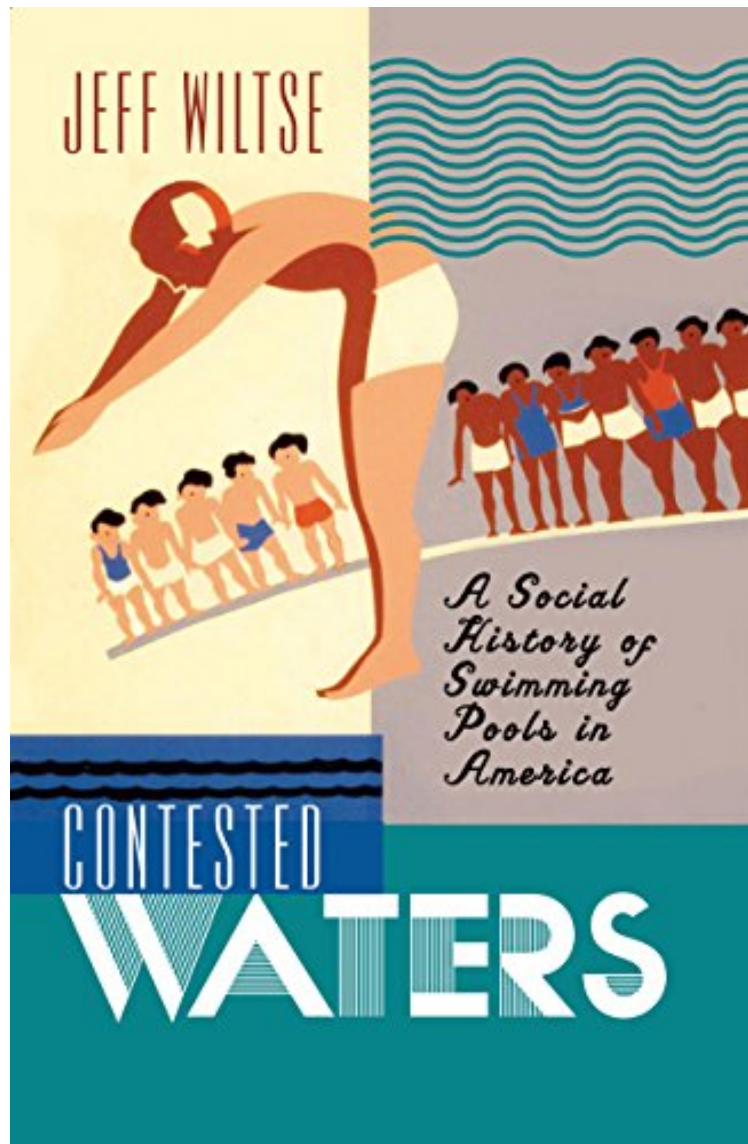


[Get free] Contested Waters: A Social History of Swimming Pools in America

Contested Waters: A Social History of Swimming Pools in America

Jeff Wiltse

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Jeff Wiltse : Contested Waters: A Social History of Swimming Pools in America before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Contested Waters: A Social History of Swimming Pools in America:

2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. once parents have a better understanding of the possible uses of pools and allBy Gloriajean WallaceVery informative book. Interesting and a must read--especially if you have young children who are swimmers. Important book because it provides information about the history of swimming pools --

that (surprisingly) had little to do with pleasure/swimming, but rather sanitation. This book may help the parent to understand "raudy" behavior among youngsters in swimming pool settings..and may also help parents to temper that behavior in a more loving/understanding manner..given the evolution of swimming pools. ..once parents have a better understanding of the possible uses of pools and all. (a little boring in places..but overall..a great book!2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A well written yet sad historyBy RegIt provides much insight into the history of pools, but this is a sad history that shows just how little progress has been made as a society.0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Awesome book!By N. AshI needed this book for school and I wanted it for personal reasons. I am glad that I finally found it. It is very informative and well written.

From nineteenth-century public baths to today's private backyard havens, swimming pools have long been a provocative symbol of American life. In this social and cultural history of swimming pools in the United States, Jeff Wiltse relates how, over the years, pools have served as asylums for the urban poor, leisure resorts for the masses, and private clubs for middle-class suburbanites. As sites of race riots, shrinking swimsuits, and conspicuous leisure, swimming pools reflect many of the tensions and transformations that have given rise to modern America.

