



# **The Magnificent Medills: America's Royal Family of Journalism During a Century of Turbulent Splendor**

*Megan McKinney*

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The riveting story of the country's first media dynasty, the Medills of Chicago, whose power and influence shaped the story of America and American journalism for four generations

When thirty-two-year-old former lawyer Joseph Medill bought a controlling stake in the bankrupt *Chicago Daily Tribune* in 1855, he had no way of foreseeing the unparalleled influence he and his progeny would have on the world of journalism and on American society at large.

Medill personally influenced the political tide that transformed America during the midnineteenth century by fostering the Republican Party, engineering the election of Abraham Lincoln and serving as a catalyst for the outbreak of the Civil War. The dynasty he established, filled with colorful characters, went on to take American journalism by storm. His grandson, Colonel Robert R. McCormick, personified Chicago, as well as its great newspaper, the *Chicago Tribune*, throughout much of the twentieth century. Robert's cousin, Joseph Medill Patterson, started the *New York Daily News*, and Joe's sister, Cissy Patterson, was the innovative editor of the *Washington Times-Herald*. In the fourth generation, Alicia Patterson founded Long Island's *Newsday*, the most stunning journalistic accomplishment of post-World War II America.

Printer's ink raged in the veins of the Medills, the McCormicks and the Pattersons throughout a century, and their legacy prevailed for another five decades—always in the forefront of events, shaping the intellectual and social pulse of America. At the same time, the dark side of the intellectual stardom driving the dynasty was a destructive compulsion that left clan members crippled by their personal demons of chronic depression, alcoholism, drug abuse and even madness and suicide.

Rife with authentic conversations and riveting quotes, *The Magnificent Medills* is the premiere cultural history of America's first media empire. This dynamic family and their brilliance, eccentricities and ultimate self-destruction are explored in a sweeping narrative that interweaves the family's personal activities and public achievements against a larger historical background. Authoritative, compelling and thoroughly engaging, *The Magnificent Medills* brings the pages of history that the Medills wrote vividly to life.

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