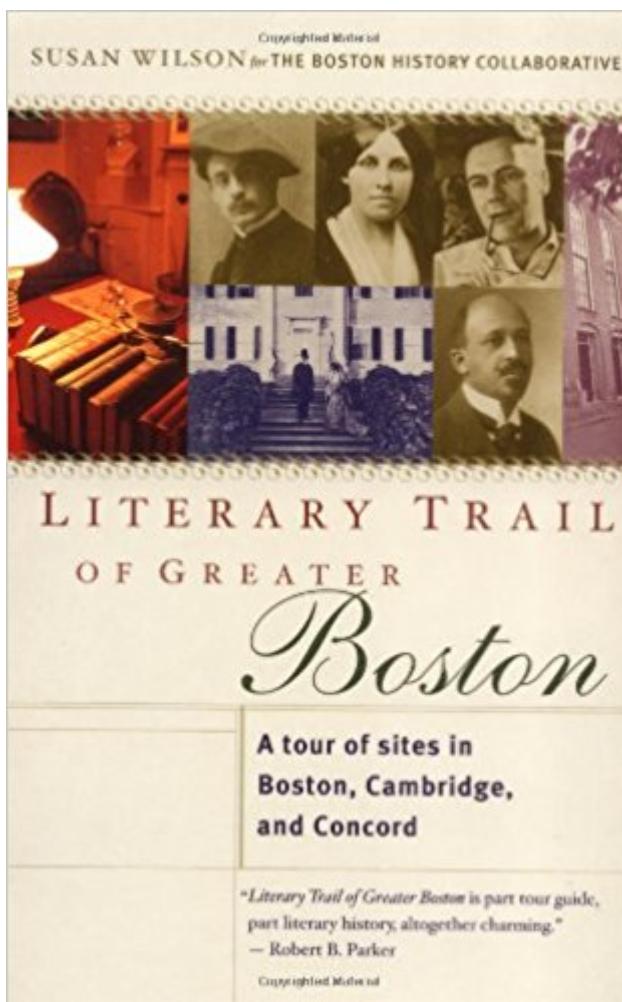


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Literary Trail Of Greater Boston: A Tour Of Sites In Boston, Cambridge And Concord



Synopsis

Modeled after the famous Freedom Trail, Boston's new Literary Trail spans three hundred years and writers ranging from Cotton Mather to John Updike. In the nineteenth century, Boston was the cultural center, intellectual hub, and literary mecca of the United States. Among the heroes of this era were such household names as Louisa May Alcott, Thoreau, Longfellow, Emerson, Hawthorne, and Julia Ward Howe. The great arc linking Boston, Cambridge, and Concord was also the spawning ground for such giants of the modern era as Kahlil Gibran, Willa Cather, Sylvia Plath, Robert Frost, Eugene O'Neill, e. e. cummings, and a remarkable number of others. This unusual guidebook features lively snippets of the writers' own works along with short essays by well-known contemporary writers, including Julia Child on Fannie Farmer, David McCullough on Francis Parkman, Henry Louis Gates, Jr., on W.E.B. Du Bois, and Jane Langton on the "importance of whiskers." The Literary Trail encompasses both walking and driving tours, the latter by car, public transportation, and Literary Tour buses. Among the landmarks "off the beaten path" are Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge (Longfellow, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and many others), Forest Hills Cemetery in Jamaica Plain (e. e. cummings and Anne Sexton), and Sleepy Hollow in Concord (Hawthorne, Emerson, and the Alcotts).

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A sprightly and informative little guidebook, packed with tidbits about literary figures, publishers, bookstores, libraries, and other historic sites on the newly designated Literary Trail of Greater

Boston. Working with the Boston History Collaborative, Cambridge author Wilson (Boston Sights and Insights, not reviewed) has compiled a chatty, easy-to-follow companion to the three-part Trail. Opening with the Parker House Hotel, site of Charles Dickens's first American reading of A Christmas Carol, Wilson guides the tour-taker through three centuries of Greater Boston's literary history, paying homage along the way to some unexpected figures e.g., Ben Franklin, Kahlil Gibran, and Vladimir Nabokov as well as the expected Alcott, Hawthorne, Longfellow, Emerson, Thoreau, and Whittier. Contemporary writers have contributed essays on their favorite authors Robert Pinsky writes about Elizabeth Bishop, Julia Child has a piece on Fannie Farmer and brief quotes have been inserted to illustrate various authors' styles. Besides three main tour segments in Boston, Cambridge, and Concord, there are "Off the Beaten Path" side trips to Beacon Hill and to cemeteries in the three cities where many of the famous literary figures are buried. Also included are tips on finding literary events at local bookstores, libraries, and museums, and information on contemporary local writers. Especially useful for the tour-goer is an appendix listing the addresses, phone numbers, web sites, and handicap accessibility of museums and other historic sites along the trail. All that a guidebook should be: compact, easy to use, informative, and entertaining. (5 maps, 80 b&w illustrations, not seen)-- Copyright © 2000 Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.

