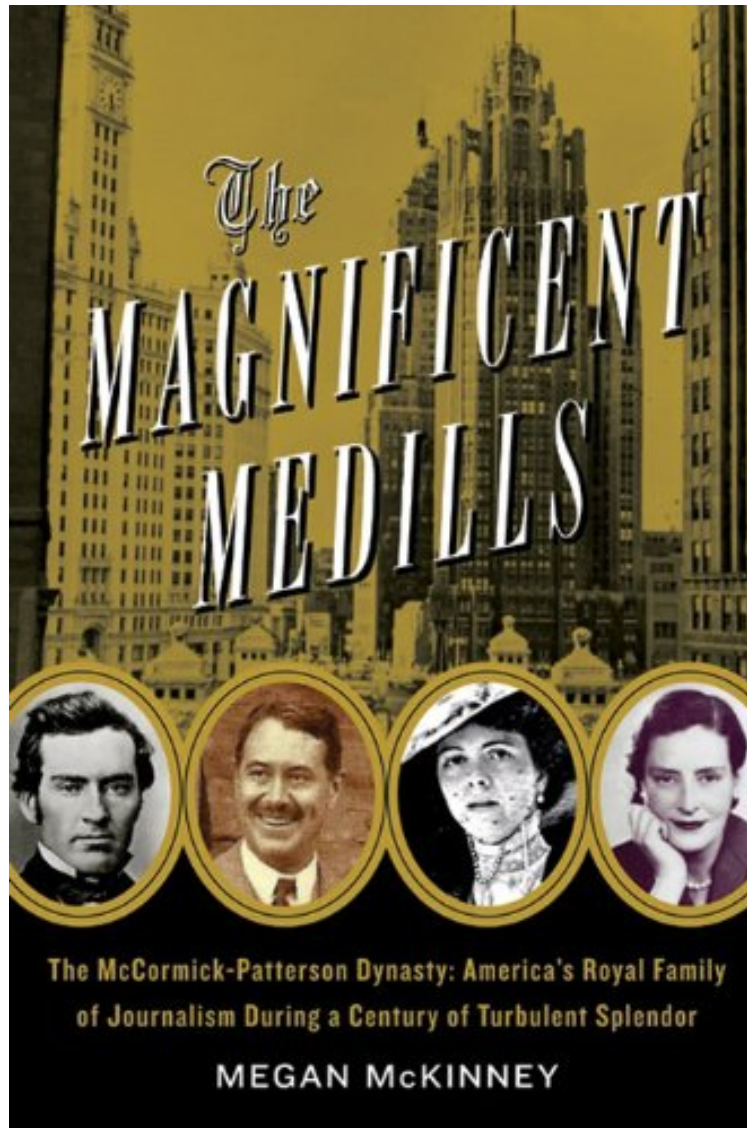


[Read ebook] The Magnificent Medills: America's Royal Family of Journalism During a Century of Turbulent Splendor

The Magnificent Medills: America's Royal Family of Journalism During a Century of Turbulent Splendor

Megan McKinney

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Megan McKinney : The Magnificent Medills: America's Royal Family of Journalism During a Century of Turbulent Splendor before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Magnificent Medills: America's Royal Family of Journalism During a Century of Turbulent Splendor:

12 of 12 people found the following review helpful. Worthwhile, if not riveting By J Thomas The author tells the tale of the Medill clan, a wealthy family that played a huge role in the establishment of modern-day journalism. What I think

you'll enjoy about the book:*

- * An interesting perspective on US history from the Civil War through the mad early 1900s to modern day, including episodes that have been largely forgotten but that were famous/infamous in their day: the Great Chicago fire, the bloody Chicago circulation wars, the curious history of the Hope Diamond.*
- * Vignettes about America's intellectual and social elite; through history, the fates/fortunes of the Medill clan intertwined with such notable figures as Abraham Lincoln, various Roosevelts (including FDR's infamously wild daughter Alice), Vanderbilts, Guggenheims, Hearsts, Fields, and other American luminaries from the world of politics, literature, entertainment, and "society".*
- * The Medills themselves, as eccentric and dysfunctional a family as you're likely to encounter in non-fiction. In addition to dabbling in journalism, various Medills wrote best-selling books and plays, won glory in WWI, rubbed shoulders with Russian royalty, dabbled in socialism, gained renown as big game hunters and aviators, hosted extravagant Gatsby-ish entertainments, built even more extravagant estates, became entangled in any number of scandals (usually sexual), and rarely missed an opportunity to destroy each other and themselves.

