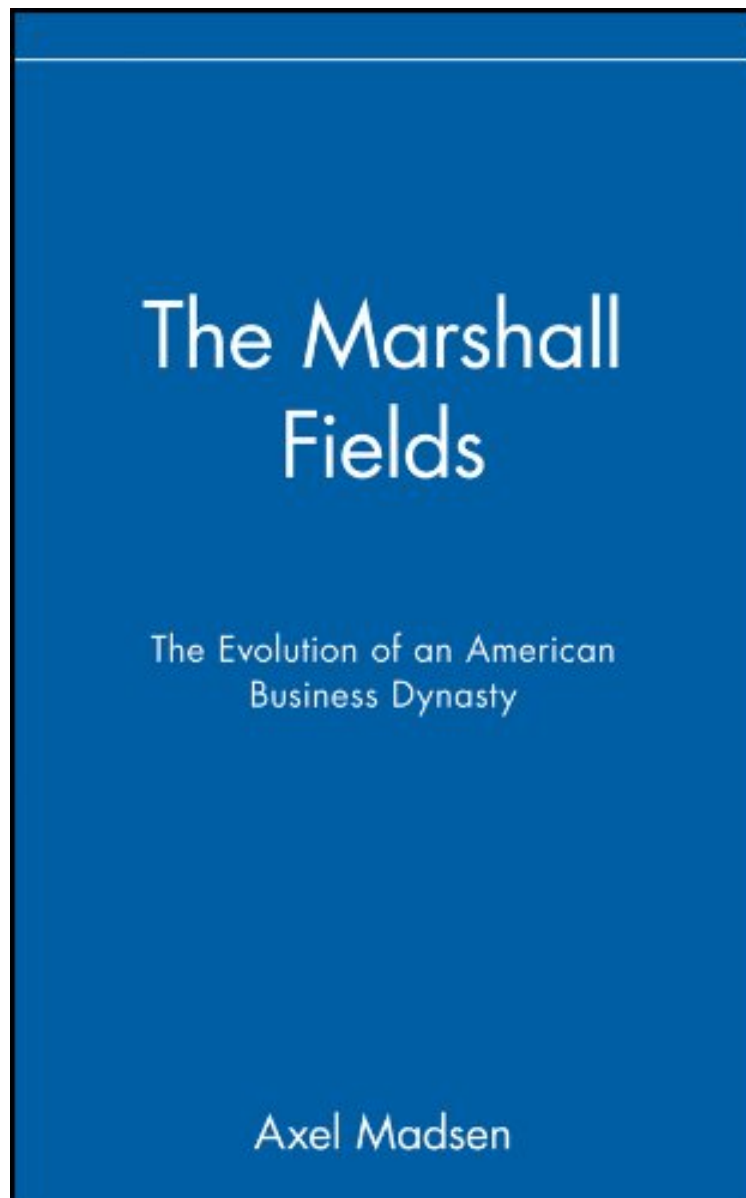


The Marshall Fields: The Evolution of an American Business Dynasty

Axel Madsen

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Axel Madsen : The Marshall Fields: The Evolution of an American Business Dynasty before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Marshall Fields: The Evolution of an American Business Dynasty:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. I was a little disappointedBy Chicago GirlI think I was expecting

