

A PROFILE OF THE PORT

New York Harbor—America's Water Gate



AN ILLUSTRATED account of the growth of the Port, this *Maritime History of New York* traces the evolution of New York Harbor from an early geologic period, through Verrazano's traditional discovery more than four hundred years ago to the present day; proposes plans for its great future development; reviews its colorful past from times of Indian dugouts to the modern epoch symbolized by streamlined transatlantic liners, sleek-bodied oil tankers, sturdy cargo carriers, and graceful flying clippers. This book marks a reawakening of port-consciousness on the part of progressive New Yorkers, harks back to a period a century past when the life of the city centered about South Street—New York's "street o' ships," forecasts America's future on the seven seas and in the upper air.

The significance of the role played today by what is, not only America's premier port, but also the world's greatest harbor has been expressed by the Honorable Fiorello H. La Guardia, who declared in 1940:

It is important for our citizens to realize that one-half of our country's foreign commerce enters and clears the Port of New York and that nearly three-fourths of the travelers by sea to and from foreign countries pass through the city. In these troubled times it is of paramount importance to the world to continue and perpetuate the peaceful commercial relations and contacts between the United States and other countries.

The Port of New York, with its constantly improved deep main channels, capacious and well-defined anchorages, specially constructed piers, tremendous floating dry docks, seven hundred and seventy-one

miles of protected waterfront,¹ trunkline railroad² and motor-truck terminals, fast-growing airports, its unsurpassed freight handling and warehousing facilities, continues to hold its pre-eminent position among the ports of the world; receives and ships a large part of the goods and people of our planet. The Port's unique geographical position, in the past at least, was largely responsible for the great metropolis that gives it its name—New York.

The rise of New York from seaport town to world metropolis is reflected in the pages that follow. The immensity of New York Harbor can be grasped only when seen from the air. Aloft one can look down and across its sprawling profile delineated by eight major bays—the Upper and Lower, Newark, Raritan, Sandy Hook, Gravesend, Jamaica, and Flushing; four river mouths—the Hudson, Hackensack, Passaic, and Raritan; one large sound, Long Island, connecting the open ocean with the Harlem and East rivers; two straits, Kill van Kull and Arthur Kill, connecting Newark Bay and the Upper and Lower bays. From the air can be seen the extent of the harbor's inland waterway and canal connections with the interior—a feature shared with few other ports—together with its protected inside route to New England via Long Island Sound and the Cape Cod Canal.

This vast port area encompasses an economic unit which, when circumscribed within a twenty-five-mile radius from the Statue of Liberty, encloses nearly fifteen hundred square miles, numbers a population of more than eleven million, contains some forty thousand industrial establishments, which annually produce goods valued at about eight billion dollars. The circumference of this area extends northward to Tarrytown, eastward farther than Jamaica Bay, southward beyond Perth Amboy and Sandy Hook, and up Long Island Sound as far as Port Chester.

To the Port of New York move the ships of more than one hundred and fifty lines, bearing the flags of at least twenty-five countries and carrying to and fro the peoples and products of more than seventy nations.

¹ Five hundred and seventy-eight miles of waterfront in New York City.

² Twelve trunk lines now enter the Port of New York.

18 A MARITIME HISTORY OF NEW YORK

This vast maritime complex is presented in the eleven chapters that follow; its rapid growth traced; its spectacular development described; its future, as outlined by port planners, forecast.