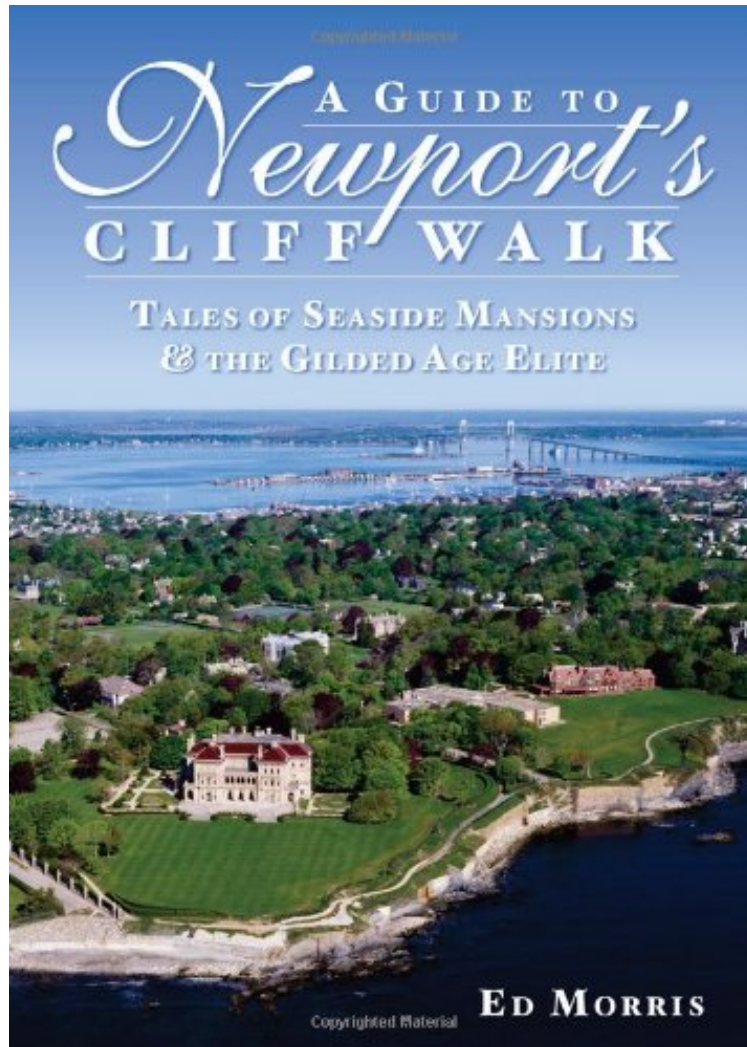


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## A Guide to Newport's Cliff Walk: Tales of Seaside Mansions the Gilded Age Elite

*Ed Morris*

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**Ed Morris : A Guide to Newport's Cliff Walk: Tales of Seaside Mansions the Gilded Age Elite** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A Guide to Newport's Cliff Walk: Tales of Seaside Mansions the Gilded Age Elite:

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on with the many mansions.

From the grand majesty of the Breakers to the beautiful proportions of Rosecliff, these houses are enduring reminders of the architectural flowering of the Gilded Age. Where the salty air mingles with the far-off laughter of women in ball gowns, the houses of the Newport Cliff Walk preside in grandeur over the crashing waves below. Walking along the paved trail, its easy to imagine the faintest hint of a waltz coming from the windows of Beechwood, or to envision the Duchess of Windsors carriage arriving for a visit at Fairholme. Ed Morris takes you on a tour of twenty-four historic mansions and landmarks, entertaining along the way with tales of splendor and style, social maneuvering and matchmaking.

About the Author Ed Morris is a veteran reporter for two Connecticut newspapers and was a correspondent for the United Press Internationals Berlin Bureau just before the construction of the Berlin Wall by Communist East Germany. In developing this book as a basis for the Newport Historical Societys guided tours of the Cliff Walk, he has made extensive use of the societys research facilities, printed reports and many other sources, but the responsibility for the material contained herein is his own. A graduate of Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut, he has also served as a tour guide in a number of the Preservation Society of Newport Countys mansions for several years. Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. Forward Cliff Walk most probably began as an Indian trail along Newports Ocean cliffs; youll 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. Well be seeing some of their architectural works, and Ill tell you something about their lives, their patrons and their fortunes, if youll follow the map route I have laid out. Each mansion I describe is numbered on the map and identified in the key.