



Argonaut: The Submarine Legacy of Simon Lake (West Texas A&M University Series)

John J. Poluhowich

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From the inspired fiction of Jules Verne to the dark menace of the Cold War, submarines have captivated millions for more than a century. Many have been credited for the invention of the submarine, but one significant figure has been seriously overlooked by both historians and the government. Without the efforts of Simon Lake, underwater navigation would be very different from what it is today. *Argonaut: The Submarine Legacy of Simon Lake* illustrates the influence of Lake's creation and passion.

Simon Lake was the classic American inventor, complete with a rival, John Holland, who reaped most of history's praise for submarine design. However, it was Lake who launched his first working submarine in 1894 at the age of twenty-seven in the rivers of his native New Jersey. In 1898, his steel vessel, the *Argonaut*, completed a thousand-mile trek up the Atlantic coast. He received accolades from his spiritual mentor, Jules Verne, for his efforts. Despite the potential for government contracts, Lake remained private, using his invention to build up a fortune from underwater salvage.

Questionable governmental trials resulted in navy contracts for submarines being awarded to Lake's rival, the Holland Torpedo Boat Company (later the Electric Boat Company), prompting Lake to build submarines for Russia and Austria. The United States would not request Lake's service until 1908 and would not recognize his contributions to underwater navigation until after his death in 1945. However, there is little doubt that Lake's work helped provide the basis for modern submarine design and construction.

John J. Poluhowich has prepared the most complete biography of Simon Lake, devoting chapters to Lake's early fascination with the idea of underwater navigation, his struggles with design, and disappointment in the government. *Argonaut* presents Lake as an unsung hero worthy of praise and appreciation from the modern scientific community.

Argonaut is ideal for the general reader, students of history and sea exploration, as well as for anyone inspired by Lake's spirit of imagination and perseverance.

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