Rockefeller down on the golf course to deliver a folded sheet with share prices. Aside from cash, railroad securities, U.S. bonds, and Wall Street loans, Rockefeller retained most of his money in Standard Oil companies and could quote the precise number of shares he held in each of his stocks, even when they ran to five digits.

Partial to old habits, Rockefeller continued to trade by buying each time a stock declined an eighth of a point or selling on each eighth-point rise. Having relinquished most of his money to Junior, he often borrowed up to twenty million dollars to execute these transactions and occasionally cadged loans from his son. "John," he said to him one day, "I've been following the stock market carefully. I think that if I had a little money, I could use it to make some more. Do you believe you could lend me several hundred thousand dollars?" "Well father," said Junior wryly, "do you think you are old enough to use it wisely?" ³

The Rockefellers fared handsomely in the effervescent market of the Roaring Twenties. As the market soared, Junior more than doubled the \$450 million he had received, and his assets approached the billion-dollar mark. When the market crashed in October 1929, the Rockefellers were caught by surprise. Ivy Lee convinced Junior of the publicity value of a calming statement from his father. After buying a million shares of Standard of New Jersey, Rockefeller issued a press release that had been scripted by Lee: "These are days when many are discouraged. In the ninety years of my life, depressions have come and gone. Prosperity has always returned, and will again." In his peroration, he said, "Believing that the fundamental conditions of the country are sound, my son and I have been purchasing sound common stocks for some days."⁴ When the comedian Eddie Cantor was informed that the Rockefellers had resumed buying stocks, he responded with the wisecrack, "Sure, who else had any money left?"⁵

After the crash, Junior and Tom Debevoise worried about the financial health of the Equitable Trust, which had operated under Rockefeller control since 1911. They plucked Abby's brother, Winthrop Aldrich, from the law firm of Murray, Aldrich, and Webb and placed him in charge of the Equitable. A few months later, Aldrich orchestrated a merger with Chase National, creating the world's largest bank and one henceforth referred to as "the Rockefeller Bank"—even though the descendants of James Stillman and William Rockefeller steered the rival National City Bank. Some years later, Aldrich also effected a merger of his old law firm with that of Bert Milbank (Junior's old friend from the Browning School) to form the firm known today as Milbank, Tweed, Hadley and McCloy, which would be closely associated with the Rockefellers.



A poetic picture of John D. Rockefeller taken on his ninety-first birthday at **Pocantico Hills, July 8, 1930.** (Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center)

Junior was dispatched to Chicago to salvage what he could from the wreckage of Edith's business affairs—which did not endear him to Edith, who saw this as more high-handed meddling. At Junior's behest, she moved from her Lake Shore mansion into a suite at the Drake Hotel, where she was provided with a family allowance. Then, in early 1930, she was diagnosed with cancer in her right breast and underwent a mastectomy and radiation therapy. While convalescing, she tried to stave off bankruptcy by selling her pearls and emeralds to Cartier for nearly one million dollars, begging Junior for a million-dollar loan for her real-estate business, and asking her father to buy the Villa Turicum for more than two million dollars. Having had more than enough, Rockefeller declined to advance her additional money.

In 1932, after she developed a chronic cough, doctors found a dark spot on Edith's lower ribs; she tried, to no avail, to cure this cancer through psychological techniques. Until the end, she promised that she would try to see her father, but these ritual assertions had become a polite fiction between them. Her children and even her ex-husband, Harold, made repeated visits to her bedside. On August 25, 1932, Edith died in her suite at the Drake Hotel. For all her unconventional ideas, Edith had never renounced the possibility that Harold would leave Ganna Walska and return; like an old-fashioned wife,

she had long kept his room at 1000 Lake Shore Drive untouched, with the furniture unchanged and his clothes hanging in the closet. It was a strange clutch of pallbearers who carried her coffin to the grave: Harold, Fowler, Junior, and Edwin Krenn. When Junior tried to exclude Krenn from the funeral, Harold, in deference to Edith, overrode his objections. In her will, Edith left more money to Krenn— five-twelfths of her estate—than to any of her three children. The Rockefeller lawyers furiously battled the bequest to Krenn until he capitulated and settled for a \$24,000 annuity for life. At the news of her death, James Joyce struck a belated note of forgiveness. "I'm sorry to learn of the death of Mrs. McCormick," he told a friend. "She was very kind to me at a difficult moment and was a woman of considerable distinction."⁶

For all his financial savvy, Senior was democratically dragged down in the crash along with lesser mortals and saw his rump fortune of \$25 million dwindle to a mere \$7 million, prompting grandson Winthrop to exclaim, "For grandfather, that was being practically broke!"⁷ In 1932, in a passing, persnickety moment, Rockefeller told Debevoise that Junior should give him \$3.5 million as an "equitable adjustment" for all the money he had spent on the Rockefeller family office during the previous ten years. Rockefeller soon retracted his request, but his momentary pique showed that he was unnerved by his thin cushion of cash.

Junior also had unaccustomed money worries after the crash, as his net worth was slashed from almost \$1 billion in 1929 to less than \$500 million in 1934. The damage to his annual income was still more savage: From a peak of \$56.7 million in the 1920s, it dropped to \$16.5 million by the second year of the New Deal. Because he had made so many charitable pledges during the 1920s boom, his expenditures began to outpace his income by the early 1930s. Right before Roosevelt's inauguration, Junior had to liquidate large positions in Standard of New Jersey and Indiana and borrow almost eight million dollars to meet prior commitments.

