

# **Thrift**

**A Cyclopedia**

**Being an Early Attempt to Assemble the Best of What Is Known from History  
and Literature About One of Our Most Provocative Words – For Those Who  
Are Not Ashamed to Think Anew About Happiness, Extravagance, and  
Thriving**

**By David Blankenhorn**

A Companion to the Traveling Exhibition,  
*Thrift: In Search of the Art of Living Well*

and the Report to the Nation,  
*For a New Thrift: Confronting the Debt Culture*

Visit the website: [www.NewThrift.org](http://www.NewThrift.org)

**For Arthur and Joann Rasmussen – thrivers who help others to thrive.**

“If a good man thrive, all thrive with him.”

## **Table of Contents:**

### Introduction

#### 1. What Is Thrift?

Thrift as *Growing*

Thrift as *Enjoying Good Fortune*

Thrift as *Prospering*

Thrift as *Saving*

Thrift as *Hoarding*

What Thrift Is

#### 2. The Cases Against Thrift

The Prophet's Case

The Ascetic's Case

The Gentleman's Case

The Economist's Case

The Socialist's Case

The Spendthrift's Case

#### 3. Visionaries

“By Dint of His Thrift” – Daniel Defoe (b. 1660)

“The More Treasure They Will Lay Up in Heaven” – John Wesley (b. 1703)

“The Art of Making Money Plenty” – Benjamin Franklin (b. 1706)

“Duncan of Ruthwell” – Henry Duncan (b. 1774)

“Knox’s Bank” – James, Walter, and James Knox  
“Those Rules of Thrift and Economy” – Catharine Beecher (b. 1800)  
“Those Who Are Not Ashamed of Economy” – Lydia Marie Child (b. 1802)  
“The Prophet of Victorian England” – Samuel Smiles (b. 1812)  
“Sikes of Huddersfield” – Charles Sikes (b. 1818)  
“A Constant Lesson in Thrift” – Clara Barton (b. 1821)  
“Who Catches the Vision?” – Alonzo, Wilmot, and Wilmot Evans  
“The Greater Thrift” – Charles Pratt (b. 1830)  
“Always Had a Broom in My Hand” – John Wanamaker (b. 1838)  
“A Day Labourer So Long” – Edward Brabrook (b. 1839)  
“The Ideal of Thrift” – Orison Swett Marden (b. 1850)  
“That We May Save the Greatest” – Bolton Hall (b. 1854)  
“A Person Who Makes Beautiful Things” – Elbert Hubbard (b. 1856)  
“Character in the Highest and Best Sense” – Booker T. Washington (b. 1856)  
“Beauty in Homespun” – Martha Berry (b. 1866)  
“Creative Economy” – S. W. Straus (b. 1866)  
“Take the Nickels and Turn Them Into Dollars” – Maggie L. Walker (b. 1867)  
“Some Reflection of the Simple Virtues” – Lawrence C. Jones (b. 1882)  
“George Never Leaves Bedford Falls” – Frank Capra (b. 1897)

#### 4. Institutions

Thrift Boxes

Gardens

Friendly and Fraternal Societies

Mutual Savings Banks

Producer and Consumer Cooperatives

Building and Loans

Credit Unions

Public Libraries

## 5. Movements

To Build International Solidarity

To Bring People Together

To Organize Sacrifice

To Train Children

## 6. Thrift Wisdom: Proverbs and Maxims

Conclusion: Which America?

Appendix A: Do You Know What Thrift Is? (A Quiz)

Appendix B: Puritans and Quakers

Acknowledgement

Notes