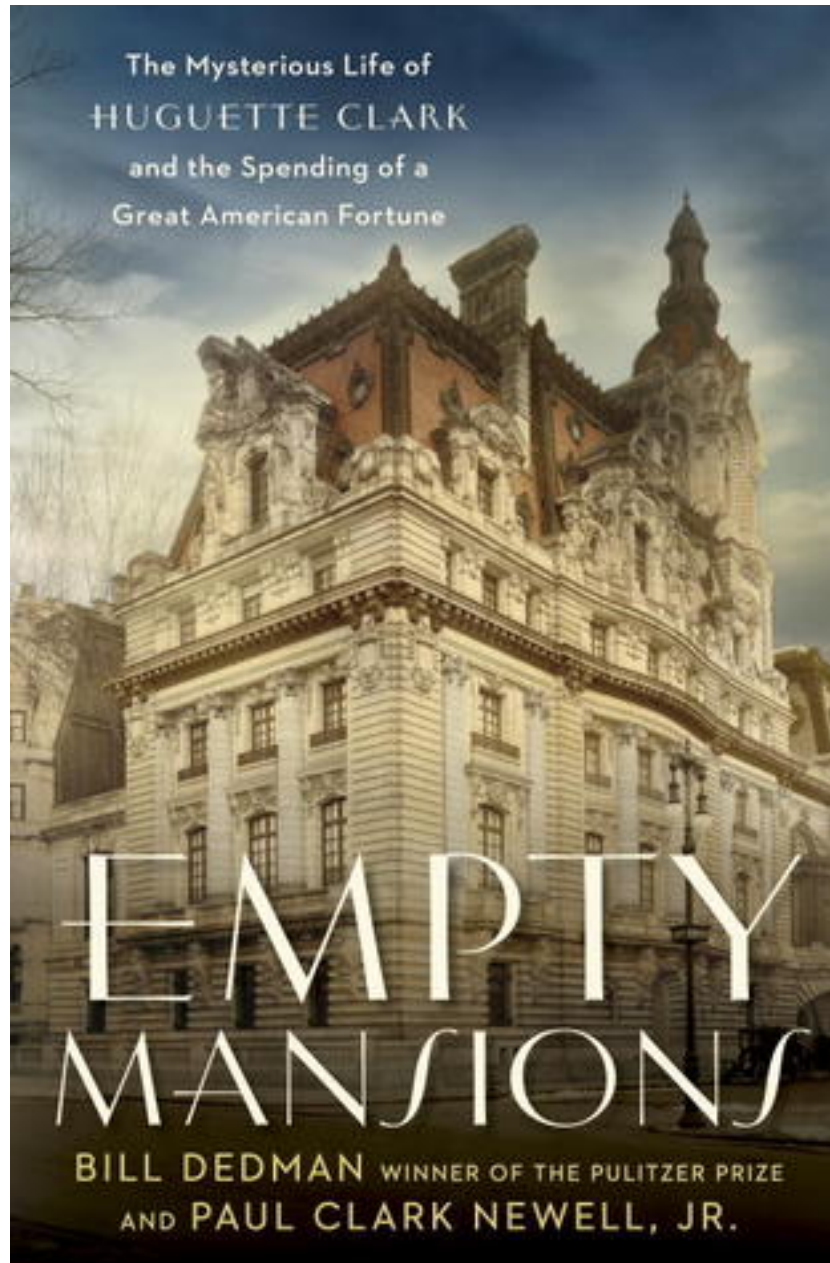


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# Empty Mansions: The Mysterious Life of Huguette Clark and the Spending of a Great American Fortune Book PDF Download



**By:**  
**Bill Dedman**

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### Kris

Update on September 12, 2013: I just received the hardcover, and the photographs are amazing. Upped my star rating to 5, between the photographs and some other adjustments in the text. Book is now released!