Throughout the Roosevelt years, the Rockefellers struggled with an ideological dilemma. As longtime donors to Republican causes, they found much of the New Deal abominable and feared, like many other rich Americans, that Roosevelt was giving away the country. At the same time, they had a patrician sense of obligation toward the poor. While Hoover was still president, Senior and Junior gave two million dollars to the Emergency Unemployment Relief, a private charity. When Roosevelt became president in

1933, Rockefeller was nudged by his son into issuing a patriotic statement in praise of "the courage and progressive leadership of President Roosevelt."⁸ (Setting an amusing example of austerity for the masses, he started to give out nickels instead of dimes.) In 1933, Junior even broadcast a radio appeal for the ultraliberal National Industrial Recovery Act. Yet despite the lip service paid to Roosevelt's policies, the Rockefellers continued to prefer private charity to public-works programs. At Pocantico, Junior charted fifty miles of new carriage trails to create extra jobs and gave generously to the American Red Cross and other relief agencies. Senior quickly cooled on the New Deal, and when the Social Security Act was enacted in 1935 he was sure it would destroy America's moral fiber.

As Junior's net worth tumbled after the crash, he began to feel the financial strain of Colonial Williamsburg and a new real-estate project in midtown Manhattan that was at first known as Metropolitan Square. With this last project, Junior became entangled in the sort of high-stakes maneuvering that had distinguished his father's career but had played no part in his own. The genesis of the project dated back to 1928 when the Metropolitan Opera Company decided to abandon its old quarters and create a new opera house on a site owned by Columbia University between Forty-eighth and Fifty-first Streets and Fifth and Sixth Avenues. Flanked by the Sixth Avenue elevated train and studded with speakeasies, pawnshops, bars, and other such sleazy haunts, the area was an unlikely choice for an opulent new opera house. Otto Kahn, a Kuhn, Loeb partner and chairman of the Metropolitan Opera Company, convinced Junior that he could render a community service and turn a tidy profit (an irresistible combination for a Rockefeller) by leasing the surrounding parcels from Columbia and building a showcase setting for the opera. After Charles O. Heydt canvassed five real-estate experts, Junior, seized by an impulse and without consulting a lawyer, authorized Heydt to close the deal with Columbia for a lease that would cost more than three million dollars per year.

The Metropolitan Opera could not fetch a high-enough price for its old building to construct a new one and suggested to Junior that he pay for half the cost of its new eight-million-dollar home. Feeling used and blackmailed, Junior turned them down, and when the Metropolitan Opera withdrew from the project, he was suddenly saddled with 229 shabby old brownstones amid the worsening economic environment. Without the opera, the development seemed to lose both its centerpiece and raison d'être, yet bills kept pouring in, and by the spring of 1930 Junior had paid out ten million dollars. Each year he was liable for another four million dollars in leases and taxes, and the rentals scarcely covered a tenth of that amount. One option was simply to scuttle the development. But Junior had always had a nagging sense of being patronized by the business community, and perhaps he now saw a chance for vindication, a chance to prove that he was really his father's son. In his most audacious career decision, he decided that he would personally finance a new complex of office buildings and round up the corporate tenants himself. As he persevered, he endured gales of ridicule and was even mocked in a Broadway play, *As Thousands Cheer*, where the hapless Junior was depicted as trying to palm off Rockefeller Center as a birthday gift on his unsuspecting father.

As might be expected, Junior suffered dreadful tension and insomnia over the midtown project. "I walk the floor nights," he told architect Wallace Harrison, "wondering where I'm going to get the money to build these buildings."⁹ A novel situation for a Rockefeller, indeed. In the spring of 1931, recognizing the telltale symptoms, doctors advised him to take a vacation with Abby in Arizona. At the Arizona Inn in Tucson, a lady sitting at a nearby table in the restaurant waved to Junior, and only later did he discover that it was Ida Tarbell. By the 1920s, her famous history of the Standard Oil Company could be found only in secondhand bookstores, and when reissued in 1925 it failed to sell.

Returning to New York, Junior endured a debilitating case of shingles, which the doctors blamed on nervous exhaustion. He was also suffering such frequent colds that tests were performed at the Rockefeller Institute to see whether a serum could be developed from his germs that might prevent future colds. Despite his medical problems, Junior displayed a new toughness in dealing with the midtown complex. First, he had to settle the vexed question of a name to supersede the now obsolete Metropolitan Square. Like his father, Junior hesitated to employ the Rockefeller name, but a team of advisers, from Ivy Lee to son Nelson to managing agent John Todd, convinced him that "Rockefeller Center" would be the most potent marketing tool—an indication of how far the family image had advanced since the dark days of the muckrakers. To lend the complex a forward-looking image, the managers decided to create a "radio city" as its linchpin. In July 1931, after RCA, NBC, and Radio-Keith-Orpheum (RKO) agreed to lease one million square feet of office space for \$3 million a year, Junior broke ground on the first of fourteen projected buildings.

Junior supervised Rockefeller Center with a command he had never shown

before in any moneymaking venture. Each morning, he arrived at work by eight o'clock, a golden five-foot ruler wedged into his back pocket. Taking huge blueprints off the table, he would unroll them on the floor and crawl about, taking measurements with his ruler. Construction during the Depression had distinct advantages, most notably in lower costs for labor and building materials, and Rockefeller Center provided work for 75,000 unionized building workers.

From the outset, Junior told John Todd that the cluster of buildings had to be architecturally distinguished and harmonious. Wallace Harrison, who had studied at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, and his colleagues turned to European modernism to endow Rockefeller Center with a sleek, futuristic look. Junior's one—and quite major—concession to contemporary taste had a canny commercial rationale behind it. Had the design of the complex been stodgy and old-fashioned, it would have undercut the Radio City marketing approach and the technologically advanced aura of the project. Ornamented with Art Deco motifs, the tapered towers of Indiana limestone, steel, glass, and masonry shot 850 feet into the air yet were spaced widely enough to create an airy sensation at plaza level. Though critics eventually labeled Rockefeller Center the world's finest skyscraper ensemble, they almost universally carped at it at its inception.

