

[if Photo] 
[/if Photo]

The Valley Breeze

8/13/2009

Read this book for the inside scoop on Rhode Island

By PATRICIA A. RUSSELL, Valley Breeze Staff Writer

CRANSTON - Did you know that Cumberlandite, the state rock, is a volcanic, slightly magnetic rock found almost exclusively on a four-acre lot in Cumberland?

Or that Lincoln, named after the president, is also the home of A.T. Cross, the oldest manufacturer of precision writing instruments, and that the company supplied the pen that President Obama used to sign documents following his inauguration?

And, did you know the Rustic Tri-View Theater in North Smithfield, the state's last remaining drive-in, used to show "adult" films in the 1970s?

From Narragansett Bay, Roger Williams, the American Industrial Revolution and the Independent Man to the New England mob, the Big Blue Bug, the Newport Mansions, Family Guy and profiles of Buddy Cianci, H.P. Lovecraft and the Farrelly brothers, here's a book that provides the lowdown on the Ocean State.

Written by Tim Lehnert, "Rhode Island 101" has everything you wanted to know about Rhode Island - and were going to ask, anyway.

The 101 series is published by MacIntyre Purcell Publishing Inc., which also produces the Book of Everything and Book of Musts series.

The editors at 101 believe that a place is revealed through the accumulation of detail. The 101 books are not about restaurant listings, hotel prices or museum openings. They are books about places and what makes them tick.

"Rhode Island 101" is a soft cover, 246-page book that can be read curled up on the coach or can be picked up and flipped through.

Compact and easy-to-navigate, the book celebrates the state's history, people, landmarks, culture and even its drinks - Awful Awfuls, cabinets and coffee milk.

Lehnert adds text about the state's beaches, cities and towns, cuisine, elite universities and, of course, the Rhody (slang for Rhode Island) accent and slang.

The book is filled with nuggets of information, too, including the five endangered state plants: Eastern prickly pear cactus, New England boneset, and violet wood sorrel, lizard's tail and yellow fringed orchid.

There are facts, too, including how many farms there are in the state (868) and what percentage of Rhode Island's population is foreign born (12.6 percent).

The author also queried esteemed Rhode Islanders who provided him with "Lists of 5" on diverse topics. There is Arlene Violet's top five memorable moments as attorney general. Also, there's retired meteorologist John Ghiorse's five most memorable Rhode Island weather events of the past 40 years. Bruce Sundlun weighs in with his top five achievements as governor from 1990 to 1994.

Actually, there are 26 such lists arranged throughout the book.

Lehnert, 43, was born in Canada and grew up in Montreal. He's lived in California for a number of years and has been a Cranston resident for the last decade.

He is also doing some editing for MacIntyre Purcell Publishing Inc.

As a project manager for the publisher, Lehnert suggested to them that Rhode Island is "tailor-made" for this kind of book. They agreed and gave him a shot at doing it.

As for Lehnert, he enjoys research and, as a journalist, knows where to go to find the information needed.

"I got to talk to all kinds of people," he said, going as far as to say that writing the book was "one of the most fun projects" he's ever worked on.

"Rhode Island 101" is available at local bookstores (Barnes & Noble, Borders and various local independents) as well as on-line from Amazon and other on/line book sites. Visit Lehnert's Web site at www.timlehnertonline.com and go to the "Where to Buy" tab. For more information, visit the publisher's Web site at: www.101bookseries.com.

Copyright © Breeze Publications Inc.