



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

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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 midnineteenth 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 Joe'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.

Printer's 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.

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

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During a Century of Turbulent Splendor Megan Mckinney**

From Reader Review The Magnificent Medills: America's Royal Family of Journalism During a Century of Turbulent Splendor for online ebook

judy says

This book is a must for anyone who loves Chicago history. Even though I lived in Chicagoland for two decades and aced History of Journalism 101, this book was a constant revelation. I'm not sure which I enjoyed more--the founding of four major newspapers by members of this brilliant clan or their personal eccentricities, family feuds and eclectic choices of multitudinous lovers. Take it seriously or enjoy it as a romp--either way--read it.

Gottesburen says

News publishing ran through the bloodlines.

There were a lot of characters and was interesting how strong news publishing ran through the bloodlines. Was not aware of how cut throat it was as multiple papers vied for majority circulation. Was also surprised to see that it is nothing new to have news politically align.

Brian says

The Magnificent Medills covers the story of the Medill Family and the McCormick Patterson Dynasty that shaped the course of journalism throughout the late 18th and early 19th century. Short of Hearst (who the Medills had many dealings with) the family was one of the most influential in shaping United States journalism. From the start of the Chicago Tribune to Newsweek the Medills and their decedents redefined the way Americans read newspapers. They were the socialites of their day amassing a tremendous fortune and flaunting it in private railway cars, huge houses and extravagant parties. McKinney provides a very useful family tree as it gets easy to lose track of so many family relations but at the end of the day an excellent job is done in giving enough time to introduce the family member before moving on to introducing a new person. I am usually not drawn to the socialite type histories but found this one enjoyable and well done holding my interest throughout the whole book. It is not a long and drawn out analysis of early journalism but really does focus on the families and their relations with one another. Overall enjoyable and well worth it for those interested in the lives of the wealthy for this time period.

Converse says

An enjoyably gossipy group biography of the family that brought the Chicago Tribune, Newsday on Long Island, and the New York Daily News The family is better known by the names McCormick and Patterson; Joseph Medill was the founder of the dynasty, but the next prominent publishers were his grandchildren descended from his daughters, who were disallowed on account of their sex from taking part in the family business. Medill became the editor and part owner of the Chicago Tribune in the 1850s and was an important

supporter of Abraham Lincoln. His prominent grandchildren were Joseph Medill Patterson, his sister Cissy Patterson, and their cousin Robert R. McCormick. Joseph Patterson's daughter, Alicia, was the person who built up Newsday.

Jan McNutt says

I was totally enchanted with this book. Never having heard of the Medill publishing dynasty I was amazed and overwhelmed at their accomplishments and publishing successes throughout the 20th century. Not only were the Medills amazing individuals but the historical factors in this book are astonishing in their importance of early America. It is a superb history of publishing, politics, two world wars, the most prominent names of American financial wealth, the cities of Chicago, New York and Washington, D.C. Megan Mckinney wrote a book that should be read by American history buffs and, especially those who love publishing and journalism.

Karenbike Patterson says

This is a typical American success story of a family who started in Chicago in the publishing business. They started one of the biggest newspapers in the country with innovation and moxie. The women especially lived daring, controversial, and feisty lives marrying many times, traveling around the world, shooting big game, breeding horses as well as publishing papers in Chicago, DC and New York. The men were eccentric and interesting. In the mid to late 1950's their empire finally was diluted by death and competition. Still, the heritage left extensive comics, sports, and editorial changes, remain today.

Barbara Mitchell says

The old saying that if you're rich, you're eccentric and if you're poor, you're insane, certainly applies to this large family. Joseph Medill, of Chicago Tribune fame spawned a magnificent family alright but nearly all of them were definitely eccentric. The fact that most of them died of cirrhosis of the liver from a lifetime of heavy drinking is just the beginning of their story.

Since this family was high society in Chicago, New York, and Washington, the reader learns interesting facts about other well known people of their time as well as tidbits that I would classify as gossip. One married Drew Pearson, for instance, so we get an entirely different look at his life than in other works.

Arguably the most influential in politics was Joseph Medill who was a founder of the Republican Party and was close to Abraham Lincoln. So close in fact that when Medill walked into his own office and found Lincoln sitting with his feet up on the desk, he yelled at him to get his feet off of it.

The Tribune was located in a "fireproof" building at the time of the great Chicago fire, and of course burned down. Afterward, Medill was mayor of that city. However, his two daughters were, though elegant and educated, known as "she-devils." They meddled incessantly in their children's lives until they died.

Perhaps the best known person in the family was Cissy Patterson, one of Joseph's granddaughters. She was a friend of Alice Roosevelt (Teddy's flamboyant daughter), the publisher of a Washington newspaper, and mixed with presidents, artists, and other famous people. Her love life was a scandal.

I could go on and on about this book and the Medill family. I found their story fascinating. I have a proof of the book so I'm anxious to see the finished product because I want to see the pictures that will be included. I highly recommend this one. (Source: Amazon Vine)

Jill Hutchinson says

When we think of the great newspaper dynasties, we often think of William Randolph Hearst, Katherine Graham, and Joseph Pulitzer. But the family of the Medill/Patterson/McCormick tops them all. It all began in Chicago when Joseph Medill bought the bankrupt *Chicago Daily Tribune* (which morphed into the Trib) in 1855 and threw his support to Presidential candidate Abraham Lincoln. It was a good move and the newspaper started picking up in sales. Medill was an unapologetic conservative and he changed how politics affected the newspaper business and vice-versa.. He instilled in his children the love of the power of the written word and ensured that his two strong willed daughters married men who could be shaped into exactly what Medill wanted.

