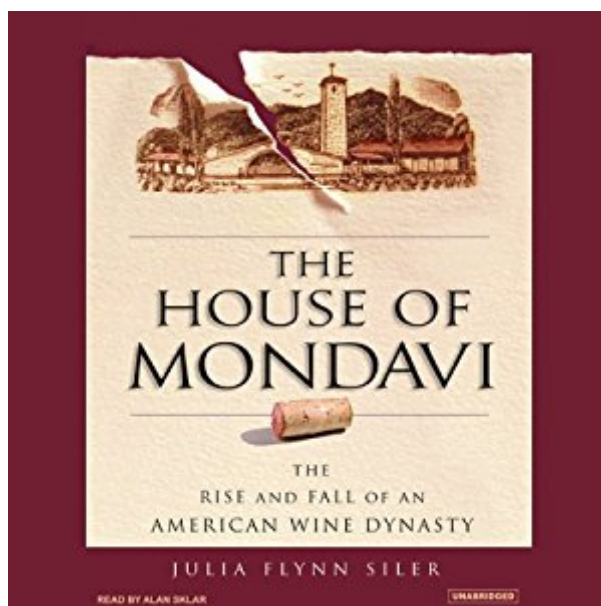


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# The House Of Mondavi: The Rise And Fall Of An American Wine Dynasty



## Synopsis

Set in California's lush Napa Valley and spanning four generations of a talented and visionary family, *The House of Mondavi* is a tale of genius, sibling rivalry, and betrayal. From 1906, when Italian immigrant Cesare Mondavi passed through Ellis Island, to the Robert Mondavi Corporation's twenty-first-century battle over a billion-dollar fortune, award-winning journalist Julia Flynn Siler brings to life both the place and the people in this riveting family drama. The blood feuds are as spectacular as the business triumphs. Cesare's sons, Robert and Peter, literally came to blows in the 1960s during a dispute touched off by the purchase of a mink coat, resulting in Robert's exile from the family—and his subsequent founding of a winery that would set off a revolution in American winemaking. Robert's sons, Michael and Timothy, as passionate in their own ways as their visionary father, waged battle with each other for control of the company before Michael's expansive ambitions ultimately led to a board coup and the sale of the business to an international conglomerate. A meticulously reported narrative based on thousands of hours of interviews, *The House of Mondavi* is bound to become a classic.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The subject matter is interesting, but the book is poorly edited and a bit of a slog to read. The author is like a pack rat with anecdotes and details, clinging to each of them even if they don't have any significance or move the story forward. If someone has an anecdote about the Mondavis, in it goes. I can see that a lot of energy went into compiling it all, but there was clearly the potential for this to

be a much better book.

This is a terrific history of the Mondavi family and the rise and fall of its wine empire. Family infighting and unwise business decisions and a dash of bad luck are part and parcel of this story. The author, Julia Flynn Siler, writes in a spellbinding manner. The approach and theme (page ix): "Over a period of two and a half years, the author interviewed all of the principle family members involved in the events leading to the sale of Robert Mondavi Corporation, seeking to understand how and why a seemingly "takeover proof" family-controlled company was sold over the objections of several key family members." The book takes us through four generations of the family. There at the beginning: Cesare and Rosa Mondavi (there is a useful genealogy on the inside of the cover page). The book describes their journey to California and the start of the family wine business. The book is divided into four parts--Foundation, Construction, Expansion, and the lugubrious finale, Demolition. Key themes: family infighting. Cesare's two sons, Robert and Peter had a major falling out, with Peter winning the family battle and ousting him from the family business. The father had sought a single condition when he began the purchase of the Charles Krug Winery--(page 23): "Robert and Peter must work together to build the business." The promise failed. After he left Charles Krug, Robert Mondavi engaged in a legal scorched earth policy against his brother and mother (who sided with Peter). The end result? Robert won and the rest of the family, in essence, lost. This sad story is told engagingly and leaves one scratching one's head as to what could have accounted for a family meltdown. Robert began his own wine business and brought his sons and daughter into key positions. Over time, he acquired other businesses and the venture expanded. However, eerily reminiscent of his own family falling out, his two sons had serious tensions between them, with very different visions of where the company should go. Interesting vignettes: the joint venture with the legendary Baron Philippe de Rothschild and his wife, who took over the reins after the Baron's death, Baroness Philippine de Rothschild. The book itself reads almost like a Greek tragedy, where the reader can see all the fault lines and can see disaster looming; however, the characters themselves as they lived their lives were unable to control events. This is a well written book that brings one into the world of winemaking and one family's successes and failures.

A well-researched book on the Mondavi family of Napa Valley. The family entertained Napa Valley for decades with their quarrels, lawsuits, affairs, extravagant bashes, etc. The book starts with the founders, Cesare and Rosa and continues into the fourth generation. This book is an eye-opener on this wine family. Their story was also the basis for Falcon Crest. It's easy to see why. The book is

worth reading.

Sad, sad interneccine struggles, but a tribute to Robert Mondavi's belief in Napa and wine.

This is not a perfect book - it seems over-long, and is dryly written - but it provides a fascinating look into the wine industry as it grew and developed in California. It follows the Mondavi family from their earliest efforts to the their world-class achievements - and failures. It shows how the personalities of people inevitably affect the performance of the companies they create or run, for good or ill. A good place to start to understand how California wines came to stand tall on the world stage.

A real page-turner. I'm loving reading the inside scoop of what happened to this family and how. It is truly sad to read the fate of the family patriarch (and the business) after subsequent generations didn't or were unable to follow his footsteps and the company declined. How hard it must have been for him after working his way to the top of the industry.

If you're interested in one of the great wine houses of the US, this is a great book. I read it while on vacation, hoping to join a book club about it the following week, but was unable to finish in time. It's not short. It canvases the rise of the Mondavi empire and catalogs the rise and fall of the family - the personal issues that plagued them. It's somewhat comforting to know even the best families have their own problems. I teetered back and forth on which of the brothers' sides I was on - the book certainly keeps you engaged. I also really enjoyed the smattering of name dropping - to hear the humble starts of so many of California's well know wine houses is so interesting! In passing, the author mentions names of the founders of many great wineries that started off as tour guides, or wine makers, back before wine was really anything in California. A great historical read. Now I need to get out to Napa to actually see the grounds!

Fascinating story of a great wine family and California wine history.

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