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OLYMPIC SALT WATER COMPANY

by Tim Kelley

Founded in 1892 by a group of businessmen headed by John D. Spreckels, the Olympic Salt Water Company described its mission as:
□ to supply the people of San Francisco pure ocean water for bathing purposes. □ The first of those people to benefit were Spreckels' fellow Olympic Club members, whose new pool and bathing facilities the company served.

Salt water was commonly used for bathing, and in swimming pools in the 19th century. In San Francisco, many bathing establishments in the downtown and northeastern areas of the city had pumping facilities to take water from the Bay. However, pollution became more and more of a concern as raw sewage and industrial effluent were dumped without restriction. Ocean water, thought to be pure, was inconveniently located eight miles from the Olympic Club and from most of the people of San Francisco.

The newly founded company built an elaborate distribution system consisting of an intake 600 feet offshore, south of the Cliff House, with a 3 million gallon per day pump located across the Great Highway, and 3.75 miles of 16 ft. iron pipe running along the present Geary Boulevard to a 5 million gallon reservoir and settling tanks in Laurel Heights. From the reservoir, the water flowed by gravity through a 14 ft. main to the downtown area, and through smaller distribution pipes to the customers.

The Olympic Club and the Lurline Baths were the major customers of Olympic Salt, along with some smaller commercial baths. The Lurline

Baths were located at Bush & Larkin Streets and included public baths and a swimming pool owned and operated by the Olympic Salt Water Company.

The company actually solicited business from private homeowners, although few were willing to take on the formidable corrosion and clogging problems of salt water. Proposals to establish fire fighting and street washing systems also failed, leaving the powerful Spring Valley (fresh) Water Company in command of those markets, and in the hot seat when its system failed during the 1906 earthquake and fire. The Olympic Salt Water Company served the Olympic Club and the Lurline Baths until it ceased operations in 1936.

Tim Kelley is an independent architectural historian and member of the San Francisco Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board. Mr. Kelley researched the Olympic Salt Water Company in connection with a National Register of Historic Places nomination.

BOOK REVIEW

by Randal Brandt

Gumprecht, Blake. [The Los Angeles River: Its Life, Death, and Possible Rebirth](http://geography.ou.edu/research/river/) <<http://geography.ou.edu/research/river/>>. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999. 369 p.

From its origins in the San Fernando Valley to where it meets the Pacific Ocean fifty-one miles away at Long Beach, the Los Angeles River is unlike any other river on earth. What little water flows in its channel is mostly treated sewage and street runoff. Chain link fences and barbed wire keep visitors away. Garbage is prolific; fish are rare. The river's most unique features are its bed and banks, which are made almost entirely of concrete. However, it is along the banks of this eyesore that Los Angeles's historic city center is still located. In order to explain the history and importance of this waterway, geographer Blake Gumprecht has written the definitive biography of the Los Angeles River. Although it has long been seen as "little more than a local joke," without the river the city of Los Angeles would not even exist. In telling the story of the Los Angeles River, Gumprecht emphasizes three themes: "how the river has changed through history, how it has been changed by humans, and how its role in the region has changed over time."

The first section of *The Los Angeles River* details the natural history of the river. Southern California is widely known as a land of little rain. The Los Angeles River, however, is fed by a huge aquifer below the San

Fernando Valley and fresh water for irrigation and drinking was abundant year round. Just three hundred years ago the river supported a vast array of life along its banks. Dense forests of vegetation, wildlife, steelhead, and Native Californians thrived because of the river. In the 18th century, Spanish explorers established an agricultural village, or pueblo □ which would later become the city of Los Angeles □ on a terrace overlooking the river in order to support the California missions and presidios.

The growth of the city doomed the river to its present fate. As the population exploded in the late 19th century, the river's waters were continually called upon to meet the city's demands. By 1904, following several years of drought, □ the entire surface and subsurface flow of the Los Angeles River had to be tapped to meet the rapidly expanding needs of the city. □ The city, of course, □ solved □ this problem by building the 233-mile Los Angeles Aqueduct from the Owens Valley to supply Los Angeles □ water demands.

