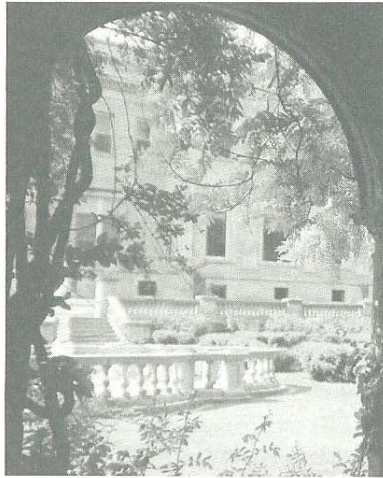




The Gold Coast

*The Mansions and Gardens
of the Northern Shore of Long Island*



June 15th - 18th, 1998

Jessica Deutsch

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Mansions the size of castles, some with mile long drives and sumptuous landscaping; others still magnificent but with an eerie sense of neglect, are the legacy of what was once the playground of America's high society. Here, in marble ballrooms or on terraces hung over the *Long Island Sound*, parties lasted until dawn and were designed to outdo each other in glittering splendor. As F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote in *The Great Gatsby*, "Elegantly dressed men and women came and went like moths among the whisperings, champagne and the stars."

Like moths drawn to light, the denizens of this land played hard and lived dangerously. Every pleasure was indulged to the fullest whether it be in flying single engine planes; sailing yachts complete with gold fixtures and imported paneling; joining the *Meadowbrook Hunt* or playing polo; showing movies in private theaters or having a secret liaison with another member of this gay young set.

Most of the super rich are long departed and their grand estates either destroyed or transformed into retreats, naval academies, schools or local preservation sites. But the splendor remains and many of the great homes are still in private hands. Led by **Monica Randall** who has carefully documented the history of these houses in her book,

The Mansions of Long Island's Gold Coast, we will visit a forgotten magical kingdom. While exploring its past glory and enjoying the scandalous stories associated with many of the houses, we will also have a private inside view of the way of life still enjoyed by the exclusive set of *Locust Valley, Oyster Bay, Old Westbury* and *Piping Creek*. We will enjoy magnificent gardens, perfectly decorated interiors and have access to some of the indoor play palaces which families such as the Pratts, Mackays and Whitneys referred to as 'playhouses'. Here we will see housed, under a glass pavilion, indoor clay courts, heated pools, steam baths, squash courts, bowling alleys and shooting ranges. Lunches and dinner at exclusive clubs such as *Piping Rock* or *The Creek* will give us a taste of part of the daily round of activities which included golf and playing tennis. A visit to *Old Westbury Gardens* will take us through breathtaking gardens while a stop at *The Woolworth Estate* will allow us to understand why these marble palaces are unequalled in splendor yet rumored to be haunted. At receptions at private homes we will see why this is a place where one still catches a glimpse of great style.

Luxurious accommodation at *The Rosalyn Claremont Hotel* will allow participants to enjoy the area to its fullest. The program will conclude with a dinner where we will relive the glamour of the world F. Scott Fitzgerald painted: "*Gay young women surrounded by men in tuxedos, and there were eddies of conversation and splashes of laughter, and corks popped and liquor flowed and you knew it was a time that would never come again.*"

Schedule

Monday, June 15th

Midday bus departure from New York. Box luncheon en-route to hotel. Check into *The Roslyn Claremont Hotel*. Lecture by Monica Randall, *The Mansions of Long Island's Gold Coast and Gatsby's World*. Visit to *Winfield*, the marble mansion which was the former home of F. W. Woolworth and which today is still the grandest of the North Shore palaces. Built by architect Charles P. H. Gilbert, it was designed to be the most opulent house of the Gold Coast Era. A mile long circular driveway takes us past Roman statuary and King Neptune standing in a pool amid pink marble horses. On one side of the house the formal gardens are patterned after the *Borghese Gardens* in Rome. The house itself, which has two private electric elevators, is magnificent beyond belief with an 18th-century Georgian dining salon and an arrangement of rooms designed for grand display. Scenic drive and tour with Ms. Randall, pointing out some of the other great estates and their history. Cocktails at a private home and collection. Restaurant dinner.

Tuesday, June 16th

Morning visit to *La Salva*, a beautiful example of Renaissance and Byzantine architecture and once the estate of Frederick Wheeler. We enjoy the house and explore the grounds, landscaped by Olmsted who designed Central Park. Of particular beauty are the Italian gardens. From here we proceed to *Chelsea*, a house built in the manner of a French chateau by

Mrs. Mackay and with turn-of-the century garden follies, bridges and topiary gardens. Next we stop at *Eagle's Nest*, the former mansion of the Vanderbilts in *Centerport*. Situated on top of a hill, the Spanish Moroccan style house overlooks the picturesque *Northport Harbor*. The estate contains a unique collection of marine life, the result of the scientific expeditions of Mr. Vanderbilt in his famous yacht, *The Alva*. After lunch we drive to *Planting Fields*, The William Robertson Coe Estate. Famed for its rare trees, the estate is named for its variety of plant species and renowned for its dream-like landscaping. We explore the seventy-room Elizabethan-style mansion modelled after a feudal Scottish castle. Our tour of the grounds includes a visit to the green house filled with camellias which bloom all year long. Cocktails at a private residence. Free evening.

Wednesday, June 17th

Visit to *The Nassau County Museum*, former home of Mr. Childs Frick. Scenic drive past the gateways of estates as we make our way to *Old Westbury*. Lunch is in the garden at the private home and collection of *Mrs. Phipps*. Afternoon visit to *Old Westbury Gardens* followed by a tour of the house and gardens. Once the home of Mr. And Mrs. John S. Phipps, this estate is considered one of the showplaces of the East Coast. The interior is furnished as if the family was still in residence and is lavishly decorated in Georgian style with paintings by Sir Joshua Reynolds, Sir Henry Raeburn, Thomas Gainsborough and John Singer Sargent. The seventy acre park with its formal gardens, lake and