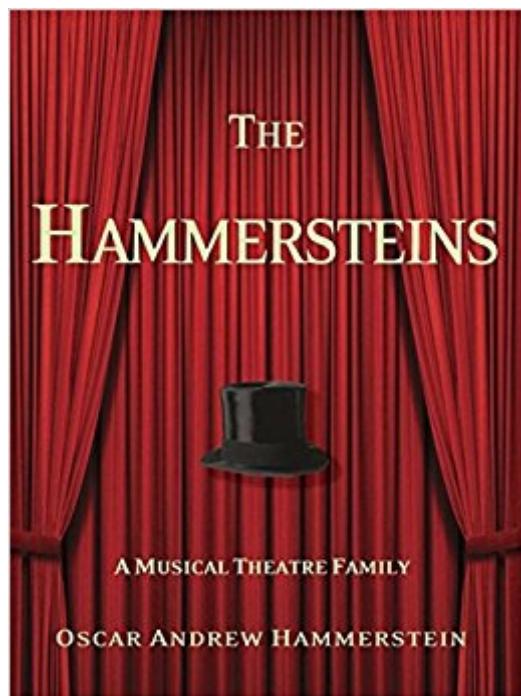


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# Hammersteins: A Musical Theatre Family



## Synopsis

The remarkable, unprecedeted biography of the Hammersteins, Broadway's greatest and most influential family, as told by Oscar Andrew Hammerstein The Hammersteins is the story of one of Broadway's most creative and productive families. It is a story that begins in 1864 when Oscar Hammerstein I emigrates to America, establishes himself as a successful cigar merchant and turns his attention to the business of music and theaters. He builds many theaters including New York's most majestic opera house. He turns Times Square (then Longacre Square) into the theater capital of the world. His sons, Willie and Arthur carry on the tradition and nurture such talents as Will Rogers, W.C. Fields, Al Jolson, Houdini, and Charlie Chaplin. Willie's son Oscar II becomes the most successful lyricist of all time, writing the story and words to the Broadway shows Showboat, Oklahoma, South Pacific, Carousel, The King and I, and The Sound of Music. The accomplishments of this family are monumental. Their tale is enchanting.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Oscar Hammerstien II's grandson (the grandson of the original Mr. Hammerstein) pays tribute to his lineage with an insightful and affectionate coffee table scrapbook. The youngest Oscar, a family historian and university lecturer, recounts a legacy worthy of a great American clan à “ one filled with as many if-at-first-you-don't-succeed failures as eventual hard won triumphs. Oscar I rose from destitute German immigrant to cigar impresario, using his wealth to build grand, often grandiose, theaters and hire opera singers to rival the Met. He lost his fortune many times and made numerous enemies, but never lost sight of his dream of bringing opera to the people, transforming himself

along the way into Times Square's first theatrical entrepreneur. Likewise, before Oscar II became the most influential librettist-lyricist in musical theater (South Pacific; Oklahoma!), he had a string of embarrassments. Although a family tree could have helped readers keep track of all the players, reading Hammerstein's book, stuffed with photos of relations and colleagues (and theaters, programs, and sheet music) is like peeking into a family album while grandpa shares stories of eccentricities and affairs, deathbed promises, and larger-than-life theatrics. Like Oscar II's musicals, it's intelligent, fun, and nimbly written. (Oct.) (c) Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved.

Written by Oscar "Andy" Hammerstein (Oscar II's grandson),<sup>Â</sup> *The Hammersteins*<sup>Â</sup> presents a multi-layered portrait of the Hammerstein legacy, complete with personal and professional highlights, as well as the scandals and tragedies. The book also draws heavily upon the family archives, presenting a rich collection of photographs, theatre blueprints, letters, programs, patents, and more, much of which has never been seen before.<sup>Â</sup> *The Hammersteins*<sup>Â</sup> is a deeply personal story of an American family living the American dream

Mostly, I enjoyed this biography of Oscar Hammersteins I and II. About "I" I knew little, so I was glad to learn about "I"'s entrepreneurial successes and failures. About "II", I felt that much was left out or summarized when I wished the author had gone into greater detail about "II"'s later years. "II"'s author-grandson and I share a great respect for *CAROUSEL*. Like the author, I consider Bill's soliloquy in *CAROUSEL* as the finest moment in musical comedy. I don't know, however, how necessary it was to quote the whole soliloquy in his text. Graduating from high school in 1953, I remember that we sang "You'll Never Walk Alone" at graduation. Many seniors at many other schools at the time did also. When I was in my twenties, I heard that there was scarcely a moment in any given day, when a Rodgers-Hammerstein song wasn't played on some radio station or other. Which leads me to a second-criticism: I think more detail should have been given to the relationship between Rodgers and "II". I don't recall that the author even mentioned Rodgers' last work or date of demise. The pictures were fine. On the whole an enjoyable coffee table book.

Reading this great book is to visit with a few great friends: the musicals. My wife of 46 years introduced me to *The Sound Of Music*, then *Carousel* and on and on. In reading the story behind these great American stage events has been a marvelous reunion! Many times I laughed and then she'd tears over these great stories! Many thanks for this walk back through many joyfully happy events of Enchanted Evenings!

This family is an example of "The very soil that music grows in" ... from start to finish on the American scene Theatre, Opera Vaudeville and memorable musicals this publication delights all with the highs and lows of the Hammerstein involvement ... a book with many good quality photographs and references of events etc ... great quality paper & printing enhances this memorable edition

Always loved his music but never knew much about the man. I have even greater admiration for him and love his music even more. Anyone that loves American musicals should read this book. It give great insight to how it emerged.

It is a great book!

This is a fantastic book. The depth and detail it goes into without being dull or boring is just about perfect. I am a musical theatre major and found this book to be enthralling. It also has great pictures and is a decently quick read for how much information is included. I highly recommend this book!  
Well done.

My husband is a Movie and Broadway enthusiast. especially Oscar Hammerstein. He watched the history of the family on Biography a television program and was thrilled when he received the book for a birthday present..

Doesn't everyone love Hammerstein's music? Lots of great background material in this book. PBS offered the book "free" with a pretty hefty pledge, which I couldn't afford, so I'm delighted to have gotten it through .

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