

Victorian Christmas - in Rhode Island, - The - Chesterfield Journal (MO) - December 8, 2004

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Rhode Island is probably the best known as being the smallest of the 50 states or as the "Ocean State." But perhaps **Rhode Island** should be known as "The Mansion State."

The picturesque 3.7 mile "Cliff Walk" in Newport, R.I., gives walkers a great outside view of the "Summer Cottages" as they were called by the elite society that owned them.

With the Atlantic Ocean lapping waves on one side and a view of the magnificent "cottages" on the other, the walk is truly beautiful.

It was no coincidence why high society built the magnificent homes here in the gilded age, each "cottage" offering magnificent views of the Atlantic Ocean, especially at sunrise.

Newport has many "Summer Cottages," some privately owned and the more famous ones owned by the Preservation Society of Newport County.

Some examples include Rosecliff, modeled after the Grand Trianon, the 17th Century pleasure palace built at Versailles for Louis XIV of France; The Elms, built by a Philadelphia coal baron, best known for its beautiful sunken gardens; Marble House, owned by one of the Vanderbilts, built entirely of Marble, (until the builders ran out of marble and had to improvise by painting plaster to look like marble); and, the most famous, The Breakers, home to Cornelius Vanderbilt II, a four-story limestone structure measuring 250 feet by 150 feet and containing 70 rooms.

The Christmas season is a great time to tour The Breakers, The Elms and Marble House, filled with spectacular evergreens, Christmas trees, wreaths, poinsettias and 19th century-style ornaments.

Enjoy live holiday music and special Saturday evening choir performances at the Breakers throughout the holiday season.

Other mansions in other parts of the state include **Clouds Hill** in East Greenwich near Warwick. Sitting on top of a hill overlooking the bay, this white and blue granite "cottage" is something to behold.

Passed down to the women of the family for four generations, Anne D. Holst is the current owner. The house was built as a wedding gift for Holst's great grandmother, related to one of the founders of the textile industry in America.

Construction of the house began in 1872 and was completed in 1877 and Holst has all the original bills and records of all the contractors and furnishings of the home. All the records are handwritten, legible and bound in hard books.

Since **Clouds Hill** was passed down for generations to Holst, all furnishings and fixtures are

original.

Many antiques, such as the pair of 5-foot china vases, a gift to Holt's great-great-grandfather from the King of Siam around 1856, still remain in the home. It's like living in a museum to Holst, who says she remembers all these things as a little girl and not as antiques.

The home is three stories, which include very distinctive rooms, such as The Music Room-better known as the Egyptian room for its Egyptian furniture-popular in Victorian homes. The fireplace stands out in this room with its carved Egyptian figures.

Other rooms include the Parlor, the Library, the Dining Room, the Billiard Room, the Rose Room featuring a rosewood camel back bed, The Canton Room with its original master bed chamber and the Java Room furnished in bamboo-style furniture popular at the turn of the century.

Tours are available throughout the year.

To learn more about **Clouds Hill**, write to: **Clouds Hill**, 4157 Post Road, P.O. Box 522, E. Greenwich, R.I., 02818.

To learn more about the Newport Mansions visit NewportMansions.org.