What you might find a little more taxing:*

- * So many Medills! All with them with more than one nickname and any number of marriages. Even though the author provides a genealogy, I had to take notes on the back pages of the book to keep all the personalities straight.*
- * McKinney faces the problem so many biographers face: the tension between maintaining thoroughness/accuracy while simultaneously spinning an interesting tale. For the most part she succeeds, but sometimes the details take over her overarching narrative. Alternating with the more interesting bits are long sections of decidedly less riveting information, including business maneuvers and buyouts, so many whirlwind trips overseas that I lost track, innumerable family spats, long paragraphs describing countless houses/estates/weddings, and dozens of friendships/love affairs that confuse rather than enlighten.

This wasn't the easiest read - partly because of the uneven pace of the book, partly because I had a hard time liking any of the main characters. Even so, I don't regret the time I spent getting to know the Medills, if only because it exposed me to chapters of US history I hadn't encountered before and deepened my understanding of a social class in the U.S. about which I knew little.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. fascinating examination of newspaper dynasty

By H. F. Gibbard

This book came along at just the right time, when the newspaper business is floundering and we risk forgetting what a glorious history it had during America's rise to a world power. McKinney's focus is on the people in one newspaper family, but we learn much about the rise of American journalism along the way. The book is well written and at times it waxes lyrical, as when McKinney describes Katherine Patrick's first pregnancy in 1853: "With the progression of winter months into spring, the waist of her long full skirt inched higher until the end of June and her retirement from journalism." This is the kind of prose that brings a smile to the reader's face. Much of the book is devoted to the rivalry between two sisters, "Nellie" and "Kate," that colored generations of lives and relationships in this boisterous, talented and often dysfunctional family. Their ambition drove the family business forward, even as it revealed and created significant fractures in the lives of their descendants. The family was far from monolithic in its politics, with one scion openly Socialist and others extremely conservative. Relative competed against relative, sometimes helping others, sometimes stymying them. Another large theme of this work is the huge role that marriages (for better or worse) played in the lifestyle and careers of the Medill/Patterson/McCormick family. None was more disastrous than the brief marriage of Eleanor Medill Patterson ("Cissy"), a privileged but rebellious child who married a Polish aristocrat, Count Josef Gizycki. McKinney's description of the impression that Old World court splendor and prestige made on young Cissy is fascinating, and her description of the primitive and harsh circumstances in which Cissy found herself after her marriage reads like a Gothic novel. We are reminded of the sheer range of possibilities, both positive and negative, that the wealth and power of this family opened up for its members. We also learn of the brutal and bitter newspaper circulation wars, which at times descended into gangland-style violence and intimidation. The book does not spend a lot of time on the technical aspects of the newspaper business, but does cover political issues. I was amazed to learn, for example, that Roosevelt was so irked by columnist John O'Donnell's criticisms of United States participation in World War II that in 1942 he mailed O'Donnell a Nazi Iron Cross. This kind of larger-than-life behavior colors many of the accounts in this book.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Not Magnificent, But Interesting.

By hasselaar

The story of the rise and fall of a family of newspaper publishers. The typical American history of various immigrants arriving in America and making it big by the third generation. This family composed of Medills, Patersons, McCormicks and many others (through inter-marriage) is an interesting description of the rise of the modern-day newspaper industry. There are also many interesting references and connections to the unique William Randolph Hearst. Along with that interesting history, is told the tale of one family and its rise and downwards progression. As with all of the great innovators and robber barons of the 19th and early 20th century, this family had its stars, but also its share of under-achievers, spoiled and emotionally-deprived heirs and heiresses. Divorces, European royalty suicides, extreme infidelity - it is all there. The lives of famous movie stars and personalities of the time are also to be found among these pages. The "Hope" diamond and its morphine-addled owner, also the owner of the Washington Post leads to the Meyer-era Post, and then progresses to the Graham-era and the famous Katherine. The book is slightly lacking in the impetus so needed to motivate the reader. However, it is still an interesting read. It is filled with previously unrevealed facts and tid-bits about the newspaper world and those behind the printed word.

