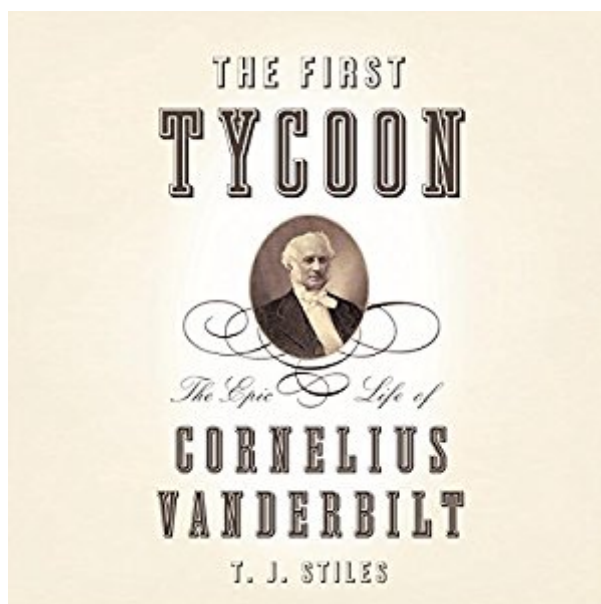


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The First Tycoon: The Epic Life Of Cornelius Vanderbilt



Synopsis

NATIONAL BESTSELLERWINNER OF THE NATIONAL BOOK AWARDIn this groundbreaking biography, T.J. Stiles tells the dramatic story of Cornelius "Commodore" Vanderbilt, the combative man and American icon who, through his genius and force of will, did more than perhaps any other individual to create modern capitalism. Meticulously researched and elegantly written, *The First Tycoon* describes an improbable life, from Vanderbilt's humble birth during the presidency of George Washington to his death as one of the richest men in American history. In between we see how the Commodore helped to launch the transportation revolution, propel the Gold Rush, reshape Manhattan, and invent the modern corporation. Epic in its scope and success, the life of Vanderbilt is also the story of the rise of America itself. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

T. J. Stiles thinks Cornelius Vanderbilt has gotten a bad rap. Born during George Washington's presidency, Vanderbilt built a massive business empire starting with steamships and then railroads. His life spanned an epic period of the growth of the United States. During his life he saw New York grow from a population of 40,000 to over 1 million, the introduction of the railroad and steamships, building the Erie canal, the gold rush, the telegraph, and the American civil war. Vanderbilt comes across as tenaciously driven in business, opportunistic, and personally aloof. During the development of the country during the 18th century, Vanderbilt was always there -capitalizing upon

and in turn, providing the infrastructure that enabled the country's growth. Vanderbilt's response to the California gold rush of 1849 is illustrative. He built a steamship line that transported passengers to the east coast of Nicaragua, transferred them to a small riverboat for the trip up the San Juan river. Shipped and reassembled a larger ferry boat for the trip across Lake Nicaragua, and then used pack animals to make the 12 miles trip to the Pacific. Finally, another steamship took them to San Francisco. Doing so required political deftness, engineering expertise, financial backing, and a keen business acumen. Vanderbilt then began shifting his business from steamships to railroads. Shortly after the civil war he had essentially shifted his entire business focus away from steamships to railroads. I wondered how he made these decisions. Did he ponder long and hard the future of the country and decide where he needed to be? How did he see these changes coming?

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