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Huguette Clark was born to nearly unimaginable wealth and privilege. Her father, William A. Clark, was a copper baron who made several fortunes, particularly in mining and railroads, booming industries during America's Gilded Age. At the time of his death

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Huguette Clark was born to nearly unimaginable wealth and privilege. Her father, William A. Clark, was a copper baron who made several fortunes, particularly in mining and railroads, booming industries during America's Gilded Age. At the time of his death in 1925, he had a huge fortune to leave to his heirs, including his youngest child, Huguette Marcelle Clark.

Huguette married once, but got divorced after approximately a year. She then turned to a very private life, far from the social whirl of New York's elite. Over time, fewer and fewer people heard from her, and hardly anyone saw her. She lived in a grand apartment on New York's Fifth Ave., with her mother, an extremely valuable art collection, as well as her beloved collection of dolls, miniature houses, and Stradivarius violins. She owned extensive properties, including a mansion with an estate in New Canaan, CT that she never lived in or furnished, and a grand mansion and grounds in Santa Barbara, CA. Bellosguardo's staff were ordered to keep the estate as close to its original condition as possible, although Huguette hadn't visited in decades.

These extensive properties caught the attention of Bill Dedman, a Pulitzer-prize winning investigative journalist. When looking for his own house, he played a game many of us have -- he started to look at properties that were hopelessly out of his price range. This led him to Huguette Clark, and her empty mansions, and a mystery-- was she still alive? What was her life like? Why were these estates left empty?

In this enthralling book, Bill Dedman provides us with the answers he discovered when on his quest to learn about the reclusive Huguette Clark. He joins with one of Clark's relatives, Paul Clark Newell,

Jr., who had a series of phone conversations with Huguette over a 9-year period, beginning in 1995. Newell's personal stories about his conversations with Huguette help a flesh-and-blood person to emerge from the mystery, while Dedman's training as an investigative journalist stands him in good stead, as he slowly unravels the history of W.A. Clark, Huguette Clark, and the battle over the fortune she left behind when she died on the morning of May 24, 2011, at the age of 104.

The first part of

## Kathrina

One goodreader calls this Mansion Porn; oh yes. Mansion Porn, Rich People Porn, this book gives you plenty of time to consider how you'd behave so much more appropriately if gifted with \$15 million dollars, if only some rich old woman would give you the chance to prove it. Too much money makes everyone look suspicious, and some of them deserve a closer look. The accountant is a skank, for sure, the nurse, a kind, benevolent, naive exploiter of the first degree, poisoned by unreasonable charity,

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On top of all this sensational rich-people drama, we're also treated to a focused perspective of America's industrial age. The author only lightly introduces the copper magnate's impact on our current environmental crisis -- how enormous wealth piled up so quickly, before we realized the real price paid for mining our natural resources. Does buying a camp for girl scouts also buy forgiveness? Do we, the readers, have any right to judge how a rich person spends their money? Can we judge the ethics of how they earned it? Wouldn't we jump at the chance to make all of their mistakes?

This book was riveting from start to finish. And, in fact, the story continues in real time. The last chapter was written in July, only 3 months ago, and the case was finally settled just weeks ago. There are more stories to be discovered and explored -- for instance, an heir to \$6 million dollars of Huguette's fortune, found dead of exposure under a highway viaduct, with a \$500,000 uncashed

check in his pocket. How about a reality show of Hadassah and her spoiled family, who lost their Bentley in Hurricane Sandy? Times are tough, eh? I'd even love an historical docudrama of Huguette's cousin's wife and Mrs. Astor, floating around, waiting for rescue while the Titanic sank with their husbands aboard. Never a dull moment when you've got Monet and Cezanne hanging on your bedroom wall, and 2 million dollars worth of dolls to curate and drink tea with.

## Julie

Empty Mansions: The Mysterious Life of Huguette Clark and the Spending of a Great American Fortune by Bill Dedman and Paul Clark Newell Jr. is a 2013 Ballantine publication.

This is one of those books I discovered through a Goodreads friend, and thankfully one of my local libraries was able to provide me with a digital copy and another one had it on audio, so I listened to parts of the book and read the other parts, which made this a unique experience.

