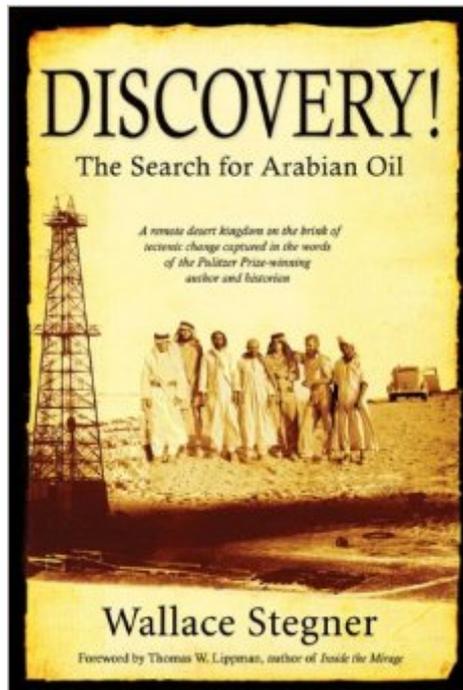


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Discovery!: The Search For Arabian Oil



Synopsis

Illuminating a little-known but extremely significant period in world history—the discovery of oil in the Middle East and the beginnings of what is now the Saudi Arabian Oil Company (Saudi Aramco)—this captivating history explores the birth of the Middle Eastern oil industry. From the king and his royal court to the desert guides, scientists, and mechanics who built the original oil company, Aramco, the distant and desperately poor world of Depression-era Saudi Arabia is vividly brought to life. Written more than 50 years ago, this detailed account serves as a kind of time capsule and features the author's prescient insights into the cultural and technological consequences of King Ibn Saud's deliberate decision to choose America as his commercial ally.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

...of this book written by Philip L. Fradkin in the San Francisco Chronicle lead me to Stegner's work. Fradkin's article was not actually about the CONTENT of the book so much as the circumstances surrounding its commissioning and publication. The conclusion is stated in his review's title: that the work should have stayed "hidden", that is, not published at all, and that would have been a real tragedy. The circumstances surrounding the work's publications are covered quite well by Thomas W. Lippman in a Foreword to the work. It is clear that Stegner was paid by the corporate predecessor to ARAMCO to write an account of the first days of oil exploration in the Kingdom. It is also clear that certain "politically sensitive" portions of his work were revised or deleted, and that his consent to this process was obtained. Like many others, I would love to have read the

unexpurgated version, but the only choice is the one available, with some "punches pulled," some "sensitivities" glossed over. Ah, if there were only similar type Forewords that explained the background and biases of the numerous "Saudi-bashing" books that have been published. In reading this book I could not help think of Edgar Snow's "A Journey to the Beginning." Snow was fresh out of journalism school, went to China for a short period, but stayed over 13 years, and in the process met, and later portrayed the creators of modern China, Mao Tse-Tung and Chou En Lai. Snow's work remains essential if one is to understand one of the most important countries in the world today. Stegner's circumstances were considerably different than Snow's, but he too had unique access, and produced a portrait of some of the characters who "were attendants at the birth of a world." (page 151).

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