



Murder at Ochre Court

Alyssa Maxwell

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In the summer of 1898, reporter Emma Cross investigates a shocking death among the bright lights of Newport's high society . . .

After a disappointing year as a society columnist for the *Herald* and staying with her more well-heeled Vanderbilt relatives in New York City, Emma has returned to the salty air, glittering ocean vistas, and grand stately mansions of Newport, Rhode Island, more determined than ever to report on hard news.

But for now she's covering the social event of the season at Ochre Court, a coming-out ball designed to showcase Cleo Cooper-Smith, who will be literally on display, fittingly as Cleopatra, in an elaborate *tableau vivant*. Recently installed modern electricity will allow Miss Cooper-Smith to truly shine. But as the deb ascends to her place of honor, the ballroom is plunged into darkness. When the lights come back on, Cleo sits still on her throne, electrocuted to death.

Quickly establishing that the wiring was tampered with, Emma now has a murder to investigate. And the array of eligible suspects could fill another ballroom--from a shady New York real estate developer to a neglected sister and the mother of a spurned suitor. As Emma begins to discover this crime has unseen connections to a nefarious network, she puts her own life at risk to shine a light on the dark motives behind a merciless murder.

Murder at Ochre Court Details

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From Reader Review Murder at Ochre Court for online ebook

Susan says

With six books in this series, I have never been disappointed. I have read them in order but it would be possible to read this one as a stand alone. However, to get the most out of Emma's personal story, start at the beginning. By now, Emma, a third or is it fourth cousin of the Vanderbilt family (she isn't sure which it is) and not one of the rich members of the family, has come back to Newport to cover the coming out ball for Cleo Cooper-Smith. For the past year Emma has been writing society articles for a New York paper and she only wants to write serious pieces as an investigative reporter. She is at the right place at the right time to witness the electrocution of Cleo as she sits on a throne made for the event, complete with special lighting. At this point in time there was friction between gas and the new fangled electricity. Could that be a motive for murder? As Emma sets about to find the killer, she continues to wrestle with her feelings for two men - which one will be want to spend the rest of her life with?

I love historical mysteries, especially ones as detailed as this series. The settings, the descriptions of the lavish Newport cottages and the people who inhabit that world are wonderful. But it isn't just their world that is seen, the world of the less fortunate is on display as well. In creating the character of Emma, both worlds are experienced by the reader. I have no doubt that I will enjoy the next in the series as well.

My thanks to the publisher, Kensington and to NetGalley for giving me an advance copy in exchange for my honest review.

Betty says

Emma Cross has been living in New York City covering the society pages for the Herald. She is sent back to Newport to cover the debutant's ball for Cleo Cooper- Smith in the 6th book of The Gilded Age series. At the ball Cleo preparing a scene to dazzle the guests. The lights go and when the lights return Cleo is dead. The first responders are also shocked trying rescue Cleo. Am a meets a shoddy developer at the ball. Emma and Jesse work together solve the riddle of why Cleo lost her life.

Class distinctions are in play Emma has decided to remain in Newport and has made up her mind which suitor she wants. The morals of the time are in play. I am looking forward to the next installment.

Disclosure: Many thanks to Kensington Books for a review copy. The opinions expressed are my own.

Missi Stockwell says

The last person you would suspect !!! The one behind all the evil in Alyssa Maxwell's latest installment of her Gilded Newport Mystery series is the LAST person you would ever imagine it would be !! A complete unexpected surprise !!

I LOVE the Gilded Newport Mystery series and can never get enough of Emma !!! Emma is truly someone to admire....she is a strong, independent woman during a time when women were looked upon as being nothing more than servants, debutantes, wives and mothers. Emma wants so much more and being a journalist for the society page of newspapers, although unusual at that time, still isn't what she wants. She wants to be taken seriously and given more important stories. After all with her background and family and

society connections, she knows more than just who is at the party and what they are wearing.

