



J.W. McConnell

William Fong

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J.W. McConnell (1877-1963), born to a poor farming family in Ontario, became one of the wealthiest and most powerful businessmen of his generation - in Canada and internationally.

Early in his career McConnell established the Montreal office of the Standard Chemical Company and began selling bonds and shares in both North America and Europe, establishing relationships that would lead to his enormous financial success. He was involved in numerous businesses, from tramways to ladies' fashion to mining, and served on the boards of several corporations. For nearly fifty years he was president of St Laurence Sugar and late in life he became the owner and publisher of the Montreal Star.

McConnell was an indefatigable and formidable fundraiser for the YMCA, the war effort of 1914/18, hospitals, and McGill University, where he served as governor for almost three decades. In 1937 he established what would become The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation, the first major foundation in Canada and still one of the best endowed.

J.W. McConnell was a principled and brilliant visionary with a strong work ethic and a deep commitment to the public good, a Rockefellerian figure in both big business and high society who quietly became one of the greatest philanthropists of his time. His life story - told in uncompromising detail by William Fong - is a study of raising, spending, and giving away money on the grandest scale.

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