



McAllister Towing 150 Years of Family Business

Stephenie Hollyman

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McAllister Towing is known throughout the shipping industry today as one of the world's most reliable and respected tugboat and marine transportation firms, towing barges, escorting ships, and providing docking services in twelve U.S. ports along the East Coast. The company's highly trained crews and state-of-the-art tugboats are trusted with dangerous, difficult, and sensitive assignments 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. McAllister clients include the world's largest fleets of container ships, tankers, bulk carriers, and car ships, the U.S. armed forces, energy companies, and various port authorities and governmental agencies.

McAllister's trusted name came the hard way. It was earned over the course of 150 years of a business continuously owned by generations of the same family. In this book, the history of the five generations of McAllisters and their employees who have operated their tugboat businesses through every war and economic and social upheaval in U.S. history is told for the first time. The account begins with company founder James McAllister, who arrived in New York City from a shipwreck and soon bought his first sail lighter in 1864. Working in New York Harbor, James steered his ships to success, hiring people he knew from his extended family and surrounding neighborhood in Greenpoint, Brooklyn. Then James's oldest son, the swashbuckling Captain Jim, expanded McAllister into sugar and coffee shipping, salvage, and even treasure hunting. The business owners in each generation that followed found ways to keep McAllister growing or surviving in tough times while upholding and passing down the company values of grit, integrity, and customer service.

The book features a wealth of fresh and never-before published documentary material on how Americans lived and worked in the maritime industry. It reveals the rivalries, bitter feuds, near bankruptcies, and battles for ownership that nearly sank the McAllister business numerous times. It tells the story of poor immigrants finding their narrow foothold in an American industry and building better lives for themselves, their family, and their thousands of employees. Woven throughout are stories of survival and peril, deep-sea expeditions, and family tragedies as well as the triumphs of a maritime dynasty that has survived for more than 150 years.

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