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**“The Heart Has Its Reasons”  
Rene’ Montaigne  
Brighton 1949**

Home is never very far away. Admit it or not, where we are from most often defines who we are: it colors how we embrace life, how willing we are to deal with both the good and bad turns life takes, how we accept ourselves and others, how we reject failure. No matter how far away we live, if we are truthful with ourselves, memory always beckons us back to the place we used to call home.

I was raised in a small family, associated with a small circle of friends, and lived in a relatively small neighborhood. And I am from a small town, a place where memories were remarkable. That town coasted into the middle of the twentieth century unchanged, for the most part. It was a quaint village with a Millpond and ducks swimming lazily from one bank to the other, a scenic church overlooking it, the city and fire hall anchoring stores on both sides of its main street from east to west.

“Town” and “home” were indistinguishable to me in the first few years of my life. Going “downtown” was a ritual for most families once or twice a week, always on Saturday night and Sundays for most church goers. Very unostentatious cars, mostly gray or black and dusty from gravel roads in the country, parked at angles abutting sidewalk curbs. A penny or two deposited into meters covered two hours of parking at the most, zealously overseen by the town cop. It was commonplace to see someone you knew—or perhaps wanted to avoid—strolling down Main Street or the main thoroughfare between Detroit and Lansing, Grand River Ave.

Not less than six churches competed for peoples’ souls in my town. Two bowling alleys, Masonic, Eastern Star and Veterans halls and a motion-picture theater were places some of the townspeople gathered in the evening or weekend afternoons for social activities. In the town proper or on its outskirts were two law offic-

es, a furniture store, four car dealerships, a small implement store, flower shop, funeral home, two drugstores, three soda fountains, five restaurants and six grocery stores. There were, as in most small towns throughout America in mid-century, blacksmith and shoe repair shops, a bank, post office, feed store and mill, four bars, an elevator/lumberyard, a printing shop and two dry goods stores. These were complemented by more than the usual number of hardware establishments—four—,plumbing and electrical contractor stores, two shoe stores, one clothing store, two barber shops, two beauty salons, the newspaper and a beer garden/hotel. Not a small number of gas stations, where one could easily make it through the week by purchasing one dollar’s worth of gas, dotted both sides of East and West Grand River.

*Excerpts used by permission from “Remarkably Brighton: Still in Touch,” former Brighton resident Paul Weber’s upcoming sequel to his historical novel “Con Weber’s Brighton” Portrait of Family, Church and Nation, 1832—1942 (Peppertree Press, 2014).*

