



The Lady Upstairs: Dorothy Schiff and the New York Post

Marilyn Nissenson

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The Lady Upstairs is the dramatic story of Dorothy Schiff---liberal activist, society stalwart, and the most dynamic female newspaper publisher of her day. From 1939 until 1976 she owned and guided the *New York Post*, the oldest continuously published daily newspaper in the United States. Dolly, as she was called, made the *Post* one of the most dedicated supporters of New Deal liberalism in the country, while simultaneously maintaining its distinct personality as a chatty, parochial, New York tabloid.

Unfazed by political or personal controversy, Schiff backed editorial writers like James Wechsler and Max Lerner and reporters like Murray Kempton and Pete Hamill. Under her guidance the *Post* broke the story of Richard Nixon's slush fund. It helped bring down such icons of the day as Joseph McCarthy, Walter Winchell, and Robert Moses. It supported the civil rights movement and opposed the Vietnam War. Although Dolly seldom appeared in the newsroom, she approved and commented on every major story and every minor column in the paper, until eventually selling it to Rupert Murdoch.

Dolly's private life could have been a staple of the *Post*'s society gossip columns. Endlessly flirtatious, she married four times and had extra-marital romances with, among others, Franklin Roosevelt and Max Beaverbrook. She was a friend of national politicians such as Adlai Stevenson, the Kennedys, Lyndon Johnson, and Nelson Rockefeller. Born into a staunchly Republican German-Jewish banking family, she used her inheritance to further causes of the political left. She used her charm and her social connections in the service of her paper, which was the center of her life.

The Lady Upstairs is the portrait of a unique life and a crucial era in American history.

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