

# [PDF] Love, Fiercely: A Gilded Age Romance

Jean Zimmerman - pdf download free book

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## Books Details:

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## Description:

### Questions for Jean Zimmerman

**What inspired you to write Love, Fiercely?** Love, Fiercely? is a dual biography of Edith and Newton Stokes. I first encountered the couple during research for my previous book, *The Women of the House*. Looking for New Amsterdam documents, I discovered *The Iconography of Manhattan Island*, Newton's masterpiece. I first tracked down *The Iconography of Manhattan Island* on an out-of-the-way reference shelf in a university library near my home and was astonished by its size and comprehensiveness. As I hoisted its volumes, I began to speculate about the author of this heavy, densely packed, six-volume tome. What obsession did it spring from? And when I went to look up the author's name--strange name it was, too, I. N. Phelps Stokes--he seemed shrouded in mystery. I could find almost nothing about him in books or journal articles. I wanted to know who had

assembled this massive, marvelous work. Then, as I dug a bit and found out that his wife Edith had been a great beauty and artist's model, the face of the Gilded Age, I was hooked.

**What attracted you to the lives of this couple?** The contrasts that abounded in their story. Elegant, patrician, wealthy, they also worked down in the trenches to solve society's ills. They were so active, so creative, so beautiful, that watching their downfall, when they lost their money and fell into poor health, couldn't have been sadder. And the painting that immortalized them, by John Singer Sargent, was an aesthetic masterpiece.

**Newton and Edith went through good times and bad. What held their relationship together through thick and thin?** They came from similar backgrounds, the group of New Yorkers that had been christened "The 400," supposedly for the number of elites that could fit into Mrs. Caroline Astor's ballroom. Children of the elite were raised to marry within the tribe. Beyond their backgrounds, though, the two of them felt a kinship, a mutual respect, that came from sharing the same values. Both were progressives, and both believed in doing great deeds, whether it was reforming tenements in Newton's case or getting the vote for women in Edith's. They fell in love when they were children, a love that lasted until they were parted by death.

**What was unusual about John Singer Sargent's painting, "Mr. and Mrs. I. N. Phelps Stokes"?** Before his portrait of Edith and Newton, Sargent always posed his wealthy subjects wearing elegant formal garb. In the portrait, Edith Minturn has a flushed, glowing countenance and is dressed as if she had just rushed in off the tennis court. Newton, too, wears casual clothes, white summer flannels. There is a feeling of action, of energy about the couple that was not apparent in Sargent's other more posed, static compositions.

**Daniel Chester French created an outsize sculpture of Edith that was truly larger than life. Let's hear some of the stats.** The Statue of the Republic, as she was called, stood 65 feet tall, on a base of 35 feet, making her almost as tall as the Statue of Liberty. Edith, who was then 24, posed wearing a Roman stola with a crowning wreath of laurel. She held an eagle perched atop a globe in one hand and a "liberty pole" in the other. Working from a 3-foot-high maquette, French enlarged Edith's figure until the statue towered above the "lagoon" at the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago, covered in gold leaf, the largest statue ever created in America.

**What drew Newton and Edith together? What made them fall in love and stay in love for so many years, despite their differences?** Mutual respect and a shared love of tradition, of the past that was rapidly disappearing, and the sacredness of art.

## **Photographs from Love, Fiercely**

### **Click on thumbnails for larger images**

I.N. Phelps Stokes by Dewitt Lockman, 1930. Head of the Republic. Statue of the Republic, World's Columbian Exhibition, 1891-93. Mrs. Isaac Newton Phelps Stokes by Cecelia Beaux.

**Review** "*Love, Fiercely* is an exquisitely-rendered portrait of passion and privilege in the Gilded Age."

—Deborah Davis, author of *Strapless: John Singer Sargent and the Fall of Madame X*  
Demonstrating the same flare as in her previous biography, Zimmerman (*The Women of the House: How a Colonial She-Merchant Built a Mansion, a Fortune, and a Dynasty*) pays respect to the lives

and times of Edith Minturn Stokes and Isaac Newton Phelps Stokes. Edith and Newton, as he was called, who married in 1895, were born in New York to immense privilege and became patrons of the arts and advocates for immigrant rights. The two knew each other as children and eventually fell in love. Newton, a respected architect in his own right, pulled together a massive multivolume documentary history, *The Iconography of Manhattan Island*, and Edith worked for many charitable organizations. Zimmerman chronicles their personal lives and love, from the heights of financial success to the depths of deteriorating health and wealth, while also encapsulating the era in which they lived. VERDICT With an impressive amount of research behind every page, Zimmerman manages to capture the sweeping drama of the turn of the century as well as the compelling story of a couple who knew how to love, fiercely. Her superb pacing and gripping narrative will appeal to all who enjoy history, biography, and real-life romance.--Library Journal

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