


The Guggenheims: A Family History

By Debi Unger

Harper Perennial. Paperback. Book Condition: New. Paperback. 576 pages. Dimensions: 7.8in. x 4.9in. x 1.1in. A portrait of a great American dynasty and its legacy in business, technology, the arts, and philanthropy. Meyer Guggenheim, a Swiss immigrant, founded a great American business dynasty. At their peak in the early twentieth century, the Guggenheims were reckoned among America's wealthiest, and the richest Jewish family in the world after the Rothschilds. They belonged to Our Crowd, that tight social circle of New York Jewish plutocrats, but unlike the others -- primarily merchants and financiers -- they made their money by extracting and refining copper, silver, lead, tin, and gold. The secret of their success, the patriarch believed, was their unity, and in the early years Meyers seven sons, under the leadership of Daniel, worked as one to expand their growing mining and smelting empire. Family solidarity eventually decayed (along with their Jewish faith), but even more damaging was the paucity of male heirs as Meyer and the original set of brothers passed from the scene. In the third generation, Harry Guggenheim, Daniels son, took over leadership and made the family a force in aviation, publishing, and horse-racing. He desperately sought a successor but tragically...

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The Guggenheim family, whose roots are also to be found in this area, played an especially significant role in the arts. I had the privilege of meeting Peggy Guggenheim twice. She was a fascinating, open woman of the world, who was good friends with nearly every protagonist of classical modern art. A woman who wrote art history, this urbane, well-traveled patroness of the arts also descended from the Lengnau Guggenheims. The world in which her ancestors lived, however, was the very antithesis of the large, cosmopolitan, polyglot 20th century of which Peggy Guggenheim was the impressive epitome. Let us flash back to the birth of the Swiss Confederation, at the turn of the 13th and 14th centuries: at that time, Jews lived in all of Switzerland's larger towns. Learn about the history of the Guggenheim Foundation, from the 1920s to the present. Please use a modern browser to access the full Guggenheim website. If you're interested in learning about hours, exhibitions on view, or other general information, please contact: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum 1071 Fifth Avenue New York, NY 10128-0173 212 423 3500. Or, join our online communities for updates and special offers. Facebook.