

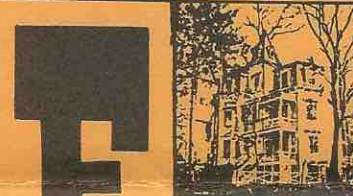
This is Publication One of the Sea Cliff Landmarks Association, dedicated to recording and preserving the buildings, parks and streets of pre-1910 Sea Cliff. To that end we have established a preservation and restoration corporation; to date one-third of the approximately 100 appropriate buildings have been recorded in detail and registered with county and state authorities, our aim eventual recognition by the U.S. Register of Historic Places as an historic district. If you would like to join and support the Association, annual membership is available for \$3.00 per person (payable to Sea Cliff Landmarks Association), Box 69, Sea Cliff, N. Y. 11579



# Victorian SEA CLIFF TODAY

## A Visitor's Guide...

Sea Cliff attracts visitors now because of its unusual atmosphere and its reminder of another way of life. However, in its heyday, Sea Cliff was a flourishing summer resort and visitors flocked to enjoy its pleasures.

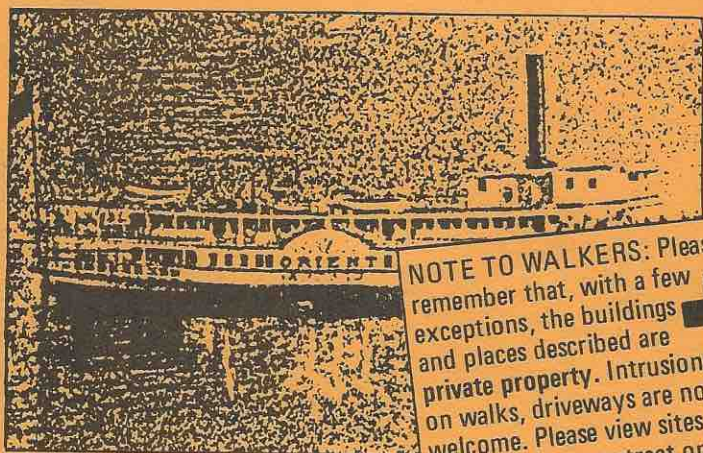


**F**OR MOST OF ITS HISTORY, the land on which the Village of Sea Cliff stands was farmland owned by the Carpenter family. In 1871 the family sold 240 acres of the land which had been in their possession for over 200 years to the Metropolitan Camp Ground Association, a Methodist group. The Association spent \$270,000, an enormous sum in those days, in developing the land. A shorefront boardwalk, a steamboat pier, a waterworks, and roads were all built at this time. A large frame structure called the Tabernacle with a seating capacity of 5,000 was erected to accommodate the revival meetings. Lots were laid out in 40 x 60 parcels on which tents were erected during the summer to shelter the thousands of people who came for two weeks at a time to attend the camp meeting. The paths between the rows of tents were the origin of the narrow streets of the old section of the Village.

**L**ATER another Methodist group of German extraction began using the meeting ground, purchasing some of the land about 1890. Part of the original Tabernacle was moved to another site and was later to become the Sea Cliff Summer Theatre. The remainder was used for camp meetings each summer until

the time of World War I when the German group disbanded.

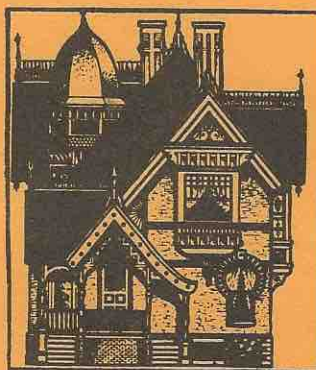
**A** COMMUNITY began to emerge around the camp ground when it began operations in the 1870's and by 1883 the Village of Sea Cliff was incorporated. In the 1890's and early 1900's the Village had a year 'round population of 1,500 which was more than tripled by the influx of vacationers.



**B**EFORE the advent of the automobile and for a time thereafter, Sea Cliff enjoyed the prestige of being one of the largest summer resorts on the Atlantic. A major reason was its easy accessibility from the city by public transportation. The Long Island Rail Road often ran week-end excursions to the Village and there was a regular daily steamboat service between Sea Cliff and New York. The trip took about 2½ hours each way and cost 50¢. The town had many provisions for the comfort of its visitors.

There was an inclined cable railway built in 1886 to bring boat passengers from the ferry dock to the town. A one way fare was 5¢. The railway carried 20,000 passengers a season but it was never able to turn a profit, and about the turn of the century it gave up the struggle. Horse and buggy took over the job. There was a short-lived trolley service established in 1902 and discontinued in 1924.

**N**UMEROUS families built summer cottages in Sea Cliff, many of which are still standing today. These varied and colorful houses are built in a style called Carpenter Gothic because they attempted to copy in wood the stone carvings seen in the houses of the rich. Another feature of these houses was the wide porches on which people could sit and visit or just watch the passing scene.



