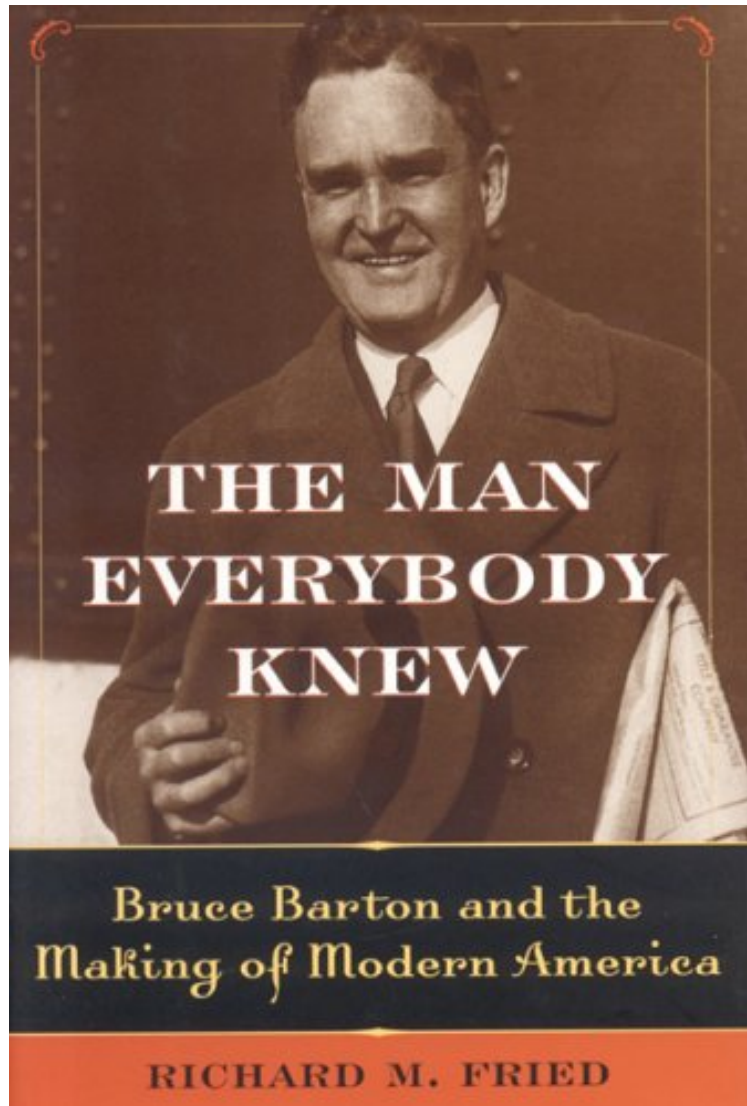


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The Man Everybody Knew: Bruce Barton and the Making of Modern America

Richard M. Fried

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Richard M. Fried : The Man Everybody Knew: Bruce Barton and the Making of Modern America before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Man Everybody Knew: Bruce Barton and the Making of Modern America:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. great bioBy SabuThe book was a great biography and I wished there was more of the copy that this man done. I did love the attention to detail and this was a well researched piece of work.

I was surprised to find that the author was from a town next to mine. 9 of 15 people found the following review helpful. Good book -- but there's one even better By David L. Deutsch This is a well-written, well-researched, long-overdue biography of an important figure in advertising and American life. A glaring omission, however, is the lack of any mention of or reference to Joe Vitale's pioneering book on Barton's methods: *The Seven Lost Secrets of Success*. For anyone who wants to know the principles by which Barton accomplished what he did--and how they can put Barton's methods to work in their own business or career--Vitale's *Seven Lost Secrets of Success* is the book to get. 8 of 10 people found the following review helpful. The Man Who Signed Off On "Which Twin Has The Toni?" By Kevin Killian Richard Fried wrote a fantastic book on US Cold War homefront pageantry (*THE RUSSIANS ARE COMING!*) a few years back, but he's perhaps not the world's most dramatic writer, and his new biography of legendary adman Bruce Barton is serviceable, but nothing outstanding. Fried estimates that Barton was the 20th century's most famous man for whom no full length biography had ever been attempted. That may be so, but maybe there was a reason no one else had tried to get Barton into hard covers. From what I can make out, his achievements are paltry, and boosted by hot air (he was, after all, one of the kings of Madison Avenue, though not a particularly original designer or thinker). As Fried reveals, Barton was so well-known at the time that many credited him wrongly with every advertising campaign that got noticed; thus he was like the Dorothy Parker of advertising (Parker got the credit for every halfway decent quip uttered at the Algonquin Round Table.) His agency, BBDO, made the Campbell Kids popular on TV, and Carton thought that their creation Chiquita Banana, a talking banana developed for United Fruit, was a masterpiece. Values are screwy in the ad world, and yet Barton had the balls to write one of the all time best sellers of the 20th century (the #1 nonfiction book of 1926), a life of Christ called *THE MAN NOBODY KNOWS* in which he attempted to paint Jesus Christ as the ultimate businessman, good at molding little people into good workers, a glad hand for everyone, the kind of guy who pats you on the back at a Kiwanis luncheon. Barton played up his marriage as something sacrosanct but he got caught with his pants down in the early 1930s, when a conniving pre-Code type of minx got her hooks in him and threatened to expose their office affair unless he paid her off to the tune of \$25,000. When he did, and she came back again with renewed demands, he went public with his affair, and charged the woman with blackmail. He handled the whole sorry mess with aplomb, but it left his reputation a little dog-eared, poor guy. Oh well, it was worth a try but at this date it might be too late to try to rehabilitate one of the dumbest careers of modern times. Fried does his best but fails to convince us that Barton's life was any more interesting than that of, oh, someone like Dick Clark. There's shallow, then there's mad shallow.

