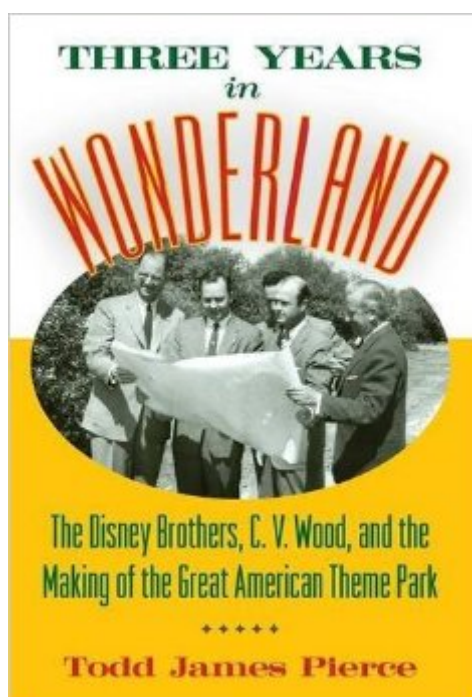


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Three Years In Wonderland: The Disney Brothers, C. V. Wood, And The Making Of The Great American Theme Park



Synopsis

While the success of Disneyland is largely credited to Walt and Roy Disney, there was a third, mostly forgotten dynamo instrumental to the development of the park—a fast-talking Texan C. V. Wood. *Three Years in Wonderland* presents the never-before-told, full story of the happiest place on earth. Using information from over one hundred unpublished interviews, Todd James Pierce lays down the arc of Disneyland's development from an idea to a paragon of entertainment. In the early 1950s, the Disney brothers hired Wood and his team to develop a feasibility study for an amusement park Walt wanted to build in southern California. "Woody" quickly became a central figure. In 1954, Roy Disney hired him as Disneyland's first official employee, its first general manager, and appointed him vice president of Disneyland, Inc., where his authority was exceeded only by Walt. A brilliant project manager, Wood was also a con man of sorts. Previously, he had forged his university diploma. A smooth-talker drawn to Hollywood, the first general manager of Disneyland valued money over art. As relations soured between Wood and the Disney brothers, Wood found creative ways to increase his income, leveraging his position for personal fame. Eventually, tensions at the Disney park reached a boiling point, with Walt demanding he be fired. In compelling detail, *Three Years in Wonderland* lays out the struggles and rewards of building the world's first cinematic theme park and convincing the American public that a \$17 million amusement park was the ideal place for a family vacation. The early experience of Walt Disney, Roy Disney, and C. V. Wood is one of the most captivating untold stories in the history of Hollywood. Pierce interviewed dozens of individuals who enjoyed long careers at the Walt Disney Company as well as dozens of individuals who—like C. V. Wood—helped develop the park but then left the company for good once the park was finished. Through much research and many interviews, *Three Years in Wonderland* offers readers a rare opportunity to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the men and women who built the best-known theme park in the world.

Book Information

Hardcover: 304 pages

Publisher: University Press of Mississippi; 1 edition (March 10, 2016)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1628462418

ISBN-13: 978-1628462418

Product Dimensions: 5.8 x 1.1 x 8.7 inches

Shipping Weight: 12.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars Â Â See all reviews Â (23 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #185,846 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #48 in Â Books > Business & Money > Industries > Sports & Entertainment > Entertainment #120 in Â Books > Travel > Specialty Travel > Theme Parks #292 in Â Books > Business & Money > Industries > Hospitality, Travel & Tourism

Customer Reviews

Sometimes the stars are in alignment and magic happens. It was thus on June 23, 1953 when Walt Disney was introduced to C. V. Wood (Woody). It was an epic moment for the theme park industry. The meeting between a man of amazing imagination who yearned to build a very special amusement park and a man, a Texan, with a dubious background, who had the charm to find, cajole and procure the funds required. So begins the history of Three Years in Wonderland by Todd James Pierce, the history of how Disneyland came to be. I am not a fan of Disney but I was surprised and fascinated by this story of the conflict between Walt Disney and his first General Manager, C. V. Wood. The author's style of prose was perfect to recreate the fifties, the period when released from the restrictions of the war years, many Californians found they could buy their own house for the first time, go to college, and afford to enrich their lives with new experiences. At that time, opportunities seemed endless and the excitement was palpable. Disney, riding the crest of his success in the movie world, wanted to try something new. He wanted to create a fantasy world that children and their parents could enjoy. Brother Roy, the money man in his projects, listened but was unsympathetic. It took the Texas size personality of Wood and his ability to connect with people to make Disney's dream come true. The drama between Disney and Wood plays out against the difficult struggle to organize and build the park. Two men, two egos, very different, battling each other at times but needing each other nonetheless. Meanwhile, a large crew of craftsmen work to prepare the park for the planned opening date of July 17, 1955.

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