**T**HE TOWN was full of small hotels and boarding houses which catered to the visitors. There were also hotels of a grander size, the largest being the no longer standing Sea Cliff Hotel. The Sea Cliff Hotel was one of the largest resort hotels on the east coast. The dining room could

went out of business one by one. Sea Cliff was no longer fashionable, but in a way this has been our gain. A remarkably large part of this past has been left undisturbed to come down to us.

**A** BRIEF WALK can make old Sea Cliff live for you again. You will have to use your imagination to block out the images of the present and to picture the unpaved roads with the houses and picket fences. Use your eyes to discover the details of the elaborate decorations so dear to the hearts of the people of this time. Sea Cliff is full of interesting detail and there is always something new to discover.



Begin at Sea Cliff & Central Aves. (in front of library) center of Village life from 1870's. Large structure was the North Building: dry goods shop on ground floor, first Village library on second, jail, village offices and Republican Club on 3rd. Go down Central to Central Hall — always a business building; housed dry goods store, first movie house and ice cream parlor. Note curved soffit (save line under roof). Several examples in village hint at work by ships' carpenters, 1890's. Continue past Central Park to 16th Ave., left uphill to street between 2 matching houses. Downhill house is the Woodshed, possibly most exuberant 90's house in village — now painted in colors reminiscent of Sagamore Hill, it was originally robin's egg blue and maroon; interiors and contents are meticulously preserved from the period. Same owner has restored the matching-painted house above, with Sea Cliff's sole surviving outdoor privy (converted to tool shed). Fence, grounds, pump are best picture of 1890's setting extant. . . . but the carriage house is new; built in 1950's with materials from an 1890's building to match surroundings. Forward to 17th Ave., left to Glen Ave., uphill to corner of Glenlawn Ave. No. 2 Glenlawn was Amrhein Tailor Shop (to carriage trade; remember most Sea Cliff houses were summer cottages owned by people from the city, boarded up in winter). The show windows survive; tiny rooms, each with fireplace, were family quarters behind and above shop. The 2nd floor door to nowhere is unexplained to this day. Now go downhill on Glen Ave. to the pink and yellow houses on the left.

Both built by Theodore Edwards in the 80's, the yellow house hasn't a true square or rectangular room — all are slightly off, connected by twisting staircases. Built for Mr. Thibault of Thibault Wallpapers. The pink house, built against slope, has a 3-storey front, 2-storey back and a dining room with bay windows at each end. Continue down Glen Ave. to Swiss Cottage on right. This yellow house surrounded by porches suggests an Alpine chalet. Actually quite small, with basement kitchen and dining room, one-room living room floor and small bedrooms above. Continue down Glen to Locust Place, right to Prospect Ave. and start uphill. You have walked around Orchard Cottage, built 1878 on part of original Carpenter farm by Dr. North, suggesting his Manhattan brownstone. Continue up Prospect past island in center of road. No. 222 opposite built for Captain Banks of Idlewild, steamship on N.Y.C. to Sea Cliff run. Family moved in on day of Blizzard of '88. Tower may have been lookout for Mrs. Banks, since harbor was visible before trees grew up.

Ahead on right are twin red and blue houses, with lavish surface decoration and "squashed-sphere top" pillars, both similar to style of 1900 cottages in New York's Thousand Islands area. Buildings are larger than they seem, with multi-storey rear elevations. Cross Prospect and head down 18th Ave. toward water; note in passing large house with rounded arch windows and flattened arch windows on downhill side. At foot of 18th are broken-flight stairs down to boardwalk (blown away in 1938 hurricane). Turn up Bay Ave. past well-done modern houses (note Japanese style house on left) to go up 16th Ave. Yellow house on right, by turns stable and school, became residence of famous composer Ernest R. Ball in 90's. On left, red house with board and batten siding (unusual in Sea Cliff) has deep curved hood over windows and diamond-paned glass. Wing (without knobs on save detail) added in 1956 with careful matching to original house. Head to Prospect Ave. and turn left.

Across street is site of famed Sea Cliff Hotel. Several houses in this area have slate-roofed towers with lacy iron decoration. Further along Prospect, Tilley Place on left leads down past Pinnacle Hotel (tree grows through roof) to another set of the steps that provided short-cuts and kept visitors out of dust of unpaved village streets.

Further uphill, 12th Ave. dead-ends at site of upper terminal of old cable railway, thence into Memorial Park with its view of harbor. Site of Battershall Inn, elegant 90's hotel, Park gives view of Glen Cove's Garvies Pt. (fine county museum there); Execution Rocks & Light just beyond Sands Pt. on left. Harbor was home port to millionaires' yachts during heyday of North Shore's "Gold Coast." Directly below park is Sea Cliff beach, site of old steamboat dock. Explore further, or return by way of Sea Cliff Ave. and antique shops to starting point at Sea Cliff and Central Aves.

**NOTE TO WALKERS:** Please remember that, with a few exceptions, the buildings and places described are private property. Intrusions on walks, driveways are not welcome. Please view sites from sidewalk or street only.

**S**EA CLIFF'S HEY-DAY was over and the town slid into quiet sleep. It was during this time that many of the summer homes were converted into year 'round residences. The smaller hotels were changed into apartment houses, and the larger hotels