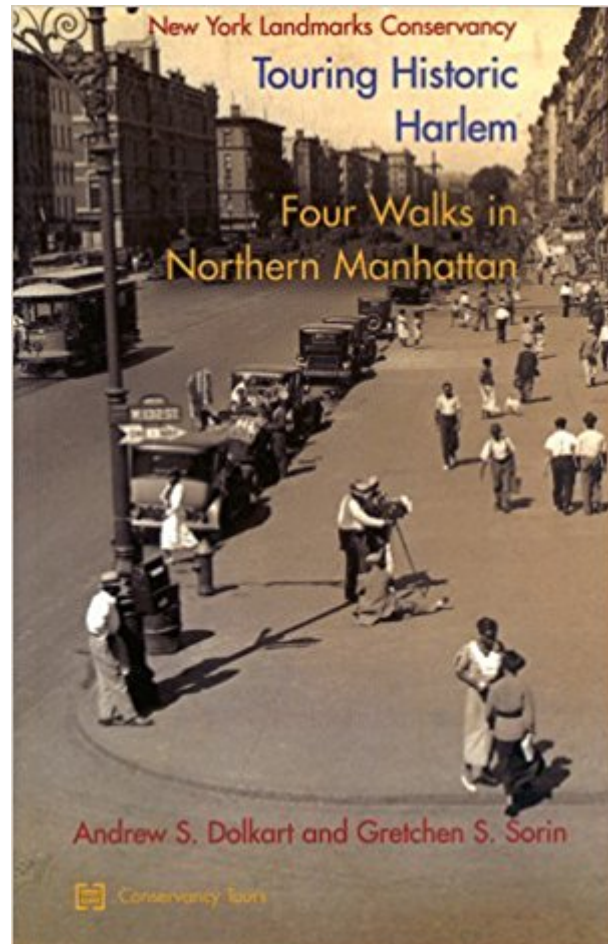




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Touring Historic Harlem



Synopsis

Book by Dolkart, Andrew S., Sorin, Gretchen Sullivan

Book Information

Paperback: 144 pages

Publisher: New York Landmarks Conservancy (March 1998)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0964706113

ISBN-13: 978-0964706118

Product Dimensions: 8.5 x 5.5 x 0.4 inches

Shipping Weight: 11.2 ounces

Average Customer Review: 3.8 out of 5 stars 3 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #2,623,942 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #86 in [Books > Travel > United States > New York > New York City](#) #761 in [Books > Travel > United States > New York > General](#) #1598 in [Books > Arts & Photography > Architecture > Regional](#)

Customer Reviews

Book by Dolkart, Andrew S., Sorin, Gretchen Sullivan

I still want this one, maybe in the future.

This is yet another excellent title in the New York Landmarks Conservancy's series of brief but comprehensive guides to some of New York City's most important historic districts. Thanks to the generosity of the American Express Company, this beautifully produced volume is that rarest of commodities in today's book industry: a genuine bargain. The entire text is printed on glossy stock, providing excellent definition for the book's many period photographs and line drawings. Dolkart, the author of several other highly regarded New York City guidebooks, and Sorin have provided extremely insightful essays which trace, in brief, Harlem's evolution as a black metropolis. Their discussion of David King's Model Houses and Striver's Row is an exemplary integration of architectural, social, and cultural history in a nutshell. The authors cast their net widely in only 138 pages, though perhaps not widely enough in a few cases. Thus, for instance, one can visit the home of Vertner Tandy, best remembered as the architect of Villa Lewaro, the Hudson River estate of Madame C. J. Walker. Yet, inexplicably, there is not a mention of her daughter A'lelia's mansion at 108-110 West 136th St., immortalized as the "Dark Tower" in some of the literature of the Harlem

Renaissance. Perhaps the twin brownstones no longer exist. The numerous and well-chosen historic photographs of outstanding Harlem buildings and personalities are extremely enlightening. But they may leave some readers wishing for a few contemporary views short of actually visiting the sites in person. These are minor criticisms, however, when set next to the considerable achievements of this handsome, elegant, and easy-to-use introduction to a neighborhood known to all Americans but quite likely visited by too few.

Engagingly written, packed with intriguing details, and well-planned, this volume is an indispensable companion to exploring one of New York's most fabled neighborhoods. As a professional tour guide, I have done lots of research on Harlem, and believe me, no other source provides so much information so concisely in such a useful format. The book is typical of Dolcart, a Columbia University professor who wears his erudition lightly. The history of the City, economic forces, changing architectural tastes, trends in race relations -- all these strands are woven together to offer a multi-dimensional view of the community.

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