

# Albert Lasker Before 1940

Albert Lasker was the son of Morris Lasker, who was the brother of Eduard Lasker, Prussian National Liberal Party Member of Parliament, and the author of Bismarck's plan for the unification of Germany around Prussia. In the 1870s, Morris Lasker was a partner of Marx & Kempner, who were Marx Marx and Harris Kempner. Morris Lasker had interests in the cotton business and was president of the Galveston Cotton Exchange.

[Morris Lasker / The Handbook of Texas Online](#)

When Harris Kempner died in 1894, his oldest son, Isaac Herbert Kempner, took over Harris Kempner's banking, insurance, railway, and cotton interests. Isaac married Henrietta Blum, and Isaac Herbert Kempner Jr. was a founding board member of the Harris & Eliza Kempner Fund.

[Galveston, Texas / Nostalgiaville](#)

[Founding Board / Kempner Fund](#)

[Harris Kempner / The Handbook of Texas Online](#)

[Isaac Herbert Kempner / The Handbook of Texas Online](#)

[Isaac Leon Blum / The Handbook of Texas Online](#)

Eduard Lasker was a good friend of [Andrew Dickson White](#), a very powerful member of the Yale secret society Skull and Bones, and of members of the German revolutionary movement.

Albert Lasker had been a Republican ever since working on the congressional campaign of Galveston sugar merchant R.B. Hawley in 1896. He was a founder of the Theodore Roosevelt Society, and until World War II, a militant isolationist. In 1917, Lasker was assistant to the secretary of agriculture during the administration of Woodrow Wilson; chairman of the United States Shipping Board in the Harding administration from 1921-23; and in 1940 was a delegate to the Republican National Convention and floor manager for its nominee Wendell Wilkie. In 1928, Albert Lasker gave the University of Chicago medical faculty \$1 million to study aging, geriatrics, and degenerative diseases. He was a trustee of the university from 1937 to 1942. A fellow benefactor of the University, Max Epstein of the General American Tank Car Co., later helped introduce him to Mary Woodard Lasker. [Robert Maynard Hutchins](#), the president and later chancellor of the University of Chicago from 1929 until 1951, was a member of the advisory committee of Yale's Institute of Human Relations, and later served with Albert Lasker's crony Paul G. Hoffman in the Ford Foundation and its Fund for the Republic.

[The University of Chicago and its Donors, 1889-1930 / University of Chicago](#)

## The Shipping Board

When the Van Camp canning company couldn't pay its bill to Lord & Thomas, Lasker and four other large creditors took it over. One of these was Indiana banker William G. Irwin, later a Republican National Committeeman from Indiana, who introduced him to Will H. Hays, who recruited him to the Republican National Committee. From there, he was appointed to the Shipping Board, which had been rocked by scandal dating from the Wilson Administration. Indiana banker William Glanton Irwin was the original financier of [Cummins Engine Company](#).

The Saga of Hog Island, 1917-1921: The Story of the First Great War Boondoggle, by James J. Martin. During the First World War, it was proposed that the government embark on a massive program to build more ships. It is a now-familiar story of the government contractors raking in vast sums of money, while producing virtually nothing. The American International Corporation created for the purpose "boasted of a board of directors which read like a Who's Who of American industry and finance. It had an interlocking relationship with a bewildering variety of subsidiaries and related firms, while its ties with a

