

**Volume 3**

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**Belle Huntington - Part II**

**Lead: Born of humble circumstances in Richmond, Arabella Yarrington Huntington in 1900 was considered by many to be the richest woman in the world.**

**Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.**

**Content: After helping to build the first transcontinental railroad, Collis Potter Huntington went south to explore investment opportunities. During his stays at a Richmond, Virginia boardinghouse, he fell in love with the daughter of the owner who**

**also served as barmaid, Arabella. She was thirty years his junior but a vivacious and beautiful woman. She moved to New York, became his mistress, and bore him a son in 1870.**

**Huntington still lived with his first wife but settled on Arabella and his son an increasingly lavish lifestyle. Often she traveled with him by private train to inspect his far-flung holdings, sometimes introduced as his niece. She was a quick study in languages and art history and developed a refined sense of taste. Arabella came to enjoy the luxuries Collis could pour out on her and when his ailing wife died, she married him in 1884. Presiding at the ceremony was the eminent Protestant pulpiteer, Henry Ward Beecher.**

**No longer needing to hide, Arabella quickly took on the demeanor of American royalty. Collis acquired for her a Fifth Avenue townhouse, a Long Island estate, a palace on Nob Hill in San Francisco, and a retreat in the Adirondack Mountains. She began to demonstrate exuberant habits of acquisition. Guiding her son Archer and Collis' favorite nephew Henry Huntington, she accumulated a huge collection of eighteenth and nineteenth century paintings. This accumulation expanded in years following Collis Huntington's death in 1900. She inherited \$150, 000,000.**

**At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.**

## **Resources**

**Evans, Cerinda. *Collis Potter Huntington*. Newport News, Virginia: Mariners' Museum, 1954.**

**Rouse, Parke, Jr. "Belle Huntington, Her Men and Her Muse," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 88 (4, October 1980): 387-400.**

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