And in Murder at Ochre Court, the sixth book in this amazing series, you follow Emma down some dark tunnels and eavesdrop on some pretty scary conversations but that will not deter her from finding out the truth behind the death of Cleo..... to think that she was electrocuted when electricity was just becoming a thing.....

The imagination of an author always amazes me but the research that some authors do when writing a story, a piece of fiction, that blows my mind !!! You cannot truly appreciate the story until you read the Author's Note at the end of one of Maxwell's stories she sheds more light onto the background of the buildings and the Newport area that Emma calls home.

I HIGHLY recommend getting lost in Murder at Ochre Court....it will take you on a very memorable journey and even though there are a lot of twists and turns you will not lose your way !!!

Pamela says

In 1898, Emma Cross is a journalist relegated to reporting on members of Mary Astor's infamous list of the 400 most influential people in New York society and their goings on. Emma longs to be a "real" investigative reporter and follow in the footsteps of Nelly Bly, but publishers hire her because she's a distant cousin in the Vanderbilt family. She returns home to Newport on assignment to attend and report on the coming-out ball of Cleo Cooper-Smith. As the belle of the ball, Cleo creates a tableau vivant with herself as Cleopatra. As she ascends the steps to sit in her throne. The electric lights plunges the ballroom into darkness. When the lights come back on, the guest of honor is dead.

Emma, working with the local policeman, knows Cleo has been murdered, but by whom? Who would want to murder a debutante from a once-wealthy family?

Maxwell has written a well-crafted cozy mystery with a complex plot, many suspects, an arsonist, a jewel thief, and of course a murderer. Maxwell moves the story along at a leisurely pace much like the pace of life at the turn-of-the-century. The ending may surprise you, but when you think about it, you will know that she gave hints along the way about who the murderer is.

While this is the sixth book in the Gilded Newport series, it is a stand-alone as well. The author does a very good job of giving enough information about the characters who appear in the previous books so she doesn't lose readers, like myself, who are just now finding this series.

Kim says

Alyssa Maxwell has picked Newport as her location and the time is just prior to the start of the twentieth century. Her heroine Emmaline Cross is returning from a disappointing foray in New York journalism. Hoping to become more than a gossip columnist reporting on the 400 who fit into Mrs. Astor's ballroom she is once again made aware of the discrimination against women. On the train from New York to Rhode Island she meets Elizabeth Cochrane Seaman a/k/a Nellie Bly who she admires for achieving everything denied to Emmaline. Bly advises Emmaline that "the only sure path to personal freedom" is Money and admits that the

only way to obtain it if you are a woman without any is Marriage. This section of the book seems to be a brief aside, but in hindsight it colors much of the narrative.

If you enjoy murder mysteries, and know anything about Newport, RI or care to know about the extraordinary Mansions and the people who built and inhabited them for a mere two months each summer in the years just prior to 1900 and continuing into the first half of the twentieth century, this book is perfect. Maxwell returns to the characters from her previous books in this series, introduces several new names, situates the reader in one of the famous Mansions (which is not currently accessible to the public for touring), adds a little romance and conflicted emotions, includes a menace from NYC and creates a satisfying read.

I have read all the previous books in this series except "Murder at Marble House - Gilded Newport Mysteries #2), which I just requested from my Public Library. "Murder at Ochre Court" can be read as a stand-alone but I think any reader will enhance their enjoyment by reading some of the other books in this series first.

Thank you NetGalley and Kensington Books for a copy

Neil Plakcy says

Maxwell's books provide such an intriguing look at the society of the time, with the Astors and the Vanderbilts and so on. Really breathes life into the era.

Linda Baker says

When we last saw Emma Cross she was excitedly heading off to New York for a new job at The New York Herald. The owner, James Bennett, had more or less promised her more substantial reporting assignments, but instead, she has been given the same old Society News that so frustrated her in Newport. While it was pleasant living with her well-heeled Vanderbilt relations, she missed her home and family in Newport. She has a decision to make and is seriously considering returning home for good.

