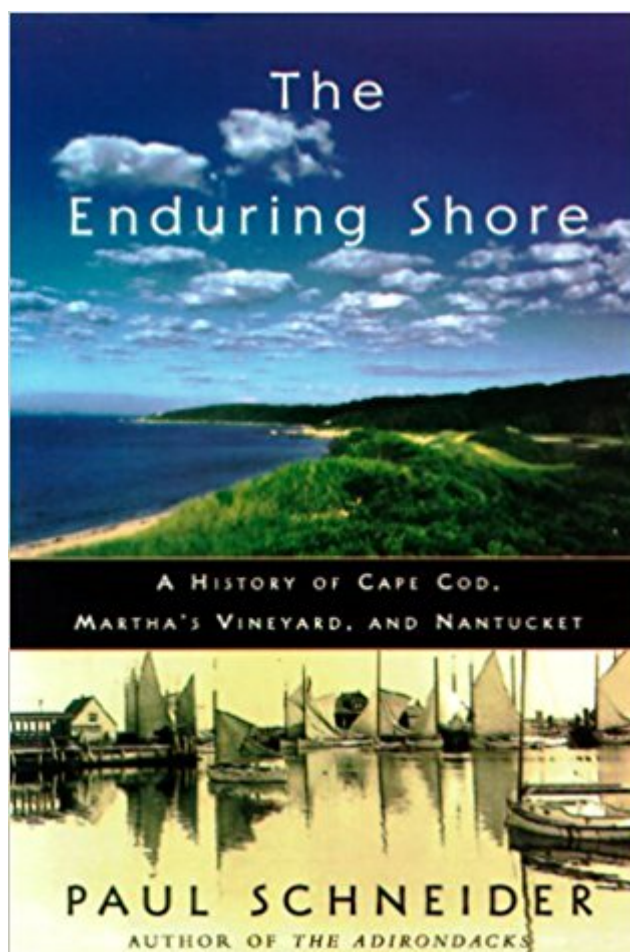


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# The Enduring Shore: A History Of Cape Cod, Martha's Vineyard, And Nantucket



## Synopsis

A history of Cape Cod, Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket Even before the Pilgrims landed in 1620, Cape Cod and its islands promised paradise to visitors, both native and European. In Paul Schneider's sure hands, the story of this waterland created by glaciers and refined by storms and tides-and of its varied inhabitants-becomes an irresistible biography of a place. Cape Cod's Great Beach, Martha's Vineyard, and Nantucket are romantic stops on Schneider's roughly chronological human and natural history. His book is a lucid and compelling collage of seaside ecology, Indians and colonists, religion and revolution, shipwrecks and hurricanes, whalers and vengeful sperm whales, glorious clipper ships and today's beautiful but threatened beaches. Schneider's superb eye for story and detail illuminates both history and landscape. A wonderful introduction, it will also appeal to the millions of people who already have warm associations with these magical places.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Billed as the first history of Cape Cod, Martha's Vineyard, Nantucket and Elizabeth Islands in 50 years, this animated if loosely organized book blends stories of the region's rich heritage with tales of the author's adventures kayaking the local current-riven waters. A Vineyard resident himself, Schneider begins by describing the culture of the area's Nauset and Wampanoag Indians, noting that they had 125 years of contact with adventurous Europeans before the Mayflower's Pilgrims clambered ashore in Provincetown Harbor in 1620. Schneider identifies the geological machinations of the last ice age, which engulfed the northern half of the continent and sculpted the cape, islands

and shoals he clearly loves. He retells the tragedy of the whaleship Essex as he juggles his way through New England's whaling heyday. More contemporary topics--such as the current milieus of the various communities and the ecological ravages of DDT in the 1960s--also emerge and recede in an energetic whirl of information. But Schneider's method is more enthusiastic than rigorous, often clouding the chronology of events. Though his literary prose can be engaging, some readers may tire of his rambling. A history of place is especially prone to fragmentation, and this talented writer has allowed his book to succumb to that weakness. (May) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Cape Cod, and its associated islands, is a storied seascape that has seen come and go the Wampanoag people, the Pilgrims, the whalers. The summer residents now seem a stable presence, but their day, too, will pass when their real estate washes away in a few hundred or few thousand years. Schneider reports on the various inhabitants by kayaking about the sounds, bays, and harbors of the area and by recasting for general interests the voluminous oeuvre on local history. Unlimbering first a natural history of the glaciers that created Cape Cod, Schneider proceeds to the human history, the recorded portion of which began with William Bradford's religious sect. They arrived to a land depopulated by a plague. With the survivors, led by the Wampanoag natives, Bradford arranged a peace that held until King Philip's War of 1675. Schneider freshens these chapters of history with a meditative mix about landscape, history, and people. Despite its encrustations of modern amenities, the Cape Cod region remains an enchanting one, according to Schneider's admiring salute. Gilbert Taylor

If you love the Cape and islands, particularly Martha's Vineyard as I do, you should read *The Enduring Shore* at once. Paul Schneider's research is meticulous and his writing is crisp and economical. Any literate person who lives or vacations on the Vineyard, Nantucket or Cape Cod, will enjoy it and feel like an ignoramus for not having read it sooner.

