



Henry Clay Frick (1849–1919) with his daughter, Helen Clay Frick (1888–1984), by Edmund C. Tarbell (1862–1938), oil on canvas, circa 1910.
National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution

Portraits of Character from the National Portrait Gallery

Henry Clay Frick: Industrialist, Art Collector, and Philanthropist

An industrialist who helped build the world's largest coke and steel operations, Henry Clay Frick had recognized, by 1870, the growing needs of the expanding Pittsburgh steel mill industry for coke, a heat-producing fuel made from coal. In 1871, Frick borrowed money to organize a company to manufacture this solid gray substance, which is left after coal is heated and the gas and tar removed. Gradually Frick increased his holdings of coal, and by the age of thirty, he was already a millionaire. In 1889, the "coke king" merged his operations with those of Andrew Carnegie and became chairman of Carnegie Brothers and Company, which he reorganized into the world's largest coke and steel firm. A decade later Frick played a major role in the formation and direction of

the United States Steel Corporation.

A discriminating collector of paintings, bronzes, and enamels, Frick devoted much of his efforts during his later years to amassing art treasures. To house them he built, in 1913, an elegant mansion on New York's Fifth Avenue, which he filled with paintings by such masters as Rembrandt, Van Dyck, Rubens, and El Greco. Upon his death, he bequeathed to New York City both his home and a fund for establishing the Frick Collection within it. His daughter, Helen, served as trustee of the institution after her father's death, and further enhanced the family's legacy to art scholarship by building, next door to the museum, the invaluable Frick Art Reference Library, of which she was director for sixty-three years.

Taking a Closer Look

This double portrait of Henry Clay Frick and his daughter was painted around 1910 by Edmund C. Tarbell, then a widely sought-after artist for figural works and portraits. Does this portrait of Frick seem to convey him more as a tough-minded steel magnate with "get-out-of-my-way drive" or as a gentleman and connoisseur of the arts? Explain your choice.

Take a virtual tour of the Frick Collection and listen to sound clips about Henry Clay Frick at the following Web site:

<http://www.frick.org/>

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