

# The Fulton Fish Market

*A History*

**Jonathan H. Rees**

The Fulton Fish Market stands out as an iconic New York institution. At first a neighborhood retail market for many different kinds of food, it became the nation's largest fish and seafood wholesaling center by the late nineteenth century. Waves of immigrants worked at the Fulton Fish Market and then introduced the rest of the city to their seafood traditions. In popular culture, the market—celebrated by Joseph Mitchell in *The New Yorker*—conjures up images of the bustling East River waterfront, late-night fishmongering, organized crime, and a vanished working-class New York.

This book is a lively and comprehensive history of the Fulton Fish Market, from its founding in 1822 through its move to the Bronx in 2005. Jonathan H. Rees explores the market's workings and significance, tracing the transportation, retailing, and consumption of fish. He tells the stories of the people and institutions that depended on the Fulton Fish Market—including fishermen, retail stores, restaurants, and chefs—and shows how the market affected what customers in New York and around the country ate. Rees examines transformations in food provisioning systems through the lens of a vital distribution point, arguing that the market's wholesale dealers were innovative businessmen who adapted to technological change in a dynamic industry. He also explains how changes in the urban landscape and economy affected the history of the market and the surrounding neighborhood.

Bringing together economic, technological, urban, culinary, and environmental history, this book demonstrates how the Fulton Fish Market shaped American cuisine, commerce, and culture.

**JONATHAN H. REES** is a professor of history at Colorado State University–Pueblo. His books include *Refrigeration Nation: A History of Ice, Appliances, and Enterprise in America* (2013) and *Before the Refrigerator: How We Used to Get Ice* (2018).

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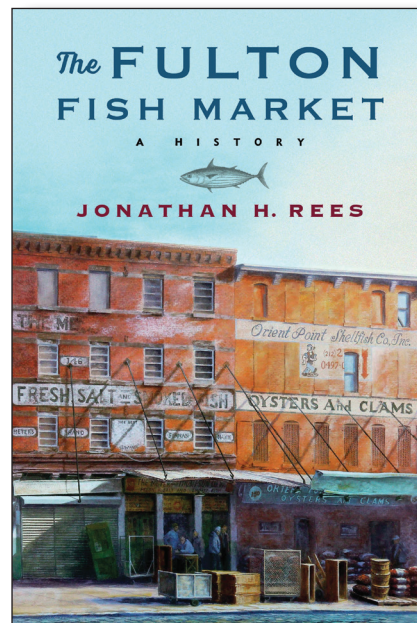
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**“The Fulton Fish Market, when it was on Fulton Street, was a legendary and unforgettable place. This book helps us to remember why it was unique.”**

—Kenneth T. Jackson, editor in chief of  
*The Encyclopedia of New York City*

**“Jonathan H. Rees tells the gripping story of the Fulton Fish Market and the technologies that made it successful for more than 150 years. Whether examining the nineteenth century’s oceangoing fishing boats, the challenges of inadequate cold storage, the heavy hand of the mafia, or changing consumer tastes, his history of the Fulton Fish Market is fascinating.”**

—Cathy Kaufman, president, Culinary Historians of New York

**“Rees’s history of Manhattan’s Fulton Fish Market is an elegy for a place that reached peak vibrancy in the 1920s, only to decline steadily as a result of overfishing, developers, the mafia, unions, politics, real estate prices, and eventually, more developers. Rees’s thoughtful analysis of these themes has much to tell us about the clash between the natural and built worlds in American cities over the last couple of centuries.”**

—Marion Nestle, professor of nutrition, food studies,  
and public health emerita, New York University,  
and author of *Food Politics*

**“Rees’s superb book is much more than an excellent history of the Fulton Fish Market—it’s a history of an important dimension of New York City and, to an extent, a history of seafood in America. It is beautifully written with excellent documentation, and it’s a delight to read!”**

—Andrew F. Smith, author of *New York City: A Food Biography*