To lend added artistic distinction to the project, Diego Rivera was commissioned to paint a mural for the prestige spot in the RCA Building lobby. Despite his left-wing politics, Abby had bought Rivera's watercolors, exhibited his frescoes at MoMA, and invited him and his wife, Frida Kahlo, to 10 West Fifty-fourth Street. Nelson negotiated the coveted commission, and the Rockefeller Center overseers chose a suitably momentous and ostensibly noncontroversial theme: "Man at the Crossroads Looking with Hope and High Vision to the Choosing of a New and Better Future." 10 In the spring of 1933, Rivera began to sketch his vision of capitalist society as a diseased world of brutalized workers and scrofulous, card-playing capitalists, contrasting it with a hopeful, revolutionary world, symbolized by red flags and crowned by Lenin's saintly visage. His wife and assistants begged him to delete the head of the Bolshevik leader, but Rivera was determined to *épater* les bourgeois, and the press gloated over the Rockefeller predicament. "Rivera Perpetrates Scenes of Communist Activity for R.C.A. Walls-and Rockefeller Foots the Bill," one paper said.¹¹ After Rivera refused to delete Lenin's head, he was paid in full and dismissed from the job. He had told Nelson that he preferred the destruction of his piece to any tampering with it,

and his mural was in fact reluctantly dismantled. "The picture was obscene and, in the judgment of Rockefeller Center, an offense to good taste," Junior hastily explained to his father. "It was for this reason primarily that Rockefeller Center decided to destroy it."¹²

With the completion of the RCA Building in 1933, Junior moved the Rockefeller family offices from 26 Broadway to the fifty-sixth floor of the new skyscraper. Henceforth, room 5600 would be the seat of the Rockefeller empire, with several hundred employees. Nelson, who was still in his twenties, got a real-estate license and soon became a frenetic salesman for empty office space at Rockefeller Center. To woo tenants, he offered attractive rents and agreed to assume their old leases. Several companies in the Rockefeller fold—including Standard Oil of New Jersey, Socony–Vacuum, Standard Oil of California, and Chase National Bank—took space in the new midtown complex. In 1938, the first year it turned a profit, Nelson was named president of Rockefeller Center. By the time Junior hammered in the last of some ten million rivets in 1939, he had transformed the project from the butt of malicious jokes into one of the Depression's outstanding business triumphs.

Even as his son created one city in midtown Manhattan and re-created another in Williamsburg, Virginia, Rockefeller remained curiously indifferent toward the urban complex that would so lastingly perpetuate his name. Amazingly enough, he probably never set foot in Rockefeller Center. "He wasn't interested in things of that sort," said Junior, "and I don't think we ever discussed Williamsburg and seldom discussed Rockefeller Center. . . . He was broad-minded and tolerant but this kind of thing didn't enter his life. He might conceivably have asked about questions of financing or labor troubles at Rockefeller Center or Williamsburg, but that would be the only type of question that he would be interested in."¹³ Senior might have followed its progress more closely than Junior realized, for Nelson remembered him waking from a nap, motioning him over to his Morris chair, and firing penetrating, detailed questions about the midtown project. Nevertheless, absorbed with his own creations, Rockefeller tended to screen out his son's accomplishments and overlook what he himself had not initiated. For all that, Junior remained slavishly devoted to his father. A wire that he sent on the eve of a visit seems to sum up this reverence: "Am not coming because I think vou need me but because I know I need vou."¹⁴

In his nineties, Rockefeller radiated the cheer of an elder statesman. The

spindly little man weighed less than one hundred pounds and looked as if he had been shrunk by a witch doctor. He was scarcely affected by the recrudescence of Rockefeller-baiting books that appeared in the left-wing atmosphere of the Depression. In such polemics as *The Robber Barons* by Matthew Josephson, critics returned to the view popularized by Henry Demarest Lloyd and Ida Tarbell that Rockefeller had been the greatest corporate brigand of his day and owed his success to his ruthlessness and dishonesty, not to his business acumen. Yet this resurgence of old resentments was short-lived. The surge of patriotic feeling that accompanied World War II led to a renewed appreciation of the iron men of American industry who had bequeathed such military might to the country—a view very much in evidence in the authorized two-volume biography of Rockefeller that was published by Columbia University historian Allan Nevins in 1940 and in revised form in 1953. Rockefeller was always either lionized or vandalized according to the temper of the times.

Still vigorous, Rockefeller could send a golf ball sailing 165 yards down the fairway. In 1930, he marched through six holes in twenty-five shots. Then, his strength began to wane, and he gradually had to curtail his game. With typical precision, he reduced his number of daily holes from six to four to two; after contracting a severe cold in 1932, he had to abandon golf altogether. The ninety-three-year-old Rockefeller bounced back from this ill health with renewed good humor. One paper reported, "He was so delighted to be out in the warm sunshine again that once he stopped and sang a hymn as he gazed with twinkling eyes at the myriad of brilliant flowers and shrubs." ¹⁵ He reiterated his wish to live to one hundred, viewing it as God's final verdict on his life. "Many folks believe I've done much harm in the world," he told Ormond Beach's mayor, George N. Rigby, "but on the other hand I've

tried to do what good I could and I really would like to live to be a hundred."¹⁶ As Rigby described it, Rockefeller grew even more detached from material things as he approached the end of life:

