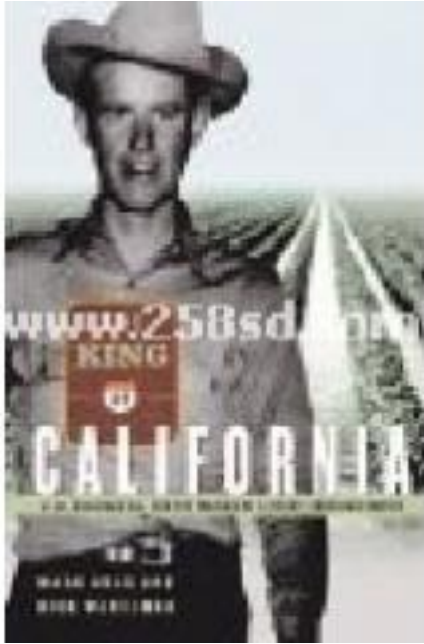


The King of California: J. G. Boswell and the Making of a Secret American Empire



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From The New Yorker This meticulous narrative of the rise of the cotton magnate James G. Boswell begins in the nineteen-twenties, when his family was driven from Georgia by boll-weevil infestations and brought its plantation ways to California's San Joaquin Valley. Not to be defeated by nature again, the Boswells leveed and dammed Tulare Lake, the largest body of fresh water west of the Mississippi, to the point of extinction. In its six-hundred-square-mile basin they grew cotton, while in Los Angeles office towers they built one of the country's largest agricultural operations, swallowing small farms and multimillion-dollar subsidies with equal

vigor. Arax and Wartzman strive for evenhandedness but acknowledge the costs of Big Ag—such as evaporation ponds with selenium levels so high that ducks are born with corkscrewed beaks and no eyes, and the recurrent “hundred-year floods,” stubborn attempts by the old lake to reassert itself. Copyright © 2005 The New Yorker --This text refers to the Paperback edition. From Booklist You may never have heard of him, but J. G. Boswell controls the biggest farming empire in America. In the early part of the twentieth century, his family moved from Georgia to California, where they drained one of the country's biggest lakes, Tulare Lake, and planted cotton. Soon their cotton empire became the richest and most technologically sophisticated on the planet. This book is many stories, all rolled into one epic. It's the story of the Boswells from the 1800s to the present day; of cotton farming in America; of California itself; and of the evolution of race relations as the country dragged itself out of the era of slavery and, not at all smoothly, into the modern era. Written in a lively style that matches the bigger-than-life qualities of its subject, the book is far more exciting than you might think the story of a cotton farmer would be. With proper marketing, it could smash through genre barriers and become the Seabiscuit of agricultural biography! David Pitt Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved See all Editorial Reviews

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