



The Rothschilds

Virginia Cowles

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Perhaps no other name in history can so truly encapsulate the phrase “rags to riches” as Rothschild does.

In the late eighteenth century, it was a gentle, astute Jew born in a Frankfurt ghetto, Mayer Amschel Rothschild, whose interest in old coins and canny investments would set the family on the path to becoming one of the most powerful dynasties of Europe.

Ennobled by the Austrian Emperor, soon the Rothschild name would become a household name.

Kings and princes, generals and businessmen, whether their move was political or economic, in a time of war or a time of peace, the controlling force behind them would be the Rothschild family.

Dazzlingly rich, the energetic, brilliant and downright extraordinary members of the Rothschild family were the force responsible for innovations in banking throughout the nineteenth century.

Times have changed and dynasties crumbled, but this marvelously rich history tells how the Rothschilds always endure.

The Rothschilds Details

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From Reader Review The Rothschilds for online ebook

SR says

The info is new to me and interesting enough - as interesting as a history of Europe and Israel in the last two centuries can be, when told from the perspective of bankers.

However, the writing is poor, the organization is sloppy and achronological, and the last chapter is basically the equivalent of a Vogue profile.

Rex Fuller says

Suffering with complete ignorance of the Rothschilds and mild curiosity about them, I picked this one to learn. And I did.

The original patriarch, Mayer Amschel Rothschild, started the family business of banking in Frankfurt in the 1760's. His sons and grandsons proliferated the bank's branches to include London, Paris, Naples, and Vienna, where they became the leading banking houses in each location but always operated as a family unit. In the process, they became the source of the excuse for racist fear mongering against the "international Jewish conspiracy." Eventually, by current times the banks have dropped to two branches, London and Paris. The family is simply one of the most accomplished and wealthiest in the modern world.

Throughout, the family has produced brilliant business men, scientists - male and female, philanthropists, vintners - yes, they are Chateau Lafite Rothschild and Chateau Mouton Rothschild, collectors, breeders, and racers of horses, boats, and cars. Throughout their history family members took first honors at Cambridge and Oxford. The Balfour Declaration was addressed to a Rothschild and a Rothschild financed the settlement of Jews in Palestine, virtually founding the modern state of Israel. In World War II they served bravely in the military and as spies. Six of them earned both the Croix de Guerre and the Legion d'Honneur. Maybe most startling, they have created almost no scandal. In short, they have shown character and talent and many of them worked very hard.

Highly detailed and fairly even-handed, this is a careful exposition of a fascinating family.

Asif says

I had started reading The House of Morgans and decided to finish this one instead. I thought the rise of the Rothschilds will be more exciting to read and also it happened at an earlier time than the Morgans.

The first half of the book was interesting but the second half was quite a drag. The author seemed to be a bit biased towards the family.

Meredith says

“There are no poor Rothschilds, only Rothschilds who are richer than other Rothschilds.”

When you're in the right place at the right time, and you make your money by being indispensable to friends in high places without attempting to compete with them. This is a family of staggering achievement and immense influence. The story of the development of the Rothschild merchant bank from arising in the late 1700s is really quite amazing, and so many of the pivotal moments of the last two hundred years of European history were directly influenced by this close-knit family. They seemed to be everywhere in Europe, pulling the financial puppet strings behind major events and personalities. Given the multiple intermarriages of generations of Rothschilds, the inclusion of a family tree would have served this book well. It's impossible to keep track of who's who. I had to consult Wikipedia often. Of course I can find all the information on the internet but it was more entertaining to read this book.

