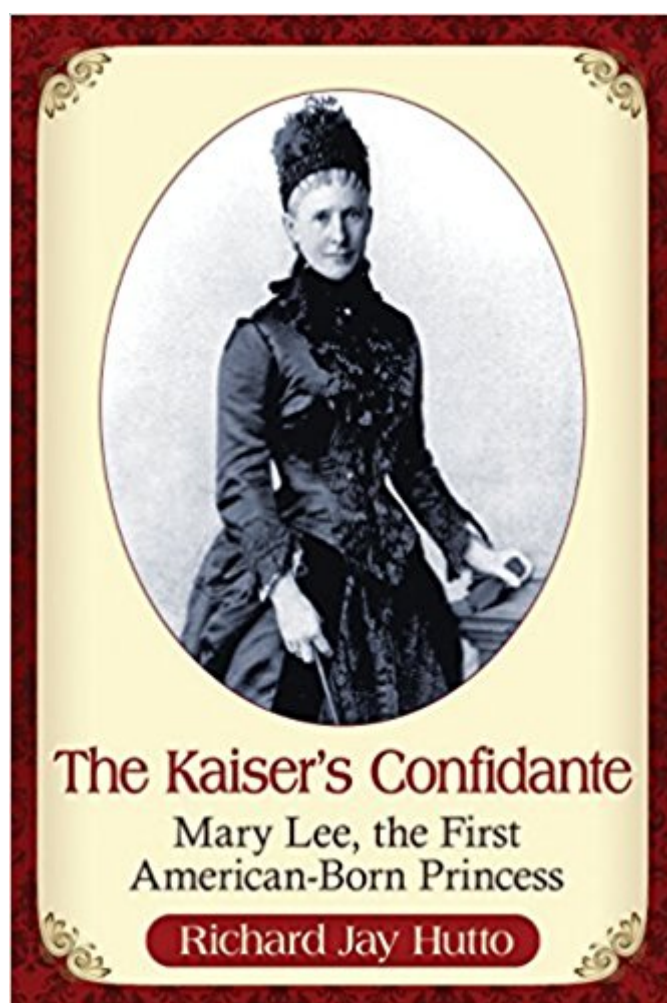


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The Kaiser's Confidante: Mary Lee, The First American-Born Princess



Synopsis

New York City native Mary Esther Lee (1837–1914) first married in 1864 the Prince von Noer, brother of the Queen of Denmark, and was created a princess in her own right after his death. An active philanthropist to Protestant causes, she then married Count Alfred von Waldersee whose close ties to the Prussian court made her an intimate friend of Kaiser Wilhelm II and a mentor and valued friend to his young wife. Although she preferred to remain in the background, Mary's influence caused intense jealousy by those at court who resented her friendship with the kaiser and kaiserin. This biography chronicles the remarkable life of an American woman whose wealth and influence enabled her to rise to power in the Prussian royal court.

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Customer Reviews

Just finished this very interesting and well researched biography of a young American woman who married into a German princely family, to be shortly widowed. Her second husband, Count von Waldersee, rose through the ranks of the Prussian military elite. Both husband and wife become

close to the Prussian royal family, including the future Kaiser Wilhelm II and also his wife. Laced with personal correspondence, the story provides an intimate insight into the dynamics of the royal courts, politicians such as Bismarck, as well as some colorful adventurers in "high places". But more importantly, Mary Lee diverged from the many American women who married into the European aristocracy, in that she followed strict religious path and intellectual life that was different from the many "socialites" who followed her. So aside from the grandeur of Old Europe, the tale takes some unexpected dark turns.

I was going to headline my review, "Who Knew?", but Deborah Wedick-Cooper got there ahead of me. Richard Jay Hutto's biography of Mary Lee provides a new dimension in understanding the reign of Kaiser Wilhelm II prior to World War I. Hutto contextualizes Wilhelm II's development as a young man by the role that Mary Lee played in his life. I also gained further understanding of the anti-Semitism in the German Empire that proliferated into the Germany of Hitler.

This was an excellent companion to the PBS presentation of Victoria. It was informative and expounded on the royal family lineage. The author is a friend of mine and I am so happy for him!

Very well written and insightful

Rick Hutto has brought us the fascinating tale of Mary Lee, the first American to have been made a princess in her own right and who occupied a central position at the German court in the decades prior to the first world war. While given a few pages in one of Mr. Hutto's earlier works, this biography expands and explains her evolution from American teen to mentor of Kaiser Wilhelm's less than socially stellar bride. Well researched and chock full of wonderful historical and geneological digressions, this book is sure to please the die hard royal junkie.

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