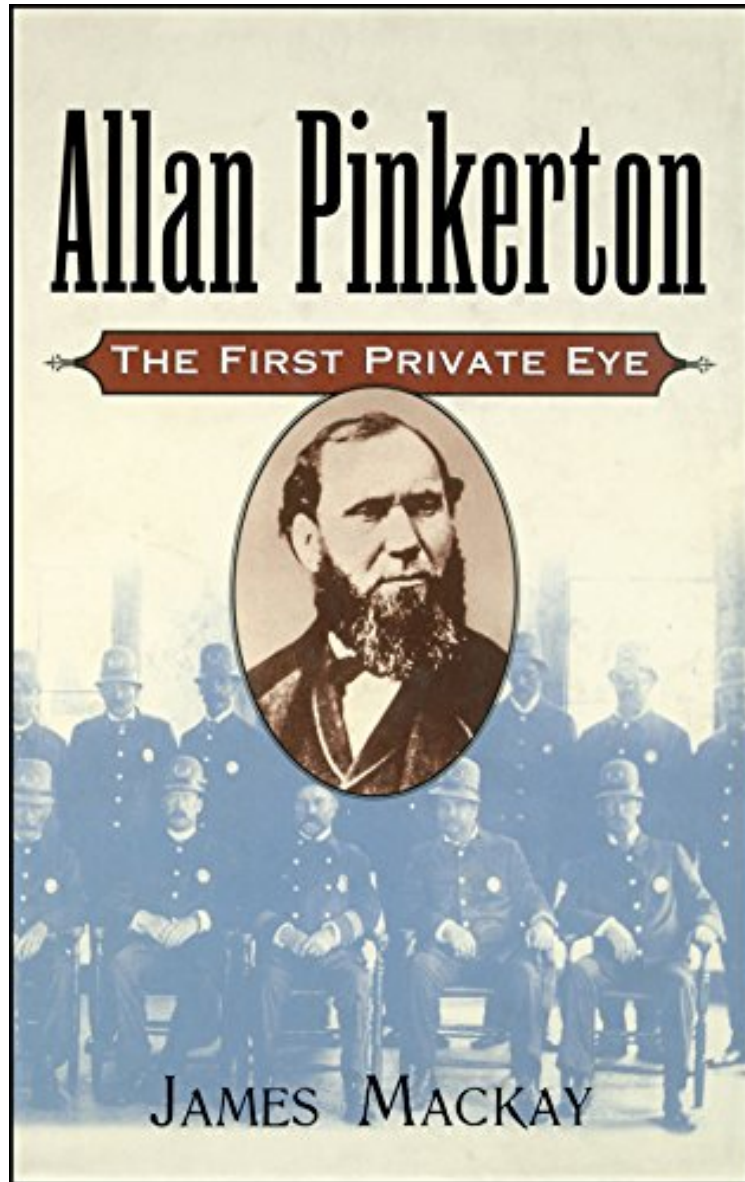


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## Allan Pinkerton: The First Private Eye

*James Mackay*

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**James Mackay : Allan Pinkerton: The First Private Eye** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Allan Pinkerton: The First Private Eye:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Allan Pinkerton: The First Detective By Marc Severson James

Mackay who wrote a biography of Robert Burns clearly presents a picture of Pinkerton, the man, the detective and the legend. The author's Scottish roots occasionally crop up in colloquial situations that can be a little confusing but all in all I greatly enjoyed the book. 7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Mackay detects truth about Allan Pinkerton By Dinah Beres Mackay is as talented a literary detective as Allan Pinkerton was as a criminal detective, written in a clear style that's a pleasure to read. It's a well balanced account, explaining the character's actions in the context of the times. Mackay's first surprise is that Allan Pinkerton wasn't born when most biographers say he was. From there he goes on to uncover the truth about Pinkerton's early career in Scotland, and the truth about a 'supposed' assassination plot against Lincoln before he took office. (The plot was independently confirmed by a political enemy of Pinkerton who had no motive to make Pinkerton look good--which convinced Lincoln the plot was real, and to follow Pinkerton's suggestions to foil it. Political enemies of Lincoln denied the existence of the plot to make Lincoln out to be a coward.) Before he finishes the Civil War period, Mackay has 'rehabilitated' the often pilloried Union general McClellan (whom Pinkerton worked for) and divulged startling information uncovered in 1967 about the plot to assassinate Lincoln. This book is outstanding, a definite 'keeper'. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Four Stars By Kerry M. Lawrence Very good book, great research. Just what I need. Thanks