The book started out a bit slowly, but it picked up and continued to accelerate. The book weakens considerably toward the end when the author's writing takes on a breathless, gushing fangirl air like you'd find in an old copy of Teen Beat. Here's an example of eye-rolling magazine prose typical of this book: “Cousin Evelyn, on the other hand, graces all the most amusing London parties. Tall, dark and handsome, he is much admired by the ladies; and, like his father, has a splendid stud farm and takes a keen interest in racing.” The last few pages gush effusively about what lovely hostesses the Rothschild wives are, and which of their children are clever, antique needle points are in their converted Victorian tea pavilions, that it becomes nearly unreadable. Maybe the author worked for the PR branch of the company. Anyway, despite the prissiness, still the point is that these were remarkable people, and likely still are today. The book is a bit out of date, since it was written forty-five years ago and most of the people who are described like rock stars in the present tense are now dead, or likely nearly so. It makes me wonder if the vitality, savvy and intelligence born of two centuries of ferocious inbreeding has yet taken its toll on the current generation?

A couple of small details that someone like me finds irritating: it's very annoying to read animals referred to as “it” when their sex is known, because it makes the writing seem cold. Why not “he” and “she”? And there were also some weirdly distracting typos. Roman numerals didn't come through very well in the e-book. You probably wouldn't see them in a print copy.

Elizabeth Finney says

Cannot remember if I read this one before or a different book about the Rothschilds. Gossipy and a little bit magazine-portrait-y - all the R men married beautiful women who were wonderful hostesses - not much said about the R women, who were forbidden to work in the banks - but interesting, both about the family and the history of the times and how they made money going and coming.

Debbie says

I read this 10 years ago before I knew.....
I enjoyed it at the time, lol.

Mandy says

A very pedestrian and really quite uninspired biography of the Rothschilds. The facts are all there, and the research has obviously been painstaking and thorough, but none of the family come alive and in fact I found it hard to really distinguish one from another. The author seems to think they are all equally praiseworthy. And although I am well aware that the Rothschilds are famous for their financial skills, reading about each and every deal they have ever made became increasingly tedious. I learnt a lot – but didn't particularly enjoy the learning....

Leonard Gladden says

Solid and Without the Conspiracies

The writing here is solid and factual. Many of the stories of this famous banking family focus on the sensational and conspiratorial. By simply telling the history, we get a picture of brilliant people working hard to better the family and the rewards it brought. The writer's style contains very few sensational elements, so it doesn't necessarily get the blood pumping. However, it's consistently interesting enough to keep the reader in the tale.

Steven Peterson says

This is a workmanlike biography of a family--the Rothschilds, whose financial accomplishments were extraordinary for the time. The book is functionally written, not elegantly so. But the information and detail makes this a fine work. Regrettably, the book was published some time ago. It would be nice to see where the family is today. But that is a mere cavil.

The tale begins many years ago, in Hamburg Germany, as Mayer Amschel Rothschild, living in a Jewish ghetto, began his business career in a modest way. What is astonishing how--from these humble beginnings in business--he and his successors developed a financial empire. This volume does an excellent job in tracing the evolution of the family--and making the various figures into human beings.

Over time, the family's influence spread, with branches of the family business appearing in Austria, Italy, France, and Great Britain, as well as--of course--Germany. Over time, the family trimmed back from this far flung network.

However, the family remained a major player for many years. One key factor is how well the brothers and nephews and grandsons were able to work together over time. Over the centuries, there were some ne'er do wells, but I found it very interesting to see how hard the family worked (for the most part). There were times that the Rothschilds could tame cross-national fiscal downturns (reminiscent of later figures, e.g., in the United States to Astors and J. P. Morgan).

Over time, the role of any family could no longer dominate. Thus, it is of much interest to see how the family adapted. Some moved toward success in the wine industry, for example.

All in all, a very well rendered family biography. Well worth reading.

Mary says

Being published 44 years ago, it's wildly out of date. Interesting though to find out how the European banking dynasty started and how they spread over Europe. A bit dry in places and a family tree would have helped as there were so many of them.

Koiti says

This is a brief glance at the Rothschild family bringing them up to date, or at least as up to date as they were about fifty years ago. I found the book essentially a work of praise for the family, and while I have no ideological qualm about them, I do doubt any "biography" that spans about two hundred years and does not find a single thing that could be criticised.

