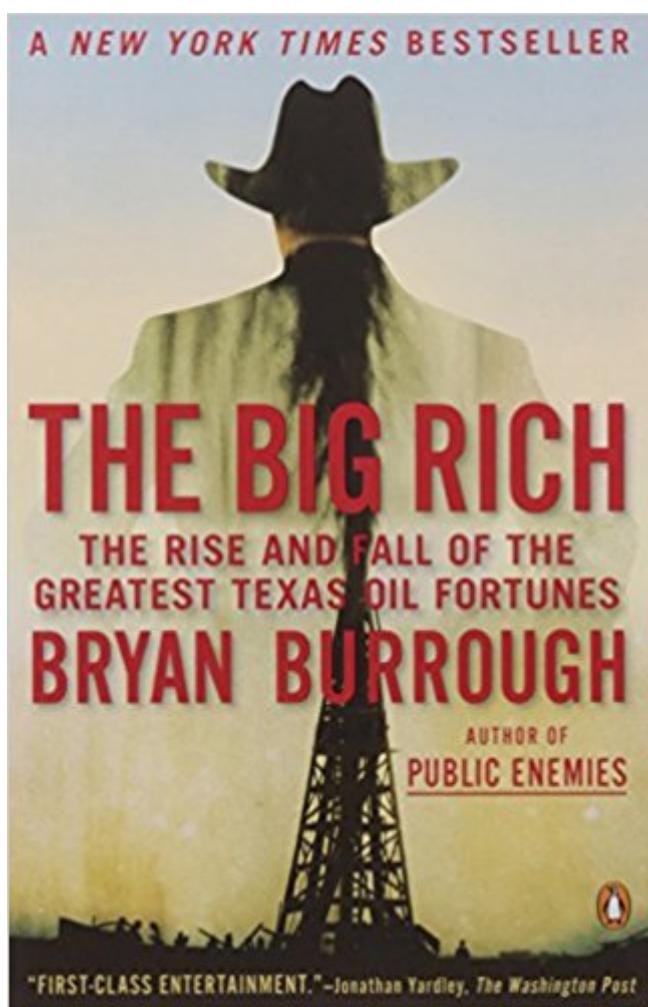


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# The Big Rich: The Rise And Fall Of The Greatest Texas Oil Fortunes



## Synopsis

"What's not to enjoy about a book full of monstrous egos, unimaginable sums of money, and the punishment of greed and shortsightedness?" --The Economist Phenomenal reviews and sales greeted the hardcover publication of *The Big Rich*, New York Times bestselling author Bryan Burrough's spellbinding chronicle of Texas oil. Weaving together the multigenerational sagas of the industry's four wealthiest families, Burrough brings to life the men known in their day as the Big Four: Roy Cullen, H. L. Hunt, Clint Murchison, and Sid Richardson, all swaggering Texas oil tycoons who owned sprawling ranches and mingled with presidents and Hollywood stars. Seamlessly charting their collective rise and fall, *The Big Rich* is a hugely entertaining account that only a writer with Burrough's abilities-and Texas upbringing-could have written.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Capitalism at its most colorful oozes across the pages of this engrossing study of independent oil men. *Vanity Fair* special correspondent Burrough (coauthor, *Barbarians at the Gate*) profiles the Big Four oil dynasties of H.L. Hunt, Roy Cullen, Clint Murchison and Sid Richardson, along with their cronies, rivals, families and, in Hunt's case, bigamous second and third families. The saga begins heroically in the early 20th-century oil boom, with wildcatters roaming the Texas countryside drilling one dry hole after another, scrounging money and fending off creditors until gushers of black gold redeem them. Their second acts as garish nouveaux riches with strident

right-wing politics are entertaining, if less dramatic. Decline sets in as rising production costs and cheaper Middle Eastern oil erode profits, and a feckless, feuding second generation squanders family fortunes on debauchery and reckless investment. H.L.'s sons' efforts in 1970 to corner the silver market bankrupted them and almost took down Wall Street. This is a portrait of capitalism as white-knuckle risk taking, yielding fruitful discoveries for the fathers, but only sterile speculation for the sons. a story that resonates with today's economic upheaval. (Jan. 27)

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When a huge oil reserve was discovered at Spindletop, in southeast Texas, in 1901, the state was an inward-looking, hell with cows built around lumber, cotton, and cattle. In this riveting history, Burrough charts the decades-long rush that made Texas oil into a political and economic powerhouse through the lives of the four great barons: Hugh Roy Cullen, Clint Murchison, Sid Richardson, and H. L. Hunt. Each began his foray into oil as a wildcatter, striking it rich through a combination of intuition and bravado. The fortunes of the Big Four swelled during the Second World War, when the United States was the world's leading producer of crude, but by the nineteen-eighties Middle Eastern oil was ascendant, and the barons' legacies had dissolved into a sordid litany of debauchery, family feuds, scandals, and murder. Burrough brings each of his outsized subjects brilliantly to life, pitching their individual epics against a grand narrative of rise and decline. Copyright ©2008 Click here to subscribe to The New Yorker --This text refers to the Audible Audio Edition edition.

