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An Unnatural Metropolis: Wrestling New Orleans from Nature

By Craig E. Colten

Louisiana State University Press. Paperback. Condition: New. 272 pages. Dimensions: 8.9in. x 5.9in. x 0.7in. An Unnatural Metropolis offers an in-depth look at a city and society uniquely shaped by the natural forces it has sought to harness. Strategically situated at the gateway to the Mississippi River yet standing atop a former swamp, New Orleans was from the first what geographer Peirce Lewis called an impossible but inevitable city. How New Orleans came to be, taking shape between the mutual and often contradictory forces of nature and urban development, is the subject of An Unnatural Metropolis. Though all cities must contend with their physical settings, Craig E. Colten demonstrates that New Orleans may be the city most dependent on human-induced transformations of its precarious site. Colten traces engineered modifications to New Orleans's natural environment from 1800 to 2000. Before the city could swell in size and commercial importance as its nineteenth-century boosters envisioned, builders had to wrest it from its waterlogged site, protect it from floods, expel disease, and supply basic services using local resources. Colten shows how every manipulation of the environment made an impact on the city's social geography as well—often with unequal, adverse consequences for minorities—and how each...



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