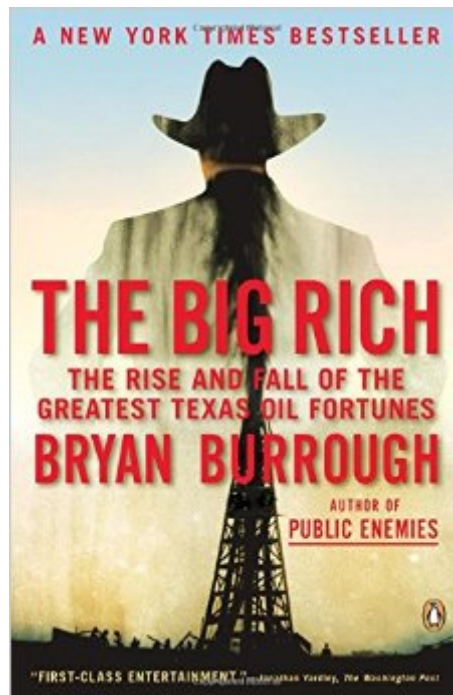


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# The Big Rich: The Rise And Fall Of The Greatest Texas Oil Fortunes



## Synopsis

"What's not to enjoy about a book full of monstrous egos, unimaginable sums of money, and the punishment of greed and shortsightedness?" 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

This book takes on a subject that has been neglected for far too long. To understand conservative Texas today, you really need an education on the men that shaped it, namely ..Hunt, Cullen, Murchison, and Richardson. All four of these men are uniquely Texan, good and bad. Cullen is by far the most philanthropic, but in many ways the least interesting, he lived a mostly quite life in Houston's enclave of wealth, River Oaks, and gave away 90 percent of his fortune. What I find most interesting, is that this most conservative of men, gave millions to Texas Southern, Houston's traditionally African American university; he also funded the University of Houston, it's not an understatement to call him Mr. Houston. H.L. Hunt is by far the most interesting, but by far the least

philanthropic, I'm not sure he ever gave to anything but the Klan, but his three families and all his silly ideas are so hilarious, you really have to give it to the guy for being colorful. Hurt's book on H.L. Hunt is fantastic. His mention of H.L.'s "creeping" is the limit. As for Richardson, he was in many ways the quintessential Wildcatter, he had the look, the charm, and the bravado, and his collection of Western memorabilia is amazing. Murchison, on the other hand, was more like a brilliant accountant, and looked like one, he was the least like a traditional Wildcatter. This book also delves into the lives of the offspring of these iconic men. Murchison's son, of course, founded the Dallas Cowboys, the subsequently, partied all the money away, Richardson's Bass family, has had their share of scandal, divorces et al. and of course Hunt's son's tried to corner the silver market in the 80's. Talk about chutzpa and his son Lamar co-founded the American Football League and owned the Kansas City Chiefs. Even the staid Cullen had an interesting grandson, the simply ridiculous Baron "Ricky" Di Portanova, he claimed to be an Italian Count on his father side, nobody bought it in Houston, but alas he was colorful, and threw some amazing parties at his mansion in River Oaks and his palace on a hill in Acapulco. Overall, this is a fun read, well written and researched, if you have any interest in Texas history and the Texas Oil Rich, then I can't imagine you not loving this book...as for the unhelpful vote..it just shows that on there is always at least one person who will find a black cloud on a sunny day..I mean how on earth is this review not helpful?

The rich Texas oil people have always been a source of fascination to most all of us. In this new book, Bryan Burrough gives us the history of the oil rich. He was a co-author, with John Helyar, of the exciting book "Barbarians at the Gate: The Fall of RJR Nabisco." He is also a native of Texas. He leads us through the lives of the Texan oil rich, Roy Cullen of Houston, Sid Richardson of Fort Worth, and Clint Murchison and H. L. Hunt of Dallas. "If Texas Oil had a Mount Rushmore, their faces would adorn it," Burrough writes. "A good ol' boy. A scold. A genius. A bigamist. Known in their heyday as the Big Four, they became the founders of the greatest Texas family fortunes, headstrong adventurers who rose from nowhere to take turns being acclaimed America's wealthiest man." You'll enjoy the stories that can only happen in Texas. For example, you'll see Hunt going between his three families, Cullen in a war bond drive that and another wealthy Texan wearing and throwing away \$100 bills as bow ties. I found this to be a well researched book. It's fast and exciting reading. It gives you a look at contemporary history but, at the same time, a personal look into the lives of those who lived large from the fruits of the black gold that poured from the Texas landscape. Highly recommended. - Susanna K. Hutcheson

This book provides considerable detail about an important slice of 20th Century Americana viz., the emergence of Texas as a economic, social, and political influence in America. In the classic sense of fact be stranger than fiction, this story almost tells itself and Bryan Burrough does an admirable job of synthesizing the various elements of the story into an American epic tale. I found the book at times too heavy on detail, as though the author insists on sharing all the research he worked so hard to obtain. The book also suffers from a bit of temporal arrogance as it looks back on early and mid 20th Century history with a 21st Century sensibility, which tends to depict everything in a critical light rather than a contemporary context. Certainly a worthwhile read.

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