



Thames Embankment: Environment, Technology, and Society in Victorian London (Technology and the Environment)

Dale H. Porter

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Any large-scale construction project is a complex of contingencies, pitting the volatility of nature against human ingenuity, and setting the discord of human nature against itself. In *The Thames Embankment*, Dale H. Porter explores the tangled history of a monumental venture in Victorian London, telling with wit and authority the stories of those involved in and affected by this rough-and-tumble process, from mudlarks and wharfingers to prime ministers and lords. The embankment of the Thames River is often considered the final element of the London Main Drainage, a great engineering project that carried the sewage of the crowded metropolis down the valley and reduced the toxic pollution of the river and surrounding neighborhoods. But the Embankment, whose construction took almost fifty years from concept to completion, achieved fame in its own right, as an immense, expensive, and successful event that reflected the cultural ecology of Victorian society. In this richly detailed and multifaceted study, Dale H. Porter reveals the intricate weave of values and practices---environmental, political, economic, technological, and aesthetic---that made possible the planning and building of these structures that altered and became a permanent part of the London riverscape. Above all, *The Thames Embankment* shows how innovations in technology, in environmental assessment, and in public policy formations not only lead to public works projects but are, in turn, stimulated and shaped by them.

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