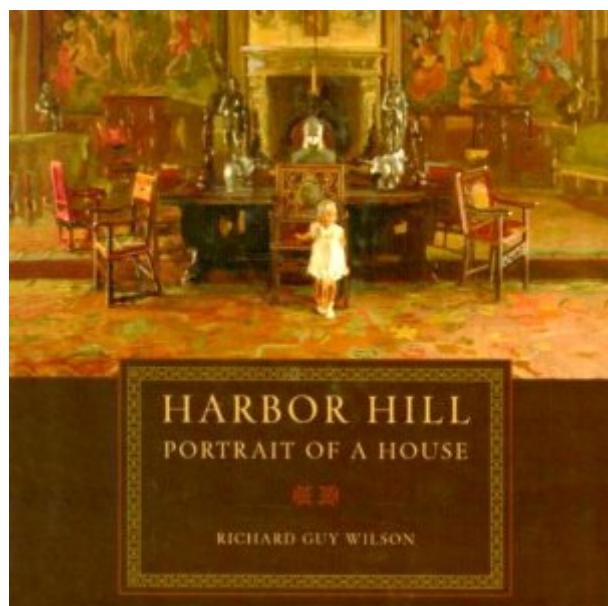


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Harbor Hill: Portrait Of A House



Synopsis

[This is the Audiobook CD Library Edition in vinyl case.] A "palace" ruled by a "queen," Harbor Hill in Roslyn, Long Island, was commissioned by the beautiful and imperious Katherine Duer Mackay, wife of one of the country's wealthiest men. Stanford White, the architect, wrote, "with the exception of Biltmore, I do not think there will be an estate equal to it in the country." The mansion, along with its magnificent furnishings, art, gardens--and the owners' hubris, striving, and ultimate failure--are the dramatis personae of this saga. An extravagant product of the desire for social acceptance, Harbor Hill's story includes elements of farce and tragedy; in a sense it is an American portrait. The portrait encompasses western mining, old versus new wealth, religious differences over the building of a church, and art collecting, as well as the many people involved, from the architects, builders, and workers to the servants and staff who ran the house and gardens.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Harbor Hill was one of the most spectacular mansions ever built in America. Designed by the iconic Stanford White and built to embody the MacKays desire to ascend to the pinnacle of NYC society. This book charts the rise of the MacKays and their ultimate demise, along with the similar fate of this great house. The mistress of the house was a real piece of work, but this beautiful showplace was really her creation, she knew what she wanted and Stanford White gave it to her, with Mr. MacKay's money of course. The book is well researched and it's an interesting read and the images are first rate. Honestly, it's tragic that this house no longer survives, you just wonder what kind of philistine could tear something like this down, unfortunately this being America and not Europe, none of us

should be surprised it was so unceremoniously destroyed. Harbor Hills fate closely resembles the great Philadelphia mansion, Whitehall, and the MacKays are more than a bit similiar to the Stotesbury's, both thought they built their great estates to last for centuries and instead they barely outlived them..when you see the kind of grand mansions built today in places like Bel Air and Palm Beach, you can't help but notice how inferior they are in comparison to the great Gilded Age mansions like Harbor Hill, it's a shame we dont have more respect for beautiful architecture of the past, we inherited so much from the Europeans, but that unfortunitely was not one of them...too bad for Harbor Hill, now just a ghost, haunting old sepia stained images.

Publisher W. W. Norton is to be complimented for taking a chance in publishing this book. Unlike more famous estates still standing, Harbor Hill is long gone and was not attached to a famous family like Hearst or Vanderbilt. But what a place it was !! In its day it was considered one of the wonders of the Gilded Age. Sadly it did not survive long. Yet here it's beautifully restored with outstanding photos of the house, grounds and family who built it. As you know from my other reviews, I'm a fan of these kinds of books and own many. So I judge accordingly. Trust me, this is a 'must have' for anyone interested in this subject. When it came out I bought it sight unseen since I knew it was rare that this house would have its own volume. I was certainly glad I did.

Anyone who is a serious student of architecture and/or history of the Gilded Age in America will love this book by Richard Guy Wilson. To begin with, it is extremely hard to find, often commanding exorbitant prices as I understand it is now out of print. can always be counted on to find books of this nature. The house, Harbor Hill, was built for the Mackay family, daughter Ellin Mackay famous for marrying composer Irving Berlin (God Bless America and many others) and defying her father, Clarence Mackay, who was violently opposed to the marriage, and ended up disinheriting Ellin for marrying Berlin. The marriage endured, as a true love match does, until the death of Ellin. Berlin lived to be 101 I believe. There are some charming photographs of the family but the true star of the book is the house, Harbor Hill, long since demolished, in the cause of progress. The vast beauty of the architecture will stagger you. It is indicative of workmanship that will never be seen again. Truly a wonderful book.

Harbor Hill: Portrait of a house deals with one of the most important private homes built in America's "gilded age." Both the family involved, and the architect, provide the meat for a good story. Unfortunately, the result is a dry review of the details. Perhaps there are few surviving photographs

of the home's interior, but too few are included to gain a good picture of the interior design and furnishings. In the end, the book is something of a disappointment.

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