The Essex Coastal Scenic Byway links thirteen towns on the North Shore of Massachusetts, spotlighting their history, culture and scenic beauty. From Lynn and Salem to Gloucester and Rockport on Cape Ann and on north to Newburyport, the Byway leads travelers through picturesque downtowns and bustling harbors, along sandy beaches and rocky shores.

There are plenty of guidebooks to tell visitors which motels have pools and which restaurants get three stars. What’s needed is one written by a local who can explain why the Great Marsh is important to everyone, where you really get the best fried clams and how Motif No.1 got so famous. Oh, and when to avoid the greenhead flies. (Slap!)

The Essex Coastal Byway Guide is that book.

Written by Boston Globe correspondent and Newburyport resident Joel Brown, the Guide features North Shore destinations from museums and historic homes to beaches and wildlife refuges. In chapters on each of the thirteen towns plus Plum Island, the Guide tells you what you need to know about Salem witches, Gloucester fishermen and Essex shipbuilding. Locals will learn the surprising back stories of their favorite spots and tips for making the most of them.

Veteran journalist and North Shore resident Joel Brown will treat you to a knowing introduction to the special places and rich, sometimes offbeat, traditions of the region

– From the foreword by Annie C. Harris of Essex Heritage, which promotes the Byway

Joel Brown has been a correspondent for the Boston Globe since 2005. Previously he worked as a reporter and/or editor for the Boston Herald, Electronic Media, the Daily Southtown and the Recorder. He has also published two local mysteries, Mirror Ball Man and Mermaid Blues, with a third due in Fall 2013. He is a Massachusetts native and a lifelong Red Sox fan.

Joel Brown is a terrific writer who knows the North Shore inside and out – and what makes it special. – Kerry Drohan, former Globe North editor

Available now, 156pp., ISBN 978-1479313402, trade paperback, $19.95

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