scenery go by—except one day when he was riding a train from New Haven to New York City and looked out the window to see workmen assembling steel beams to build a power line tower. The sight inspired his next toy, which featured small metal girders with evenly spaced holes that could be bolted together to construct models of buildings, bridges, and cranes. First sold in wood cases with the slogan, "The toy whose girders resemble structural steel," Gilbert's Erector Set remained a popular plaything for decades and is his most enduring legacy.

DID YOU KNOW?

Gilbert put himself through Yale University by performing as a magician, a vocation that inspired the first toy he invented and marketed—the Mysto Magic set.



PINNACLE PEAK PATIO STEAKHOUSE

Scottsdale, Arizona. 1958

STEVEN SPIELBERG

Filmmaker

It takes 21 merit badges to become an Eagle Scout, and 11-year-old Steven Spielberg was in pursuit of his Photography badge. But he had a problem: His dad's still camera was broken. "So I asked the scoutmaster if I could tell a story with my father's movie camera," Spielberg recalled in 2008. "He said yes, and I got an idea to do a Western." That nine-minute movie, *The Last Gunfight*, starred Spielberg's friends as cap pistol-waving bandits who robbed the red

stagecoach that sat outside the Pinnacle Peak Patio Steakhouse in Scottsdale. Spielberg used creative camera angles to disguise the lack of horses, and a bottle of ketchup for fake blood. When he premiered the finished film for Troop 294, his fellow Scouts "liked the movie and made so much noise laughing and clapping," said Spielberg, "that I got the virus, thinking I've got to do this the rest of my life."

PHOTOGRAPHY BY TENISHA/ALAMY

DID YOU KNOW?

In January 1977, when ABC broadcast *Roots*, the eight-part miniseries based on Haley's epic book, more than 85 percent of American households viewed all or part of it. The finale is still the third most-watched program in television history.

MATTAPONI RIVER

Spotsylvania, Virginia

ALEX HALEY

Writer

In 1926, decades before he began searching for his roots, five-year-old Alex Haley sat cross-legged on his grandmother's porch listening to her sisters tell stories about the "furthest-back person" in his family's history, a slave they called "The African." One day, the slave pointed to the broad, languid Mattaponi River near the Virginia plantation where he worked, and uttered to his daughter, "Kamby Bolongo"—a strange sounding phrase passed down through seven generations of storytelling. "I would later learn that that and other sounds which were kept in the story were part of the Mandinka tongue," Haley told Tom Brokaw in 1976. "*Bolongo* meant large moving stream, such as a river. And preceded by the word[s] *ken be*, it probably meant Gambia River, and that was what gave me a place to go." Starting with that alluring phrase, Haley embarked on 12 years of work to complete his epic *Roots: The Saga of an American Family*.



MONROEVILLE COURTHOUSE

Monroeville, Alabama
1930s

HARPER LEE
Novelist

The "tired old town" of Maycomb, where Atticus Finch practiced law and Scout, Jem, and Dill roamed the streets looking for mischief, existed in real life before Harper Lee re-imagined it in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Lee grew up in Monroeville during the 1930s, and was eight (the same age as Scout) when a local newspaper reported a series of "mad dog" attacks like the one in the novel. Her best friend on her block was Truman Capote, and together they spied on a reclusive neighbor similar to *Mockingbird*'s Boo Radley.

And just like Scout, Lee would watch from the balcony of the county courthouse as her father, a respected, small-town lawyer like Finch, argued cases in front of a jury. Lee's love of storytelling wasn't inspired by the usual things—the movies of the day or tales from the playground—but by literature and the poverty of her "remote village," she wrote to Oprah Winfrey in May 2006. "A movie? Not often—movies weren't for small children. A park for games? Not a hope. We're talking unpaved streets here, and the Depression." Lee's prized books became her childhood salvation, and also the creative catalyst of her gift to American letters.

DID YOU KNOW?

In the original draft of her patriotic poem, Bates wrote about "halcyon"—meaning calm—skies, instead of "spacious skies," and "enameled" instead of "fruited" plain.

PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN CASSIDY



PIKES PEAK

Colorado Springs, Colorado
1893

KATHARINE LEE BATES
Poet

Words probably came easily to a literature professor like Katharine Lee Bates, who taught at Wellesley College in Massachusetts. But it took the view from the 14,115-foot summit of Pikes Peak to inspire Bates to open her notebook and write the verses that became "America the Beautiful." Climbing the peak by wagon, mule, and on foot exhausted the 33-year-old Bates, who traveled West in the summer of 1893 to teach at Colorado College. "But when I saw the view, I felt great joy. All the wonder of America seemed displayed there, with the sea-like expanse," she later wrote. Several memorable lines, including the "amber waves of grain," were inspired by her train journey across the Midwest. The poem, initially titled "America" and eventually paired with a hymn by Samuel A. Ward, became well-known two years later when Bates published it to commemorate the Fourth of July.

LENOX LOUNGE

HARLEM JAZZ CLUBS

New York City, 1923

LANGSTON HUGHES

Poet

Hunched over a notebook in a Harlem cabaret in March of 1923, Langston Hughes finally unlocked the door between the blues rhythms and African-American speech cadences he'd heard all his life, and the poetry he aspired to write. As the music played, he wrote these lines—*Droning a drowsy syncopated tune/ Rocking back and forth to a mellow croon/I heard a Negro play/Down on Lenox Avenue the other night/By the pale dull pallor of an old gas light*—and the rest of his groundbreaking poem, "The Weary Blues."

Hughes kept what he called his "beauty of a cabaret poem" hidden for two years, constantly revising the last lines to his satisfaction. Published in 1925, it won him a \$50 prize, inspired his first book of collected poetry, and launched his career as the literary spark of the Harlem Renaissance.

DID YOU KNOW?

After Hughes's death in 1967, at age 65, his place in Harlem history was made permanent when his ashes were interred beneath the foyer of New York's Arthur Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.