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Tugboats Of New York: An Illustrated History



Synopsis

2005 Author of the Year Award; Working Harbor Committee of New York and New Jersey
2006 AAUP Book, Jacket, and Journal Show in the category of Trade Illustrated Book Design
Tugboats are the workhorses of the greatest harbor in the world, easing massive ocean liners and garbage scows alike cleanly into their berths. Tugboats of New York captures the history and lore of these iconic craft, from their precursors in the early 1800s to their heyday in the 1950s, when more than 700 small but potent boats dotted the harbor. They are the most versatile of vessels, not only guiding large oceangoing ships safely into harbor, but also conducting rescue operations and navigating vast quantities of oil, cement, and scrap iron through traffic-clogged waters. A twenty-year veteran of New York tugboats, George Matteson knows the tides and currents of New York from the Bronx to the Verrazano Narrows. His history of tugboating shows how this inherently risky business pits men and their boats against weather, water, and the scarcely measurable physics of ships and barges of far greater dimension. The story of New York's tugs parallels the broader history of New York's industrial development, from the rise of railroads to the decline of the port in the wake of labor disputes and large container ships. It is also a story of remarkable seamen who pass their craft from pilot to apprentice over generations, along with the lore of great waterways that remain unchanged despite the lengthening shadows of skyscrapers and commerce. Rich with first-person anecdotes of life on the New York waterways and one hundred and fifty black-and-white illustrations, including rare and sumptuous photographs from the likes of Gordon Parks and Todd Webb, Tugboats of New York will fascinate readers interested in New York history, boating, and maritime history.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Tugboats of New York: An Illustrated History" by George Matteson, is so well-written and informative that I read it in two sittings (I did have to work in between). This book will appeal not only to people interested in tugboats, New York harbor, canals, history, interpersonal interaction, and ships in general, but it will also appeal to those who are interested in social-historical aspects of New York centered around New York harbor starting with the 18th century and continuing through the present. Aside from "Tugboat Annie," a tv show from the '50's I believe, Tugboats is a topic few people know about but this book will really enlighten them. This first-hand account is extremely well-written, and clear to the lay person; even one who has never been on a boat will understand it. I believe that many readers will be extremely interested in this book which clearly conveys its subject matter with the text accompanied by extremely illustrative photos, many archival. The book is so vivid that there were times when I just about felt seasick reading some of the descriptions (Not really, of course, but the way that the book is written frequently makes one feel that one is right there on the boat). It is amazing how Matteson has managed to convey the complicated aspects of running tugboats in a way that a layperson can understand. Although the purpose of many non-fiction books is to communicate with the reader, and to have the reader learn something by explaining things in an understandable way without falling into the "jargon" that only people already within the field are able to understand, few attain these goals. In contrast, this will not happen with "Tugboats of New York." The reader will find every word comprehensible, and will not be at all disappointed.

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