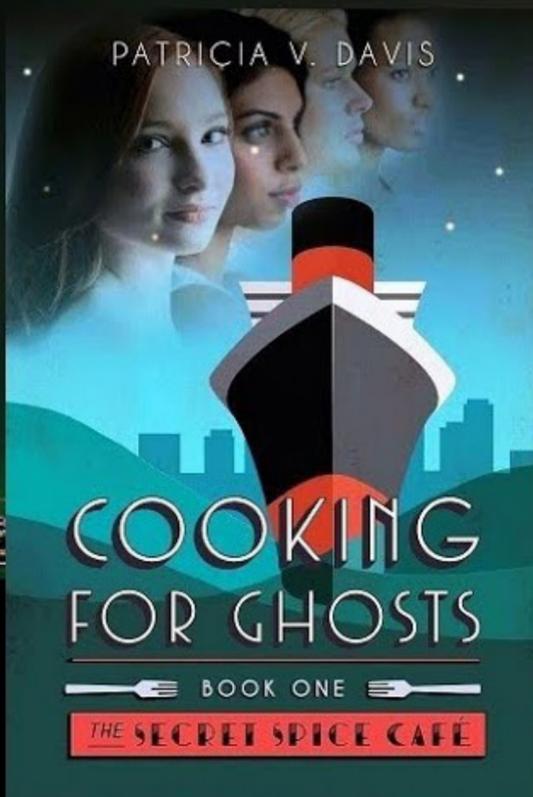


“A beautifully structured novel that builds layer upon layer of meaning, held together with gossamer threads and magic.”

– *Huffington Post*



Books Set in Long Beach

By Meghan O'Dell

Many people's New Year's resolutions include reading more books, and with the pandemic still keeping a lot of us at home, there's no better time to dig into your reading list! I always find it exciting when a story is set in my city, so I thought I'd round up some books that are set in Long Beach. Whether you like mystery, nonfiction, or romance, there's something here for everyone. (Note that I haven't read any of these myself, but they're now on my list. My dad, who is a voracious reader and loves detective/mystery novels, recommended the first two series.) Next month, I'll round up some movies and shows that were filmed in Long Beach!

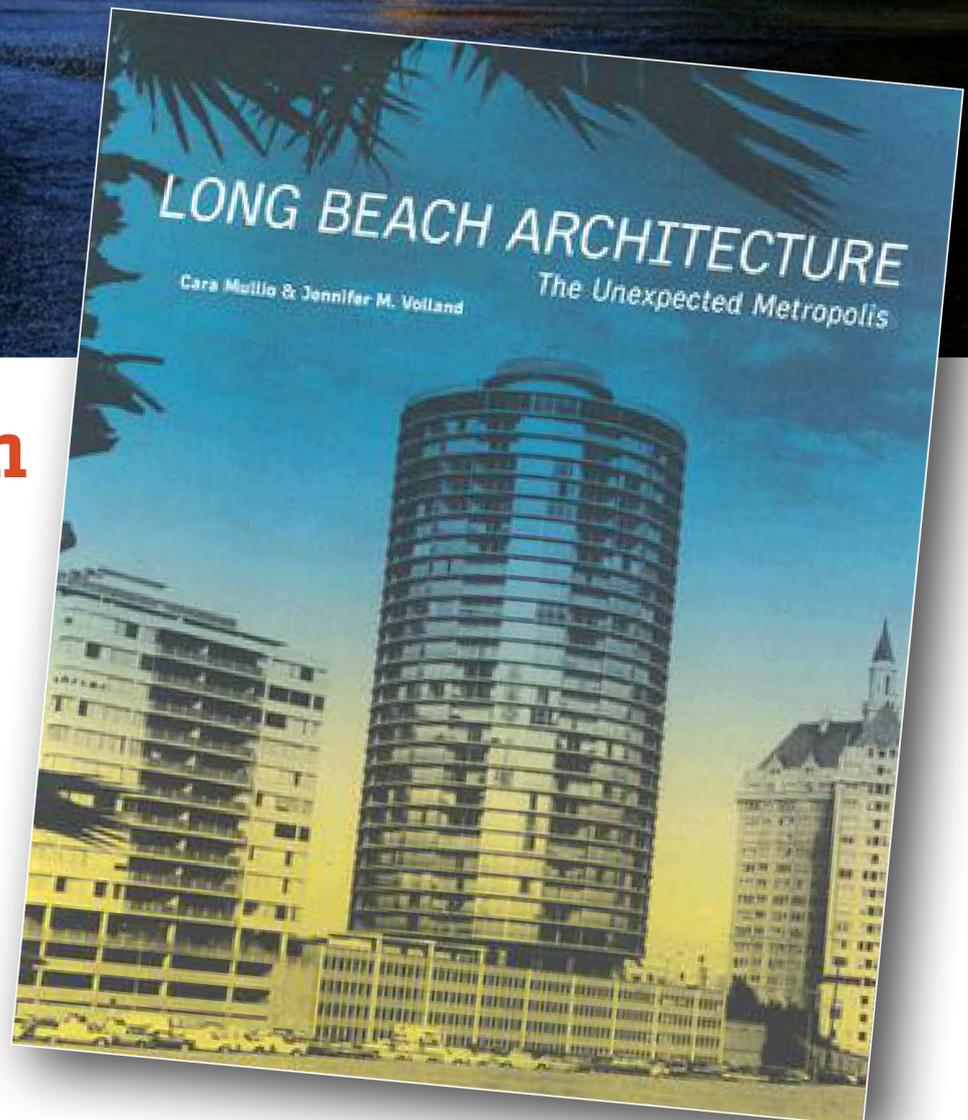
IQ series by Joe Ide: Japanese-American author Joe Ide, who grew up in the East Adams neighborhood of Los Angeles in the 1960s, sets his detective series on the streets of Long Beach. Described as *Sherlock Holmes* meets *The Wire*, the series follows unlicensed private eye Isaiah Quintabe (known as IQ) as he takes on increasingly dangerous cases. The fourth book of the series — all set in East Long Beach — has IQ squaring off against a Cambodian gang and their white nationalist rivals. News has it that rapper Snoop Dogg (who hails from Long Beach) is producing a [forthcoming TV adaption of the series](#). The books include *IQ* (2016), *Righteous* (2017), *Wrecked* (2018), and *Hi Five* (2020).

