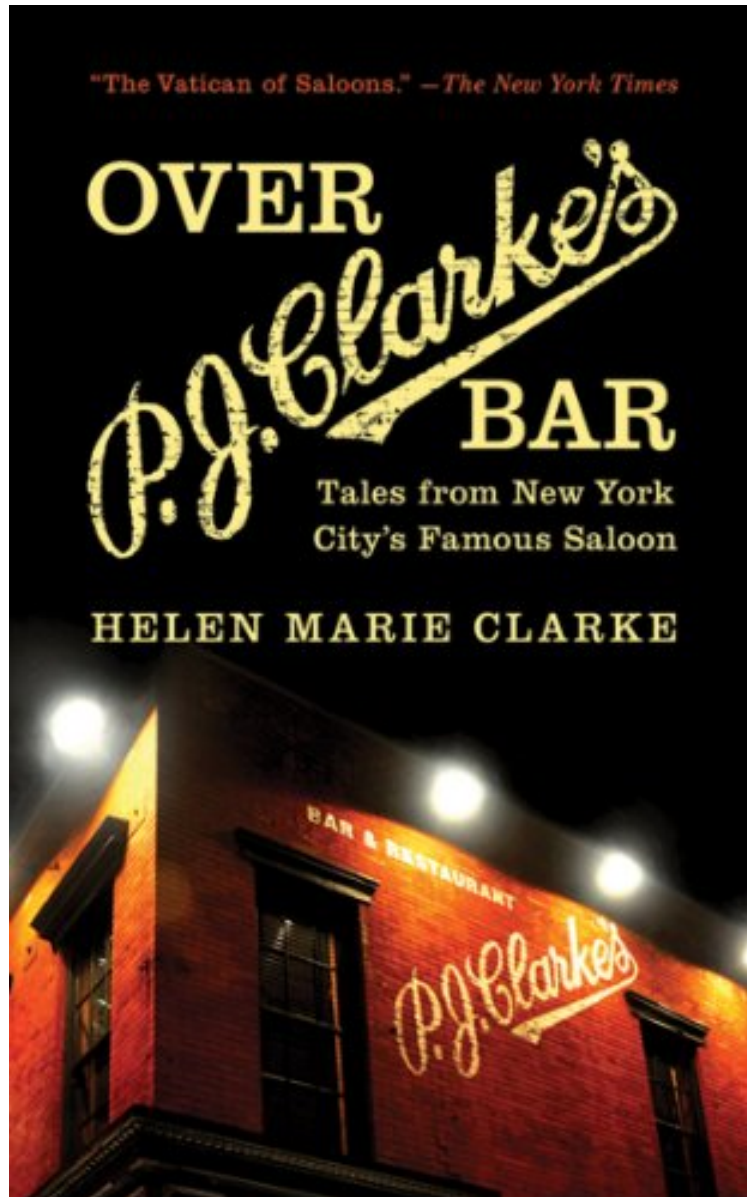


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## Over P. J. Clarke's Bar: Tales from New York City's Famous Saloon

*Helen Marie Clarke*

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**Helen Marie Clarke : Over P. J. Clarke's Bar: Tales from New York City's Famous Saloon** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Over P. J. Clarke's Bar: Tales from New York City's Famous Saloon:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Clarke family chronicleBy classicsloverThis book lovingly