I recall one day we were sitting on his front porch at Ormond watching a most elaborate yacht winding its way down the Halifax River toward Palm Beach. He expressed his wonder at the possible pleasure a man could get out of such show and pretension. Then, after a moment or two, the whole expression of his face changed and he asked enthusiastically, "Wasn't that a beautiful rain we had last night?"¹⁷

Rockefeller's improbable love affair with the movie camera flourished. In

1930, he was invited to attend festivities in Cleveland to celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of Standard Oil of Ohio. Too frail to go, he agreed to shoot a newsreel that would be shown at the celebration. Sitting on his sunlit porch as the cameras rolled, Rockefeller delivered a congratulatory message in a thin voice. "And the gesture of his removing his glasses when he finished reading and turned to regard me where I stood behind the camera revealed a natural actor," said his handpicked cameraman, Curt Engelbrecht. Two weeks later, when a Standard of Ohio executive flew down to Ormond Beach, Rockefeller was shot playing golf and greeting the executive as his plane alighted on the green. Showing surprising spunk, the ninety-one-year-old Rockefeller boarded the airplane and was eager to fly off, cameras rolling, when his vigilant valet, John Yordi, called off the flight as subjecting him to too much excitement. In a compromise, the monoplane taxied up and down the runway, with Rockefeller inside waving to the cameras. "You make me feel like a movie actor," Rockefeller told Engelbrecht.

Though free of self-pity, Rockefeller often seemed forlorn in the 1930s. Too proud to plead for visits from descendants, he dropped hints and tactful suggestions that he would like to see them more, but this did not seem to work. He craved some human warmth that he never fully got from his own family or perhaps had never really allowed to flower. Engelbrecht noted Rockefeller's strange fascination with a little girl named Lucille, who was the daughter of his chauffeur, Vincent Frasca.

She somehow filled a tremendous gap for him, and it may be safely asserted that he demonstrated an affection for her that he was never known to manifest for one of his own blood. Never a day passed but she paid a visit to him or he came looking for her. In her presence everything else was forgotten. She was a charm for him. He talked with her and told her stories. His face brightened

to her responses, and his eyes warmed in his glances in her direction. 18

As the Depression progressed, Junior found himself in the same uncomfortable position that his father had been in a generation before: His children were restive and wanted him to make some final disposition of his money. It infuriated them that they were now married grown-ups still living on allowances who had to go hat in hand to father for a new car or trip abroad. In May 1933, Junior heard the first murmurs of outright rebellion when his children complained in a collective letter that too much of their time with him was taken up with money squabbles that jeopardized family relations, and they petitioned him for larger allowances. To mollify his mutinous offspring, Junior gave his three oldest children—Babs, John III, and Nelson—200,000 shares of Socony– Vacuum apiece, providing each with about \$3.2 million.

The following year, Congress sharply boosted tax schedules. Rates jumped for the top income bracket from 55 to 63 percent, while the estate tax soared from 45 to 60 percent for estates valued beyond \$50 million and the gift tax rose from 33 to 45 percent for sums beyond \$10 million. Junior decided to set up trusts for his wife and children before the steeper gift tax took effect at year's end. To safeguard this money, which would be managed by the trust department of the Chase National Bank, he stipulated that the children could draw income, but that principal withdrawals had to be approved by trustees. (Junior made an invidious exception for Abby and Babs, who could not touch principal under any circumstances.) Since the trustees included such intimates of Junior as Raymond Fosdick, Tom Debevoise, and Winthrop Aldrich, he did not forfeit total control. The largest single trust went to Abby, who received \$18.3 million and the full freedom to purchase modern art with her income. Babs, John III, and Nelson got \$12 million apiece and Laurance, Winthrop, and David smaller amounts. The following year, Junior added money to these last three accounts to equalize the trusts.

In all, Junior transmitted \$102 million—or more than \$1 billion in 1996 dollars—to his wife and children through the trusts. As he explained the operating philosophy behind them to Laurance:

They have been created in accordance with the policy which your Grandfather Rockefeller adopted with his children and which I hope your children will ultimately follow. . . . As you know, Grandfather and I have always been keenly alive to the responsibilities inherent in the possession of wealth. He believes, as I do, that these responsibilities and the opportunities which they bring for useful living and unselfish service to mankind should be shared with those of the next generation when and as soon as they have reached such an age and attained such a maturity as justifies their being entrusted with them.¹⁹

The \$102 million that Junior bequeathed to his heirs was a stupendous sum, yet it represented only a fraction of the money he had inherited. Between 1917 and 1960, Junior gave away \$537 million directly, plus another \$540 million indirectly through organized Rockefeller philanthropies. (Junior did not leave himself a pauper. He was left with about \$200 million in the 1950s,

while his descendants, wisely investing their inheritances, were worth more than \$6.2 billion in 1996.) He also paid \$317 million in taxes to federal, state, and local governments. So whatever Rockefeller's plunder, the great bulk of the gain was ultimately plowed back into worthwhile projects and the public purse. Such was the indignation aroused by Standard Oil, however, that perhaps only generosity on this extraordinary scale could have softened memories of the ravening monopolist.

