



Abby Aldrich Rockefeller

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Abigail Greene Aldrich was a daughter of Nelson Wilmarth Aldrich of Rhode Island, the most powerful man in the state and a leading figure in national politics in the years around the turn of the century. In 1901, she married John D. Rockefeller, Jr., of New York, and thus brought together two of the wealthiest and most influential families in American history. Bernice Kert details the life story of Abby Aldrich with the considerable skills of a practiced biographer, using both archival documentation and personal interviews. Fortunately, Abby Aldrich also proves to be an intriguing figure in her own right, apart from her family connections, and holds the reader's interest throughout this narrative of her rich and active life.

As a member of the Aldrich family, Abby was surrounded by relations who firmly believed in getting things done, whether in politics or publishing or business or, later, film. (Although Kert omits it, one of Abby's nephews was Robert Aldrich, director of *THE DIRTY DOZEN* (1967), among other pictures.) When Abby married John D. Rockefeller, Jr., what could have been a marriage of convenience became a true romance, and her role as wife and mother (Nelson, Winthrop, and David Rockefeller were three of her six children) is admiringly recounted.

Kert also examines Abby as a significant figure in her own right, and the second half of the book concentrates on her efforts to establish the Museum of Modern Art and her support of art in general. It proves a fascinating story of a remarkable woman who refused to be overshadowed by the powerful men around her. Her contribution to the development of this aspect of American culture is well worth the telling.

Finally, Kert does a fine job of describing the world in which the Aldriches and Rockefellers moved. Summer homes in Maine, trips to Europe, the high social life in New York City are all described with precision and understanding. What could have been a "Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous" travelogue becomes an effecting look at a bygone time and way of life.

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