



The Last Mrs. Astor: A New York Story

Frances Kiernan

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"Kiernan's sharp-eyed biography brings back a woman who, far into her 90s, relished the dance of life."—*O Magazine*

The fabulous life of Brooke Astor, a pioneer of philanthropy and for decades a luminary of New York society. Hers is a story out of Edith Wharton. After a disastrous early marriage, Brooke Astor wedded the notoriously ill-tempered Vincent Astor, who died in 1959. In a highly publicized courtroom battle, Brooke fought off an attempt to break Vincent's will, which left some \$67 million to the Vincent Astor Foundation. As the foundation's president, Brooke would use this legacy to benefit New York, where the Astor fortune had been made. Brooke would personally visit each grant applicant and charm anyone she met. At her one-hundredth birthday, princes and presidents honored her, but in 2006 a grandson petitioned the courts to have his father removed as Brooke's guardian. Once again an Astor court battle became the stuff of headlines. This biography—based on firsthand knowledge and interviews with Brooke's friends and the heads of New York's great cultural institutions—gives us back the woman so loved and admired, whose hands-on approach would inspire future philanthropists.

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