Rockefeller inspired many premature reports of his demise, and his habitual secrecy about his medical condition kept the press on high alert. In 1934, at ninety-five, he suffered a bout of bronchial pneumonia that threatened to thwart his goal of reaching one hundred, but he managed to recover. His weight dropped below ninety pounds, and he decided to abandon Kykuit for good. He loaded up a private railroad car with fruits, vegetables, cultured milk, and oxygen canisters and traveled to The Casements, where he settled permanently. Determined to eke out five more years, he drastically restricted his routine to conserve energy. No more golf, no more afternoon larks in the car, no more garden walks. He took off his expensive silver wigs, never to don them again. As his pace slackened, the servants marched to his slower tempo, and a twilight hush seemed to descend over the Ormond Beach house. Watchful and alert, the wizened little man sat for hours on the sunporch. To maintain muscle tone in his legs, he mounted a stationary bicycle in his room every day and slowly cycled. When he reached ninety-six on July 8, 1935, his insurance company, abiding by an old custom, had to pay him five million dollars, the face value of his policy. According to contemporary actuarial tables, only one person in 100,000 lived that long.

Always ready to embrace change, the old man liked to watch Hollywood movies at home, especially those with shapely blondes, such as Jean Harlow. His life, however, still revolved around religion, and when he was too weak to go to church, he listened to sermons on a bedside radio. His thoughts turned toward eternity. When Henry Ford was leaving one day, Rockefeller said to him, "Good bye, I'll see you in heaven," and Ford replied, "You will if you get in."²⁰ Yet Rockefeller seemed to know for certain that the Lord was not a radical critic of society and would reward him in the hereafter. He started a new routine, singing hymns accompanied by a violinist who came to the house. For all his religious certitude, however, death remained the one unmentionable subject for Rockefeller. "Never did he speak of death in relation to himself; rather did he speak always of life, of activity, of accomplishment," said Junior.²¹

In early 1937, as Rockefeller approached ninety-eight, his body was feeble, but his mind was lucid. "Father is very well," Junior wrote an old friend in March 1937, "better even than for the past year or two. We are having a delightful time here with him, and the weather is beautiful."²² He still gambled in stocks and enjoyed his unvarying comedy routine with Mrs. Evans. On Saturday, May 22, he was taking the sunlight when Evans said to him, "Mr. Rockefeller, the sun has given you some color. You look so much better." When he just flashed a wordless smile, she added, "Mr. Rockefeller, you haven't said anything about how I look." In his chair, he made a chivalric bow and said, "Mrs. Evans, that is because I am never able to do the subject justice." ²³ That same day, he paid off the mortgage of the institution that had so profoundly affected him: the Euclid Avenue Baptist Church.

Before the day was over, Rockefeller had a heart attack. At 4:05 A.M. on the morning of May 23, he lapsed into a coma and died in his sleep. The official cause of death was sclerotic myocarditis, a hardening and inflammation of the heart wall, although it is probably more accurate to say that he died of old age. Rockefeller drifted off peacefully, six weeks short of his ninety-eighth birthday. His placid end disappointed critics who were still hoping for some earthly retribution.

As news of Rockefeller's death spread, crowds gathered outside his compound and the sexton of the Union Baptist Church tolled the steeple bell. After a private funeral at Ormond Beach for staff and friends, a motorcycle guard accompanied the casket to the railroad station, where it was placed on a private car for the northward journey to Pocantico. When the train arrived at Tarrytown, Junior and his five sons were waiting on the platform in identical homburgs. On May 25, the Reverend Harry Emerson Fosdick delivered a brief, touching eulogy at the Pocantico funeral while Dr. Archer Gibson played the Kykuit pipe organ. As a reminder that the deceased had never lacked detractors, state troopers scoured Pocantico Hills for trespassers as the service progressed. Around the world, employees in the offices of all Standard Oil successor firms observed five minutes of silence. On May 27, Rockefeller's body returned to Cleveland and was lowered into the earth between the two Baptist women who had so devotedly believed in him, Eliza and Cettie. Because of fears that vandals might desecrate the grave, Rockefeller's casket was placed in a bombproof tomb, sealed by heavy slabs of stone.

Having given away most of his money, Rockefeller left behind an estate of

\$26.4 million, showing that he had recouped his stock-market losses after the 1929 crash. Most of his estate took the form of U.S. Treasury notes, though he had retained, for sentimental reasons, one share of Standard Oil of California marked "Certificate No. 1." The fabulous oil wealth of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait would be tapped within a year of Rockefeller's death, ensuring the preeminent place of petroleum in the twentieth-century economy. Sixty years after their founder's death, four of the Standard Oil successor firms—Exxon, Mobil, Amoco, and Chevron—numbered among the fifty largest companies on earth.

To an extent that would have seemed inconceivable in Ida Tarbell's heyday, the newspaper obituaries dwelled on Rockefeller the benign philanthropist, not Rockefeller the ferocious trust king. He was "the world's greatest philanthropist and organizer in the science of giving," said one editorial. ²⁴ Most striking was that the laudatory comments emanated from across the political spectrum and included those who had jousted with him in the past. Attorney Samuel Untermyer issued this paean to the elusive witness he had interrogated: "Next to our beloved President, he was our country's biggest citizen. It was he who visualized as did no other man the use to which great wealth could wisely be put. Because of him the world is a better place in which to live. Blessed be the memory of World Citizen No. 1." ²⁵

In truth, John D. Rockefeller, Sr., had left behind a contradictory legacy. An amalgam of godliness and greed, compassion and fiendish cunning, he personified the ambiguous heritage of America's Puritan ancestors, who had encouraged thrift and enterprise but had also spurred overly acquisitive instincts. He had extracted mixed messages from his religious training as well as from his incongruously matched parents. Not surprisingly, he had served as an emblem of both corporate greed and philanthropic enlightenment.