Long Beach Homicide series by Tyler Dilts: In this series of detective novels, protagonist Danny Beckett is haunted by the things he's lost but throws himself into cracking murder cases. The books by Tyler Dilts, who teaches creative writing at CSULB, include *A King of Infinite Space* (2010), *The Pain Scale* (2012), *A Cold and Broken Hallelujah* (2014), and *Come Twilight* (2016), which was nominated for an Edgar Award. His latest novel, *Mercy Dogs* (2018), follows Ben Shepard, a veteran Long Beach Police Department officer who is drawn back into the world of solving crimes after nearly losing his life to it.

The Freedom Writers' Diary by Erin Gruwell and the Freedom Writers: The basis of the 2007 movie *Freedom Writers*, this nonfiction book is a compilation of entries by 150 students from Wilson High School in Long Beach. When their English teacher, Erin Gruwell, intercepted a racist drawing from one of her students, she compared it to Nazi propaganda techniques, but only one of them had ever heard of the Holocaust. She then had them read and write about *The Diary of Anne Frank* and *Zlata's Diary: A Child's Life in Wartime Sarajevo*. The students learned to see the parallels to their own lives, writing about their thoughts and calling themselves "Freedom Writers" in an homage to the civil rights activists The Freedom Riders. The book includes powerful entries from the students' diaries and narration by Gruwell, showing how a teacher can have a tremendous impact on students (and vice versa). [You can also read about where the Freedom Writers are now.](#)

The Secret Spice Café series by Patricia V. Davis: This three-part series is set on Long Beach's most famous historical landmark, the RMS Queen Mary. Described by the author as "magical realism," the books follow four women from very different backgrounds as they meet on a food blogging site and come together to open a café on the floating hotel. Filled with secrets, ghosts, friendship, food, and romance, the books also contain historical facts about the ship. The first book in the series, *Cooking for Ghosts*, was nominated for a National Book Critics Circle Award for Fiction.

The Day it Snowed in Long Beach by John Grossi: This is a fictional, illustrated account of a magical wintry day in East Long Beach. All illustrations were done by local artists, and you can purchase the book at [Made by Millworks](#) at their downtown location or online.



Growing up in Long Beach by

Tim Grobaty: Written by a veteran writer for the *Long Beach Press-Telegram* (who is currently a columnist and opinions editor for the *Long Beach Post*), this book chronicles Tim Grobaty's memories of growing up in East Long Beach as well as local residents' recollections of the hangouts and landmarks that helped define the city.

Long Beach Architecture by Cara Mullio and Jennifer M. Volland: You've probably seen this hardcover book on a few coffee tables! A great gift for Long Beach residents, this book documents 100 of the city's most important architectural projects, including those that were never built or were demolished. If you're intrigued by the history of the buildings we so often drive by (and by how the city was developed in the first place), this book is for you!

Meghan O'Dell has been a Long Beach resident for 16 years. She loves reading, seeing live music, and watching too many shows, and she lives with her husband and their Calico cat in the Bluff Heights neighborhood.