The riveting story of the country's first media dynasty, the Medills of Chicago, whose power and influence shaped the story of America and American journalism for four generations. When thirty-two-year-old former lawyer Joseph Medill bought a controlling stake in the bankrupt Chicago Daily Tribune in 1855, he had no way of foreseeing the unparalleled influence he and his progeny would have on the world of journalism and on American society at large. Medill personally influenced the political tide that transformed America during the mid-nineteenth century by fostering the Republican Party, engineering the election of Abraham Lincoln and serving as a catalyst for the outbreak of the Civil War. The dynasty he established, filled with colorful characters, went on to take American journalism by storm. His grandson, Colonel Robert R. McCormick, personified Chicago, as well as its great newspaper, the Chicago Tribune, throughout much of the twentieth century. Robert's cousin, Joseph Medill Patterson, started the New York Daily News, and Joseph's sister, Cissy Patterson, was the innovative editor of the Washington Times-Herald. In the fourth generation, Alicia Patterson founded Long Island's Newsday, the most stunning journalistic accomplishment of post-World War II America. Printers' ink raged in the veins of the Medills, the McCormicks and the Pattersons throughout a century, and their legacy prevailed for another five decades—always in the forefront of events, shaping the intellectual and social pulse of America. At the same time, the dark side of the intellectual stardom driving the dynasty was a destructive compulsion that left clan members crippled by their personal demons of chronic depression, alcoholism, drug abuse and even madness and suicide. Rife with authentic conversations and riveting quotes, *The Magnificent Medills* is the premiere cultural history of America's first media empire. This dynamic family and their brilliance, eccentricities and ultimate self-destruction are explored in a sweeping narrative that interweaves the family's personal activities and public achievements against a larger historical background. Authoritative, compelling and thoroughly engaging, *The Magnificent Medills* brings the pages of history that the Medills wrote vividly to life.

[An] immensely entertaining book. . . . McKinney vividly re-creates the city's no-holds-barred newspaper culture. (Chicago Tribune) Shifting smoothly from the life of one Medill, Patterson or McCormick to another, in the end she achieves a clear and comprehensive family biography, with all its complex interconnections. (New York Times Book) A solid account of this family. (Washington Post) Megan McKinney has written a knock-out dynastic history about the world of journalism. In *The Magnificent Medills* we learn how a single family forever changed Chicago and America. It's impossible to understand today's modern media world without reading this brilliant book. Highly recommended! (Douglas Brinkley, author of *The Quiet World*) Megan McKinney's wonderfully researched, thoroughly engrossing, *The Magnificent Medills*, reveals Chicago's McCormick-Patterson family in all its dazzling brilliance and delicious eccentricity. (David Garrard Lowe, author of *Lost Chicago*) Compulsively readable. . . . With its backdrop of wealth and power, *The Magnificent Medills* reads almost like a rich historical novel. It just happens to be true. (BookPage) An intensely personal look at the Medill family. . . . Meticulously researched and detailed. (Washington Independent of Books) Chicago historian McKinney provides the first comprehensive chronicle of the Medill newspaper dynasty. . . . Deftly tell[ing] the tale of one of America's first families of business. (Philanthropy Magazine) Ink, booze and eccentricity flow through a newspaper dynasty's veins in this lively, gossipy clan bio. . . . Like her subjects, McKinney blends canny fact-finding, well-paced narrative and colorful detail into a compulsively readable confection. (Publishers Weekly) It is their brilliance in publishing newspapers when newspapers really mattered, combined with lives full of fault lines, that truly fascinates. . . . A solid account of the life and times of a family that was indeed magnificent. (Kirkus) This portrait of a storied newspaper dynasty packs a powerful punch. . . . Not only a compulsively readable collective biography but also an overview of the rapid evolution of the American newspaper industry during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. (Booklist) From the Back Cover The riveting story of the country's first media dynasty, the Medills of Chicago, whose power and influence shaped the story of America and American journalism for four generations. When thirty-two-year-old former lawyer Joseph Medill bought a controlling stake in the bankrupt Chicago Daily Tribune in 1855, he had no way of foreseeing the unparalleled influence he and his progeny would have on the world of journalism and on American society at large. Medill personally influenced the political tide that transformed America during the mid-nineteenth century by fostering the Republican Party, engineering the election of Abraham Lincoln and serving as a catalyst for the outbreak of the Civil War. The dynasty he established, filled with colorful characters, went on to take American journalism by storm. His grandson, Colonel Robert R. McCormick, personified Chicago, as well as its great newspaper, the Chicago Tribune, throughout much of the twentieth century. Robert's cousin, Joseph Medill Patterson, started the New York Daily News, and Joseph's sister, Cissy Patterson, was the innovative editor of the Washington Times-Herald. In the fourth generation, Alicia Patterson founded Long Island's Newsday, the most stunning journalistic accomplishment of post-World War II America. Printers' ink raged in the veins of the Medills, the McCormicks and the Pattersons throughout a century, and their legacy prevailed for another five decades—always in the forefront of

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About the Author: Megan McKinney is an expert on historic Chicago families. She has written for *Town Country*, *TV Guide*, *Opera News* and the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. She lives in Chicago.