



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

Mark Arax, Rick Wartzman

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A rich, colorful history of California centering on the untold story of America 's biggest farmer, J. G. Boswell, who controls more than \$1 billion worth of water rights and real estate in the heart of the state. J. G. Boswell is the biggest farmer in America. Over the past fifty years he has built a secret empire while thumbing his nose at nature, politicians, labor unions and every journalist who ever tried to lift the veil on the ultimate "factory in the fields. " Now eighty years old, with an almost pathological bent toward privacy, Boswell has spent the past few years confiding one of the great stories of the American West to Mark Arax and Rick Wartzman. The King of California is the previously untold account of how a Georgia slave-owning family migrated to California in the early 1920s, drained one of America 's biggest lakes in an act of incredible hubris and carved out the richest cotton empire in the world. Indeed, the sophistication of Boswell 's agricultural operation -from lab to field to gin - is unrivaled anywhere. Much more than a business story, this is a sweeping social history that details the saga of cotton growers who were chased from the South by the boll weevil and brought their black farmhands to California. It is a gripping read with cameos by a cast of famous characters, from Cecil B. DeMille to Cesar Chavez.

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