



Los Angeles Aqueduct opening day, 5 November 1913. COURTESY OF COUNTY OF INYO, EASTERN CALIFORNIA MUSEUM.

BOOM STAFF

The *Boom* List

What to do, see, hear, and read this fall in California

The opening of the Los Angeles Aqueduct on 5 November 1913 arguably marked the birth of modern Los Angeles. The one hundredth anniversary will be commemorated, celebrated, and, no doubt, in some cases hotly contested. Here's our idiosyncratic and selective guide to some of the things on our must-do list. For a complete list of things not to be missed around California this fall—including our own special events—visit boomcalifornia.com.

Take a road trip to Owens Valley with Kim Stringfellow's *There It Is—Take It!* audio tour. The route follows Highway 395 from Owens Lake north to the aqueduct intake,

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with 90 minutes of interviews offering insights on the landscape, history, and current controversies rooted in places along the way. Read more about the *There It Is—Take It!* project in this issue of *Boom*, and download the tour at thereitistakeit.org.

Visit the Eastern California Museum. Stop in Independence to take in *Building Bill's Ditch*, an exhibition offering an Owens Valley perspective on the massive engineering, logistical, and construction feat that is the aqueduct, as well as its human and environmental costs.

Listen to Pavement, Frank Black, and the Cold War Kids. Pavement's song "Unfair" is a howling tour-de-force about the aquatic political geography of California's "man-made deltas and concrete rivers / the south takes what the north delivers." Former Pixies frontman Black Francis's "Ole Mulholland" is a bent musical tribute to William Mulholland's engineering feat. We're not sure what Cold War Kids' "Water and Power" is about, exactly, but it sure sounds right for the occasion.

Visit the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County's new exhibit *Becoming Los Angeles*. Opened one day after the aqueduct in 1913, the museum has just completed an extensive renovation for its own centenary. Long the "only place pioneering LA organizations and families could donate their historic treasures," the museum has many items from its archives on display, along with a vial of water taken from the aqueduct on its opening day.

Read *William Mulholland and the Rise of Los Angeles* by Catherine Mulholland (University of California Press, 2000). Writing about a controversial historical figure who happens to be your grandfather is risky. Mulholland has a few unkind things to say about writers who preceded her, but all in all she delivers a measured, dispassionate, but still engaging biography of William Mulholland and an intriguing portrait of Los Angeles in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Watch *Chinatown*. Though never intended to be a faithful retelling of history, the movie is all many people know of the battle to build the aqueduct. It's a brilliant film at every level. As William Deverell and Tom Sitton argue in these pages,

fact and fiction blend in Robert Towne's script to tell a story that is true in essence, if not historically correct in any detail. *Chinatown* will be screened at a special event in downtown LA during the centennial.

Read *Water and Power: The Conflict Over Los Angeles Water Supply in the Owens Valley* by William Kahrl (University of California Press, 1980). Kahrl divided the books that came before his own into two camps: those that depicted Los Angeles as the "conscienceless destroyer of one of California's prime agricultural regions" and those that saw "the heroic advance of civilization" in the city's efforts secure water for growth. Kahrl judiciously tries to find the truth in each account.

Watch for *Paya*. Long before anyone conceived of the Los Angeles Aqueduct, Paiute Indians constructed 60 miles of irrigation systems in Owens Valley. But as filmmaker Jenna Cavelle explains, "after the Indian War of 1863, surviving Paiute returned to the Valley from the Eastern Sierra and White Mountains to find their ancient waterworks taken over by white settlers." Cavelle's new documentary delves into this history and the Paiute's fight to save their forgotten waterworks.

Read *Beyond Chinatown: The Metropolitan Water District, Growth, and the Environment in Southern California* by Steven P. Erie (Stanford University Press, 2006). The "Met" is the elephant in the room here—or "empire" as Erie calls the giant southern California cooperative of water purveyors stretching from Oxnard to the border with Mexico. Erie brings the wheeling and dealing into the beginning of the 21st century. Just in time.

Read *ARID: A Journal of Desert Art, Design and Ecology*. The fall issue of this biannual, online, peer-reviewed journal will mark the aqueduct's centennial by asking everyone who is implicated in "Big Water"—could they mean us?—to reexamine our policies and practices and consider "alternative visions for renegotiating a shared future."

Stay tuned to boomcalifornia.com for more recommendations of things to do, see, read, and hear around the Golden State. **B**