



The Warburgs: The Twentieth-Century Odyssey of a Remarkable Jewish Family

By Ron Chernow

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Bankers, philanthropists, scholars, socialites, artists, and politicians, the Warburgs stood at the pinnacle of German (and, later, of German-American) Jewry. They forged economic dynasties, built mansions and estates, assembled libraries, endowed charities, and advised a German kaiser and two American presidents. But their very success made the Warburgs lightning rods for anti-Semitism, and their sense of patriotism became increasingly dangerous in a Germany that had declared Jews the enemy.

Ron Chernow's hugely fascinating history is a group portrait of a clan whose members were renowned for their brilliance, culture, and personal energy yet tragically vulnerable to the dark and irrational currents of the twentieth century.

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Editorial Review

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All three of Ron Chernow's books are lengthy and solidly researched, but his background as a journalist shows in his ability here to convey complex material in terms of vivid characters and a well-defined theme. As in his National Book Award-winning business history (*The House of Morgan*) and his comprehensive biography of John D. Rockefeller (*Titan*), in *The Warburgs* Chernow employs marvelously detailed material to trace a single overarching story: the riveting and ultimately tragic odyssey of German Jews. The Warburgs were Hamburg's preeminent banking family from the 18th century until Hitler's Third Reich forced them to hand over their business to Aryans in 1938. But they also boasted among their family members a celebrated art historian (Aby Warburg), a Nobel Prize-winning scientist (Otto Warburg), and the financial angel of the New York City Ballet (Edward Warburg). Two of the "Famous Five" brothers married American women at the turn of the 20th century and became honored members of the Wall Street establishment, so Chernow's lively narrative imparts important U.S. social and economic history as well. But don't let all those fancy credentials intimidate you: *The Warburgs* features enough flamboyant personalities and high-class gossip to make this as entertaining a read as the latest issue of *People* magazine. --Wendy Smith

From Publishers Weekly

The rich, sprawling story of 400 years of a German-Jewish banking family by the author of *The House of Morgan*.

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From Library Journal

Chernow's saga traces the fortunes of the influential German-Jewish banking family from its generation of great wealth, stimulated by the Franco-Prussian War, through the family's defamation and degradation by the Nazis, and its subsequent return to Hamburg following World War II. In the United States, family members married and joined forces with the Schiffs and Loebes at the beginning of the century. While Chernow (*The House of Morgan*, LJ 2/1/90) discusses serious, diverse themes such as international finance, the misplaced loyalty of German Jews to a country that betrayed them, and the relationship of succeeding generations of Warburgs to their Jewish roots, the book is filled with trivia and family gossip. Chernow had access to private family papers, and the conflicting descriptions of the numerous personalities of this prolific family confuse and overwhelm the reader. Previewed in *Prepub Alert*, LJ 6/1/93.

- Carol R. Glatt, VA Medical Ctr. Lib., Philadelphia

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