Starting in the 1870s, Rockefeller's stewardship of Standard Oil had signaled a new era in American life that had both inspired and alarmed the populace. His unequaled brilliance and rapacity as a businessman had squarely confronted the country with troubling questions about the shape of the economy, the distribution of wealth, and the proper relationship between business and government. Rockefeller perfected a monopoly that indisputably demonstrated the efficiency of large-scale business. In creating new corporate forms, he charted the way for the modern multinational corporations that came to dominate economic life in the twentieth century. But in so doing he also exposed the manifold abuses that could accompany untrammeled economic power, especially in the threat to elected government. As architect of the first great industrial trust, he proved the ultimately fragile nature of free markets, forcing the government to specify the rules that would ensure competition and fair play in the future.

The fiercest robber baron had turned out to be the foremost philanthropist. Rockefeller accelerated the shift from the personal, ad hoc charity that had traditionally been the province of the rich to something both more powerful and more impersonal. He established the promotion of knowledge, especially scientific knowledge, as a task no less important than giving alms to the poor or building schools, hospitals, and museums. He showed the value of expert opinion, thorough planning, and competent administration in nonprofit work, setting a benchmark for professionalism in the emerging foundation field. By the time Rockefeller died, in fact, so much good had unexpectedly flowered from so much evil that God might even have greeted him on the other side, as the titan had so confidently expected all along.

Although Junior moved into Kykuit after Rockefeller's death, he knew that his father was inimitable, and so he decided to retain the *Jr*. after his name. As he was often heard to say in later years, "There was only one John D. Rockefeller."²⁶

NOTES

ABBREVIATIONS

AN—Allan Nevins Papers, Butler Library, Columbia University, New York, New York

CUOH-ABF—Columbia University Oral History Collection, Abraham B. Flexner interview

CUOH-PM—Columbia University Oral History Collection, Paul Manship interview

FSL—Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, D.C.

HDL—Henry Demarest Lloyd Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin

IMT—Ida Minerva Tarbell Papers, Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission, Drake Well Museum Collection, Titusville, Pennsylvania

RAC—Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York. Papers of John D. Rockefeller, Sr., John D. Rockefeller, Jr., and other family members

RAC-CAS-Rockefeller Archive Center, Charles A. Strong Papers

RAC-FTG-Rockefeller Archive Center, Frederick T. Gates Papers

SOCMB—Standard Oil Company Minute Books, BP America, Cleveland, Ohio

UC-JDR-University of Chicago, John D. Rockefeller Papers

UC–UPP—University of Chicago, University Presidents' Papers

B = Box

F = File

FOREWORD

1. Wells, The Work, Wealth and Happiness of Mankind, p. 454.

PRELUDE: POISON TONGUE

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Lucy Avery Rockefeller, the doughty grandmother of John D. Rockefeller. (Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center)



John D. Rockefeller's humble birthplace in Richford, New York. (Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center)



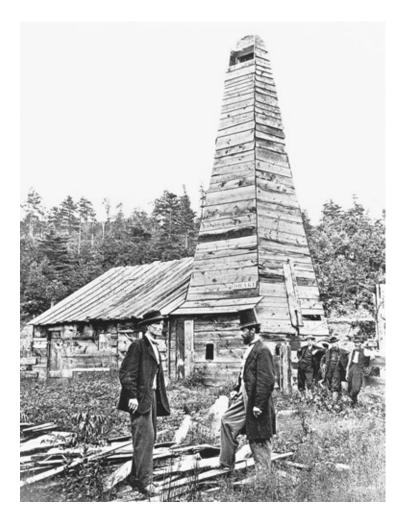
The five children of William and Eliza Rockefeller. Seated, from left: John, twenty, Mary Ann, sixteen, and William, eighteen. Standing: Lucy, twenty-one, and Frank, fourteen. (Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center)



Lucy Henry Spelman, Rockefeller's mother-in-law, and Harvey Buel Spelman, his father-in-law. The Spelmans were staunch temperance advocates and abolitionists. (Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center)



The inseparable Spelman sisters: Lucy, also known as "Lute" (left), and Laura. (Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center)



A top-hatted "Colonel" Edwin Drake stands before the landmark well he drilled in Titusville, Pennsylvania, in 1859. (Courtesy of the Drake Well Museum)



After the Civil War, Rockefeller & Andrews occupied second-floor offices in the Sexton Block in Cleveland. (Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center)



The storied oil boomtown of Pithole, which sprang up miraculously in 1865 and vanished within a decade. (Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center)



The stately Rockefeller home at 424 Euclid Avenue in Cleveland. (Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center)



Rockefeller's rambling retreat at Forest Hill, which was briefly run by the family as a hotel. (Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center)



A studio portrait of a polished John D. Rockefeller in 1884. (Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center)



A family picnic at Forest Hill, circa 1880. Rockefeller stands at far left. Daughters Bessie, left, and Edith, right, sit directly behind the table, while Alta lounges impishly below. Cettie sits at far left and Grandmother Spelman at far right.(Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center)



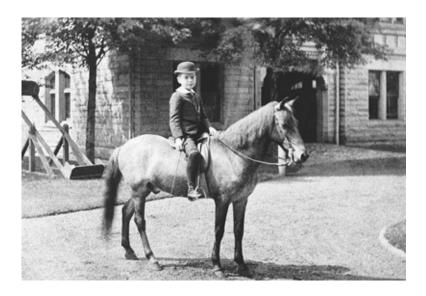
Rockefeller dines on sardines al fresco during an 1899 camping trip in the American West. (Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center)



Rockefeller sits erect on the steps of brother William's estate, Rockwood Hall, flanked to the rear by daughter Alta, left, and William's daughter Emma; in the foreground, from left, sit William's children Percy and Ethel and John D. Rockefeller, Jr. (Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center)



The first graduating class of Spelman Seminary, 1887, which was founded to educate freed women slaves and their daughters. (Courtesy of the Spelman College Archives)



