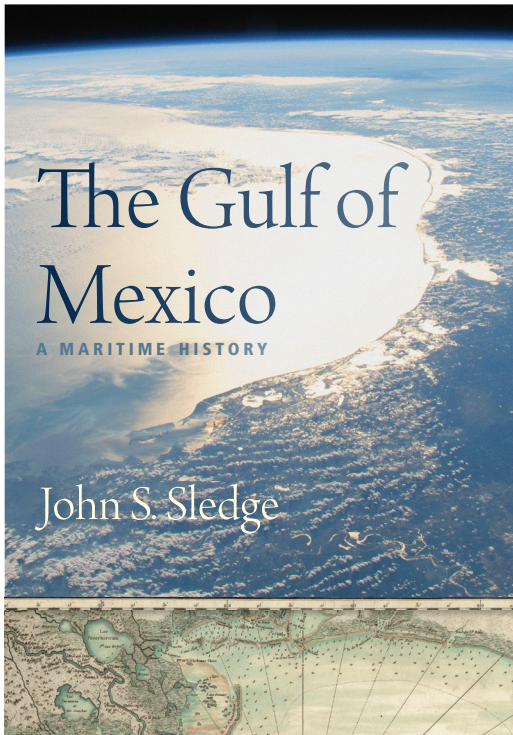


# NEW BOOK NEWS

FORTHCOMING NOVEMBER 2019



## The Gulf of Mexico

*A Maritime History*

**JOHN S. SLEDGE**

*The Gulf of Mexico: A Maritime History* presents a compelling, salt-streaked narrative of the earth's tenth largest body of water. In this beautifully written and illustrated volume, John S. Sledge explores the people, ships, and cities that have made the Gulf's human history and culture so rich. Many famous figures who sailed the Gulf's viridian waters are highlighted, including Ponce de León, Robert Cavalier de La Salle, Francis Drake, Elizabeth Agassiz, Ernest Hemingway, and Charles Dwight Sigsbee at the helm of the doomed *Maine*. Sledge also introduces a fascinating array of people connected to maritime life in the Gulf, among them Maya priests, French pirates, African American stevedores, and Greek sponge divers.

Gulf events of global historical importance are detailed, such as the only defeat of armed and armored steamships by wooden sailing vessels, the first accurate deep-sea survey and bathymetric map of any ocean basin, the development of shipping containers by a former truck driver frustrated with antiquated loading practices, and the worst environmental disaster in American annals.

Occasionally shifting focus ashore, Sledge explains how people representing a gumbo of ethnicities built some of the world's most exotic cities—Havana, way station for conquistadores and treasure-filled galleons; New Orleans, the Big Easy, famous for its beautiful French Quarter, Mardi Gras, and relaxed morals; and oft-besieged Veracruz, Mexico's oldest city, founded in 1519 by Hernán Cortés. Throughout history the residents of these cities and their neighbors along the littoral have struggled with challenges both natural and human-induced—devastating hurricanes, frightening epidemics, catastrophic oil spills, and conflicts ranging from dockside brawls to pirate raids, foreign invasion, civil war, and revolution. In the modern era the Gulf has become critical to energy production, fisheries, tourism, and international trade, even as it is threatened by pollution and climate change. *The Gulf of Mexico: A Maritime History* is a work of verve and sweep that illuminates both the risks of life on the water and the riches that come from its bounty.



PHOTO BY SIMONA GHERSI NEWELL

**JOHN S. SLEDGE** is senior architectural historian for the Mobile Historic Development Commission and a member of the National Book Critics Circle. He holds a bachelor's degree in history and Spanish from Auburn University and a master's in historic preservation from Middle Tennessee State University. Sledge is the author of six previous books, including *Southern Bound: A Gulf Coast Journalist on Books, Writers, and Literary Pilgrimages of the Heart*; *The Mobile River*; and *These Rugged Days: Alabama in the Civil War*.

7 x 10, 264 pages, 36 color and 38 b&w illus.

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