legion of subcontractors and materials suppliers during the Hog Island shipyard and ship construction days created such a maze that a veritable regiment of auditors was never able to lay out the situation in any clear way to the satisfaction of any students or investigators of this incredible business. Among its directors were Frank A. Vanderlip, President of the National City Bank of New York, Theodore N. Vail, President of American Telephone and Telegraph, Robert Dollar and TP Grace, shipping line magnates, Percy A. Rockefeller, Pierre S. du Pont, J. Ogden Armour, Robert S. Lovett, William E. Corey, Otto H. Kahn, C.A. Coffin, John D. Ryan, W.S. Saunders, G.L. Tripp, A.H. Wiggin, T.A. Stillman, H.F. Herrick, Beekman Winthrop, Edward S. Webster and Charles Augustus Stone.... Where Gillen and other witness admitted to lapses which amounted to \$2 billion, Albert D. Lasker, who assumed the direction of the Shipping Board under President Harding, on July 16, 1921 declared that the total government 'loss' on the ship construction, operation and leasing activities during the World War came to \$4,000,000,000--double the figure originally thought. But apparently everyone involved agreed to let bygones be bygones, and a bipartisan attitude of myopia and forgetfulness attended the end of the Shipping Board investigation. Lasker also announced that no one in particular was to blame, and the four billion dollars could be charged off to 'incompetence,' while he was simultaneously telling the nation that Shipping Board losses for the fiscal year which had just ended on July 1, 1921 amounted to an additional \$280,000,000.... In the liberal monopolized textbook-writing industry in the almost 60 years since the end of the First World War we have been doused with oceans of stale indignation and feigned moralization about the few million dollars involved in the scandals of the Harding Administration. The billions involved in the defense and war construction scandals of the preceding Wilson Administration have disappeared from the story and the broad general record without a trace."

[Martin / Blancmange.net](#)

The American International Corporation was used to finance the Bolshevik Revolution in the USSR (Wall Street and the Bolshevik Revolution, by Antony C. Sutton. Chapter VIII, 120 Broadway, New York City.)

[Wall Street and the Bolshevik Revolution / Reformed Theology](#)

"Miss Elizabeth C. Stone of New York, daughter of Melville E. Stone, General Manager of the Associated Press, named the 6,200-ton cargo carrier launched at Hog Island today American Press as a tribute to the loyalty of newspapers during the war." Assisted by AIC President Matthew C. Brush, she drove a couple of rivets as well. Members of the launch party included seven other members of the Stone family. (Launch cargo carrier named American Press. New York Times, Dec. 24, 1919, p. 4.) [Matthew C. Brush](#), Vice President of AIC in 1918 and President in 1923, was also a director of General American Investors, Inc.

The Albert and Mary Lasker Foundation's audio of Albert Lasker's address to the Red Cross in 1936, with introduction by John Barton Payne. They sound stewed. Note that the Lasker Foundation incorrectly states that President Harding established the Shipping Board, and that Lasker was its first head.

[Albert Lasker Addresses the American Red Cross / The Albert and Mary Lasker Foundation](#)

Rear Admiral William S. Benson, retired Chief of Naval Operations (1915-19), was evidently the functional head of the Shipping Board from 1920 to 1928. He was Commander of the Philadelphia Navy Yard from 1913 to 1915.

[Admiral William S. Benson, USN \(1855-1932\) / Naval Historical Center](#)

[William Shepherd Benson / Arlington National Cemetery](#)

[Who's Who - William Benson / First World War.com](#)

Benson's predecessor as Chairman of the Shipping Board was Chicago railroad attorney [John Barton Payne](#), who subsequently became Chairman of the Red Cross, and a member of the advisory committee of Yale's Institute of Human Relations.

Other business connections from the 1920s:

## J. Ogden Armour

Armour, of the Chicago meat packing firm, along with chewing gum magnate William Wrigley, were Lasker's partners in their purchase of the Chicago Cubs baseball team in 1916. Armour was a director of National City Bank and American International Corporation.

## William Benton

[William Benton](#) is credited with originating modern techniques of polling while employed at Lord & Thomas. "After quitting Lord & Thomas, Benton founded Benton & Bowles in partnership with Chester Bowles, became publisher of the Encyclopedia Britannica, and later rose to be Assistant Secretary of State and Senator from Connecticut, amongst much else." Albert Lasker was "the single largest contributor to Benton's campaign when he ran for Senator." (Taken at the Flood. The Story of Albert D. Lasker. By John Gunther. Harper & Brothers, 1960.)

