

The Medici Family: Catherine de Medici

Background:

The Medici family became successful because of political influence. They created their own banking system founded by Giovanni di Bicci de Medici which was important because it became the official bank of the papacy and gave it popularity among catholic Europe. They also gained wealth through commerce. The banking system was later taken by Giovanni's son, Cosimo de Medici, who soon after created an elaborate network of secret alliances and allowed him to control almost every business in Florence. After some time they converted their wealth into political capital becoming the rulers of Florence. They became a powerful family through wealth and not by birthright or war and kept their power by funding art as propaganda for themselves (Lorenzo de Medici= Michelangelo and DaVinci). The Medici family had good family connections and soon were able to "cement" their power and be a very well known and recognized family.

Greatest Achievement and why:

One of the greatest achievements of the Medici family was the rise of power they had politically and economically but the most important event that represents success for this family is the marriage between Catherine de Medici and King Henry II of France that led to her becoming the consort and Queen of France. Catherine's uncle Pope Clement VII who was in charge of her at the time due to the fact that her parents had died when she was only a baby. Her uncle started looking for a husband for her and accepted happily when he got an offer from King Francis I of France for his second son, Henry that would soon become King of France.

After King Henry's death during an unfortunate jousting wound, his son Francis II became the new King of France. Catherine was appointed as regent of France and formulated policies and managed state business. As Regent Queen of France, Catherine de Medici was able to exercise political power and control and became one of the most powerful women in the 16th century in Europe. After Francis II and Charles IX had died, Henry III became King but he wasn't very interested in the administration of the government and depended on Catherine's advice until her last days.

How has it changed history:

Even though Catherine de Medici could not be officially the ruler of a country such as France because of salic law of succession, she managed to rule the nation as regent for 30 years while both her sons were too young to be crowned as king and even after that when King Henry III showed indifference for his position. Queen Catherine brought not only recognition to her family but also proved that someone that was not part of royalty could rule a nation and be successful at it as well while facing many problems at the time such as Catholics against Protestants. As said before Catherine de Medici became one of the most powerful women during this time period (16th century). Even though there are much more recognized people such as DaVinci and Michelangelo, the truth is that the Medici family including Catherine were the ones who brought the Renaissance. They contributed greatly in the rebirth of arts(patrons) and political achievements(Rule of France).

http://the-roman-republic-to-the-renaissance.wikia.com/wiki/The_Medici_Family

<http://www.thefamouspeople.com/profiles/catherine-de-medici-6289.php>

<http://study.com/academy/lesson/the-house-of-medici-rise-and-fall-of-a-banking-family.html>