chronicles the lives of P.J. and successive Clarke's who contributed to the growth of this establishment into one the most famous bars in the world. I was, however, disappointed that the book did not cover more about the bar itself and was so hoping there would be photographs of its development and changes over the years, and had also hoped for photographs of the interior of it and some of the people who made it such a resounding success. The book is fine as far as it goes, but it leaves the reader feeling let-down and disappointed that the main event, the bar itself, was mostly left out of the book. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A bygone era of New York City By Allan D. Grody If you are interested in a bygone, romantic and spectacular era in the New York restaurant/celebrity scene of the 40's, 50's, 60's and 70's, this is a very good book to read. P.J. Clarke's is an iconic pub and restaurant, visited by celebrities from all over the world. It is part of the world of Toots Shore's, Elaine's, 21 Club and Copacabana. It still exists on 3rd Avenue and 55th Street and when we visit New York, we're going to stop there just to revisit a part of NYC history, our past and, last but not least, to fill out "tummies". 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A Heartwarming History of Our Wonderful City By B. Wolinsky There are so many wonderful things about this book that I don't know where to start. It's like being welcomed into one of those beautiful old wood-paneled pubs on a cold February afternoon. Not one of those Iceman Cometh type of pubs, where the regulars are all pipe-dream losers, and the women are all prostitutes. I'm talking about the kind where the clientele are working people who go there to socialize. Over P.J. Clarke's (written by the founder's great-grandniece) paints an upbeat portrait of her ancestor as a businessman, politician, tribal chief, and psychologist. He was an Irishman who lived up to the tradition where the barkeep was an unofficial mayor of the town. Public meetings were held at his place, and all local politics passed through him. It's no surprise why the word "pub" comes from "public house." Unlike the Last Chance Saloon in the Iceman Cometh, there were no women in P.J. Clarke's, unless their husbands brought them there for dinner. The women's entrance was at the back near the dining area, away from the bar, and Clarke had good reason for it. In 1912, when he began his career, respectable women did not drink alcohol. It wasn't against the law, but against the norm. The only women who frequented pubs were prostitutes, and Clarke wanted to keep them out at all costs. Pubs were a "men only" establishment in those days, and he wanted at least a modicum of respectability. Like a mayor of small town, it was up to him to set the tone, and set it he did. When the Prohibition hits New York, the story gets funny. The new mayor is Jimmy Walker, a Catholic, beer-loving, pub-crawling, corrupt gentile sleazeball. As for the Prohibition, he has no interest in enforcing any Federal law, let alone a law that says "sorry, you're not allowed to drink whiskey anymore because the Protestants say you can't." To the Clarke family, they don't see the Prohibition as moral or healthy; they know full well that it's anti-Catholic, anti-German and basically anti-immigrant. The Temperance Union was heavily Protestant, and there wasn't much support for it in cities with huge immigrant populations. Sure, the Jews and Catholics were allowed sacramental wine for their services (no doubt a lot more Catholics attended mass) but the real business was in the bars. P.J. Clarke's had a bar full of soda bottles and a place in the back where trusted people were served gin. I can just imagine the looks on the cops' faces when they were told they'd have to help enforce the Volstead Act; either they said "forget it" or "sorry, but the distillers are paying our wages!" Regardless, the barmen, brewers, and distillers were paying Mayor Walker's wages too. The neighborhood that was once full of bars began to change as the area became more business than residential. Old buildings were torn down, replaced by glass office towers, and once the El was pulled down, so went the bars and pawn shops. The neighborhood made famous by The Lost Weekend is no more, and P.J. Clarke's is now a profitable, upscale business, not a family-run social club. Nonetheless, this book is a wonderful story about the Irish immigrant experience and what the city used to be like. It's a great companion piece for anyone studying the Prohibition or learning about old New York.

How did a bar like P. J. Clarke's saloon become the beloved watering hole for Frank Sinatra, Marilyn Monroe, Jacqueline Kennedy, Rocky Marciano, and Buddy Holly (not to mention the fictional Don Draper)? And what was it about their bacon cheeseburger that caused Nat King Cole to pronounce it "the Cadillac of burgers"? Established in 1884 and bought in 1904 by Patrick "Paddy" Joseph Clarke, this Irish saloon in a beautiful Victorian building on the corner of Third Avenue and Fifty-Fifth Street has captivated generations of New Yorkers—from the working class to entertainers, athletes, business executives, and members of high society. Here, finally, is the story of this famed saloon. Learn more about the bar where Ernest Borgnine and Ethel Merman announced their impending nuptials to an astonished crowd; Johnny Mercer penned "One for My Baby (and One More for the Road)" on a napkin while sitting at the bar; Frank Sinatra was the "owner" of table twenty. Over P. J. Clarke's Bar is at once a nostalgic look back at one of New York City's most famous landmark saloons (in an age when they are quickly disappearing) and an eloquent memoir by the former owner's grandniece, which details in sharp relief the excitement of days gone by—when as a young girl she entered through the "ladies" entrance and watched bartenders handing buckets of beer to thirsty customers on the sidewalk through the "to go" window.

About the Author Helen Marie Clarke is a grandniece of Patrick Joseph Clarke, founder of the legendary Clarke's Bar in New York City. Her father and his brothers were brought up in an apartment beside Paddy Clarke's own

apartment above the bar, and the saloon forms an intrinsic part of her family history. Clarke has a doctorate in humanities from the University of Texas and teaches writing and literature in Santa Fe, New Mexico.