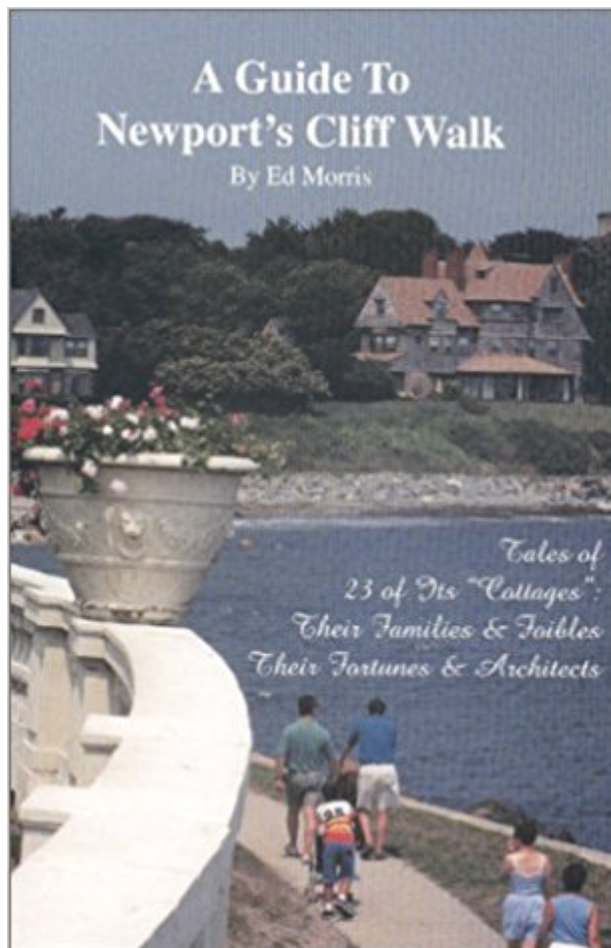




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A Guide To Newport's Cliff Walk



Synopsis

It animates the History of the Gilded Age Era along this three-and-one-half-mile path, 30 feet above the Atlantic Ocean, by telling the story, not only of the path and of the development of Bellevue Avenue, but also that of 23 cottages along it: tales of their extraordinary owners: the Vanderbilts, the Astors, the Belmonts, their friends...their fortunes...their frailties and their extraordinary architects. It includes a numbered map to guide the visitor--with margin numbers in the text to correspond. There are photos of 23 mansions as well as six 2-page photo spreads, illustrating that Gilded Age Social Life. More than one third of tourists visiting Newport, R.I., explore at least a part of Cliff Walk during their stay. The author researched this material to inaugurate the Newport Historical Society's two-mile, guided tour of this walk--then expanded it into this book. It features humor in addition to historical facts. More than 2,000 copies have been sold since publication in May, 2000.

Book Information

Paperback: 90 pages

Publisher: Ed Morris (May 2000)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0970865805

ISBN-13: 978-0970865809

Package Dimensions: 8.2 x 5.2 x 0.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 4.8 ounces

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars 26 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #7,431,463 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #62 in Books > Travel > United States > Rhode Island > Newport #3954 in Books > Travel > United States > Northeast > New England

Customer Reviews

Ed Morris is a veteran reporter for two Connecticut newspapers and earlier a correspondent for United Press International's Berlin Bureau. In developing this book as a basis for the Newport Historical Society's guided tours of Cliff Walk, he has made extensive use of their research facilities and reports as well as other sources, but the responsibility for the material contained is his own.