I'm sure a classic, but very detailed and I have yet to read.

Good read

This is the perfect book to take with you on your Cape Cod vacation. It offers lots of interesting tales and stories about life on Cape Cod and the Islands from pre-Colonial times through the present, and

also is one of the few books that actually treats the Native Americans in enough depth to provide the reader with an appreciation for how essential the natives' contributions were to the survival of the early European settlers. It also makes it quite clear that the natives no doubt regretted their helpfulness in short order, having been kidnapped, stolen from and otherwise abused by the newcomers very soon after they landed. I always enjoy reading books about the places I visit while I'm there, so *The Enduring Shore* was perfect for my vacation to the outer Cape earlier this month. Schneider's discussion of the geology of the Cape is fascinating, and I will look at its cliffs and sandy beaches in a more knowing, deeper way henceforth. I like to have two or more books going at once, usually one nonfiction and one fiction. A good complementary novel to read in conjunction with *The Enduring Shore* is William Martin's *Cape Cod*, which offers an abundance of useful and interesting facts about the Cape while delivering them in the context of a family saga that is perfect for beach reading. I recommend *The Enduring Shore* for anyone who is interested in how the Cape got that way and why it matters to so many of us today.

The romantic relationship between people and the land under their feet dates back, as the name suggests, to the Romantics of the 19th century. It was a relationship born of the truth that absence makes the heart grow fonder -- as cities grew, man longed for a natural world that was no longer readily at hand. And Cape Cod, that barren, sandy strip the Pilgrims had fled as soon as practicable, became a summer destination of choice for well-to-do New Englanders. Paul Schneider's *The Enduring Shore* is the latest tribute to the Cape from one of its inhabitants-by-choice. And, in keeping with the long tradition of such works, it proclaims two truths: things used to be better, but the charms of the Cape endure all the same. It is an eminently enjoyable fiction, this pretense that the Cape has always and will ever endure. And Schneider is a past master of the romantic form, sweeping the reader along with a well-crafted mix of local color, geographic history, and maybe-true legends. It is, in sum, wonderful summer reading, particularly for those who have themselves long felt some measure of love for the Cape. For those who find they have enjoyed Schneider's book, I would recommend also Diana Muir's *Reflections in Bullough's Pond*, which does for New England as a whole what Schneider has done for the Cape in particular. Romantic times and sunny days, after all, call for remembrance of things past, with a smile.

As a regular visitor to the Vinyard - I grabbed this book to get more depth in understanding the local history. I was pleasantly surprised to find a book that provides insights into early American history that would be of value to any one with interests in the topic. Undermining the "myth" of the "new"

world's "virgin forests", Schneider's description of the impact of European explorers on the native populations and the profound consequences of these early interactions a good CENTURY BEFORE the Mayflower -- explodes the simplistic history still understood by many. His description of the robust, healthy natives whose populations were devastated long before the sickly, weak European's began settlements - will turn history on its head for many. It provides a great complement to anyone interested in books such as "Guns, Germs and Steel" by Jared Diamond. I also found his descriptions of issues such as the early development of the whaling industry to be of interest to a far broader audience than one would assume for a "regional" history book. I found his writing style engaging and was frequently amused with his turns of phrase - which was a plus I did not anticipate from on local history book. Though others have been critical of how he weaved his personal, contemporary experiences with the historical narrative - I found it rather engaging -- though these parts of the book may be of more interest to local readers and less engaging for those with out a personal tie to the region. In short, I would highly recommend this to anyone with an interest in early American history - especially with an ecological/anthropological bent. Especially if one has never been exposed to ideas presented in books such as "Changes to the Land". If you are traveling or live anywhere near the southern/central New England coast or have an interest in colonial history of the northeast - this is a must read for you.

This is very pleasant reading, although it isn't history. It is more of a meander along the coast of the Cape and Islands. Paul Theroux expressed it well in his review in the New York Times, calling this a work of "intelligent peculiarity," and complaining that the history of the Cape and Islands that we are promised in the title, is never delivered in the text. What we get instead are Schneider's rather charming musings about topics like Pacific whaling and first encounters between Amerindians and Europeans. As Theroux points out, if someone actually wanted to understand the region, this book would, at best, provide a place to start. I enjoyed it, but on the whole I preferred Reflections in Bullough's Pond. Talk about misleading titles! What were they thinking to stick a word like 'Reflections' on a really fine book?

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