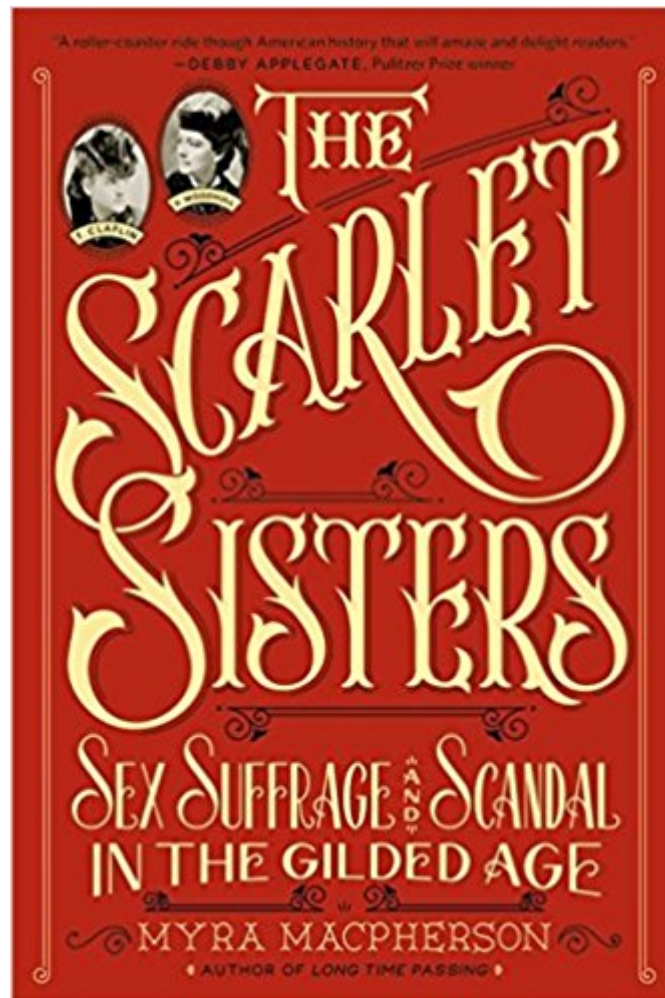




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# The Scarlet Sisters: Sex, Suffrage, And Scandal In The Gilded Age



## Synopsis

A fresh look at the life and times of Victoria Woodhull and Tennie Claflin, two sisters whose radical views on sex, love, politics, and business threatened the white male power structure of the nineteenth century and shocked the world. Here award-winning author Myra MacPherson deconstructs and lays bare the manners and mores of Victorian America, remarkably illuminating the struggle for equality that women are still fighting today. Victoria Woodhull and Tennessee "Tennie" Claflin-the most fascinating and scandalous sisters in American history-were unequaled for their vastly avant-garde crusade for women's fiscal, political, and sexual independence. They escaped a tawdry childhood to become rich and famous, achieving a stunning list of firsts. In 1870 they became the first women to open a brokerage firm, not to be repeated for nearly a century. Amid high gossip that he was Tennie's lover, the richest man in America, fabled tycoon Cornelius Vanderbilt, bankrolled the sisters. As beautiful as they were audacious, the sisters drew a crowd of more than two thousand Wall Street bankers on opening day. A half century before women could vote, Victoria used her Wall Street fame to become the first woman to run for president, choosing former slave Frederick Douglass as her running mate. She was also the first woman to address a United States congressional committee. Tennie ran for Congress and shocked the world by becoming the honorary colonel of a black regiment. They were the first female publishers of a radical weekly, and the first to print Karl Marx's Communist Manifesto in America. As free lovers they railed against Victorian hypocrisy and exposed the alleged adultery of Henry Ward Beecher, the most famous preacher in America, igniting the "Trial of the Century" that rivaled the Civil War for media coverage. Eventually banished from the women's movement while imprisoned for allegedly sending "obscenity" through the mail, the sisters sashayed to London and married two of the richest men in England, dining with royalty while pushing for women's rights well into the twentieth century. Vividly telling their story, Myra MacPherson brings these inspiring and outrageous sisters brilliantly to life.

## Customer Reviews

Sensational doesn't begin to describe the over-the-top reaction that greeted every aspect of the lives of nineteenth-century America's two most controversial sisters. Flamboyant, outspoken, opportunistic Victoria Claflin Woodhull and her younger sister, Tennie, were self-aggrandizing scene-stealers who tangled with Henry Ward Beecher, swindled Cornelius Vanderbilt, and antagonized Susan B. Anthony. Yet for all their pomp and bombast, they were unrepentant champions of equal rights for women in everything from the bedroom to the boardroom,

the voting booth to the battlefield. Dismissively patronized by men for being empty-headed fripperies and scathingly ostracized by women for their unladylike bravura, the sisters courageously battled such defamatory characterizations to bring their controversial views on monogamy and suffrage to packed lecture halls throughout the country. MacPherson draws a detailed portrait of the roller-coaster, rags-to-riches lives of two backwoods country girls who, seeking to better their own situation, hoped to do the same for women everywhere. Sadly, MacPherson concludes, many of their causes remain little changed 150 years after their tireless campaigns began. --Carol Haggas

--This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"THE SCARLET SISTERS has everything--from history and intrigue, to sex and money. Myra MacPherson has written this book with the care and professionalism of the great reporter she is but also with the wit, wisdom, and flair of the great novelist she definitely could be. A fabulous delight of a read." -- Jim Lehrer, former host of PBS NewsHour, playwright, and author of Top Down: A Novel of the Kennedy Assassination

"Read the epilogue first, to understand immediately why THE SCARLET SISTERS resonates so richly in today's political world. Myra MacPherson's rich understanding of the threads connecting these colorful pioneers to our contentious twenty-first century issues is wonderfully instructive." -- Lynn Sherr, author of Failure Is Impossible: Susan B. Anthony in Her Own Words and the forthcoming Sally Ride: America's First Woman in Space

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