"All that a guidebook should be: compact, easy to use, informative and entertaining." Kirkus Reviews "Anyone who has even the slightest interest in American literary history is sure to be charmed by this attractive little book." The Chicago Tribune "This lively guidebook invites residents to take a fresh look at our area's literary heritage...A spirit of inclusiveness welcomes Malcolm X and Fannie Farmer alongside the Alcotts and the Jameses, while contributions by contemporary local writers like Gish Jen and David McCullough ensure that the circle remains unbroken." Boston Magazine "A sprightly and informative little guidebook, packed with tidbits about literary figures, publishers, bookstores, libraries, and other historic sites on the newly designated Literary Trail of Greater Boston. Working with the Boston History Collaborative, Cambridge author Wilson (Boston Sights and Insights, not reviewed) has compiled a chatty, easy to follow companion to the three-part Trail. Opening with the Parker House Hotel, site of Charles Dickens's first American reading of A Christmas Carol, Wilson guides the tour-taker through three centuries of Greater Boston's literary history, paying homage along the way to some unexpected figures - e.g., Ben Franklin, Kahlil Gibran, and Vladimir Nabokov - as well as the expected Alcott, Hawthorne, Longfellow, Emerson, Thoreau, and Whittier. Contemporary writers have contributed essays on their favorite writers - Robert Pinsky writes about Elizabeth Bishop, Julia Child has a piece on Fannie Farmer - and brief

quotes have been inserted to illustrate various authors' styles. Besides three main tour segments in Boston, Cambridge, and Concord, there are "Off the Beaten Path" side trips to Beacon Hill and to cemeteries in the three cities where many of the famous literary figures are buried. Also included are tips on finding literary events at local bookstores, libraries, and museums, and information on contemporary local writers. Especially useful for the tour-goer is an appendix listing the addresses, phone numbers, web sites, and handicap accessibility of museums and other historic sites along the trail. All that a guidebook should be: compact, easy to use, informative, and entertaining." (March 1, 2000) Kirkus Reviews with Pointers"Boston has long been a hub of intellectual activity in this country, beginning with Cotton Mather and Ben Franklin, continuing with Ralph Waldo Emerson and Nathaniel Hawthorne, and moving on into the 20th century with Robert Frost and John Updike, to name a few. Wilson (Boston Sites and Insights) includes virtually every literary personage ever connected with Boston and describes their homes, their gathering places, and the landscapes associated with them. She even attempts to re-create some of the atmosphere of the different intellectual circles. Also included are separate information boxes, such as "Off the Beaten Path," which have walking tours to areas adjacent to the main trail, and "Author/Author!," in which a contemporary Boston writer discusses the importance of another from the past. The impression one gets is that this is a celebration of the intellectual richness of Boston rather than a guidebook. In fact, it is often easy to forget where one is along the trail or that one is even on a trail. Walker succeeds in giving basic information about the intellectual climate of Boston but is less successful at providing an easy-to-use guide to the city. Recommended only for libraries with large collections related to Boston."-- Library Journal, March 15, 2000 Library Journal

I bought this to replace a copy I lent to someone who never returned it. Of course, I'll never do that again. This is one of my favorite areas for history and writers, so this book is great to take on vacation to this area.

Such a crucial period in American literary history, with so many strong and productive players.

I actually used this, including the maps, on a recent visit to Boston and Concord, and I certainly recommend it.

Susan Wilson has done a wonderful job writing essentially a "travel" book in an approachable and compelling style. Her instructions and "trails" are clear and logical and take you into some of the

prettiest areas in Boston and the surrounding towns. Yet while she is directing you in and among the alleyways, Wilson manages to weave a compelling history of characters and places that has you heading for your local library to check out long-forgotten authors. I've drawn up a whole "Boston" reading list to reacquaint myself with some old friends and maybe make some new ones.

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