Everyone knew him then: Bruce Barton was a cultural icon. Two-thirds of American history textbooks today cite him to illustrate the 1920s adoration of the business mentality that then dominated American culture. Historians quote from his enormous best-seller, *The Man Nobody Knows*, in which Barton called Jesus the "founder of modern business" who "picked up twelve men from the bottom ranks of business and forged them into an organization that conquered the world." But few know Bruce Barton now: he is the most famous twentieth-century American not to rate a biography. Richard M. Fried's compelling new study captures the full dimensions of Barton's varied and fascinating life. More than a popularizer of the entrepreneurial Jesus, he was a prolific writer of novels, magazine articles, interviews with the mighty, pithy editorials of uplift. He edited a weekly magazine that anticipated the format of *Life*. Most famously, he co-founded the advertising agency that became Batten, Barton, Durstine and Osborn and grew to symbolize "Madison Avenue." He made GM and GE household initials. Barton's religious writings, especially *The Man Nobody Knows*, epitomized modernist religious thought in the twenties at one point he had two religious books on the best-seller list. As a political spin merchant, he advanced the careers of Calvin Coolidge and Herbert Hoover; his agency scripted later campaigns for Republicans, notably Dwight Eisenhower. Barton himself was twice elected to Congress, ran for the U.S. Senate in 1940, and that year lent his name to FDR's famous mocking litany, "Martin, Barton, and Fish." In Richard M. Fried's illuminating biography, Barton comes to life as a man who often initiated, sometimes followed, and occasionally fought the social and political trends of his times but always defined their essential qualities. He can truly be called a key figure in a large territory of the American mind. With 8 pages of black-and-white photographs.

A fine biography. (John M. and Priscilla S. Taylor *The Washington Times*) Fried shows the extent of Barton's true influence . . . as a pioneer in modern political advertising. (James Boylan *Columbia Journalism*) Well-researched and well-written. (Walter A. Friedman *Journal of American History*) Brief, fair-minded, and well-researched. (Robert K. Landers *Commonweal*) Fried paints a broader portrait of Barton . . . a straightforward biography. (*Business History*) This admirable, readable volume enriches our knowledge of Barton's career and his political involvements. . . . A well-researched and detailed, if relatively brief, account of a neglected pioneer of contemporary image-making. (David Greenberg *Washington Monthly*) Well-researched . . . insightful biography . . . rightly considers Barton's life . . . a parable about . . . relationship between corporate business ideology and popular mainline protestant thought. (Quentin J. Schultze) Richard Fried has written an engaging, deeply researched, and admirably balanced brief biography of Bruce Barton adman, best selling author, and politician who was indeed very well-known during his heyday between

the 1920s and 1950s. An accomplished historian, Fried is especially good at capturing the context of Barton's times. (James T. Patterson, Brown University) One of America's most prominent ad agents, Bruce Barton assiduously crafted kindly images for soulless corporations and dour presidential candidates. He was also a prolific essayist, lay theologian and, briefly, a member of Congress. In a wonderfully written and researched book, Richard M. Fried skillfully describes Barton's many legacies. *The Man Everybody Knew* will be necessary reading for historians of America's political and commercial cultures. (James L. Baughman University Of Wisconsin-Madison) Entertaining and succinct introduction. . . . Mr. Fried sees his biography as a corrective, and indeed it is. (Christine Rosen *The Wall Street Journal*) Despite his many achievements few know [Barton's] name today: history professor Fried remedies this omission. (Diane C. Donovan, editor, *Midwest Book Midwest Book*) It's been worth the wait. (James B. Twitchell *The Wilson Quarterly*) A suitably brisk, anecdote-filled account. (Michael Kazin *The New York Times*) Fried aptly characterizes Barton. (Joseph Epstein *The Weekly Standard*)

About the Author Richard M. Fried is professor of history at the University of Illinois at Chicago and author of *Men Against McCarthy*, *Nightmare in Red*, and *The Russians Are Coming! The Russians Are Coming!* He studied at Amherst College and Columbia University, and has been a senior Fulbright lecturer. He is married with two children and lives in Glen Ellyn, Illinois.