Emma still has her entree to the "400" events in Newport, so the Herald sends her to cover the society debut of Cleo Cooper-Smith. Mrs. Ogden Goelet, the widowed owner of Ochre Court, promised Cleo's mother, also deceased, a perfect launch into society thereby ensuring a suitable (and monied) marriage. Emma, on the other hand, is on the trail of Silas Griggson, who will be in attendance. Griggson is a wealthy real estate developer in New York whose tenement building collapsed, killing many inside. Griggson escaped taking responsibility for the collapse, but Emma thinks he is responsible by using shoddy materials and workmanship. Emma aims to prove his culpability but is sidetracked by a bizarre death at the debut ball. Could Griggson also be responsible for that death?

The Gilded Newport Mysteries are well-researched and bring to life the manners and mores of the late 1890's. Even the notorious Five Points Gang of New York plays a part in Murder at Ochre Court, and Emma has an encounter with the famous Nellie Bly, a woman who made a successful career in journalism. Emma

wants to emulate Bly but is drawn to two different men with roots as deep in Newport as her own.

Thanks to NetGalley and Kensington Books for an advance digital copy. The opinions are my own.

RATING- 3.5 Stars rounded up to 4

LORI CASWELL says

Dollycas's Thoughts

Emma clearly has not been happy in New York. Her work for the Herald as a society columnist has been pretty mundane. She really wants to be a hard news journalist, something very few women have been given the chance to do. She has a huge decision to make. Will she return to New York after covering the coming-out ball of Cleo Cooper-Smith or will she stay in Newport and try to find a way to follow her dream?

Ochre Court is where the party for Miss Cooper-Smith is taking place. The Goelet's have just installed modern electricity and the decorations and planned tableau vivant should be spectacular and the talk of the season. But as the debutante dressed as Cleopatra takes her place on the throne, the room shockingly goes dark. As soon as lighting is restored a horrible sight awaits the crowd. Miss Cooper-Smith is dead, she has been electrocuted and the wiring has been tampered with. The young lady was murdered and there is a room full of suspects.

With Emma on the scene, she plans to report on the death for the Herald and investigate the murder too. The problem is as she uncovers the truth she is putting herself in the killer's sights. She may miss her final deadline if she isn't careful.

Alyssa Maxwell is an extraordinary storyteller. She is able to blend real historical times, places and events into a fictional story that will have readers believing they are reading a true account. She is careful to separate fact from fiction at the end of the story. It is so easy to see that she has researched the era and the area extensively. It is also very easy for the reader to escape right into the pages and away to Newport circa 1898.

Emma Cross is a protagonist that is smart, engaging and very independent for a woman at this point in history. Because of her shirttail relationship to the Vanderbilt family, she is able to call on and question almost all members of the elite 400 Club. She doesn't hold back either. They are not always happy to see her, but they usually come around to answering her questions. Also in this story, Emma meets Nellie Bly, a famous female journalist who has inspired Emma to follow her passion of becoming a hard news reporter.

We meet many new characters in this installment and each is very defined but they all seem to have some kind of secret that causes Emma to really dig to find the truth. The truth leads her to some shady dealings in

New York, and that takes the story in direction Emma has been pondering a while. Twists, yes. Turns, yet. Surprising reveal, yes, yes, yes.

The cover of the book gives us a nice picture of Ochre Court, but after reading each book in this series and the author's notes at the end I always find myself searching for more information about the place and the family that actually lived there. I really enjoyed this post on The Gilded Age Era, complete with pictures and floor plans. Seeing those confirmed that what I had imagined from the author's wonderful descriptions were spot on.

Thanks to Ms. Maxwell readers are treated to a rich story set in the Gilded Age with a complex mystery that keeps us guessing right up until the end. Then she gives us just a little snippet that leaves us craving for the next book in this series.

Every book in this series is wonderful and I do recommend reading them all in order. I am amazed at all Emma Cross has been through in these six stories.

Danika says

Find more reviews on my blog, Pages & Pepper by following the link below!

I received a free copy of this book from Kensington Books in exchange for my honest review.