The river has always been subject to flooding, often changing its course dramatically during periods of high flow. As the city developed, □ human beings made matters worse by building on the floodplain, removing trees and vegetation that had kept soils in place, cutting openings in stream banks to divert water for irrigation, erecting levees that constricted flood flows, and constructing railroads that interrupted natural drainage patterns. □ The vagaries of the river could no longer be tolerated. After many years of trying to control the river, the Army Corps of Engineers was charged with taking steps that were drastic by any measure. They widened and deepened the river channel, then encased nearly its entire length in concrete.

□ The Los Angeles River today is like a scar on the landscape, a faint reminder of what it used to be. □ In the final chapter of *The Los Angeles River*, Gumprecht documents the formation of the Friends of the Los Angeles River, an environmental group leading a movement to revitalize the river. Although to date very little has actually happened to green the river, many diverse groups are talking about the river and Los Angeles officials are discussing a variety of proposals for its future.

The book is meticulously researched and written. It is illustrated with a wealth of photographs and drawings. Of particular note is the series of original maps by the author that appears throughout the text. The maps show a variety of features of the Los Angeles basin not readily found on other maps, such as the river's drainage area in its natural state, the zanja (irrigation ditch) system of Los Angeles in the 1880s, flood prone areas, and the river's flood control system. With *The Los Angeles River*, Gumprecht has created an important addition to the literature on rivers in the urban landscape.

Randal Brandt is the Associate Librarian at the Water Resources Center Archives.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT - DILIP TRIVEDI

by Kathy Dieden

Dilip Trivedi is an engineer with Moffat & Nichol Engineers since 1992. He completed his undergraduate work in India and received his Masters and Doctorate degrees in engineering from Texas A&M University.

Q: What kind of work are you doing at present?

A: Design of coastal and shoreline protection structures, wetlands restoration design, and port and harbor design.

Q: Why did you come to the United States to continue your education?

A: Primarily because of the technology in this country, and the marvelous synergy of the academic and professional environments. In the urban centers, e.g., UC Berkeley, the engineering programs are directed toward solving field and industry problems. In other countries the academic and professional worlds are relatively distinct, which offers much less opportunity for collaboration.

Q: Why is California spending over \$2 billion on Bay Area bridges?

A: The bridges represent an integral part of the Bay Area's arterial network of highways. The loss of even one would be a disaster from the perspective of public safety as well as traffic impacts.

Q: What are the most interesting projects you are currently working on?

A: We are in a unique and challenging field where it is not very often that we complete "cookie cutter" projects. Almost all the projects have distinct characteristics. In the Bay Area, I would have to say that the new Bay Bridge East span, the SFO Airport runway extension project, and the work for local Ports are among the most challenging.

Q: What kind of projects do you think Moffatt & Nichol will be doing in the year 2020? Where is the work likely to come from and what are the trends in your industry?

A: The majority of our clients are local, state and federal agencies and our

work comes, primarily, from the public transportation sector (port facilities, harbors and highways), along with specialized coastal and waterfront projects. I expect that we will continue that trend. With the growing focus on the environmental and regulatory impacts of large public projects, I anticipate that we will get more involved in helping clients resolve complex environmental issues while meeting basic project goals. In addition, we will focus our efforts on the growing market segment in environmental restoration projects (e.g., wetlands restoration in the Bay Area and the Delta, and the CalFed program).

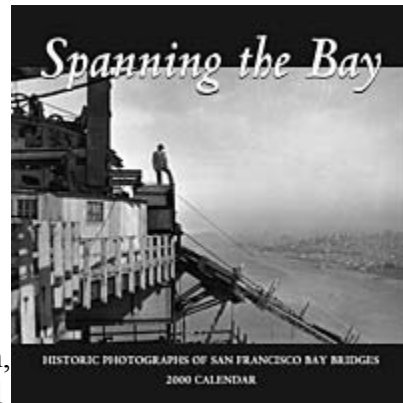
Q: What project has presented you with the greatest challenge and did you handle it?