This biography of the family follows them through the creation of the *New York Daily News* and the Washington Times-Herald, both of which, in addition to the Trib, became amazing successes in the dog-eat-dog world of publishing. And the family held on to most of their newspaper empire until the decline of newspapers in the late 20th century.

As well as publishing history, the book is packed with the romantic scandals, drug use, alcoholism, depression, and suicide. of some of the main movers and shakers of the family which eventually destroyed the dynasty. This is a thoroughly researched and well written history of a family who changed how news was reported. Recommended.

Scott says

For all the misplaced attention we Americans currently lavish on the undeserving trailer trash of the moment (the Kardashians, the Hiltons, the train wrecks of New Jersey, and the rest), we fail to appreciate the spectacularly scandalous lives of Americans who actually mattered to the country. Anyone without shame can make a scandalous videotape and win their own reality TV show; it takes real talent to scandalize the very nation you are helping to build.

The Medill family started innocently enough - a young lawyer took a gamble and bought a newspaper at the same time he got involved with a new political party, the Republicans. It just so happened that Joseph Medill became a close advisor to Abraham Lincoln and took over a critical newspaper at the same time Chicago erupted into the powerhouse capital of the Midwest. For the next century, Joe Medill and his family, along with a dizzying cast of partners (both business and romantic), helped shape America's political and journalistic foundations.

It is hard to underestimate the importance of the Medill family, which in its way is just as important as the Vanderbilts, the Rockefellers, and the Roosevelts. From defining how American journalism worked to building many of its core institutions to influencing American politics to driving America's quest for flight, even down to the creation of Little Orphan Annie, the Medills and their family were there. Even today, the Robert McCormick Foundation, one of the nation's leading philanthropic organizations, influences the lives of millions - and the Foundation was built by the legendary Colonel McCormick who guided the family's fortunes for years.

As told by Megan McKinney, the Medills and their clan were as scandalous in their behavior as they were successful in their entrepreneurship. Divorce, affairs, parties, suicides and family feuds seemed to be their bread and butter, and McKinney tells a number of juicy tales. My personal favorite occurs when, the day after a society party at a friend's house, one of the Medill daughters has her underwear delivered to her by messenger - perhaps the ultimate "It appears you have misplaced these" moment. These were people who knew how to raise a scandal and do it in style.

The Medills are a largely forgotten family now - I had no idea who they were until I read this book - but deserve to be mentioned as one of the great American families. Sure, there may have been some horrible individuals in that family who did terrible things to their friends as well as enemies, but they contributed much to the American achievement in the 19th and 20th centuries, and that demands respect.

Mary says

I found this book fascinating if not a little dry. It appears some information is based on gossip and inuendo. For lovers of Chicago history, especially the history of the Chicago Tribune dynasty, the book is packed with all the characters that made the paper number one and revolutionized not only the industry but helped build the great city we know today. From the time of the Great Chicago fire the story follows the family's members through two world wars and family tragedies. Altho the characters don't jump off the page their lives are detailed and interwoven so we not only know the names and dates, but get a feeling for how bearing the mantle of this famous family affected them all.

Roni says

A very entertaining saga about a most important but mostly unknown family. But also a fascinating lesson about American history.

SundayAtDusk says

If you love newspapers and hate seeing what has happened to them, this book may make you cry. For it is the story of newspapers in their heyday--when Sunday papers had 72 pages, and comic strip artists were paid \$25,000 to \$85,000 a year. Current employees of *Tribune* papers really might cry, because this book covers the years when the *Tribune* was backed by a bottomless money pit. *Tribune* employees received "medical aid, free dental cleanings, life insurance, silver flatware as wedding gifts, home financing", pensions, bonuses, and, most important, job security. There was even a "drunk bank" for those who needed money "the day after a bender". Unfortunately, the newsboys did not have such blessed lives; they were sometimes maimed by competing newspapers, That is one of the most interesting parts of the book, where Ms. McKinney shows how the Chicago mob was created by the fierce competition between the Chicago newspapers.

This, of course, is also the story of the Medills, particularly Robert McCormick, Joe Patterson and Cissy Patterson. There is a family tree in the beginning of the book, which I did not find that helpful. The final copy of the book, as opposed to the ARC, has 16 pages of photos, and those are probably way more helpful in keeping everyone straight. Women in the family were more than once called "she-devils", and they tended to marry very strangely, but it is still a great story of powerful women in the newspaper industry. Cissy

Patterson, however, ends up very badly due to very bad choices in her personal life. It is also not the happiest of endings for Robert McCormick and Joe Patterson, but what exciting , privileged, hardworking lives they all lived.

(Note: I received a free ARC of this book from Amazon Vine.)

Margaret McCamant says

I heard this author speak, twice. At first I feared that she'd told all the best gossip stories in her presentation. As I read the whole book, I realized that it is mostly gossip stories, not so much a history of newspapers in Chicago but the story of the characters in these interlocked families--their rivalries, affairs, multiple marriages, houses, travel, etc.

It was gratifying to see that younger women managed to make their own way. The two daughters of Joseph Medill, Kate and Nellie, had little opportunity to use their intelligence except to compete through their husbands and, especially, their sons.

Phoebe says

4.5 stars. Comparable to Erik Larson, McKinney has produced a fascinating, fantastic book of history. Covering over one hundred years of a family who founded four newspapers, elected Abraham Lincoln, and changed American culture, this is one to read. Highly recommend.

Lauren says

This book really picked up for me once it got to the Medill grandchildren, when the money and they emotions really flowed. I found Cissy and Alicia Patterson to be the most interesting of the group. The gilded age treated these people well, and it is fascinating to trace all of the disparate newspapers of the 20th century back to one family. The book is heavy on the salacious aspects of the family, but doesn't skimp on the contributions and evolutions Medills brought to the news gathering business. A highly readable introduction to Chicago and Washington high society.
