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Postcard from Cambridge

Gina Cariño



Greetings from Cambridge. Guess which. There are lots of Cambridge cities, towns, villages, and neighborhoods in the English-speaking world. Sometimes the CAM rhymes with SAM, DAMN, and LAMB. This CAM is pronounced like CAME. I came to Cambridge.

But which. In alphabetical order, I could be sending this from Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the UK, or the USA. The USA alone has Cambridge cities in at least fifteen states including Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, and Iowa, to mention only those that begin with the letter I.

Of course the name Cambridge most commonly refers to two famous university cities, one in the UK and the other in the USA. Both are county seats, one being the administrative center — oops, CENTRE— of Cambridgeshire, the other the administrative center —yes, CENTER— of Middlesex County, in the state of Massachusetts.

The famous English Cambridge is near London and lies along the River Cam, formerly called the Granta. It dates back to before Roman times and the Anglo-Saxons and Normans gave it

names like Grantebrycge, Grentabrigge, and Cantebrigg. The famous American Cambridge is near Boston and its river is the Charles River. It was first established in 1630 by English Puritan colonists, who called it Newtowne.

Cambridge, England is most famous for the University of Cambridge. Cambridge, Massachusetts is best known for being home to Harvard and MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology).

The University of Cambridge in Cambridge, England was founded by University of Oxford students escaping hostile townsfolk in nearby Oxford. Harvard University in Newtowne, Massachusetts started out as a college for training Puritan ministers. Newtowne was renamed Cambridge to reflect its status as a university town as important as the original, English Cambridge.

Both Cambridges also happen to be cradles or incubators of technological innovation. The old Cambridge is at the heart of a high-tech zone dubbed Silicon Fen. The newer Cambridge could be said to be a kind of east-coast Silicon Valley.

Vain comparisons, inane parallelisms. So what, you say. WHO CARES? I couldn't care less. I came to Cambridge —Cambridge, England— to visit my friend Gideon and we are having a great —oops, LOVELY— time. Good Gideon works in the Department of International Programs— oops, PROGRAMMES— and he's given us a "fellow's" room in Pembroke College, *alma mater* of sharp Tom Sharpe, where we are surrounded by Californian and Japanese students doing their desirable Cambridge stints and walking around in "jimjams." He mixed me a Cosmopolitan and baked me a cobbler —oops, CRUMBLE— and we went punting on the Cam. You can punt on the Cam because it's narrow and shallow. If you're the punter, you stand, hold a long pole, feel for the side or bottom of the river, and push...

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