WOW! I started my career with an oil and gas attorney in San Angelo, Texas, in the late 1950s, and have continued my entire career in that world, ending up a landman in Midland, Texas. Embedded in that culture, of course, I knew of the Texas Oil families (I also happen to be an original Kansas City Chiefs' fan), but had no idea of the coziness of these landed gentry (oil acreage) and politicians, influencing national policies for their own benefit to the detriment of others, perhaps the forerunner of today's political mess. Over the years I did see, from the inside, the manipulations of banks and markets by "oil people" - it wasn't pretty!!!! At any rate, Bryan Burrough has, almost with photographic skill, written a real-life scenario comparable to any suspenseful mystery writer of today - I could not put the book down, staying up late at night wanting to know how it all worked out. CAVEAT: NOT ALL TEXANS ARE INSANE - JUST THOSE TO WHOM MONEY/POWER IS/ARE GOD !!!! HIGHLY RECOMMENDED!!!!

Amazing story of Texas oil, its billionaires, its politics and its history of how we came to be the way we are as Texans on the road to the way we are in 2014. I grew up in the 50's in a sleepy little town 35 miles north of Dallas. My parents were Democrats, my father a self-employed home builder. I heard daily discussions of politics, the government's ineptitude and wasteful policies, how big unions encouraged laziness and less productive workers (GM, AT&T, etc.) and I heard many negative discussions about LBJ and how he "stuffed the ballot boxes". Of course, at the tender age of 7- 16, I didn't know what that meant nor was I concerned with it. Somewhere in the sixties, my parents became (mostly) Republicans. This book was a great read, with lots of footnotes and source references. I learned a lot and understand a lot more about my history as a native Texan!

My book group selected this book for our February book. When we got together to discuss it, some of the people really liked it and some found it difficult to read. It IS about Texas oil.... discovery, drilling, etc. But more than that, it is about four men who, through cunning and perseverance more than education, discovered oil and in that discovery changed both Texas and the United States. I am a native Texan and there are tales in here that I have never heard and was not aware of. And I've been associated with the natural gas business for over 40 years. It was fascinating! These men.... well, let me just say that, through their actions, I have a better understanding of why some people don't \*like\* Texans. They lived large.... really large. I would say that they were egotistical and obnoxious. But they were never dull. They defined a persona that many people outside of Texas still thinks is the \*average\* Texas personality. I believe that many of the characters in the TV show Dallas (which I have never watched) are based on these oil men and their families. If you are familiar with the movie Giant, James Dean's character Jet was Edna Ferber's way of slamming one of the original four Big Rich. There are some parts that do get technical about aspects of drilling for oil. Skim those, if you like. But don't miss a moment of the history of the Big Rich, and the impact that these men had. Great read!

Growing up in Houston I've heard so many of the names in this book. It's quite a story to learn of all these real life characters that if were fiction, it wouldn't be believed. Though the book is thick, Burrough's style is not at all laborious. I enjoy his pace of narrative.

Wow! I had no idea and to the reach of Texas Oil. After relocating to Houston, one suggested this as a must read. Certainly worth the 430 pages or so. Fascinating read and not that the "history"

book needed any more pizzazz, since the the stories were scintillating, but the narration by James Jenner (listened to Audible about 75% of the book) added even more depth. It is hard for me to imagine the lengths the author went to to gather this much information in one book. It as if the author was a fly on the wall listening to personal conversations, I can only wonder how much narrative license was taken in many of the the intimate quotes and personal thoughts of the subjects.

Insight into how the Big Rich of Texas came to be. Who knew that oil was trucked out of Texas in the night to avoid the quotas on oil production? There are many details about the key Texas oil families that have long since been forgotten or never known by those of us alive today--- and this book gives those interesting stories new life. Easy to read despite its length---the book has interesting story after interesting story. Highly recommend the book.

I wanted to read a book about the oil tycoons of the early 50's. Being from Texas, I thought it would be fun. This was a rambling tome with an obvious bias. Early Democrats are called ultra-conservatives and while they were conservatives the author gives the impression the people like Pappy O'Daniel were Republicans. It's just confusing. Many of the things these wealthy men did were huge positives in the long run. The Houston Medical Center being one. While this is mentioned, most of the book was about the scandals, silliness and excessive spending of people and their children with billions of dollars. None of it being an unusual consequence of uneducated but lucky men who were willing to risk everything to bring in an oil well. Risk takers are going to do silly stuff. What I feel is amazing was the amount of good they did given their backgrounds and natures. Texas was painted as a state that is past its prime and ready to recede into the landscape. I have my doubts. I don't have to agree with an author's point, I just need to know what it is. Sloppy sentence structure and poor general flow rounded out one of the most frustrating reading experiences I've had lately. Such a great premise. Such an annoying book.

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