Allan Pinkerton Around the world, his name is synonymous with security and protection. The legendary agency he began nearly one hundred and fifty years ago is still in operation today, as are many of the surveillance and infiltration techniques he originated. His company's trademark symbol, a large, unblinking eye, inspired the term private eye. As befits a man who spent so much of his life working behind the scenes, Allan Pinkerton's life has been shaded in mystery and misinformation. Now, after a decade of painstaking research, award-winning biographer James Mackay pierces the web of contradictions, half-truths, and myths to reveal, for the first time, the true story of the life and career of this colorful, complex, and controversial man. Born in Scotland, Allan Pinkerton arrived in America with a solitary silver dollar in his pocket and as legend has it the law hot on his heels. A cooper by trade, he might have spent his life making barrels but for a fateful trip in the summer of 1846. On an uninhabited island, where he had gone to cut saplings for barrel staves, Pinkerton happened upon a thicket where a blackened patch suggested a recent fire. To Pinkerton, it also suggested something was amiss. In what became his very first case, the young cooper employed his acute powers of deductive reasoning, patience, and perseverance that would become the hallmarks of his modus operandi. His dogged determination (and several damp, cold, lonely nocturnal vigils) paid off when a gang of counterfeiters was discovered. The modern detective was born. Through four decades of tumultuous history, Allan Pinkerton left an indelible mark. From the Underground Railroad to the Chicago underworld to Pennsylvania and the civil unrest of the notorious Molly Maguires, he took on bandits, bank robbers, kidnappers, spies, and even Jesse James himself. His role in the Civil War was critical: as Lincoln's spymaster, he managed a network of spies who worked behind Confederate lines and tackled espionage at the highest levels in Washington itself. In particular, James Mackay's scrupulously balanced account challenges the conventional view of the controversy surrounding Pinkerton's role in the Peninsular campaign of 1862. Was poor intelligence responsible for prolonging the war? A man of firm beliefs and principles, Allan Pinkerton could be a fair-minded employer and an absolute tyrant as a husband and father. As intriguing as any of the detective's countless cases, Allan Pinkerton: The First Private Eye is a masterful look at an extraordinary figure, filled with the rich, revealing details that distinguish the best biographies. "James Mackay, the award-winning biographer of Robert Burns, is the first historian to attempt to shade in both the darker and lighter sides of Pinkerton, and the result is the tightest and most reliable account so far, a portrait of a man at once deeply admirable and quite obnoxious." The Times (London). "A fair-minded and thorough analysis of a complex and contradictory man . . . an impressive look at the life of Pinkerton." The Daily Telegraph (London).

.com The founder of the United States's most famous detective agency was a fiery political radical in his native Scotland before immigrating to America in 1842. The genius for organization and attention to detail that he displayed as a rebel stood Allan Pinkerton (1819-1884) in good stead as he shaped a national organization capable of pursuing criminals across state lines at a time when there was no federal law enforcement. Vividly depicting his subject's eventful career, historian James Mackay corrects longstanding errors as small as Pinkerton's birthday and as large as the canard that he provided Union Army General McClellan with faulty intelligence that prolonged the Civil War. From Library Journal Award-winning historian Mackay's (Michael Collins, LJ 1/97) research skills show through in this book. He apparently spent many years studying one of the most enigmatic characters from the Civil War era, Allan Pinkerton. Though Pinkerton started the first U.S. detective agency after successfully uncovering a counterfeit ring, little was known about him. The author does an excellent job of tracing Pinkerton's early life and his arrival in the United States from Scotland. Then he examines better-known aspects of Pinkerton's career?his part in Lincoln's train ride through Baltimore, investigation of the Confederate spy Rose Greenhow, and association with Gen. George McClellan, his mentor and hero. Mackay is perhaps too apologetic in his treatment of Pinkerton's intelligence reports to McClellan, which vastly overstated the number of Confederate troops, and he blames McClellan's lack of initiative on political intrigue from Washington. Nevertheless, Mackay's work will appeal greatly to historians and Civil War

specialists. Mark E. Ellis, Albany State Univ. Lib., Ga. Copyright 1997 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Kirkus  
sMackay, a Scottish historian whose previous works include a biography of fellow Scot Robert Burns (1993), turns his  
attention to another Glaswegian, Allan Pinkerton. Pinkerton is best remembered as the founder of the private-  
detective agency that still bears his name. When he started the agency in Chicago in 1850, it had a staff of two; today  
it has a staff of thousands, with offices around the world. Pinkerton, who was born in 1819, was early left fatherless; as  
an adolescent he became a cooper's apprentice. His skill as a barrelmaker would be matched by his rapid rise in the  
ranks of radical politics, where he became prominent in the Scottish branch of the Chartist movement. Undoubtedly,  
his controversial past led in part to his decision to emigrate to America in 1842. Pinkerton and his wife, Joan, made  
their way to Illinois, settling near the budding city of Chicago. Scouting a seemingly deserted island for wood,  
Pinkerton came upon a mysterious campfire that led him to a counterfeiting ring. Soon after, he was appointed deputy  
sheriff of Cook County, and his career in law enforcement was underway. Eventually, he would become head of  
intelligence for General George McClellan and a key figure in Civil War history. It is in his treatment of the Civil War  
period, fully a third of the book, that Mackay falls down grievously. Too much of his time is spent in spirited special  
pleading for McClellan and a defense of Pinkerton's reputation. Mackay is, however, astute in his assessment of the  
relationship between the growth of Pinkerton's private agency and the railroad industry. After the war Pinkerton was  
involved in a number of notorious cases, including attempts to bring the James gang to trial and to suppress the Molly  
Maguires, a secret organization active in the Pennsylvania coalfields. More hagiography than biography, this rather  
lifeless narrative hardly represents a balanced portrayal of a controversial figure. -- Copyright 1997, Kirkus  
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