## The Foreman Bank

"In 1931, the great Foreman Bank in Chicago got into severe difficulties. Lasker was intimately connected with this institution; several members of the Foreman family were his cronies, he had \$2,000,000 on deposit there, and, above all, his daughter Mary had married Gerhard Foreman, a youthful member of the clan, in 1927... To help save it, Lasker made his whole \$2,000,000 account available to the family; the attempt failed, and he lost every nickel of the two million... Lasker, [John] [Hertz](#), McCulloch, and William Wrigley, Jr., were all directors of Foreman. If this bank should close its doors (it was the third largest in the city) thousands of men and women would be ruined and there would certainly be a panic in Chicago, and perhaps throughout the nation. At the last minute it was taken over by the First National Bank of Chicago and catastrophe was averted... Lasker then became a director of First National, and had a cordial relationship with it for many years." (From Taken at the Flood. The Story of Albert D. Lasker. By John Gunther. Harper and Brothers, 1960.) Hertz, Lasker, and Charles A. McCulloch, Chairman of the John R. Thompson Co., were directors of the First National in 1932-33, joining Lasker's old friend Philip D. Block of Inland Steel; former Wisconsin Governor [Walter J. Kohler Sr.](#); Col. Robert R. McCormick of the Chicago Tribune; and Marvin Hughitt Jr., son of the [Blackstone Zionist](#) financier. (Display Ad 11. Chicago Daily Tribune, Jan. 2, 1932 p. 16; Display Ad 23. Chicago Daily Tribune, Jul. 8, 1933 p. 23.) Walter J. Kohler Jr. also became a governor of Wisconsin, as well as a leading official of the American Cancer Society.

## George Washington Hill

(Late in 1923) "The New York office of Lord & Thomas had done substantial business before the war, but was much reduced in strength. Now a man named Lou Hartman, who has a prosperous agency of his own in New York today, came to Lord & Thomas in New York and brought with him a small American Tobacco account for one of its cigarettes known as Blue Boar. Hartman worked at a complicated and ingenious scheme whereby the manufacturer, in order to attract sales, made up to the dealer the amount of federal tax on each pack of cigarettes. Blue Boar business rose steeply in consequence, and the American Tobacco people wondered if the same process could not be extended to Lucky Strike.

"The President of the [American Tobacco Company](#) was Percival Hill. His son, George Washington Hill, was in charge of advertising for the company. Hartman knew both well. Lasker, eager for the Lucky Strike account, came to New York, and Hartman asked him to lunch at the Hotel Vanderbilt (which had just been opened) to meet the Hills. A.D. at once opened up on them by saying that they must stop frittering away their advertising on a variety of small accounts - all their minor brands - and throw everything into one gigantic effort to build up Lucky Strikes. Otherwise, they would be drowned by Chesterfield and Camel. The Hills were much impressed by Lasker's line of thought, and before lunch was over proffered him the Lucky Strike account." (From Taken at the Flood. The Story of Albert D. Lasker. By John Gunther. Harper and Brothers, 1960.)

## David Sarnoff

David Sarnoff, president / chairman of the board of RCA from 1930 to 1970; formed NBC in 1926 after acquiring AT&T's broadcasting assets, and RKO motion pictures. Sarnoff was a close friend of the Laskers, who met Albert Lasker during a publicity cruise on the SS Leviathan during Lasker's tenure on the Shipping Board. Lasker bought a large amount of RCA stock, whose rise in value largely paid for his mansion in Lake Forest, Il. Lasker's friend [Lewis L. Strauss](#) of Kuhn, Loeb was a director of RCA.

[David Sarnoff biography / Museum of Broadcasting](#)

### The President's Commission on Heart Disease, Cancer and Stroke, 1964

Members of the 1964 President's Commission on Heart Disease, Cancer, and Stroke included [Florence Mahoney](#) and other prominent Lasker associates (Dr. [R. Lee Clark](#), [Emerson Foote](#), Dr. Sidney Farber, Mrs. Harry Truman, Gen. David Sarnoff, Dr. Irving S. Wright) to the panel, chaired by Dr. [Michael DeBakey](#). Dr. Maureen Henderson was on the staff, and Abraham Lilienfeld was the staff director.