To begin, the cover of this novel is stunning. A French-chateau style home (likely Ochre Court itself) graces the cover with a romantic gated entryway and beautiful, dark romantic colours. I admit, the cover attracted me to the story at least as much as the book description itself.

The novel begins with a conversation about marriage and money with none other than Nellie Bly.

This beginning is an ambitious one, considering her historical importance. The interaction is done well, but we are left wondering why this conversation really matters. At the end of the 19th century, many if not most women were openly encouraged to try to marry at least slightly above their own circumstances in order to improve their own and their family's social standing. But we never encounter Bly again. This ends up coming across as lazy writing... Why is our protagonist doing/saying/thinking this? Because Nellie Bly said so. So? Because she's Nellie Bly! Instead of creating and developing a trustworthy and capable character whose word we can take because of trouble the author took to establish her as credible, the author fictitiously uses a fairly well-known historical person, leaving the reader to rely on biographical knowledge acquired prior to reading this book (or, for those who would be unfamiliar with Bly, Wikipedia). Bly doesn't come back into the picture at all during this story except in a sort of "What Would Nellie Do?" manner, making their first and only meeting appear somewhat contrived and gratuitous. What we are left with at the beginning of the story is a woman sitting in a train car with a complete stranger, who offers advice that we must then subsequently read about for the rest of the novel.

I was rather annoyed by the awkward juxtaposition of phrasing. Maxwell seems unable to decide whether she wishes for her writing to mimic the English of the period or whether she wishes to use a contemporary style. Her occasional incorrect usage of vocabulary is frustrating. Unless done very deliberately for effect (which is obviously not the case here), consistency is key. I would highly recommend some editing simply to establish that consistency.

Our protagonist, Emmaline "Emma" Cross, is a distant relation of the Vanderbilt family, which, to be frank,

it also rather lazy writing. By making Emma a relation, the reader is expected to infer a certain degree of wealth (even if it is minor, dwindling, or relatively newly squandered), social capital and connections, and status that one would expect of anyone connected to the Vanderbilt dynasty. Yet by making her such a distant relation (“[t]he Vanderbilts were my third cousins – or was it fourth- on my father’s side”), the author can capitalize on the Vanderbilt splendour without having to do more than cursory research on the family. The Vanderbilt family is so iconic that much of Emma’s family history requires no explanation or description – so, very little work from the writer. Emma Cross is important enough to be granted access to society, but not so important that real-life contradicts the author’s story. I would expect for an author who can concoct a murder-mystery to be capable of providing a superior backstory than what was provided for Emma Cross.

Our players are rather one-dimensional. They do not exhibit humour (we hear how Robbie can make Emma laugh all the time, but we never actually see this happen), they do not playfully engage with each other. I understand that this story is a classic murder-mystery, but the only way to give it depth is to provide extraneous detail and interaction. The murder-mystery formula is adhered to far too rigidly. People are either nice or not nice, helpful or withholding, everyone who appeared to be straightforward remained straightforward. I would have loved to have seen more depth from Emma and the supporting characters.

For a woman who is upset about the abhorrent possibility of being defined by a future spouse, Emma is very pre-occupied with her feelings toward Jesse the policeman and Derrick the newspaper man. Following the first scene in which she has her brief interaction with Bly, Emma reminds us at every turn that she doesn’t want to marry and has no intention to marry and that marriage is such a burden to an independent woman and so forth. It dominates the pages until right around the end when we’re sure of the choice she will soon be making. The lady doth protest too much? Between her frequent holier-than-thou attitude, her oscillation between two men and remaining single, her rich relative name dropping (while seemingly martyring herself by not wanting to accept help from them and worrying about how she would fit in with their set if she did marry up), and her complete inability to read people, I found myself wishing that I could root for anyone else.

That being said, the author did obviously conduct a thorough investigation of late 19th century Newport geography, and learned a great deal about the houses of the Gilded Age, which comes through in the detail with which she describes our surroundings. Having never entered one these great houses, I feel as though as I have in mind’s eye.

