



Introduction

By FIORELLO H. LA GUARDIA, Mayor



AS A CITY of skyscrapers New York is widely known. Because of the rise of industrial and financial New York, many Americans overlook the fact that their largest municipality is also a great seaport; that its tremendous expansion can be traced to the growth and dominance of the Port; that, lying between ship docks and railroad terminals, the city's development was the natural corollary of its growth as a maritime center. This is the growth principle of any seaport city.

Here is an account that is more than a recital of facts: it is a dramatic tale peopled with colorful, vigorous characters ranging from pirates, smugglers, and slavers to sea captains, great merchants, shipbuilders, and city officials—the men who made municipal history. It is a story, furthermore, of typical American growth, nation and city; of men and goods from every land arriving in the Port; of commodities, ever increasing in extent, flowing into the Port for distribution to every part of a great country; and of an endless procession of American exports being shipped out of that same Port to all parts of the world. It is impossible to treat the history of the City of New York apart from the history of the Port of New York.

Especially does the Port of New York have an intimate relation to the country as a whole: it is likely that the majority of Americans today are the descendants of immigrants who arrived by sea and who entered



the United States through the Port of New York. New York it was, then, that introduced these men to the United States; for them it was a city symbolizing both the vitality of a new nation and the opportunities offered by that nation to peoples of every race and creed.

The dominant part the sea has always played in the affairs of New Yorkers gains in dramatic importance in our own time because of a great war whose prosecution depends so directly and vitally on the exchange of materials between countries separated by oceans. Today, in 1941, darkened freighters slip out of port bound for the waters of Europe's combat zone in almost the same manner that American privateers slipped out past Sandy Hook to run the blockade during the War of 1812. The wonder in the eyes of Verrazano's men, and in the eyes of Henry Hudson's men as they entered the Lower Bay in 1609, has been and still is reproduced in the eyes of seafarers, immigrants, and refugees arriving for the first time at America's premier seaport.

It is hoped that a reading of this history of the Port will result in a better understanding of the City of New York—its present as well as its past, its problems as well as its accomplishments.

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