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IN LIVING MEMORY:
A CHRONICLE OF NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND, 1888-1988
by Eileen Warburton
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A BOOK REVIEW
by Bertram Lippincott III, Librarian, Newport Historical Society

In October of 1779 the British forces pulled away from a tired and abandoned Newport and sailed on to New York to continue the war. Left behind was a devastated city, both socially and economically. The Revolution had brought an end to the golden age of Newport; her first gilded age. The great merchants, the fleets of ships, and the colonial mansions gave way to war. The development of the textile industry in Providence had shifted the economy of Rhode Island from the coast forever. Newport was left alone to struggle through the nineteenth century.

Rebirth came slowly to the 'City by the Sea' until the 1880's when a whole new city exploded out of the past. The people and the events of the 1880's set the foundation of life in present day Newport. It is the lifetimes of contemporary Newporters, their parents and grandparents, that is the subject of In Living Memory: A Chronicle of Newport, Rhode Island, 1888-1988 by Eileen Warburton, PhD. The book outlines the events of a century that molded the social and economic dynamics of today. In essence, these are the living memories of Newport residents of today.

In the 1880's poets, writers, teachers and scientists from Boston stepped aside for an entirely new type of summer 'visitor', namely THE Mrs. Astor and 'The 400' of New York society. The new summer residents brought unparralled wealth and style to the seaside city. The people and events of the 'Gilded Age of Newport' have been the focus of the attention of writers and historians back to the time of Mark Twain. Unfortunately, the glamour and antics of the summer colony have always overshadowed the more significant aspects of Newport history. Eileen Warburton chronicles the events of the last century and their impact on the city of Newport as a whole.

In Living Memory begins with the period of the 'Gilded Age' and the arrival of Society. It was a period of great economic opportunity for a city that had previously trudged along, making a living out of shipbuilding, housebuilding and light industry. The erection of the mansions provided thousands of jobs and many dollars to the tax base of Newport. Immigrants
from Europe, particularly the Irish, found permanent employment in the households of the wealthy. The ambitious efforts exercised in the mansions influenced the neighborhoods and subsequently the city government. The goods and service industries flourished. They supplied building materials, labor, food and fuel to the mansions and a reviving city. New schools were built, neighborhoods improved, as did city services such as police and fire protection.

The end of the 'Gilded Age' began with the outbreak of World War I and was finally extinguished by the Great Depression. The war opened up a new chapter in Newport's history. The Naval fleet and the torpedo industry helped Newport survive both the war and the depression. Labor, goods, and services shifted from Bellevue Avenue to the support and entertainment of the thousands of sailors stationed in Newport. The city remained a 'Navy Town' until the dismantling of the torpedo station and the removal of the fleet. In the 1970’s the city began to scramble for a replacement for the Navy. The solution was tourism and the development of Newport as a tourist attraction. Uniform shops were replaced by Tee shirt shops and real estate development exploded. This new era has provided many benefits as well as problems for the city.

_In Living Memory_ is about the people of Newport and how they adjusted to the events of the last century. It reflects the joys and sorrows, the ups and downs, the glamour and the ugliness of a modern American city in continuous transition. The great events of the last century such as World War II, hurricane Carol, the loss of the fleet and ultimately the America's Cup are all chronicled through the eyes of the city as a whole, from the millionaires to the laborers. One example is the Fall River Line which provided jobs and a rather inexpensive way to travel luxuriously to New York. Its demise in 1937 hurt everyone deeply.

Scattered through the text of Warburton’s book are amazing photographs, most of which have never been published before. They were gathered from private collectors and the glass plate collection of the Newport Historical Society. Reproduced by Richard "Chip" Benson of Newport, the photographs highlight the events of the period from Bellevue Avenue to the slums along the basin.

_In Living Memory_, consisting of only four chapters and no index, is not an historical reference book. Rather, it is a very intimate narration and depiction of Newport within recent memory. Detailed descriptions of neighborhoods, schools, bars, parties, and local politics will delight people who have had intimate contact with the city and will intrigue newcomers.