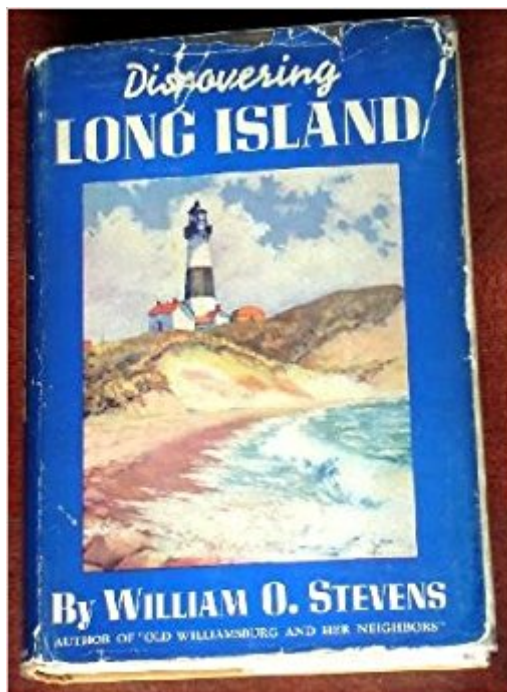


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Discovering Long Island,



Book Information

Hardcover: 349 pages

Publisher: Dodd, Mead & Co; First Edition edition (1939)

Language: English

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Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 stars 2 customer reviews

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Customer Reviews

A breezy account of 1938 Long Island, entertaining and informative

This is a review that, I realize, may never be viewed, as this is an old book. Stevens, a product of a presumably well-to-do 19th century upbringing, wrote this tome in 1939. At 343 pages of text with beautiful integrated and special plate illustrations, this is a wonderful read for those who love Long Island, New York. Though this volume is 70 years old, it is in many ways not outdated. Admittedly, this is not a suitable reference for the modern LI explorer, but for those who want to take a trip back to a more peaceful LI and learn something about its history, this is a great book to pick up, and it is relatively cheap for an older book. Stevens, who I believe was in his 50s at the time of the book's release, uses a refreshing and friendly literary device: he pretends that the reader is in the passenger seat of his car, and you are going on a tour of LI with him. He used phrases such as "Look to the left over there, between the two oaks, see that house? [paraphrase]" This makes it easier for the modern reader, accustomed to I-495 and the zooming N and S State Parkways, to appreciate the languor of this exciting trip back in time to LI's old summer landscape. The tour begins on the Queens/Nassau border and skirts the entire North Shore coast (including Shelter Island) and back across the South Shore to Brooklyn in its southern reaches, before ending with a brief visit to LI's then-undeveloped interior and a few words about Brooklyn and the upcoming World's Fair in Flushing. The main gems for the LI buff are the stories (all well-told; Stevens was a good story-spinner) about the Island's towns, villages, parks, houses, great events, and historic figures. This would be a godsend for a researcher looking for obscure information about our Island's past! Sit back and enjoy the thrill of the story of Lion Gardiner and Captain Kidd's buried treasure;

let your mouth drop at the terror of the Hurricane of 1938; have fun learning about why the towns are called what they are. (Did you know Malvern used to be called Skunk's Misery? Mt. Sinai's name was randomly selected by dropping a finger onto a Bible passage, etc.) Now, the negatives. Though I am rabidly anti-revisionist history, it must be pointed out that an older gentleman of Stevens' time was, as we should expect, a product thereof. You must expect to see terms in this book like red man, negro, insane (referring to the mentally ill), and suffer the old-fashioned prejudices of a man whose culture had taught him that white men were the be all and end all. This is NOT a minorities history of LI (nor did I expect or want that). Just remember to take his quaint anglophilia and anachronistic phraseology with a grain of salt. Additionally, some of the book can be skipped outright, as it is truly outdated: the final 15 pages deal with the excitement of the upcoming World's Fair...yeah...kind of old news. Read a history of Queens. And I do wish the author had spent more time in the interior of the Island, though I do understand that there was little there but the Pine Barrens at the time. I feel that he should at least have visited Lake Ronkonkoma, Medford, and certainly Riverhead, all of which are skipped or not even mentioned. All in all, this is a fun and eye-opening book, a slice of life in LI history and a useful tool for expanding one's knowledge of the Island's story.

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