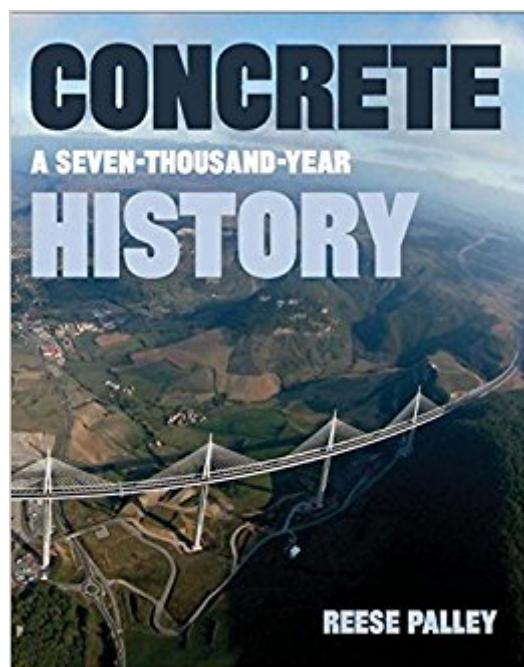


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# Concrete: A Seven-Thousand-Year History



## Synopsis

A historical account of our most versatile building material, beginning in ancient Egypt and ending on the moon. For seven thousand years concrete has periodically shaped the path of human progress. Reese Palley's fascinating history of this ubiquitous and versatile material chronicles the repeated and often centuries-long losses of the technology and its many reemergences and the cultural, scientific, and engineering accomplishments it has enabled. Palley takes us from concrete's earliest beginnings, including the startling proof that at least one of the pyramids was partially poured, through the building of the Eddystone Light, to the dramatic building explosion in the use of concrete during the twentieth century and the start of the twenty-first century. He discusses the environmental impact of the production of concrete and attempts to find substitutes for the burning of lime. He ends by contemplating outer space, where almost all of the elements needed to build extraterrestrial communities already exist in the chemical makeup of the moon and Mars. 200 four-color & b/w photographs

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Historian Reese Palley is the author of many books and articles, including Wooden Ships & Iron Men: The Maritime Art of Thomas Hoyne, Concrete: A Seven-Thousand Year History, and The Answer: Why Only Mini Nuclear Power Plants Can Save the World. He lives in Philadelphia.

Book is interesting to read, but it is missing some important informations (e.g.: he does not mention the primitive shelter dated 5600 BCE, which was found in Serbia or water tanks in Rhodos - 500 B.C) I also expected more informations about roman concrete bridges or other structures from roman times. He also does not mention that light weight aggregate was used in Pantheon, which is a very important fact. Also he argues that pyramids are built by concrete, but this is still just more hypothesis than a proved fact. Despite its photograph on the front cover, there is not even an index entry to the Millau Viaduct in the book. But on the other hand I enjoyed it and I found some interesting points of view in it. I recommend everyone interested in concrete to read it, but do not expect to find there everything.

My paper for "Art History" was wonderful and I would not been able to do it with out this book.

Thanks

A very comprehensive book on concrete.

I have only read the first chapter and a bit of the second. The history and perceptions were very bad. Chronologies a thousand years out (e.g. Akenaton in the time of the pyramid builders), and no understanding of how stone workers worked. Even his comment about how relativity was proven with Venus was incorrect. Some basic editing would have helped. How could you believe the rest. I gave up when I discovered that the age of Pharaohs was over by the time the Romans came along. I will finish it, but I have to stop laughing at the first chapter first.

I only read the first couple of chapters of this book, looking for something to supplement the college architecture course I am teaching. I had expected to find an historical account of the development of concrete. What I got was a wealthy dilettante's nonsense from a vanity press. Read the dust jacket biography if you don't believe me. As for history, the book (though just published in 2010) is already dated. He places one site in "Yugoslavia." When did he start writing this? Did no one bother to edit it? Secondly, he places Akhenaton in the period of the pyramid builders. That statement alone should cast suspicion on anything the text says. If you're going to write a history, then check your history. He uses arcane terms that haven't been used in years, such as Chaldea when talking about Uruk period architecture. He ridicules as lunatics those who would argue for an alien origin for the pyramids (with which I agree), but then claims the pyramids were cast rather than carved. I didn't mind him making the argument, but what I did mind was that he offered no arguments as to why the

vast majority of legitimate Egyptologists do not accept his theory. After the Egypt chapter, he leaps to the Romans and the Pantheon, as if there were no concrete production in the Republican age, and makes the argument that the Romans may have acquired the knowledge of concrete from King Herod and his Nabataean mother. What? As if the Romans were not already making concrete before Herod? I was reading this text while camping. After seeing that claim, I left this book outside for two days hoping that some wild animal would just drag it off and destroy it. Unfortunately, that didn't happen. The sad part is that people will read this book, assume that it was written by a legitimate historian (which he is not) and take it as fact.

I found the first chapters of the book entertaining...but questionable. As soon as the author stated that the pyramids were made of poured concrete, I had to question that all the "facts" were not merely speculation. This book has much speculation and ideas that are worth study. It does not truthfully detail the improvements and innovations that progressed with concrete. The later chapters became a chore to read because they were nothing but speculation (and blame) on politics, the future, global warming, world catastrophe, etc. I was really looking for real history of concrete and innovations that have occurred over the years. This book started with some of that but was not of a quality that can be trusted. If I had wanted a book about how the world might end, maybe this is a book that would fit that description.

I picked this up since Stephen Baxter cited it as a source. It isn't. It's ahistorical garbage. There is no evidence whatever that the Pyramids are made of concrete. There is no evidence that Romans acquired knowledge of concrete from the Near East. This book is nonsense. Avoid like the septicemic plague.

What a curious, unexpected and illuminating story. Who woulda thought we owe so much and know so little about one of the building blocks of our civilization? Not only interesting, but well-told, with anecdotes, tall tales and bits of trivia that will forever change the way you think about the (man-made) world we share and in which we live.

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