something else when I purchased the book coming from Chicago and growing up shopping at Marshall Fields (I remember getting my prom dress there and them wrapping it in a green Marshall Fields garment bag) I was really excited to know about how it got started. I will note I purchased the Kindle edition and it is horrible. The letters/words are very hard to read (I am in my late 30's and can see just fine). Some of the letters are split I finally gathered 2 capital "I's" next to each other is a capital letter "H" so it made the book a little bit of a nuisance to read. There are a few pictures in the book as well which was nice. The book started out good you got to hear how Marshall Fields the store first started out and information about Marshall Fields personal life and how effected the growth of the store and then as you got to the middle and kids are born people are divorcing people, in family disgust and committing suicide and then I became confused who was who and there were parts that I think we're not pertinent to Marshall Fields the store history and read more like a really bad soap opera. There is a bit of history about general period history about what people got paid and work conditions that was interesting. I think the book kind of ended on a sour note about what Ted Fields (great grandchild x's I list track of what great, great, great grandchild he was) feels about the dynasty he came from (his feelings were not warm and fuzzy), I think it was a bit of a let down. If I could go back in time I would NOT purchase this book again...there were some very interesting stories but the book could have been 60% shorter. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Surprise-some remnants of this great family store still remain. By RalphAGot hooked on reading about the great family stores by watching Mr. Selfridge on PBS. Naturally since Selfridge started and succeeded at Marshall Fields, it was the thing to read about. Very interesting read. Surprised to find out that the Fieldcrest label originated with Marshall Field many years ago. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Lisa Peppas So nice to find this rare book.

A classic American success story with a twist Like J. P. Morgan, John D. Rockefeller, and Andrew Carnegie, Marshall Field was one of the overlords of triumphant capitalism in the Gilded Age of the late nineteenth century. However, his phenomenal wealth and generous philanthropy masked a disastrous personal life. Deserted by his wife and alienated from his children, the founder of the Field dynasty left a legacy of immense wealth and misery to match. The Marshall Fields recounts the classic tale of Field's spectacular success as well as the tragic story of a man who, while making millions by knowing what women wanted, had no inkling of his own wife's emotional needs. This revealing account follows the next five generations of the Field family, concentrating on the most important and controversial figures in each generation. What emerges is a startling saga of money, madness, and mystery. From the son who may have been shot by a chorus girl to the great-great grandson who used his millions to create Hollywood fantasies, Field's descendants have caromed wildly between rebellion and folly. Their story offers a new and penetrating take on wealth, success, and the nightmare that often accompanies the American dream.

Unless you knew better, you'd probably think that earning \$40 million a year a century ago was a good thing. But you'd be mistaken, at least in the case of Marshall Field, according to Axel Madsen. In "The Marshall Fields," Mr. Madsen offers up a portrait of a man who made an awful lot of money but who also alienated his wife and family, devoting so much time to building his fortune that he didn't have much left over for anyone else - thereby setting into motion domestic troubles and, by extension, the troubles of his heirs and descendants. Well, perhaps so. It would not be the first time that a rich man had a less than ideal family life. Still, if money and entrepreneurial zeal can somehow compensate for personal failure, Field had plenty of both. He was one of the country's greatest retailers as well as one of its shrewdest financiers. Having started out as a dry-goods clerk in Pittsfield, Mass., when he was only 16 years old, Field quickly became a customer favorite. Five years later, in 1855, he moved to Chicago with a glowing recommendation from his boss and nearly \$1,000 in savings. Eventually he would take control of the successful retail and wholesale operation owned by one Potter Palmer. When Mr. Palmer's health failed him, he offered Marshall Field and Levi Z. Leiter, a bookkeeper and colleague of Field's, a chance to buy his business. In time, the company became known as Field, Leiter Co. and, later, Marshall Field Co. It is here that Mr. Madsen is at his best. He explains that Marshall Field catered to his customers-overwhelmingly women-with a style that few merchants ever equaled. In Victorian America, writes Mr. Madsen, unescorted women were often unwelcome in city centers. But at Field's store, women were treated as royalty. Marshall Field's department store became symbol of elegance-affordable elegance for the prosperous middle classes. It eventually became, as well, the place for the women of Chicago to meet - and to meet in proper comfort. Mr. Madsen says that prior to the installation of toilets in Field's store, women who spent the day shopping had nowhere to turn. The Women's Gazette actually had to campaign in the 1870s for lavatories to be built in "hotels, restaurants, and tea shops." Marshall Field's department store led the way. Unfortunately, most of Mr. Madsen's book lacks such vivid and reliable detail. It fails to explain how, by the 1880s, Field had become a significant investor in 30 major companies. And it sometimes trades in rumor. In his introduction, Mr. Madsen writes that Marshall Field's first wife "died in France, possibly a drug addict," but he has no evidence for this. Later in the book he even quotes John Tebbel, the author of "The Marshall Fields: A Study in Wealth" (1947), saying that the claim was a rumor spread by Mr. Field's rivals. Mr. Madsen suggests that Field might have had an affair with his best friend's wife - a rumor at the time - but again there is no evidence. Elsewhere he passes along the speculation that