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The author describes how he first came across the story of the Clark family's empty mansions and I can see why this story and the mystery surrounding it would appeal to anyone, but for a journalist the urge to investigate was nearly impossible to ignore.

The book got off to a slow start for me, as the author went through the family background explaining how the Clark's accumulated their vast fortune.

But then the book began to read like an episode of "American Castles" and I got caught up the descriptions of opulence, and the blueprints of the main properties owned by W.A. Clark. The designs, the furnishings, the grounds and the various collections of art and books, china and countless other investments were mind boggling.

I then found myself wrapped up in W. A. Clark's rather colorful personal life, his bid for the senate, various scandals he found himself embroiled in, and of course his family life.

All of this is quite interesting, but then the second half of the book begins to focus exclusively on Huguette Clark, W.A.'s daughter, who eventually inherited the family fortune.

## David Stone

Let me answer the big question first. Yes, there is a lot of new information about Huguette Clark in this book by journalist Dedman and Huguette's cousin Paul Newell.

I thought I already knew the whole story about the woman with three of the most expensive homes in America who didn't visit them for decades, instead choosing to live in a small hospital room, even though she was healthy. But Huguette leaps out of these pages like no other recluse since Edie Beale. She ought to do for wearing six l

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I thought I already knew the whole story about the woman with three of the most expensive homes in America who didn't visit them for decades, instead choosing to live in a small hospital room, even though she was healthy. But Huguette leaps out of these pages like no other recluse since Edie Beale. She ought to do for wearing six layers of Scottish cashmere sweaters over a hospital gown what Little Edie did for statement scarves. The difference is that Huguette died with \$400 million, while Edie's Grey Gardens went to the cats.

Most surprising to me was to learn about Huguette's talent and vocation as a painter and I, for one, am very envious of the collector who picked up her portrait of a geisha for \$104 on eBay in 2010. One small detail that I loved was that in the home Huguette bought in New Canaan (and never slept in once) she built an addition (a painting studio above her bedroom), with the balusters of the staircase leading up to it carved to look like paintbrushes. Even her much derided passion for dolls

and dollhouses was part of a lifelong art project and one that, even in her final years, she devoted incredible time and connoisseurship to, corresponding with artists around the world and petitioning the Emperor of Japan to use a special protected wood.

As someone who lives near Newport, Rhode Island, where the Gilded Age still sits astride the present, I was fascinated to read how Senator Clark amassed his fortune and how he chose to spend it. His daughter Huguette, born in 1906, came close to perishing on The Titanic and survived 9/11, which gives you a sense of the depth of her life story.

Everything that seemed ridiculous and sad about this woman in the news reports about her "discovery" and alleged neglect seems, after reading this book, understandable and even laudable. She had love of every kind in her life, gave away millions at a whim, and preserved her apartments and homes for ghosts, yet still died with her capital intact making numerous savvy business decisions and art investments completely on her own. Each of those decisions yielded immense profits.

Somewhere, Huguette is having the last laugh with one of her dolls.

Note: I received an advance reader's copy of this book from the publisher.

## Frances

The rich are different, but the super rich are very much in a class of their own and W.A. Clark belonged to the very super rich establishment who always carried two grades of cigars; fine ones for himself and lesser ones to give away. A farm boy born in a log cabin in 1839, his rise to a powerful, wealthy business man and U.S. senator is astonishing. By 1895 he owned the most expensive 121-room mansion in New York on Fifth Avenue, and once completed it was more expensive than Rockefeller and Car

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special room held carved and gilded wood panels made in 1770 brought over intact from Paris, along with a gilded clock from Marie Antoinette's boudoir while she watched the hands tick by waiting for the guillotine. Approximately one-third of the book is devoted to W.A. Clark and his accomplishments which are well worth reading alone. The remaining chapters examines the life of his youngest daughter Huguette Clark who inherited a 1/5 share of her father's estate with the rest left to his other four children. This part is quite fascinating as Huguette spends and spends millions on frivolous items and gives away still more millions to people she meets over the years. Empty Mansions will keep the reader enthralled and well entertained with the lives of the super wealthy. Highly recommended to all readers.