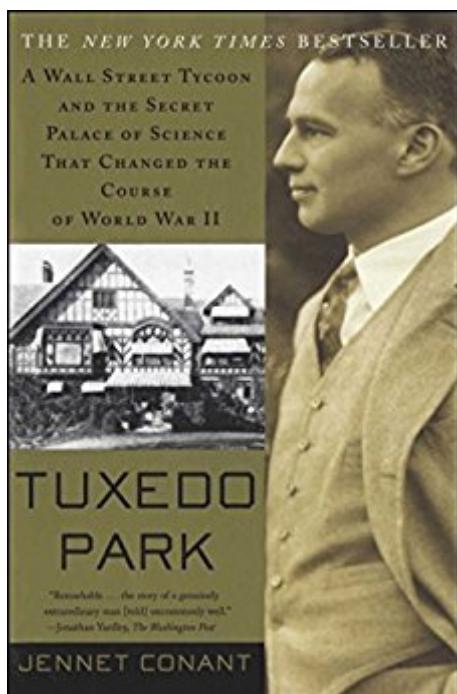


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Tuxedo Park: A Wall Street Tycoon And The Secret Palace Of Science That Changed The Course Of World War II



Synopsis

The untold story of an eccentric Wall Street tycoon and the circle of scientific geniuses he assembled before World War II to develop the science for radar and the atomic bomb. Together they changed the course of history. Legendary financier, philanthropist, and society figure Alfred Lee Loomis gathered the most visionary scientific minds of the twentieth century—Albert Einstein, Werner Heisenberg, Niels Bohr, Enrico Fermi, and others—at his state-of-the-art laboratory in Tuxedo Park, New York, in the late 1930s. He established a top-secret defense laboratory at MIT and personally bankrolled pioneering research into new, high-powered radar detection systems that helped defeat the German Air Force and U-boats. With Ernest Lawrence, the Nobel Prize-winning physicist, he pushed Franklin Delano Roosevelt to fund research in nuclear fission, which led to the development of the atomic bomb. Jennet Conant, the granddaughter of James Bryant Conant, one of the leading scientific advisers of World War II, enjoyed unprecedented access to Loomis’s papers, as well as to people intimately involved in his life and work. She pierces through Loomis’s obsessive secrecy and illuminates his role in assuring the Allied victory.

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Customer Reviews

I cannot believe that I hadn't heard of this book years ago. I spent 40 years teaching the history of physics and this very interesting and important book blew right by. To any one interested in the various technological developments brought about by the needs of the US and our allies during WWII, this book should be required reading. It is fascinating to watch the various individuals breaking all sorts of barriers to allow the US and our allies to win the war. In particular, had we not come together over technology, the Germans would have surely conquered England--they came close enough as it was. The focus on the character of Loomis and his central role in the new technologies is all the more interesting since to me, he was virtually unheard of. The book is very well researched, well written, and to anyone with an interest either in WWII or in the scientific developments of the time this book is central to our knowledge. Highly recommended. Jane Carter Webb, Ph.D.

A man I never heard of, yet of his many contributions to the Allies defeating the Axis in WWII, what he did for the RadLab at MIT in radar development could arguably be called the greatest contribution any US civilian made during that critical era. This is a great book about a great man!!

What a great book! Though this book is not actually about WW-II, if you think you know how we won WW-II you may be very interested of what actually went on behind the scenes here is the US scientific community and how this one man's wealth, love of science and philanthropy enabled the US' victory. Loomis' Tower House laboratory literally either invented, paved the way or facilitated breakthroughs from spectroscopy, encephalography and precision chronography to RADAR (and even the fission weapon that cost 40K+ Japanese lives to save 2.1 million US and allied lives and effectively ended WW-I) by gathering some of the greatest minds in world with the lure of having access to some of the finest laboratory equipment on earth and the funding to pursue their scientific interests -- From Bohr to Heisenberg to Lawrence to Einstein and many dozens of other notables, and from his personal service in WW-II in the field and, more notably, as the head of Research at the US Aberdeen Proving Grounds. Most of the accounts in this book are via intensive document research (has an extensive bibliography) and via the diaries of other researchers, family and friends and many accounts are direct quotations from those sources. Ironically, since Alfred Lee Loomis never had interest in drawing attention to himself or his wealth-gathering years, his single-minded focus on science and one breakthrough after another, effectively excluded him from the history books. There is also much insight into the doings of high-society in the 20s and 30s since Tower

House was actually located in the exclusive enclave of Tuxedo Park -- home to dozens of the most wealthy in the US. Tower House is still there, now housing the (private) Vacuum Tube Museum. So, while this book is clearly a biography of Alfred Lee Loomis, it is also a vital work in understanding this country's history, society, science and also why the free enterprise system is the only vehicle that could have possibly permitted a single man to so profoundly impact the betterment of this science and, through that, the this country and, arguably, the betterment of all mankind. I'm not a novel reader at all -- I am much more comfortable reading science and nature magazines and some journals, however this book painted a heretofore unpaved road underneath the players and breakthroughs in the world of science in a way I found both engaging and satisfying. If you share similar interests by all means read it! And if you just like history and/or a better understanding of the just how some key science came to be, you will also like this book. There are a lot of characters and the Prologue and first chapter do set the stage, but it can be a easy to get a little lost in the names, yet it's writing with appropriate 'tie-backs' direct and parenthetical) that you will not likely get lost for long. Buy it!!

A fine, detailed description of a period not well known. Having lived near Tuxedo Park for 11 years, I was curious about its fabled residents. But this book brought to light a towering figure who really did affect the course of America's involvement in World War II. Excellent account. Recommended, especially for those interested in science.

My thanks and congratulations to the author for this outstanding work of biography and history. Until a respected friend and colleague called Alfred Loomis and this book to my attention, I was aware of neither, sorry to say. Ms. Conant certainly cured that shortcoming on my part with her very capable writing. She handles a very large cast of family, social and professional connections so well that each seems to take on actual personal characteristics, so much so that I got the feeling I was coming to know them as individuals - not merely what each did or did not do. Very well done, so that the reader could practically sit in and participate in social situations or in the scientific undertakings, if it were possible to go back in time and walk into one of Alfred's doings. And how significant his doings were, as bond underwriter for the electric utilities, as the moving force behind urgent efforts to research and develop radar applications, and as Ernest Lawrence's close confidant and enabler in his highly consequential research. Outstanding treatment of what might have been a very dry topic. One aspect of the author's handling of scientific information, which generally is both capable and informative, falls short. Descriptions of early experimentation with electromagnetic waves and

microwaves include fatal effects on fish in water, and effects on the human mind/brain. What did Loomis learn about effects of microwaves on humans and other life, which could benefit public interests in protecting health regardless of government preference for secrecy? We don't know. Yes, radar and the A-bomb were significant developments, but so is safeguarding health against permanent genetic damage. See the recent public pronouncements of UK physicist Barrie Trower, for example.

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