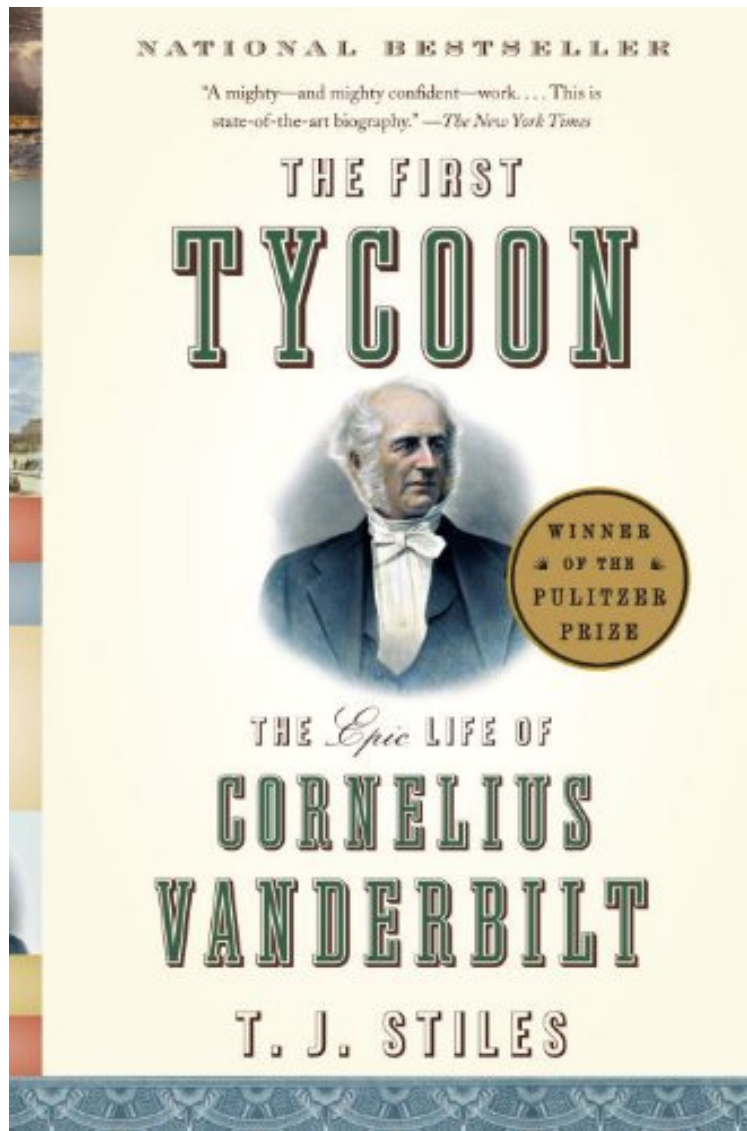


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## The First Tycoon

*T.J. Stiles*

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**T.J. Stiles : The First Tycoon** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The First Tycoon:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. The Invention of US CapitalismBy AllegrippusPainstaking, comprehensive, and engrossing account of Commodore Vanderbilt's life and his role in the experimental formulation of business practices in the United States. Starting as a shrewd, pugnacious, driven, self-disciplined, and uncommonly industrious ferryboat operator between his native Staten Island and New York City, he helped his employer combat the monopolistic State franchises favoring privileged colonial patricians, thereby incurring their perpetual enmity. This

group developed implacable contempt toward the Industrial Revolution which they had once embraced and expected to profit from. Competitive charters were awarded to Vanderbilt and other entrepreneurs to perform public functions which all levels of government were forbidden to engage in themselves under Jeffersonian principles. If Vanderbilt failed to knock his competitors out of the way, he was bought out himself. He mastered and even contributed to the arcane intricacies of Wall St. finance. He pioneered the new steamboat technology on routes out of New York to Philadelphia, Albany, and Boston in conjunction with stagecoaches and eventually railroads, offering ever-increasing speed and amenities at lower costs and fares. Then he tackled the transcontinental Gold-Rush trade via Nicaragua, followed by the trans-Atlantic traffic with ever-larger and more efficient steamships of his own ingenious designs. His donation of his mammoth namesake iron steamship to the US government during the Civil War was what terrified the Confederate ironclad into retreat. Late in his career he set his sights on amalgamating existing railroads operating from New York to Albany, soon progressing across the entire state, and then to Chicago. In his old age he was outwitted by the up-and-coming financiers Jay Gould and John D. Rockefeller. Vanderbilt's lifelong friendship with the like-minded financier Daniel Drew survived their intense business rivalries, Drew's collusion with Gould against him in the Erie RR War, and Drew's ultimate bankruptcy. Becoming the wealthiest man in the nation, Vanderbilt invested his fortune in his business rather than into grandiose display, and managed to bequeath both fortune and business intact to his eldest son in hopes that he would follow the same practice. The heirs soon sold off the enterprise to enable them to concentrate on flaunting their wealth, more importantly initiating the process of joining the patrician ranks by repudiating their tainted industrial heritage. Illustrated by a selection of out-of-the-ordinary photographs and prints, this book is a tour de force deserving every award it receives. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. 19th Century American Business Primer By Avid Reader This book is well researched and well written. It provides a panoramic view of the 19th century through the eyes of Cornelius Vanderbilt, a great business strategist and founder of many corporate structures and practices we would recognize today. Equal to the author's portrait of Cornelius Vanderbilt is his portrait of America transforming itself from an agrarian society into one driven by territorial expansion and industrialization. Along the way, the reader experiences the effects of the California gold rush, the Civil War, and the building out of our national transportation infrastructure - first using steamboats and canals and later the advent of railroads. The narrative is both enlightening and prophetic. For the latter, if the reader substitutes "real estate" for "railroads" in many of Vanderbilt's remarks, the connection to recent business practices becomes apparent. Overall, this is a read worthy of your time. 3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. 19th Century Mega Learn By Rev REK The First Tycoon is an interesting and far reaching tome. If you don't know much about the mid 19th century this volume will help you understand many of the dynamics that shaped the United States economically. It may also help you understand the need for much of the legislation Congress has passed relating to commerce. Cornelius Vanderbilt is certainly a colorful character, extremely strong willed and achieved a lot in his life without much formal education. He is obviously the founder of a dynasty, the trappings of which can still be found around our country: Biltmore House, Marble House, The Breakers.

**NATIONAL BESTSELLER WINNER OF THE NATIONAL BOOK AWARD** In this groundbreaking biography, T.J. Stiles tells the dramatic story of Cornelius "Commodore" Vanderbilt, the combative man and American icon who, through his genius and force of will, did more than perhaps any other individual to create modern capitalism. Meticulously researched and elegantly written, *The First Tycoon* describes an improbable life, from Vanderbilt's humble birth during the presidency of George Washington to his death as one of the richest men in American history. In between we see how the Commodore helped to launch the transportation revolution, propel the Gold Rush, reshape Manhattan, and invent the modern corporation. Epic in its scope and success, the life of Vanderbilt is also the story of the rise of America itself. From the Trade Paperback edition.