



**Napoleon III, Empress Eugenie and Her Secret
Duke of Sesto: Imperial Wedding of Old Paris-
Personal History of Second Empire France
Entwined with ... Compiegne, Fontainebleau and
Versailles**

Nancy Becker

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Summary: Frustrations of a single woman and the Napoleonic heir of France that led to their marriage in the most magnificent wedding during the most romantic era of European history

Principals: Emperor Napoleon III; Eugénie de Montijo, Countess of Teba; and her girlhood and lifetime love, the Duke of Sesto

Theme: The ultimate unrequited love story: a woman who tried to commit suicide twice, devastated that the Dukes of Alba and Sesto each preferred her sister. Eugénie reluctantly agreed to marry Napoleon's nephew and emerged as one of the most powerful women in history.

Influence: The Vanderbilts and Astors spent millions copying her in Gilded Age Newport and New York. "It was the strange fate of Eugénie Marie de Montijo...to become known...as one of the greatest beauties of her time, and later...personally influential in European events and destinies of three generations..." (New York Times)

Unique Features: Recipe of original Imperial Wedding cake of 1853; recipe of Marie-Antoinette's favorite pastry

Timeliness: Current projects to rebuild the Tuileries Palace and the Palace of Saint-Cloud, art-filled historic monuments burned in war and terror; the Louvre recently paid \$10.7 for one of Eugénie's brooches; Eugénie's items at Metropolitan Museum of Art, N.Y., Louvre, Malmaison; Mexico and Cinco de Mayo; Imperial Wedding with 200,000 people at Nôtre-Dame Cathedral similar to Charles and Diana's in 1981 and Royal Wedding of 2011.

What other woman:

- Became Regent of France three times?
- Was the last woman to wear all the Crown Jewels of France including a 140.64 carat diamond?
- Lived in the Palaces of the Tuileries, Saint-Cloud, Fontainebleau and Compiègne?
- Used the Palace of Versailles for parties?
- Collected Marie-Antoinette's possessions?
- Used the Petit Trianon for her retreat?
- Was the first muse of French haute couture?
- Inspired Louis Vuitton, Creed, Guerlain, Christofle?
- Made Biarritz a jet-set destination?
- Had Washington Irving, Prosper Mérimée and Stendhal as childhood story tellers?

- Belonged to families mentioned in Don Quixote?
- Was bridesmaid to Queen Isabel II of Spain?
- Urged occupation of Mexico and Cochin-China (Vietnam)?
- Forged a lifetime friendship with Queen Victoria?
- Made decisions leading to the Franco-Prussian War and the burning of Paris?
- Fled past 60,000 rioters and survived to age 94?

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