From the first, the members of the family are brought to the forefront and described in their brilliant schemes in the service of governments and against opposing banking factions. All's good, but there could have been a lot more depth to the story. While the writing is accessible, it is therefore not a thorough picture that's painted for the reader's viewing, and in many a case it seemed that extra effort had been put in to find a quote from (yet another) politician to praise the family.

At the same time, the technological innovativeness which enabled the family to carry out some of its banking manoeuvres was not really described, giving only half a look into what and how they won their fortunes. Therefore, this makes a better (bedtime) story than a good research overview, and there're plenty of gaps left to fill in after reading this book.

This review was originally posted on my blog.

Micaylah G says

Hmmmm. 3 or 4 stars. Although choppy and written rather haphazardly it is definitely informative if you know nothing about the Rothschilds. Sweeping a large time frame it is a quick read that gives a birds eye view of the family and their rise in European history. It will lay to rest some of the conspiracies that so many choose to believe and yet surprise you with others that you may not of known.

Being Jewish in this time frame was restrictive and I found it astounding how, when banding together, the family reached the heights they did.

All in all not a bad read, just not a great one.

Lora Grigorova says

The Rothschilds. A Family of Fortune: <http://readwithstyle.wordpress.com/20...>

Like every wealthy and old family the Rothschilds are surrounded by numerous rumors and unconfirmed stories. From the idea that they control the world through their vast wealth (still not proven) to the story that they knew the outcome of the Waterloo battle before the British Government (true) they are one of the most hated and admired families alive. Back in the 18th century an uneducated Jew of the name of Mayer Rothschild living in the poor ghetto of Frankfurt set to conquer the merchant and banking world. For me it was quite a revelation that Jews were as hated and deprived back then as they were during Nazi time, which understandably adds to the admiration for the old Mayer, who managed to rise above the persecutions and restrictions and form one of the most wealthiest and powerful families ever. And I am not just saying that because I work there.

His five sons were strategically sent to the five banking capitals of the world at that time: London, Paris, Vienna, Naples and Frankfurt. The rest is a history of the constant interaction between the Rothschilds and whatever was happening in Europe at the time. They were involved in the opposition against Napoleon, they provided financing for numerous armies fighting the French emperor, they supported the Jews in establishing their new-found state of Israel, they participated both physically and financially in both World Wars. Any important political or social development in Europe was ultimately connected to or influenced by the Rothschilds in some way. Numerous generations continued the legacy of old Mayer and his five sons, establishing the Rothschilds as the most prominent bankers of the 19th century. Due to various reasons three of the branches (Naples, Vienna and Frankfurt) ultimately closed, but the supremacy of the French and British Rothschilds is evident up to this date.

Read more: <http://readwithstyle.wordpress.com/20...>

Paul Carlson says

An interesting book covering the Rothchild dynasty from humble beginnings to extreme wealth and influence in Europe. The writing style can be a bit dry and at times it is difficult to keep track of the family tree and which branch is being discussed. However, you will find the trajectory of this family fascinating.

Peter says

The amount of research that went into this book is truly staggering.

Not everyone will enjoy The Rothschilds but for those of us with an interest in finance and history, it is a gem. It is not an easy read largely because of the Rothschilds rules about not marrying outside of the family. One reviewer commented that it would have been easier to read had there been a family tree. There might be some truth in that but with cousins repeatedly marrying cousins you would have needed a skilled drafts-person to come up with something remotely understandable.

What a remarkable family. To come from a Hamburg ghetto and end up being one of the most powerful families in the world. The accumulation of wealth in the early 1800s would put even Warren Buffet to

shame. To think that Nathaniel could turn twenty thousand pounds into fifty million pounds in London is truly staggering.

Virginia Cowles did a fantastic job with The Rothschilds and I dread to think how many years the research and writing took. A brilliant, well written masterpiece.