I do wonder if this book could have been improved had it not felt so rushed.

See this review and more at:

<http://pagespepper.com/2018/07/26/mur...>

Susan Johnston says

Princess Fuzzypants here: I do enjoy historical novels especially those that bring the factual into the fictional. This series is one that does an admirable job blending the two. Our heroine is related to “the” Vanderbilt’s but is a poor relation. As such she has access to Society while being relegated by many to the fringes, almost there but not quite.

Emma wants to be journalist but the best she can manage, thanks to her tenuous acceptance by the rich and powerful, is to report on their lavish lifestyles. She wants to much more but as a woman is denied. When she meets Nelly Bly, her idol gives her advice that she does not appreciate fully until the end of the book. For it

is during this adventure so much that seemed confused becomes crystal clear.

While coming to these powerful self realizations, she must try to discover who killed the debutante at her Coming Out party. Her end is quite electric= literally. There are plenty of suspects but hardly any of them seems to fit the bill except one particularly nasty piece of work. Could it be that simple? Snidely Whiplash has nothing on this guy. Is he responsible for the death as well as a tenement disaster in NYC?

While the resolution is not completely a surprise, the book offers enough dead ends and blind spots the reader can enjoy the final twists.

I rather enjoyed as well how the book ended. I am excited to see where certain story lines go. I give four purrs and two paws up.

Cindy Burnett says

Murder at Ochre Court is a decent addition to the Gilded Newport Mysteries series. I struggled a bit with this book because I loved the setting in the story but felt that there was too little focus on Ochre Court and too much focus on an unexciting mystery and other extraneous things. My favorite part of this series is learning about the various Newport “cottages” and would have loved to learn more about Ochre Court and its inhabitants and less about the characters that were part of this particular mystery. However, if you are a fan of this series, it is still worth the read.

Fred says

Murder At Ochre Court is the sixth book in the Gilded Newport Mysteries series.

I love historical cozy mysteries and this series is definitely one of my favorites.

After spending an unsatisfying year writing society columns for the Herald in New York City, Emma’s editor sends her home to cover the society debut of Cleo Cooper-Smith. Mrs. Goelet is handling the gala affair, having promised Cleo’s mother before she died. Mrs. Goelet has planned an elaborate throne, much like Cleopatra would have had, for Cleo to reside on. She had local electrician, Dale Hanson, string so Edison lights near where Cleo would be sitting. After the decoration have been hung and Hanson has completed the wiring, Mrs. Goelet has ordered that the ballroom is locked and that no one is allowed in the ballroom until the gala that evening. That evening when Cleo assumes her seat and the Edison lights are turned on some of the guests sense something is wrong and when the ballroom lights are turned back on Cleo’s lifeless body is seen having apparently having been electrocuted. Then when Jessie Whyte, police detective and friend of Emma, and Hanson arrive, Hanson unwittingly touches the chair and Whyte grabs him and attempts to dislodge Hanson. They both require hospitalization and Whyte asks Emma to investigate what might have gone wrong.

When Emma returns to the Goelet’s home to begin her investigation she notices wiring around the feet of the chair that Cleo had been sitting on and was able to get confirmation that this was definitely a case of murder. She has many suspects to sort through. The owner of the local gas company, Max Brentworth, who might feel his business is being threatened by all the homes that are converting to electricity, Silas Griggson, a real estate developer, who was hoping to get engaged to Cleo but had been spurned by her, and her maid who had had an argument on the day of Cleo’s death and who had valuables of Cleo in her possession, and others.

This is another well-plotted and told story from Ms. Maxwell. Maxwell does a wonderful job of portraying what life might have been like in the late 1800's in Newport and providing the reader with an interesting and believable cast of characters.

I will definitely be watching for the next book in this exciting series.

