



King of the Lobby: The Life and Times of Sam Ward, Man-About-Washington in the Gilded Age

Kathryn Allamong Jacob

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King of the Lobby tells the story of how one man harnessed delicious food, fine wine, and good conversation to the task of becoming the most influential lobbyist of the Gilded Age.

Sam Ward was a colorful character. Scion of an old and honorable family, best friend of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and charming man-about-Washington, Ward held his own in an era crowded with larger-than-life personalities. Living by the motto that the shortest route between a pending bill and a congressman's "aye" was through his stomach, Ward elegantly entertained political elites in return for their votes.

At a time when waves of scandal washed over Washington, the popular press railed against the wickedness of the lobby, and self-righteous politicians predicted that special interests would cause the downfall of democratic government, Sam Ward still reigned supreme. By the early 1870s, he had earned the title "King of the Lobby" and jokingly referred to himself as "Rex Vestiari." Ward cultivated a style of lobbying that survives today in the form of expensive golf outings, extravagant dinners, and luxurious vacations.

Kathryn Allamong Jacob's engaging account shows how the "king" earned his crown through cookery and conversation and how this son of wealth and privilege helped to create a questionable profession in a city that then, as now, rested on power and influence.

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