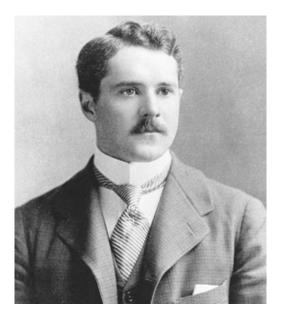
John D. Rockefeller, Jr., sits astride his first pony, which was handpicked by his father. (Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center)



John D. Rockefeller, Jr., circa 1880, with his sole childhood friend, Harry Moore, son of the Forest Hill housekeeper. (Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center)



Alta Rockefeller on the day of her wedding to Ezra Parmalee Prentice. (Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center)



Harold Fowler McCormick, dreamer and businessman. (Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center)



Edith Rockefeller McCormick holds aloft John Rockefeller McCormick, whose early death from scarlet fever led to the founding of an institute for infectious diseases in Chicago. (Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center)



Senior's massive house at 4 West Fifty-fourth Street, foreground, and Junior's still grander adjoining house at 10 West Fifty-fourth, on the site now occupied by the Museum of Modern Art. Their carriage house is visible in the foreground. (Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center)



For their bedroom at 4 West Fifty-fourth Street, John and Cettie Rockefeller retained the richly exotic furnishings of their predecessor, Arabella Worsham, the mistress of Collis P. Huntington. Such luxury was not their usual style. (Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center)



Senator Nelson W. Aldrich **of Rhode Island, whom Lincoln Steffens dubbed "the political boss of the United States."** (Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center)



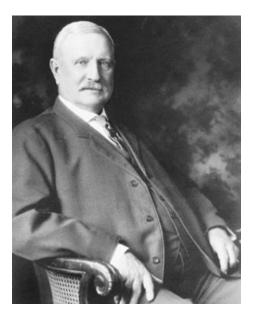
The Aldrich sisters in 1910. From left: Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, Elsie Aldrich, and Lucy Aldrich. (Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center)



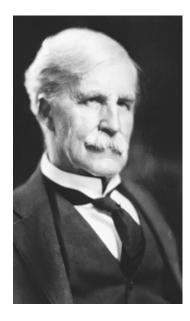
The Aldrich family. From left: Abby, Lucy, Senator Aldrich, Winthrop (?), and Mrs. Aldrich. (Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center)



William Rockefeller. (Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center)



Frank Rockefeller. (Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center)



Frederick T. Gates in his later years. (Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center)



The only existing photo that shows John D. with his father, William Avery Rockefeller, who sits rather awkwardly to the left, while Edith holds John Rockefeller McCormick on her lap, circa 1897. (Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center)



The aging Eliza Davison Rockefeller bore a comical resemblance to her famous son in his later years. (Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center)



The tombstone of William Avery Rockefeller— a.k.a. Dr. William Levingston—in Freeport, Illinois. (Courtesy of Heather Brownfield)



The cover of *McClure's Magazine* containing the malevolent "character sketch" by Ida Tarbell that so deeply wounded Rockefeller. (Courtesy of the Drake Well Museum)



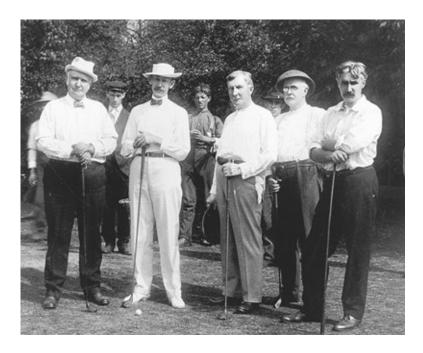
Rockefeller en route to testify in an antitrust case against Standard Oil, November 18, 1908. (Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center)



Rockefeller goes to court, escorted by John G. Milburn, a Standard Oil lawyer in the federal antitrust suit. (Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center)



John D. Archbold, Rockefeller's combative protégé and successor. (Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center)



Rockefeller (center) pauses at Forest Hill with some favorite golf cronies. From left: Dr. Hamilton F. Biggar, Elias M. Johnson, Capt. Levi T. Scofield, and Dr. Charles A. Eaton. (Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center)



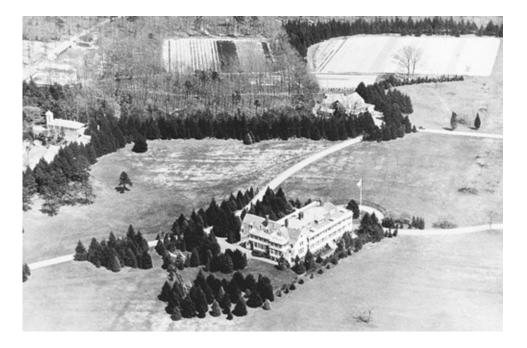
An eerily hairless Rockefeller holds an unidentified grandchild, September 23, 1904. (Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center)



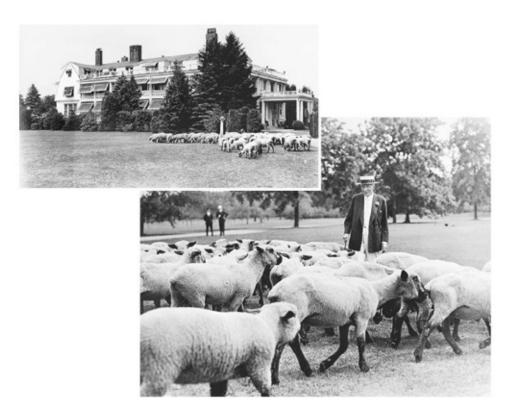
The first version of Kykuit, completed in 1908 and found wanting by John and Cettie. (Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center)



