



The Teapot Dome Scandal: How Big Oil Bought the Harding White House and Tried to Steal the Country

By Laton McCartney

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Mix hundreds of millions of dollars in petroleum reserves; rapacious oil barons and crooked politicians; under-the-table payoffs; murder, suicide, and blackmail; White House cronyism; and the excesses of the Jazz Age. The result: the granddaddy of all American political scandals, Teapot Dome.

In *The Teapot Dome Scandal*, acclaimed author Laton McCartney tells the amazing, complex, and at times ribald story of how Big Oil handpicked Warren G. Harding, an obscure Ohio senator, to serve as our twenty-third president. Harding and his so-called “oil cabinet” made it possible for the oilmen to secure vast oil reserves that had been set aside for use by the U.S. Navy. In exchange, the oilmen paid off senior government officials, bribed newspaper publishers, and covered the GOP campaign debt.

When news of the scandal finally emerged, the consequences were disastrous for the nation and for the principles in the plot to bilk the taxpayers: Harding’s administration was hamstrung; Americans’ confidence in their government plummeted; Secretary of the Interior Albert Fall was indicted, convicted, and incarcerated; and others implicated in the affair suffered similarly dire fates. Stonewalling by members of Harding’s circle kept a lid on the story—witnesses developed “faulty” memories or fled the country, and important documents went missing—but contemporary records newly made available to McCartney reveal a shocking, revelatory picture of just how far-reaching the affair was, how high the stakes, and how powerful the conspirators.

In giving us a gimlet-eyed but endlessly entertaining portrait of the men and women who made a tempest of Teapot Dome, Laton McCartney again displays his gift for faithfully rendering history with the narrative touch of an accomplished novelist.

From the Hardcover edition.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

McCartney (*Friends in High Places: The Bechtel Story*) does an efficient job of narrating 20th-century America's first great federal corruption scandal. Petroleum preserves (or domes) were set aside on public lands in California and Wyoming, to be kept until needed by the navy. During 1921, President Harding's secretary of the interior, Albert Fall, took control of the lands from Secretary of the Navy Edwin Denby and leased two domes—Teapot Dome in Wyoming and California's Elk Hills—to Harry Sinclair's Mammoth Oil Co. and Edward Doheny's Pan-American Petroleum and Transport Co., respectively. Concurrently, Fall received personal payments from the two men totaling \$404,000, some of which he distributed to underlings who helped with the transactions. Scandal ensued, continuing through the presidency of Harding's successor, Calvin Coolidge. Congressional investigations were held; Coolidge appointed special prosecutors, and in 1929 a federal court found Fall guilty of bribery, fining him \$100,000 and sentencing him to a year in prison. Though McCartney adds nothing new to the story, he has a solid grasp of it in this retelling. (Feb. 5)

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Review

“A terrific tale that resonates nearly a century on, at a time when many people are still wondering about the connections between Big Oil and politicians at the highest levels.”

—**Jon Meacham, author of *Franklin and Winston***

“This is a story that has it all—a Jazz Age background, a pleasure-loving president surrounded by booze and chorus girls, boomtown capitalists from the Wild West, [and] conniving politicians. . . . [Laton McCartney has] a certain zest for *Teapot*’s sordid comedy [and] delivers fresh, arresting portraits of the main players, some of them lovable rogues, others beady-eyed scoundrels.”

—***The New York Times***

“The most thorough treatment of the scandals to date.”

—***Los Angeles Times Book Review***

“Titillating, tantalizing . . . The book reads like a novel. McCartney’s cast of characters jumps off the page.”

—***Baltimore Sun***

“A cautionary tale of what happens when corrupt and indifferent public officials give an industry undue influence over public policy.”

—***The Denver Post***

“Fascinating reading.”

—***St. Louis Post-Dispatch***

From the Trade Paperback edition.

About the Author

LATON MCCARTNEY is the author of the national bestseller *Friends in High Places*. He divides his time between Wyoming and New York City.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Paul Heisler:

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John Householder:

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