[President's Commission, 1964 / tobacco document](#)

The anti-smokers accused Sarnoff of "greed, cowardice, [and] lack of real leadership": "CIGARET SCANDAL. Profits vs. public health. Tobacco, advertising, television, tax-bureau interests smother public health voices. Greed, cowardice, lack of real leadership produces vicious pact between business interests and politicians. Tobacco lobby killed \$1.9 million program sponsored by the U.S. Public Health Service to educate teen-agers against dangers of smoking. President's Commission on Heart Disease, Cancer & Stroke voted overwhelmingly to recommend law requiring health warning in all cigaret advertising. Resolution killed by Commission member David Sarnoff, RCA chairman threatened to appeal directly to President Johnson if resolution passed. Said it would cost him his job at RCA (parent company of NBC-TV, which grosses \$30 million annually in cigaret advertising). Sarnoff's argument against resolution: 'Maybe it's better to lose your lungs than to lose your freedom.' Commission members shocked. Believe Sarnoff should not have accepted assignment on President's Commission. Having accepted, should have subordinated personal interests. Sarnoff should resign from Commission immediately. Consensus of other members guarantees passage of resolution if it is introduced." (The Gallagher Report, Nov. 18, 1964. In: Cigarette Tow Newsletter, Dec. 15, 1964.)

[Gallagher Report, 1964 / tobacco document](#)

Sarnoff told his side of the story to Robert B. Walker of American Tobacco, when they met on a plane: "The General was pleased with my comment, but he made it clear that his position did not stem from the fact that the tobacco industry was a big advertiser on NBC; rather, he said he was a champion of the free enterprise system and against what he referred to as 'fanatics'.... Part of the report drafted by Foote was so unacceptable to General Sarnoff in its condemnation of the cigarette industry in the statement that 'cigarettes cause death,' and further - if I understood him correctly - cigarette smoking and advertising should be outlawed, that he locked horns with Foote. He said that these statements were uncalled for, referred to them as the work of a fanatic." He threatened to resign, or else to refuse to sign the report and submit a very strong dissenting opinion.

"General Sarnoff then made the point that all the discussion and everything to do with the work of the Committee was to be held highly confidential and was not to pass beyond this 'closed door' behind which the Committee met. Subsequent to this, his office began to receive telephone calls from writers of I.F. Stone's Weekly, the Gallagher Report, and Advertising Age asking for comment on his part with regard to the disagreement which they had learned about. Sarnoff declined to make any comment, and was furious to think that news of what had transpired had leaked. He put 'his own people' to work on it to trace the leak and they reported to him that the leak came through Foote. He has, therefore, put the stamp of distrust and dishonesty on Foote and has debated whether to a. Issue a statement regarding his position; or b. Talk to President Johnson about Foote. He has not reached a decision, but declared Foote as an

arch-enemy, and then asked for my opinion and what I knew about Foote."

Walker said that he "suspected that [Foote] was operating under the aegis of Mrs. Albert Lasker whose husband also accumulated a great deal of wealth through his association with American Tobacco particularly in the days of Lord & Thomas which was owned by Albert Lasker and which handled all cigarette advertising for American Tobacco.

"At this point General Sarnoff interrupted me to say that he and Mrs. Sarnoff had been for many years very dear friends of Mary Lasker. He too felt that Foote was operating under her aegis and he intended to see her with respect to Foote whom she was encouraging and whom he again referred to as a fanatic.

"He made the further point that he had every reason to be on the team that fought cancer as his own wife had undergone surgery for cancer five years ago (removal of a breast) and is considered to be cured; also, his brother died at the age of 60 of cancer. In any event, he said he was going to straighten out Mary Lasker's thinking or they would no longer be friends." (Walker Memorandum Re: Talk With General David Sarnoff, Dec. 2, 1964.)

[Walker Memorandum, 1964 / tobacco document](#)

We should be so lucky as to have this kind of leadership today. While gibbering rabid accusations against business interests who resist their fascist proposals, the anti-smokers gloss over their own powerful lobby, which has misused vast sums from the taxpayers for their own political purposes, who instigated the creation of this Commission in the first place, and who endeavored to stack it with nothing but fanatics and lackeys. It was not the business interests they besmirch, but the anti-smokers, who turned America into a giant Tuskegee Experiment by suppressing research on infection.

