



# **The Age of Sail in the Age of Aquarius: The South Street Seaport and the Crisis of the Sixties**

*Robin K. Foster*

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In *The Age of Sail in the Age of Aquarius*, cultural historian Robin K. Foster examines the historic preservation movement of the 1960s through the development of Lower Manhattan's South Street Seaport Museum.

While existing scholarship has tended to identify this preservation impulse as a response to the destructive course of urban renewal and the aesthetic void of modern urban planning, Foster considers a broader cultural landscape from which the preservation movement emerged.

When the Friends of South Street obtained a charter to establish the South Street Seaport Museum in 1967, their vision was "to tell the story of the men in ships who built the city's greatness" during the heyday of the nation's maritime prowess. To them, the history and imagery of the city's Golden Age of Sail glowed like a beacon in the midst of a grittier reality, lighting the way forward through an era wracked by cultural and political upheaval.

Cutting through the nostalgia and the myths, Foster explores the history of New York City's oldest maritime district and digs into the deeper questions surrounding collective identity and cultural meaning that drove the desire to revitalize the heroic past during a decade of great uncertainty and change.

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