



Katharine and R. J. Reynolds: Partners of Fortune in the Making of the New South

Michele Gillespie

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Separately they were formidable—together they were unstoppable. Despite their intriguing lives and the deep impact they had on their community and region, the story of Richard Joshua Reynolds (1850–1918) and Katharine Smith Reynolds (1880–1924) has never been fully told. Now Michele Gillespie provides a sweeping account of how R. J. and Katharine succeeded in realizing their American dreams.

From relatively modest beginnings, R. J. launched the R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company, which would eventually develop two hugely profitable products, Prince Albert pipe tobacco and Camel cigarettes. His marriage in 1905 to Katharine Smith, a dynamic woman thirty years his junior, marked the beginning of a unique partnership that went well beyond the family. As a couple, the Reynoldses conducted a far-ranging social life and, under Katharine's direction, built Reynolda House, a breathtaking estate and model farm. Providing leadership to a series of progressive reform movements and business innovations, they helped drive one of the South's best examples of rapid urbanization and changing race relations in the city of Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Together they became one of the New South's most influential elite couples. Upon R. J.'s death, Katharine reinvented herself, marrying a World War I veteran many years her junior and engaging in a significant new set of philanthropic pursuits.

Katharine and R. J. Reynolds reveals the broad economic, social, cultural, and political changes that were the backdrop to the Reynoldses' lives. Portraying a New South shaped by tensions between rural poverty and industrial transformation, white working-class inferiority and deeply entrenched racism, and the solidification of a one-party political system, Gillespie offers a masterful life-and-times biography of these important North Carolinians.

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