Crittermom says

At the turn of the century, few women had careers outside of service. Emma Cross, a poor relation of the Vanderbilt's, has been trying to make her way as a reporter, but papers hire her for her society connections and her links to gossip. Society reporting is lucrative but far from what Emma wants for herself. Her return to Newport coincides with the society event of the season - Cleo Cooper-Smith's coming out at Ochre Court. Emma plans to report on that, and rouse the opportunity to dig up information on Griggson, a wealthy builder with an uncertain past and links to a collapsed tenement.

When Cleo is electrocuted, Emma's friend Dale is blamed for the accident. With the sheriff, Jesse, in the hospital, Emma starts gathering information. Cleo's accident was clearly murder, but who would want to kill a young debutante? Is Cleo's father complicit in Griggson's wrongdoings? What happened to Cleo's first fiancé, Oliver?

Murder at Ochre Court is much better than many of the turn of the century mysteries I've read. It does a wonderful job portraying the restrictions placed on women at the time, and the difficulty of cross class relationships. While some may call the time civilized, it's clear that the civility shown to women was a thin veneer meant to keep them in their place. Even at the very beginning when Emma is speaking to Nelly Bly, she is told to find a rich husband who will support her endeavors. Murder at Ochre Court is a fascinating and well written historical mystery.

5 / 5

I received a copy of Murder at Ochre Court from the publisher and NetGalley.com in exchange for an honest review.

— Crittermom

Connie Fischer says

Newport, Rhode Island - 1898

Emma Cross has just returned to Newport by train after spending the last year in New York reporting for the New York Herald. Riding with her is the famous journalist, Nellie Bly, and they are discussing marriage. Nellie tells her that she must find a man she can trust, make her laugh, and who is very wealthy. Emma has known some nice men, but as yet, not one she wants to marry.

Currently, she is on assignment from the New York Herald and is also investigating Silas Griggson, who owns a construction company. A building built by his company recently collapsed killing and injuring people, but he appears to be blameless.

Emma has been a reporter for the local Newport newspaper for years, but has only been relegated to report on the social scene. She is a cousin to the Vanderbilt family but does not share in their money. She has come to Newport to report on a ball at Ochre Court hosted by Mrs. Goelet in honor of Miss Cleo Cooper-Smith's come-out.

Emma's home is Gull Court which she shares with her old nanny and some other young women whom she has taken in when they needed help. She has now decided to stay in Newport and not return to New York. Even though she enjoyed working for the Herald, she found that the editor only wanted her to report on the society events due to her social connections.

At the ball, Mrs. Goelet has decorated Ochre Court quite elaborately. She meets Cleo who appears to be a rather spoiled person. When she meets Cleo's sister, Ilsa, she finds a lovely and kind young woman. Sadly, Ilsa has an extreme curvature of the spine which limits some movement for her. Also attending the ball is Silas Griggson who appears to be enamored by Cleo, but she does not return his affection. At the climax of the ball, an electrical accident occurs killing Cleo and frightening everyone.

As always, our sleuth, Emma Cross, decides to try and find the killer. Along the way, she meets some questionable people and even encounters some threats against her. Who killed Cleo and will they strike again?

I think my favorite book of this series is "Murder at Chateau sur Mer" because there weren't a lot of characters and the story centered itself in and around the Chateau. I have read all of the other books in this series and I have to say "Murder at Ochre Court" is my least favorite. It's because there are so many, many characters and the story line branches out into too many places making it difficult for the reader to keep up with who is who. I have enjoyed the character of Emma in the past, but in this book, she comes across as a hardened spinster-wanna-be. I'm wondering if it's time to wrap up this series and start another, because the author is certainly very talented and I would like to see her write something new. I enjoy her "A Lady and Lady's Maid" mystery series and look forward to reading more of those books.

Copy provided by NetGalley in exchange for a fair and honest review.

Ellen Byron says

I love this series, and Murder at Ochre Court is a wonderful addition to it. Maxwell does a masterful job of threading historical events into her fictional narrative. The characters are likeable -except for the ones that shouldn't be! - and the mystery satisfying.

BRAVA! Can't wait for the next Gilded Newport Mystery.

