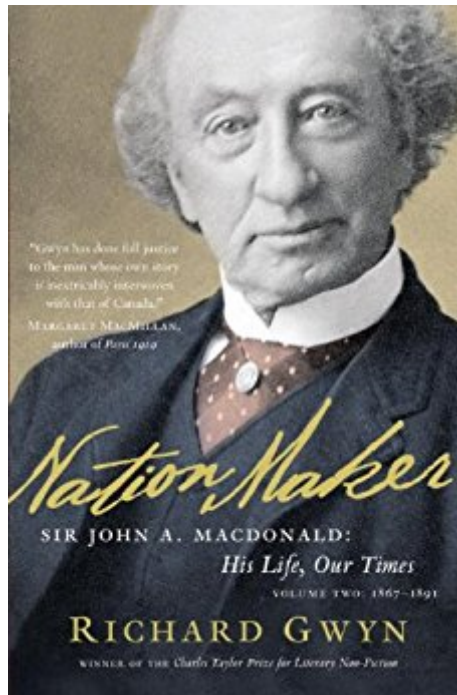


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Nation Maker: Sir John A. Macdonald: His Life, Our Times: 2



Synopsis

#1 NATIONAL BESTSELLER An exciting story, passionately told and rich in detail, this major biography is the second volume of the bestselling, award-winning *John A: The Man Who Made Us*, by well-known journalist and highly respected author Richard Gwyn. John A. Macdonald, Canada's first and most important prime minister, is the man who made Confederation happen, who built this country over the next quarter century, and who shaped what it is today. From Confederation Day in 1867, where this volume picks up, Macdonald finessed a reluctant union of four provinces in central and eastern Canada into a strong nation, despite indifference from Britain and annexationist sentiment in the United States. But it wasn't easy. The wily Macdonald faced constant crises throughout these years, from Louis Riel's two rebellions through to the Pacific Scandal that almost undid his government and his quest to find the spine of the nation: the railroad that would link east to west. Gwyn paints a superb portrait of Canada and its leaders through these formative years and also delves deep to show us Macdonald the man, as he marries for the second time, deals with the birth of a disabled child, and the assassination of his close friend Darcy McGee, and wrestles with whether Riel should hang. Indelibly, Gwyn shows us Macdonald's love of this country and his ability to joust with forces who would have been just as happy to see the end of Canada before it had really begun, creating a must-read for all Canadians. From the Hardcover edition.

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Customer Reviews

Nation Maker is an excellent look at the man and the times. It is 'moist' book, personal and colloquial rather than a dry and analytical historical survey. With Volume 1, it provides a sprawling epic of Canada's founding. John A. was a flawed man, at times a drunkard, erratic, melancholic, politically unscrupulous, who greased the machinery of governance with patronage. He was, however, a man who could get things done. From disparate ethnic and religious groups, he cobbled together a national consensus that flew in the face of the overwhelming logic of Canada's annexation to the U.S.; of those whose sole common goal was the avoidance of that fate. Fractious from the start these groups were motivated by allegiances (as British or French, Protestant or Catholic), most of whom were far more bitter towards their confreres than to an anomalous American threat.. and whose motives, fears, and prejudices were not easily reconciled. The era was marked by tension between radical religious polarities, notably the Ultramontane and Orange Order. The virulently anti-British Fenians represented an external and internal threat to Canada, and produced Canada's first and only political assassination, of D'Arcy McGee, the poet laureate of Canada's founding. McGee and Georges Etienne Cartier provided a vital force of charismatic idealism that counterbalanced MacDonald's acerbic expediency, and formed the foundation of a French, English political accord. It was MacDonald who provided the prose to this poetic idyll. By nature MacDonald was practical and flexible, not a visionary in the utopian sense or an ideologue.

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