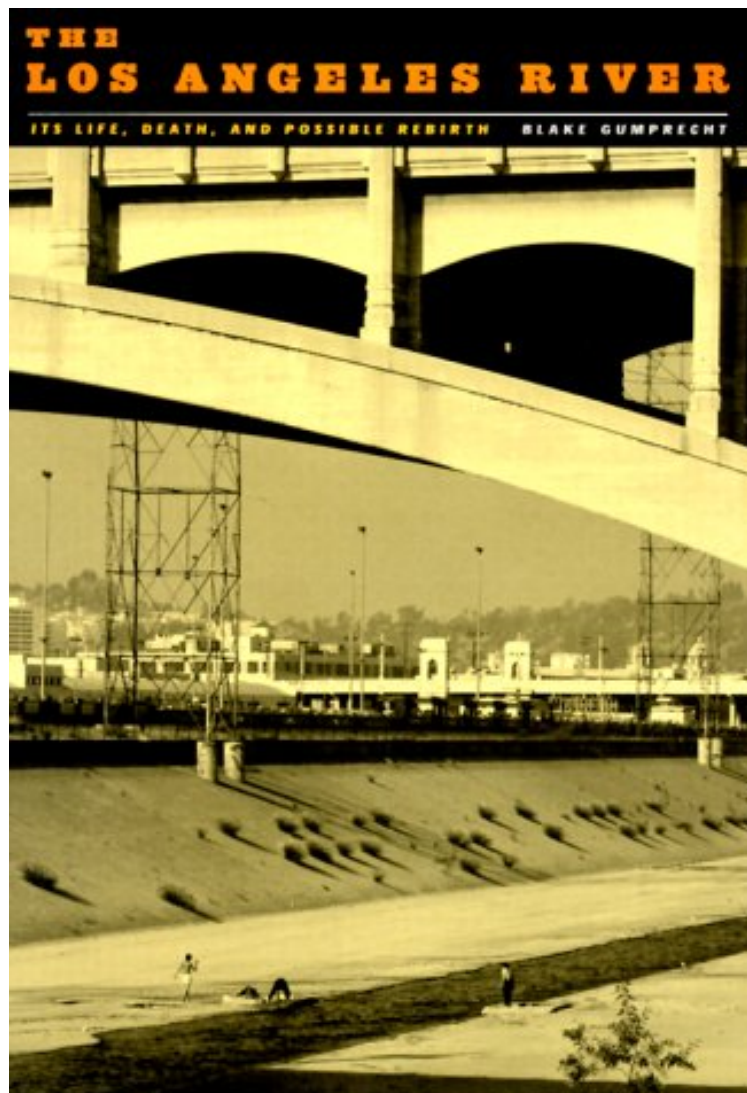


[Library ebook] The Los Angeles River: Its Life, Death, and Possible Rebirth (Creating the North American Landscape)

The Los Angeles River: Its Life, Death, and Possible Rebirth (Creating the North American Landscape)

Mr. Blake Gumprecht

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Mr. Blake Gumprecht : The Los Angeles River: Its Life, Death, and Possible Rebirth (Creating the North American Landscape) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Los Angeles River: Its Life, Death, and Possible Rebirth (Creating the North American Landscape):

30 of 30 people found the following review helpful. The River that Made Los AngelesBy A CustomerAs a boy growing up in North Long Beach in the 1930s, I often camped out with my friends on the banks of the Los Angeles

River. We would go skinny dipping, catch pollywogs and lizards, make willow whistles, and trudge through the oily sludge that lined the river bottom. We did not know that once the river flowed year-around crystal clear, teeming with fish and supporting a heavily wooded flood plain rich with swamps, lakes, and wildlife. My first surprise on reading the biography of this once-ample river was the fact that it supported one of the largest concentrations of natives in the country. The first Europeans who settled on its banks named their village after it. This book really tells three stories. The first is how the river contributed to the growth of agriculture during the first 100 years of European settlement, creating a lasting image of fertile vineyards and orchards in the sunshine. After the railroad came, the needs for water grew so rapidly they pumped the river dry and built an aqueduct to the Owens River in the north to supply their needs. The second story is about the river's revenge and the periodic devastation it caused by flooding. Time after time, the river, swollen by storms in the San Gabriel Mountains, would smash through its levies, carry off whole houses, factories, herds of cattle, orchards and vineyards, destroy roads, bridges, cemeteries, and towns, putting the whole county under water. It was not until the late 1930s that an earnest attempt was made to tame the river with a system of dams, catchment basins, and pavement. The third story is about the recent attempts to restore the river to its natural state, an exercise about which the author is skeptical. Blake Gumprecht has given us a splendid book that again shows us how much geology, climate, and topography affect how we live and think of ourselves as a people.