From Publishers WeeklyHistorian Wiltse offers a detailed study of the history of municipal swimming pools from the late 19th century through the present, tracing their development from bare-bones baths for the working classes to elegant, "sylvan" recreational spaces for the middle and upper classes. Wiltse makes a strong case that the history of these swimming pools embodies the painful challenges that class, gender and race presented America in the 20th century. The most compelling portions of the book deal with segregation and the fight to integrate municipal pools. Wiltse describes the eroticizing of the municipal pool as white women began to appear in increasingly revealing swimming suits; this, says the author, was one of the primary motivations behind the white push for municipal pool segregation. Wiltse also details the "white flight" from the pools that followed desegregation. This is well done, clearly written, thoroughly researched history, and it effectively makes important points about the tensions that confounded America during the Civil Rights movement. The writing is occasionally dry and statistic-laden, but Wiltse uses the municipal swimming pool as a fascinating window onto social changes and urban tensions across the 20th century. Bw photos. (Apr. 23) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.From The New YorkerThe first public swimming pools in the United States were "large community bath tubs"indoors, relatively small, and intended to encourage good hygiene among the poor. By the nineteen-twenties, pools had become elaborate "public amusements," accommodating thousands. Wiltse's history argues that, at every turn, these sites of "intimate and prolonged contact" between swimmers of different races, genders, and social classes stirred intense conflict. The book is most incisive in its discussion of swimming pools as what one editorialist called "one of the touchiest problems in race relations." Between the wars, swimming pools began to mix the genders, but African-Americans were gradually excluded from the "sexually charged" spaces. In the fifties and sixties, as civil-rights activists persevered in the courts, many cities chose to close municipal pools rather than integrate them. Copyright 2007 Click here to subscribe to The New Yorker Wiltse unpicks a story that begins in an age when the main reason for public pools was to let poor people get clean.--EconomistIt quickly becomes clear that Wiltse's Contested Waters isn't a dreary historical catalog of shapes and styles of swimming pools vast and small. It's the colorful story of America's municipal swimming pools in the 19th and 20th centuries. Against that backdrop it becomes a story of America. It's all here: a sense of this country's benevolence, its community relations, civic wars, social strata, sexuality and sexism as well as our capacity for having a good time. Chronicled along with these are our ill-feeling prejudice, ignorance and racial strife. . . . [Contested Waters offers] a good course in America. All its traits, fine and lamentable are found here--the most vivid being, alas, our stinking racism.--Dick Cavett, New York Times Book [A] well-written account. . . . [Wiltse's] myriad primary sources are particularly impressive. . . . Succeeds on all accounts.--The Journal of American History[An] intriguing history.--PeopleIncisive.--New YorkerAn expertly researched and well-written new book. . . [that] gives a detailed overview of how race played a major role in defining one of America's favorite leisure pastimes.--Journal of Blacks in Higher EducationFascinating. . . . Wiltse has put a unique lens to the American experience.--Flint JournalIn Contested Waters, historian Jeff Wiltse argues that the nation's contentious history of racism, class conflict and gender inequality can be captured by chronicling the rise and fall of municipal pools in northern American cities. And he makes a compelling case. . . . [In] this extremely readable narrative. . . . Wiltse persuasively shows that there are some very serious consequences to how Americans play together--and when and why they decide that they won't.--Washington Post Book WorldA rare gem. . . . A thoroughly researched and thought-provoking, yet entertaining study.--Register of the Kentucky Historical SocietyIntelligent, compelling social history.--Atlantic MonthlyProvides valuable insight on the evolving attitudes toward race, class, gender, and community in the US. . . . An excellent resource, well researched and well written.--CHOICEAt public swimming pools. . . . [people are] less likely to make the same nice distinctions about one another that [they] would at the pizza parlor or shopping mall. This potential for fluid intimacy is one attraction of public pools. And as Wiltse shows in Contested Waters, it's also the reason they've been social battlegrounds for the past century and a half. . . . The struggle to desegregate public pools . . . makes for compelling

reading.--Wilson QuarterlyThat rare book that answers questions so interesting and so important that one is surprised they have not been asked before. . . . Wiltse's research is thorough, and thoroughly documented. . . . Wiltse has done a remarkable job of finding and synthesizing a large body of material, most of it never considered seriously before, and the narrative he presents is fresh and important.--Magill's Literary Annual 2008This is well done, clearly written, thoroughly researched history, and it effectively makes important points about the tensions that confounded America during the Civil Rights movement. . . . Wiltse uses the municipal swimming pool as a fascinating window onto social changes and urban tensions across the 20th century.--Publishers WeeklyFrom gender integration, class and racial segregation, even down to the definition of a permissible swimsuit, Wiltse covers his topic with in-depth research and examines the levels of contention connected with the history of public pools in America.--Black Issues Book Captivating social history. . . . [Contested Waters] makes absorbing, disturbing reading and meticulously backs up Wiltse's argument that we can see the fault lines in American society by tracing the history of municipal pools. . . . Contested Waters is crisp and readable. . . . Wiltse has put a unique lens to the American experience.--Cleveland Plain DealerAn excellent and well-crafted social history. . . . Valuable for its presentation of the physical geography of swimming pools, but even more importantly for inviting readers to see individual and personal behavior in public space as a form of social and cultural reproduction.--H-NetCarefully researched and well-written . . . a welcome beginning to a national story of public recreation.--American Historical