Forward Cliff Walk most probably began as an Indian trail along Newport's Ocean cliffs; you'll hear reports of part of it as a place for "tea and romping" in Colonial times; as a public path through sheep pastures in the middle of the last century; and then as a manicured

right of way sunken below eye level for privacy of the great High Society parties held in the new palaces of the turn-of-the-century Gilded Age. Just as the computer, the fax, the cell phone and endless kinds of automation are creating massive changes in the nature and ways of achieving wealth in our own time; so too did the fire-tube railway locomotive boiler in 1829; the oil well in 1859; the typewriter in 1867; the telephone in 1876; the incandescent electric light in 1879; the linotype printing press in 1884; the electric current transformer in 1885; the alternating current electric generator in 1892; the wireless radio in 1895; the safety razor in 1901; the airplane in 1903--and I haven't scratched the surface of these wealth changing events and the wrenching changes they occasioned in our society and culture. The whirlpool of the American Industrial Revolution overran our agrarian economy; the railroads opened land inaccessible by river and slow overland wagon trails; immigrants poured into our make-it-on-your-own economy; and a great new wealthy class emerged, so wealthy in fact, that more than 500 marriages took place from 1880 to World War I between the children of the new-rich American millionaires and those of British and European nobility--with a total estimated dowry of more than \$220 million, probably more than three billion in today's dollars, being transferred overseas in exchange for title, respectability and privilege. The cultural veneer of the new money class grew with the generations. Old Commodore Vanderbilt could sell his fleet of steam ships, sail a new steam yacht to Europe, be received by the Lord Mayor of London and the Admiral of the Russian Fleet in St. Petersburg, but he cursed a bluer streak than barge captains, and liked to pinch his hostesses on the rear. It was his grandsons who were educated, a granddaughter-in-law who broke down the social barriers to their family. The men built the palaces for the social queens to rule in, and had their own private clubs. But the women set the new social rules and governed battalions of household staff, dressed like those in European palaces. The U.S. was emerging as a new world power, but these ladies were emerging as emancipated women--divorce became acceptable as well as multi-million dollar divorce settlements and the right to own property. There was a striving for greatness during the Gilded Age: in wealth, in palaces, in fashion, but also in architecture, painting, and in sculpture, in music and in literature. These were the new Medici, and they were ready to play their part as patrons. We'll be seeing some of their architectural works, and I'll tell you something about their lives, their patrons and their fortunes, if you'll follow the map route I have laid out. Each mansion I describe is numbered on the map and identified in the key.

I purchased this guide book prior to a trip to Newport. I had heard of the Cliff Walk but didn't know much about it. The last time we visited Newport we toured the mansions but we didn't have time to

take the walk and this trip I intended to give the Cliff Walk priority. I googled for information on Newport, RI and reference was made to the Cliff Walk and this guide. I was very happy with my purchase. The author not only gave descriptions and pictures of the homes along the way but a little history regarding the owners of the homes and informative and humorous stories associated with them. He divided the 3.7 mile walk into map segments with information on what you would see in each section. I think a trip to Newport, RI would not be complete without visiting at least some of the mansions and taking this walk along the cliffs behind the famous homes. The views of the ocean are beautiful and many of the homes are viewable from the path. I would advise, however, that if you go on a sunny day that you take sunblock and a hat!

I visited Newport and walked the Cliff Walk, or should I have said, hiked? It is a marvelous three miles of gorgeous acreage of the "backyards" of the summer "cottages" built more than a hundred years ago, impossible to duplicate today. The other side of the walk consists of the Atlantic Ocean, with no guard rails, it's just you and the sea. The book details the history of these mansions, as well as Newport itself, and also cautions the reader to truly beware on "the Walk" as a wrong twist of the foot could tumble you into the ocean. The book is an enchanting blend of pictures and narrative, written companionably to present a sublime image of one of Newport's greatest assets. It is marked to let the reader know where he is each step of the way. One word of warning, leave the book back at the motel, or read it before venturing out on Cliff Walk. One needs total concentration out there.

Really helped our trip. Just enough information for the tour.

A good guide while in Newport visiting mansions.

Easy to read and informative. Took it along to Newport two weeks ago.

Perfect little book to read before going.

I live in Newport and have walked the cliff walk many times. It helps to have some details as to what is going on with the many mansions.

A great book for walker!

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