

[PDF] Mellon: An American Life

David Cannadine - pdf download free book

Books Details:

Title: Mellon: An American Life

Author: David Cannadine

Released: 2006-10-03

Language:

Pages: 800

ISBN: 0679450327

ISBN13: 978-0679450320

ASIN: 0679450327



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Description:

From Publishers Weekly In this volume, the first published "full-scale life" of financial pioneer Andrew Mellon—who would help propel the country to economic domination, serve as servant and scapegoat for powerful White House administrations, and establish the National Gallery of Art—biographer Cannadine (In Churchill's Shadow) tackles every aspect of a towering American figure who was nevertheless "shy in life and secretive in business." Beginning with the boyhood immigration to Pittsburgh of Mellon's domineering father, Cannadine chronicles the busy buildup of Mellon's early career, as he involves himself with his father's successful real estate projects and enters the world of Pittsburgh's wealthy industrial elite. His largely obstacle-free ascension, however, packs the book's first third with humdrum lists of business transactions. Tellingly, the chapter titled "The First Scandal" provides the book's first meaty narrative: the disastrous collapse of Mellon's mid-life marriage to the young Englishwoman Nora McMullen. Following this, Mellon becomes a more dynamic character and his money takes a more secondary role. Mellon's

contentious stint as Secretary of the Treasury under Presidents Harding, Coolidge and Hoover provides interesting insight into the clash of democracy (which Mellon was never such a fan of) and high finance; it also provides Mellon a telling conflict between his responsibility to the country's failing post-war economy and his desire to re-engage his estranged daughter Ailsa. Cannadine does not shy from pointing out the hypocrisy and insensitivity in his subject-especially in his devastating behavior toward his unfaithful wife-but remains sympathetic throughout, providing a balanced look at a supremely principled businessman who made some startlingly unprincipled choices. Though a scholarly work with limited popular appeal, this is a valuable, comprehensive look at an important American life.

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From *Starred Review* This is the first comprehensive biography of Andrew Mellon, the powerful American financier, secretary of the treasury, and art collector. Like Rockefeller and Carnegie, Mellon came to symbolize the era of the U.S. rise to industrial might, with all the benefits and abuses that entailed. Professor Cannadine brings compassion and fairness to his subject. At first glance, Mellon is neither an appealing nor an especially interesting character. Mellon's father, Thomas, had already made his fortune, so Andrew's story lacks the rags-to-riches aspect that made Andrew Carnegie such a compelling figure. In personal relations, Mellon was stiff, diffident, and self-absorbed. His only marriage ended disastrously, and his relations with his children were problematic. But, as Cannadine eloquently shows, Mellon was a true genius at the art of making money. He was a brilliant practitioner of and a true believer in -laissez-faire capitalism. As secretary of the treasury under Presidents Harding, Coolidge, and Hoover, he used his financial acumen to cut both taxes and the national debt. Although he came to philanthropy late in life, the donation of his private art collection and massive subsidizing of a museum to house it have greatly enriched the nation's cultural life. Despite Mellon's personal shortcomings, Cannadine's recounting of Mellon's public career make this a worthy contribution to our understanding of the man and his era. *Jay Freeman*

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