## **James Middleton Cox**

Cox was the former governor of Ohio and owned the Cox Newspaper chain. Mary Lasker's friend [Florence Mahoney](#) married his ex-son-in-law Daniel Mahoney, the president of Cox. Albert Lasker became friends with Cox and the Mahoneys after the 1920 presidential election, when Harding beat Cox. Cox was reportedly the only Democrat Lasker would allow at his parties in Chicago.

## **Thomas Logan**

Thomas F. Logan was a close friend of David Sarnoff, and his agency handled RCA's advertising (and created Sarnoff's heroic biographical myths), as well as that of General Electric, Anaconda Copper (now Anaconda Minerals), the New York Central, and Cities Service. The Logan agency was merged with Lord & Thomas in 1926.

## **Paul G. Hoffman**

[Paul Gray Hoffman](#) was a junior member of the staff of Albert Russell Erskine, the head of Studebaker, when he and Albert Lasker first met. Eventually, Hoffman became president of the Studebaker Corporation; president of the Committee for Economic Development, administrator of the Marshall Plan from 1935 to 1948; and president of the Ford Foundation from 1953 to 1956. He was a delegate to the United Nations from 1956 to 1957, and managing director of the UN Special Fund (later called the UN Development Program) from 1959 to 1972. His first wife Dorothy Brown died in 1961, and he married Mary Lasker's close friend [Anna Lederer Rosenberg](#) in 1963. He was also an officer of the OSS.

## **John Hertz**

Albert Lasker suffered little damage in the 1929 stock market crash because of John Hertz, of Yellow Cab and Hertz car rental fame, to whom he was so close that they had a joint stock account. "This was largely

because John Hertz, with stunning intuition, guessed what was going to happen and sold some of their holdings just before the market collapsed. He was in the nick of time. Lasker, in truth, did not want to sell; Hertz overrode him and in fact went to his comptroller in the Lord & Thomas offices and arranged to liquidate some of his holdings without even letting him know." (From: Taken at the Flood, The Story of Albert D. Lasker, by John Gunther. Harper & Brothers, 1960.)

General Motors bought the Yellow Cab Manufacturing Company in 1926, and Hertz joined GM's Board of Directors. He became a major partner in Lehman Brothers in 1933, and served until 1961. During World War II, he was on the staff of Undersecretary of War Robert P. Patterson as his expert advisor on wheeled vehicles. He later served as a director of the Arthritis and Rheumatism Foundation and a trustee of the Lovelace Foundation for Medical Education and Research.

[John Daniel Hertz and Fannie Kesner Hertz bio / Hertz Foundation](#)

## **The 1928 Lasker Foundation for Medical Research at the University of Chicago**

"An initial gift of \$1,000,000 was made by Albert D. and Flora W. Lasker on Jan. 7 to establish the Foundation whose program at present is to be an attack on the degenerative diseases. The Advisory Committee is composed of Dr. F.C. McLean, Chairman of the Department of Medicine at the University of Chicago; Dr. D.B. Pheister, Chairman of the Department of Surgery; Dr. A.J. Carlson, Chairman of the Department of Physiology; Dr. H.G. Wells, Chairman of the Department of Pathology; Alfred E. Cohn of the Rockefeller Institute; and Mr. Lasker." (First Lasker Study to be Bright's Disease. New York Times, Jan. 28, 1928, pg 5.) Lasker was a trustee of the University from 1937 to 1942. [Robert Maynard Hutchins](#) was president and later chancellor of the University of Chicago from 1929 until 1951, when he became associate director of the Ford Foundation, with Lasker's old crony, Paul Hoffman.

The Times later did a big spread on the Lasker Foundation (Science Attacks Slow Ills of Old Age. By Eunice Fuller Barnard. New York Times, Feb. 12, 1928, pg 134.) It featured a picture of two teenagers, and claimed that slouching was a sign of "later development of chronic disease," while a stilted and artificial pose like that which the rich people favor in their inbred show animals was a sign of health. [It is surely familiar to many generations of Americans, and it is nice to know where this stupid nonsense came from!] Assorted pooh-bahs of the health establishment rendered their opinions, including Alfred E. Cohn; Dr. [Eugene Lyman Fisk](#), who was quoted at length; E.W. Knopf and Louis I. Dublin of Metropolitan Life Insurance Co.; Dr. Louis L. Harris, Health Commissioner of New York City; Dr. Wendell C. Phillips, former President of the American Medical Association; and Dr. C. Ward Crampton of the Post Graduate Medical School and Hospital.