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Compelling Story of an Urban River
By Thomas J. Burke
I first saw the Los Angeles River in TV shows and movies like Terminator 2 and have ever since been interested in learning more about this strange, concrete encased urban waterway. Blake Gumprecht's book does a great job of providing the history of the Los Angeles River from its pristine condition two centuries ago into the modern era as a "Freeway for Water" in the book "The Los Angeles River." The author balances his coverage of the river and fairly represents both sides of the struggle to restore it back to a more natural appearance versus the need to provide flood control protection with concrete fortifications. The book is extremely well researched and documented. Extensive maps and photos shed light on the topic and make the historical changes easier to follow. My only wish is that a future edition will include color photos.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. fantastic
By blue_skies322
Must read book. There are few others with quite as much comprehensive details about the different life stages of the LA River.

Three centuries ago, the Los Angeles River meandered through marshes and forests of willow and sycamore. Trout spawned in its waters and grizzly bears roamed its shores. The bountiful environment the river helped create supported one of the largest concentrations of Indians in North America. Today, the river is made almost entirely of concrete. Chain-link fence and barbed wire line its course. Shopping carts and trash litter its channel. Little water flows in the river most of the year, and nearly all that does is treated sewage and oily street runoff. On much of its course, the river looks more like a deserted freeway than a river. The river's contemporary image belies its former character and its importance to the development of Southern California. Los Angeles would not exist were it not for the river, and the river was crucial to its growth. Recognizing its past and future potential, a potent movement has developed to revitalize its course. The Los Angeles River offers the first comprehensive account of a river that helped give birth to one of the world's great cities, significantly shaped its history, and promises to play a key role in its future.

.com Why is the historic center of Los Angeles located where it is, 15 miles from the ocean and 10 miles from the San Gabriel Mountains, on an arid plain? The answer is the Los Angeles River, which once flowed freely across that flat land. In his book, *The Los Angeles River: Its Life, Death, and Possible Rebirth*, Blake Gumprecht points out that before the course of the river was paved, Hollywood and Beverly Hills were marshland and that in flood years, the river carried as much water as the Mississippi. "The destruction of the river had begun half a century before the first concrete was poured," Gumprecht writes, "when the river ... began to be viewed not as a giver of life or a thing of beauty, but as a dumping ground--for horse carcasses, petroleum waste, and the city's garbage." The river, he adds, was also viewed as a mere vehicle for a commodity, water, and a vehicle that could be improved with the addition of channels, culverts, and reservoirs. Such changes made the wide-scale development of the Los Angeles region possible, but they destroyed the living river. Now, years later, environmental activists are pressing to restore the river to something of its former self--and their efforts, if successful, will again alter the course of regional history. The Los Angeles River has figured widely in many ecological studies of Southern California; in historical work it has figured largely as a backdrop. Gumprecht grants the river close attention as a thing unto itself, one that has affected many other aspects of the area's social, economic, and environmental history.

--Gregory McNamee
From Publishers Weekly
For those even aware that it exists, the Los Angeles River conjures up an image of a barren concrete channel, a place best suited for Hollywood car chases and gang brawls. There was a time, however, when the L.A. River, which runs from the San Fernando Valley into the Pacific, had an entirely different image, not to mention a different course. Before modern flood control programs fixed the river's path with high cement walls, it ran variously south and west, at one time emptying into the Santa Monica Bay. In this exhaustive and lively investigation, Gumprecht, a geography professor and former Los Angeles Times reporter, charts the waterway's evolution from a "beautiful stream, wandering peacefully amid willows and wild grapes" to the refuse-strewn, "ugly, concrete gutter" it

is today. Gumprecht describes the crucial role that the river played in the settlement and growth of L.A. Both as a water source and as a symbol of the region's Arcadian promise and, conversely, how the river was remade in the image of the metropolis itself, becoming depleted and degraded by the very development it made possible. Like fellow L.A. historian Mike Davis, Gumprecht scatters an archive of startling photos throughout the book, from a man holding a 25-pound trout caught in the river in 1940 to the scene of a riverbed drag race broken up by the police in 1950. Conjuring images of Roman Polanski's Chinatown, Gumprecht's river "biography" breathes vitality into a subject that in the hands of a less enthusiastic author might be drier than the industrial wasteland that he describes. Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Scientific American It is a sorry thing now, corseted in graffiti-splotched concrete over most of its 82-kilometer (51-mile) length, carrying mostly treated sewage and storm drainage and pocked with discarded shopping carts, refrigerators and other detritus of the big population that surrounds it. Yet as recently as 1877, the river was described by William Mulholland, an engineer who became superintendent of the Los Angeles water department, as a "beautiful, limpid little stream with willows on its banks." But it had to supply the burgeoning city with water, and it sometimes produced damaging floods, and so it gradually took its present form through extensive flood-control works. Gumprecht, a former newspaperman who now teaches geography at the University of Oklahoma, relates the history of the river with graceful thoroughness. "We can learn much about urban rivers everywhere from the story of the Los Angeles River," he says. Taking note of recent efforts to improve the riverside scene with bikeways and small parks, he is mildly optimistic about revitalizing the river. "Only a fool would bet on its future. But a few years ago, only a fool would have cared."