Marshall Field II, the patriarch's son, was killed by an irate prostitute in a Chicago brothel and then transported home; he also reports that it is possible that Field shot himself at home by accident. The rest of the Field generations get cursory treatment in Mr. Madsen's book, although they deserve more. The entertainment mogul Ted Field, for instance, is a fascinating sort of retailer's scion. In the early 1980s he forced the eventual sale of the remaining family assets in what was then known as Field Enterprises. (The trustees of Marshall Field's estate had sold 90% of the stock in the store to management in 1917. Today Marshall Field's is a unit of Target Corp.) With his stake, he went on to produce the hit movie "Revenge of the Nerds"; on the music front, his Interscope Records was perhaps the most successful independent label of the 1990s, featuring such performers as Tupac Shakur and Dr. Dre. A long way from dry goods, one can't help thinking. A long way from Victorian America, too. — Mr. Trachtenberg is a Journal reporter. (Wall Street Journal, October 9, 2002) From the Inside Flap At a time when the average American earned \$500 a year, Marshall Field enjoyed a tidy annual income of \$40 million. Unlike his robber-baron contemporaries, however, Field was the enlightened prince of the Gilded Age. Always looking toward the future, he built his department store empire on a solid foundation of quality, customer service, and a hard-earned reputation for honesty and good character. His attempts to secure the future of his family and his fortune were less successful. The Marshall Fields follows this terse and industrious young farm boy's career as he learns how to make millions by knowing what women want. It reveals the tactics and innovations that enabled Field to keep his business growing while many around him succumbed to the ravages of the Chicago fire, bank panics, and constant, fierce competition. But Field's phenomenal success came at a high price. Noted biographer Axel Madsen creates a moving portrait of an aging and lonely tycoon whose estranged wife departed for Europe and may have died a drug addict; whose dissolute son may have committed suicide or been shot by a floozy; and whose iron-clad will was designed to keep his immense fortune intact for at least four generations. Armed with this enormous wealth, the succeeding Field generations caromed wildly between rebellion and folly, haunted by a palpable sense of alienation and a deep fear of the hereditary insanity that led many family members to suicide or to commitment in mental institutions. You'll meet the jazz-age playboy who suffered that peculiar kind of public contempt reserved for idealists with money, the diligent businessman who tried to expand the family fortune, and the contentious half-brothers who finally managed to dissolve it. This multigenerational saga of money, madness, and mystery tells a Jekyll-and-Hyde story of American capitalism — a tale of drive and nerve and moral stumbles. Sometimes shocking, often absurd, and always absorbing reading, The Marshall Fields offers a rare and unforgettably intimate look at the glorious and tragic history of one of America's most venerable business families. From the Back Cover A classic American success story with a twist Like J. P. Morgan, John D. Rockefeller, and Andrew Carnegie, Marshall Field was one of the overlords of triumphant capitalism in the Gilded Age of the late nineteenth century. However, his phenomenal wealth and generous philanthropy masked a disastrous personal life. Deserted by his wife and alienated from his children, the founder of the Field dynasty left a legacy of immense wealth and misery to match. The Marshall Fields recounts the classic tale of Field's spectacular success as well as the tragic story of a man who, while making millions by knowing what women wanted, had no inkling of his own wife's emotional needs. This revealing account follows the next five generations of the Field family, concentrating on the most important and controversial figures in each generation. What emerges is a startling saga of money, madness, and mystery. From the son who may have been shot by a chorus girl to the great-great grandson who used his millions to create Hollywood fantasies, Field's descendants have caromed wildly between rebellion and folly. Their story offers a new and penetrating take on wealth, success, and the nightmare that often accompanies the American dream.