A: There are quite a few which come to mind. For example, there was an engineering feasibility study that we completed for the Garcia River in Mendocino County that was particularly challenging. It involved providing recommendations for improving the health of the estuary, without increasing the risk of flooding of adjacent farmlands. Another project was in Carmel where a reservoir had lost almost all of its storage capacity, and we designed several schemes to remove the accumulated sand from behind the dam face.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

SPANNING THE BAY: HISTORIC PHOTOGRAPHS OF SAN FRANCISCO BAY BRIDGES

The Water Resources Center Archives and the [Harmer E. Davis Institute of Transportation Studies Library](#) collaborated on the publication of a calendar for the year 2000 that features historic photographs of Bay Area bridges. The photographs are from the Archives' collection of the papers of Charles Derleth, Jr. (1874-1956), a consulting engineer and former Dean of the UC Berkeley College of Engineering. Publication of the calendar was generously underwritten by a [T.Y. Lin International / Moffatt & Nichol Engineers](#) joint venture. To order the calendar contact ITS Publications Office at (510) 642-3558. Order forms are available at: <http://www.its.berkeley.edu/library/calendar.html>



TICKETS AVAILABLE FOR BENEFIT CONCERT

The Water Resources Center Archives and the [Mono Lake Committee](#) (MLC) are jointly sponsoring a benefit concert on Sunday, November 7, 3:00 p.m. at St. John's Presbyterian Church, 2727 College Avenue, in Berkeley. The concert features violinist David Abel and pianist Julie Steinberg performing works of Beethoven, Debussy and Dresher.



David and Julie have volunteered their musical talents to assist both MLC and WRCA. Members of the Mono Lake Committee since the 1970s, David and Julie support the Archives' efforts to preserve the historical record of the environmental struggle to save Mono Lake and to make that record available to the people of California. "We want concerned citizens to realize that it is possible to make a difference," said Julie in a recent interview.

Pacific Gas and Electric in San Francisco is generously underwriting \$5,000 of the cost of the concert. There will be a wine and dessert reception for sponsors and donors following the performance. Dr. G. Mathias Kondolf, Associate Professor in the Departments of Environmental Design and Geography at UC Berkeley, and Dave Shuford, a biologist with the Point Reyes Bird Observatory, will inform the audience about the activities of each organization.

For more information and to order tickets, please see <http://www.monolake.org/events/monomusic.htm> or contact Kathy Dieden (510) 642-2666; kdieden@library.berkeley.edu.

ARCHIVES HOSTS 1998/1999 BENEFACTORS RECEPTION



On August 17, 1999 Linda Vida, Director of Library and Information Services at the Archives and Henry J. Vaux, Jr., Associate Vice President, Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources, University of California hosted an afternoon reception at the Faculty Club to honor those donors who contributed \$1,000.00 or more to the Water Resources Center Archives in 1998/1999.

Linda Vida thanked the benefactors, Gary Weatherford of Weatherford and Taaffe, Richard Dornbush of Moffatt & Nichol Engineers, Chris White and Edward Ballman of Balance Hydrologics, Inc. and Tony Landolt and Verena Landolt, for their generosity. Henry J. Vaux, Jr. presented the benefactors with a plaque engraved with their names which is now prominently displayed in the main reading room of the Archives.

STAFF NOTES

Jennifer Lewis joined the staff of the Water Resources Center Archives on September 1st. as a grant-funded Archivist Assistant to organize and process some of WRCA's archival collections. She received a Master of Science in Information degree from the University of Michigan, School of Information, at Ann Arbor. Jennifer previously worked as an archival processor at the Liberation Movement Archives at the University of Fort Hare, where she processed the papers of the Pan Africanist Congress Tanzania Mission. Welcome, Jennifer.

Elizabeth Redies was awarded her fifteen year service pin at the Benefactor's Reception. Henry J. Vaux, Jr., Associate Vice President, Division of Agriculture & Natural Resources, University of California, made the presentation and expressed his appreciation to Elizabeth for her years of service to the University of California. Elizabeth has been a member of the Water Resources Center Archives' staff for seven years. She previously worked at UCLA. Congratulations, Elizabeth.

GIFTS & DONATIONS

GIFTS

WRCA wishes to thank the following water districts, corporations and individuals for becoming Friends of the Archives.

The following individuals and corporations have recently become members of the Friends of the Archives:

Benefactors/ \$1000 +

- Santa Clara Valley Water District

Associates/ \$250 +

- Metropolitan Water District of Southern California
- Ripley Pacific Company

Donors/ \$50 +

- Zone 7
- Noble Consultants

DONATIONS

The Archives wishes to thank the following individuals and organizations for their donations in kind to the library.

- David E. Todd
- G. Robert Koch
- Department of Geography, University of California, Berkeley