



Great Fortune: The Epic of Rockefeller Center

Daniel Okrent

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Everything about the conception and creation of Rockefeller Center was outsized and wildly improbable. Launched in the teeth of the worst depression in American history, the most ambitious construction project since the Pyramids was the unintended result of a philanthropic gesture gone awry. But when it was finished, John D. Rockefeller Jr.'s accidental adventure redefined the very nature of New York City. In this hugely appealing book, noted journalist Daniel Okrent draws on a depth of original research and a broad grasp of subjects-money, art, politics, business, social history-to tell the story of how Rockefeller Center rose in the heart of Manhattan to become the playground/laboratory/headquarters for all the world's affairs.

Okrent's lavish cast of singular characters is a Who's Who of a glamorous age. Gertrude Vanderbilt, Otto Kahn, Henry Luce, Diego Rivera, Georgia O'Keeffe, even Benito Mussolini all play crucial, and often unexpected, roles in this saga. But at the heart of the story are four remarkable individuals: John D. Rockefeller Jr., the timid son of the world's richest man, whose greatest accomplishment turns out to be something he had never intended; his son Nelson, who launched his own imperial career by seizing control of this vast enterprise; the rude, vain, but dazzlingly creative real-estate genius John R. Todd; and Raymond Hood, a scamp, a provocateur, a drinker-and the greatest skyscraper architect America has ever known. Brilliantly weaving together multiple narrative lines and a wealth of historic detail, *Great Fortune* is a vast tapestry of New York in its first flush of world-dominating wealth and power.

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