A.J. Carlson and H. Gideon Wells were both teachers of Dr. [Evarts A. Graham](#).

### **Anton Julius Carlson**

Carlson was active in the American Physiology Society between 1904 and 1950. (10th APS President (1923-1925) Anton Julius Carlson (1875-1956.)

[Anton Julius Carlson / American Physiological Society](#)

### **Alfred Einstein Cohn**

Alfred E. Cohn (1879-1957) was one of the first cardiologists in the US. He joined the Rockefeller Institute of Medical Research in 1911, and a few years later became leader of the laboratory and clinical service devoted to heart disease until retiring in 1944. He was involved in the New York Heart Association, New York Academy of Medicine, Veterans Administration, China Medical Board, Asia Institute, Sydenham Hospital, and the Committee for Displaced Foreign Scholars and Displaced Foreign Physicians. (Alfred E. Cohn Papers, 1900-(1920-1954)-1980. Rockefeller University Archives.) In 1925 he was visiting professor at Union Medical College, Peking, China. During World War II he was a special

advisor to the Board of Economic Welfare. (Alfred Einstein Cohn. College of Physicians and Surgeons Obituary Database.)

[Alfred E. Cohn Papers / Rockefeller University](#)

[Alfred E. Cohn obituary / Columbia University](#)

Cohn's friends included Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter; Dr. Peyton Rous; Melville H. Cane, New York lawyer who was a boyhood friend and was the executor of his estate; Dr. Henry A. Murray, Professor of Psychiatry at Harvard; and Dr. Detlev Bronk, head of the Rockefeller Institute. He left the Rockefeller Institute his library of 6,000 volumes. (Friends Honor Dr. A.E. Cohn at Library Dedication. New York Times Dec. 4, 1959.)

### **Franklin Chambers McLean**

"In 1914, McLean joined the staff of the Rockefeller Institute in New York. While there he formed close relationships with Alfred E. Cohn, Donald D. Van Slyke, and Rufus Cole as well as meeting Abraham Flexner and Simon Flexner." In 1916, he was placed in charge of the Rockefeller Foundation-sponsored Peking Union Medical College. In 1923 he was invited to direct the new medical school being planned at the University of Chicago, which opened in 1927. McLean was a correspondent of Donald E. Baxter, who had been a medical missionary in China and founded the company which became [Baxter International](#); and of Harold Loucks, who was chairman of the Department of Surgery at Peking Union and later a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, and presumably a forebear of Baxter International's former CEO, Vernon R. Loucks Jr., Skull & Bones Class of 1957.

[Guide to the Franklin C. McLean Papers / University of Chicago](#)

### **Dallas B. Phemister**

(A Biography of Dallas B. Phemister, MD. By Jack D. McCarthy. University of Chicago Surgical Society.)

[Dallas B. Phemister / Surgical Society, University of Chicago](#)

### **H. Gideon Wells**

Wells was a member of the Board of Directors of the [American Society for the Control of Cancer](#) in 1936. [Clarence Cook Little](#) was the Managing Director, [James Ewing](#), who accompanied Little to testify for the National Cancer Act of 1937, was Chairman. Winthrop W. Aldrich (Nelson A. Rockefeller's uncle); Haven Emerson, Professor of Public Health at Columbia University and member of the advisory board of Yale's Institute of Human Relations; Samuel Clark Harvey, Chairman of Surgery at Yale and a longtime crony of Harvey Cushing; Frederick L. Hoffman, Prudential Life Insurance statistician; Thomas Parran, who became Surgeon General from 1936 to 1948; and [Stanley P. Reimann](#) and [Edwin B. Wilson](#), future members of the Tobacco Industry Research Council, were also directors.

[ASCC, 1936 / tobacco document](#)

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