

**Volume 18**

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**Suez Canal - II**

**Lead: In 1869, finally, the land bridge between Egypt and Suez was pierced with a canal, thanks in large measure to Ferdinand de Lesseps.**

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

**Content: He was no engineer, had no great fortune, had no access to capital, and was in no way an effective administrator, unanimated by tedium. Yet, if anyone might be called the Father of the Suez, it was de Lesseps. Other than his indefatigable energy and dedication to the project, he largely succeeded in building the canal**

**because of his personal connection to two people.**

**De Lesseps attended the Lycée Napoleon and was destined to follow his father into a career as a diplomat. Posted to Lisbon, Tunis, Rotterdam, Barcelona and Madrid, he also spent seven years in Egypt. During this last he had the occasion to befriend a young aristocrat, Mohammad Said, who was overweight, unappealing, without friends. Shortly after De Lesseps' wife died in 1853, he received word that Egypt's viceroy had been assassinated and his successor was his long-time friend Mohammed. Upon their reunion Said asked de Lesseps on what great enterprise he should focus his new administration and his**

**energies. Lesseps, after brief hesitation, suggested building a canal across the Suez.**

**The second whose relationship with de Lesseps proved decisive in securing funding and support for the canal was Eugénie de Montijo, the half-Spanish, half-Scottish Empress of Napoleon III. She was a distant cousin of de Lesseps and had for most of her life looked up to her dear Fernando. Half the money for the canal came from 25,000 small French investors, influenced in no small measure by Empresses' faith in her brilliant entrepreneurial cousin. Next time: Getting it built.**

# **At the University of Richmond's School of Professional and Continuing Studies, I'm Dan Roberts.**

## **Resources**

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**Keith, Kyle. *Suez*. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1991.**

**Kinross, Patrick Balfour, Baron. *Between Two Seas: The Creation of the Suez Canal*. New York, NY: Morrow, 1969.**

**McCullough, David. *The Path Between the Seas: The Creation of the Panama Canal, 1870-1914*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1977.**

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