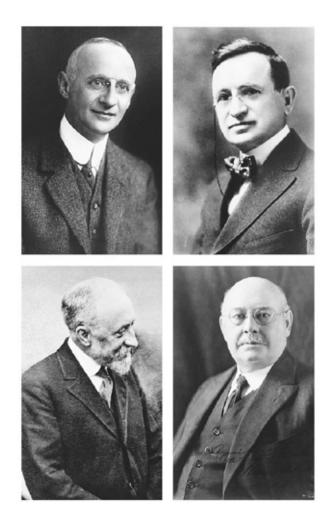
The more compact and elegant second version of Kykuit, finished in 1913 and today open to the public. (Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center)



An aerial view of John D.'s golf hideaway in Lakewood, New Jersey. (Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center)



Rockefeller, nattily attired, strolls among the sheep that browsed outside his Golf House residence in Lakewood. (Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center)



Chief lieutenants of the Rockefeller philanthropies: (top, left) Dr. Simon Flexner, director of the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research; (top, right) Wickliffe Rose, head of the Rockefeller Sanitary Commission; (bottom, left) Starr J. Murphy, legal adviser to the Rockefeller Family Office; and (bottom, right) Wallace Buttrick, secretary of the General Education Board. (Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center)



Abby Aldrich and John D. Rockefeller, Jr., circa 1916. (Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center)



The Rockefellers *could* be playful on occasion. Abby Aldrich and John D. Rockefeller, Jr., costumed for a fancy dress ball at Louis Tiffany's home,

probably around 1910. (Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center)



John D. Rockefeller, Jr., leaves hearings on the Ludlow Massacre, held at New York's City Hall in January 1915. (Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center)



Junior takes the stand to testify about Ludlow. (Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center)



A photographer captured an impromptu encounter between Junior and labor organizer Mother Jones—a vocal critic of Colorado Fuel and Iron at the January 27, 1915, hearings. (Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center)



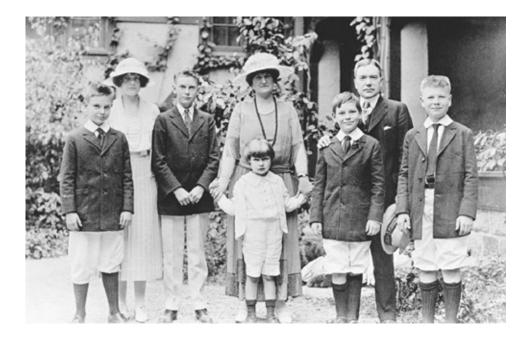
Publicist Ivy Lee worked to rehabilitate the tarnished Rockefeller name after the Ludlow disaster. (Courtesy of the Princeton University Library)



Rockefeller sits wedged between two ladies in the backseat of his touring car. His hands often strayed during the afternoon drives. (Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center)



Jo Davidson sculpts an equally stony-faced Rockefeller in 1924. (Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center)



Abby Aldrich and John D. Rockefeller, Jr., with their children in Seal Harbor, Maine, 1921. From left to right: Laurance, Babs, John 3rd, David, Winthrop, and Nelson. (Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center)



Rockefeller with Bessie's grandchildren, Elizabeth and John de Cuevas, Ormond Beach, 1933. (Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center)



Rockefeller's winter home in Ormond Beach, Florida, called The Casements. (Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center)



Rockefeller trades one-liners with Will Rogers in Ormond Beach, February 1927. (Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center)



Rockefeller and daughter Alta at Ormond Beach, 1931. (Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center)



Rockefeller, in trademark goggles, smacks a ball down the fairway at Ormond Beach, December 24, 1932. (Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center)



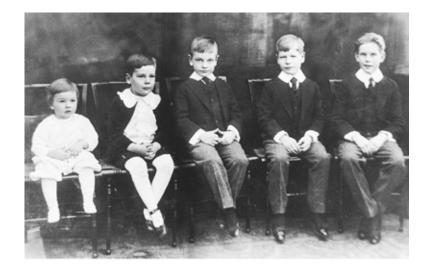
Abby and John D. Rockefeller, Jr., tour the Grand Tetons in October 1931. (Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center)



Junior bashfully greets the Rockettes at Radio City Music Hall, December 30, 1937. (Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center)



Junior and Senior pose with Nelson and his first son, Rod-man. (Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center)



The sons of Abby and John D. Rockefeller, Jr., in their Eton collars. Left to right: David, Winthrop, Laurance, Nelson, and John 3rd. (Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center)



A formal family dinner party at 740 Park Avenue in Manhattan, March 1949. Standing, from left to right: Irving H. Pardee, David, Nelson, Winthrop, and Laurance Rockefeller. Seated: John 3rd and John D. Rockefeller, Jr.(Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center)



The wives at the same dinner party. From left to right: Abby (Babs) Rockefeller Pardee, Peggy McGrath Rockefeller, Mary "Tod" Rockefeller, Blanchette Hooker Rockefeller, Barbara "Bobo" Sears Rockefeller, and Mary French Rockefeller. (Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center)



A photo taken on December 17, 1931, that shows the seamed, leathery face of John D. Rockefeller in his final decade. (Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center)



RON CHERNOW

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Ron Chernow's first book, *The House of Morgan*, won the National Book Award, the Ambassador Award for the year's best study of American culture, and was named one of the 100 best nonfiction books of the century by the Modern Library. His second book, *The Warburgs*, won the Eccles Prize as the Best Business Book of 1993 and was also selected by the American Library Association as one of that year's best nonfiction books. In reviewing his recent collection of essays, *The Death of the Banker*, *The New York Times* called the author "as elegant an architect of monumental histories as we've seen in decades" and chose the paperback original as one of the year's Notable Books.

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The House of Morgan The Warburgs The Death of the Banker

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