



The Jews in America Trilogy: "Our Crowd," The Grandees, and "The Rest of Us"

Stephen Birmingham

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Three *New York Times* bestsellers chronicle the rise of America's most influential Jewish families as they transition from poor immigrants to household names.

In his acclaimed trilogy, author Stephen Birmingham paints an engrossing portrait of Jewish American life from the colonial era through the twentieth century with fascinating narrative and meticulous research.

The collection's best-known book, "*Our Crowd*" follows nineteenth-century German immigrants with recognizable names like Loeb, Sachs, Lehman, Guggenheim, and Goldman. Turning small family businesses into institutions of finance, banking, and philanthropy, they elevated themselves from Lower East Side tenements to Park Avenue mansions. Barred from New York's gentile elite because of their religion and humble backgrounds, they created their own exclusive group, as affluent and selective as the one that had refused them entry.

The Grandees travels farther back in history to 1654, when twenty-three Sephardic Jews arrived in New York. Members of this small and insulated group—considered the first Jewish community in America—soon established themselves as wealthy businessmen and financiers. With descendants including poet Emma Lazarus, Barnard College founder Annie Nathan Meyer, and Supreme Court Justice Benjamin N. Cardozo, these families were—and still are—hugely influential in the nation's culture, politics, and economics.

In "*The Rest of Us*," Birmingham documents the third major wave of Jewish immigration: Eastern Europeans who swept through Ellis Island between 1880 and 1924. These refugees from czarist Russia and Polish shtetls were considered barbaric, uneducated, and too steeped in the traditions of the "old country" to be accepted by the well-established German American Jews. But the new arrivals were tough, passionate, and determined. Their incredible rags to riches stories include those of the lives of Hollywood tycoon Samuel Goldwyn, Broadway composer Irving Berlin, makeup mogul Helena Rubenstein, and mobster Meyer Lansky.

This unforgettable collection comprises a comprehensive account of the Jewish American upper class, their opulent world, and their lasting mark on American society.

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