



THE CHICAGO RIVER

A Natural and Unnatural History

By Libby Hill

↑ American Regional History Publishing Award
1st Place for the Midwest Region, 2001

↑ Midwest Independent Publishers Association Book Award
2nd Place — History, 2000

↑ Abel Wolman Award, for best new book in public works history:
“Outstanding Nomination”

Many writers and thinkers have approached our hometown creek in the context of Jolliet and Marquette’s use of the Chicago portage to access the Mississippi River System: a sluggish stream in the right place at the right time, i.e. the making of Chicago. Libby Hill’s version examines the other side of the story—*the making and perpetual re-making of a single waterway by everything from the forces of prehistoric glaciers to the interventions of an emerging, world-class city.* The episodes in between include use and abuse, straightening and channelizing, reversal and restoration, with particulars like sewage, stormwater diversion, toxic dumping, sand accretion, watershed management, engineering feats, and more!

The Chicago River is truly a labor of love. After years of meticulous research—poring through mountains of historic and technical documents, pursuing original hypotheses, collecting supplementary material from various specialists, undergoing extensive peer and expert review, creating several original maps, and personally investigating the river’s nooks and crannies in the field—Libby Hill has written a very readable and important contribution to the field of natural history: *A book that continues to influence experts and policy makers, and to find new audiences several years after its initial release.*

From the 100th anniversary of the reversal of the Chicago River to the city’s plans for a new, week-long riverfest, to the abundance of commercial, recreational, and ecological projects underway on and in the river, the Chicago River is a timely subject, due for this in-depth and absorbing treatment. Epitomizing the eternal struggle of humans vs. nature over the centuries, the Chicago River at the turn-of-the-millennium is now revealing the “win-win” possibilities for both humanity and the natural world.

Used and abused. Straightened and channelized. Reversed and revered. But *never* ignored . . .

AN INTIMATE BIOGRAPHY OF THE HEROIC CREEK THAT CHICAGO MADE.