



WILLIAM LAWRENCE BAILLIEU

*FOUNDER OF AUSTRALIA'S GREATEST
BUSINESS EMPIRE*

by Peter Yule

Available for extract
Publication date: March 2012
Hardie Grant... RRP \$65.00

Born in Queenscliff in 1859, William Lawrence Baillieu rose from a humble background to become a successful auctioneer during Melbourne's feverish land boom of the 1880s. He quickly built a large fortune, only to lose it all in the crash of the early 1890s. Ever the astute and daring entrepreneur, he resurrected his fortunes, and those of his family, beginning with real estate, share trading and gold mining and going on to build Australia's greatest diversified business empire.

Baillieu founded and remained the unquestioned leader of the Collins House group, which by 1914 had grown to become the most powerful force in Australian industry. The group dominated Australian mining, contributing to the increased industrial capability of Australia in the Second World War through its metals processing and manufacturing capabilities. He played a central role in the rise of such companies as Rio Tinto, the Herald & Weekly Times, Electrolytic Zinc, Dunlop, and Carlton & United Breweries.

Working together with the Zinc Corporation and Amalgamated Zinc companies, Baillieu provided much of the vision and leadership to pioneer the development of the minerals flotation processes. This solved the problem of separating zinc from the complex Broken Hill ores and positioned Australia at the forefront of flotation research and development within the global mining industry.

Following the First World War, Baillieu became increasingly interested in the business of farming. Between 1919 and 1926 he purchased properties in New South Wales, Queensland and Western Australia, investing considerable time and money in boosting their productivity. Despite having had little experience in pastoral and agricultural enterprise, Baillieu's entrepreneurial ability ensured a constant flow of ideas along with a commitment to maximising the return on his investment and a strong desire to see his sons Harry and Tom Baillieu prosper on the land.

In the first two decades of federation, 'Big Bill' Baillieu was a major figure in Victorian politics, being widely believed to be 'the puppet master who pulled the strings' behind every state ministry. He was also highly influential at the federal level, playing a central role in the establishment of the Nationalist government led by Billy Hughes in early 1917.

As a builder of businesses and constructor of new industries, Baillieu left a profound and lasting imprint on the economic and political environment of twentieth century Australia.

Peter Yule's biography is the first ever of this significant Australian, the founder of the Baillieu family dynasty, and arguably the most important individual in the development of the modern Australian economy.



About the Author

Peter Yule is a Research Fellow of the School of Historical and Philosophical Studies at the University of Melbourne. He has written widely on Australian economic and business history, with his recent books including a biography of Sir Ian Potter, a study of the Collins Class submarine project, a history of the Melbourne suburb of Carlton, and a history of Australian National Airways. He shares WL Baillieu's passion for golf.

William Lawrence Baillieu (Hardie Grant, RRP \$65.00) by Peter Yule, will be released in March 2012

To purchase the book online, visit www.amazon.com

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