



Across Fortune's Tracks: A Biography of William Rand Kenan Jr.

Walter E. Campbell

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William Rand Kenan Jr. (1872-1965) is best remembered throughout his native North Carolina as a major benefactor of his alma mater, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. But he was also a gifted scientist and business executive. In this first comprehensive biography, Walter Campbell charts Kenan's achievements in areas as diverse as chemistry, dairy science, media management, and railroad and resort development. While still a student at UNC, Kenan played an important role in the discovery of calcium carbide--the major component in the manufacture of acetylene--which led to the formation of Union Carbide Company. He later created the nation's largest and most advanced private dairy research farm at his home in Lockport, New York. In 1899, he became a consultant to Standard Oil cofounder and Florida developer Henry Morrison Flagler, who later married Kenan's sister Mary Lily. Following Flagler's death in 1913, Kenan successfully guided the vast network of Flagler businesses, as well as his own flourishing enterprises, through a tumultuous period that saw two world wars, a speculative land boom, and a depression. This biography offers new insights into Kenan's many successes as well as his disappointments, particularly his keen sense of having lived his life in the shadow of others. It also includes the first objective account of the widely reported rift between the Kenans and the family of Mary Lily's second husband, Robert Worth Bingham.

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