Honored. . . Where Honor is "Due"

The American Merchant Mariner's Memorial is an organization that has dedicated more than a decade to creating a fitting monument honoring the thousands of American Merchant Seamen who lost their lives while serving their country during war and peace since the American Revolution.

The Merchant Marine, which was the earliest source of ships and men for our navy, is historically the descendant of our earliest seafaring settlers and privateers, who came to the defense of our nation during the Revolutionary War. George Washington, stressing our dependence upon our Merchant Marine, urged the first congress to, "provide encouragement to our own navigation as will render our commerce and agriculture less dependent on foreign bottoms." Thomas Jefferson, recognizing its defense value, told the house of representatives: "as a brand of industry, our navigation is valuable—but as a source of defense—essential." Thousands of merchant seamen were to die as prisoners of war held on British prison ships moored in the captured port of New York. Thus from the very beginning of our nation, civilian officers and seamen sailing under the American flag have served the nation with fidelity and valor.

During World War II, our merchant marine suffered unusually high casualties when nearly 6,700 seamen lost their lives—most in the unmarked depths of the sea.

In this nation's more than 200 year old history, our republic has failed to truly recognize that its founding, survival and prosperity have been linked to the ships and seafarers of our merchant marine. We have failed to fully memorialize the critical sacrifices made by generations of merchant mariners.

To increase public awareness of their sacrifices, and our country's dependence on shipping in war and peace, *The American Merchant Mariners' Memorial, Inc.*, a non profit organization composed of major elements of the United States maritime industry, was created in 1976 to build this monument.

The Forgotten Remembered . . . at Long Last

THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR

The American revolutionary forces at sea were dependent upon the vessels of private ship owners. Merchant seamen who manned these ships contributed to the very birth and founding of our Republic. In Revolutionary times, the 13 Colonies, having declared their independence were without a proper navy. To augment what little navy they controlled, they issued Letters of Marque to the privately owned merchant ships. These merchantmen then set forth as armed privateers to defend their new nation.

In 1776, by actual count, the former Colonies had only 31 true men-of-war mounting 586 guns. In that same year, however, there totalled 136 privateer merchantmen, mounting 1,360 guns. By 1782, there were only seven government ships carrying 198 guns remaining, while the privateers' total had climbed to 323 vessels mounting 4,845 guns. It is estimated that at one time or another, about 70,000 American seamen served aboard the privateers. By their efforts, they contributed victory against at least 600 British ships which were either destroyed or taken as prizes.

The Royal Navy enacted a harsh penalty in retaliation, capturing merchant seamen both from the privateers as well as from other unarmed merchantmen. Those prisoners were incarcerated aboard prison hulks, some of which were moored in New York's East River. The conditions of captivity, particularly in the Port of New York, were inhuman. Untold numbers died of disease and malnutrition. Their fate was to be buried by order of their captors without proper ceremony or marker on the mud flats of Wallabout Bay where the Brooklyn Navy Yard now stands.

Those merchant mariners lost their lives in the founding of our Nation.

CONTINENTAL AMERICA 19th CENTURY

Ships, manned by merchant mariners brought generations of emigrants to the shores of the United States. Mid-19th century American clipper ships, manned by merchant seamen, made history sailing from our East Coast ports around the treacherous Horn of South America and on to the Golden Gate of San Francisco. These merchant mariners fulfilled an important role in the development and economic expansion of the continental United States. A price was paid for that growth and expansion. Sailing ships not infrequently arrived with half their crew members lost, buried at sea, or maimed and injured.

Those merchant mariners helped build America, but for so many, no marker dignifies their final resting place.

WORLD WAR II

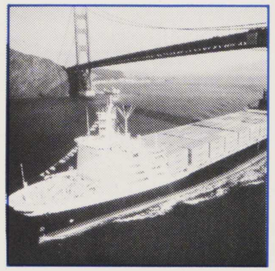
In the Second World War, Allied victory depended on a gallant fleet of merchant ships which literally encircled the globe. Huge North Atlantic and Pacific convoys of these merchant ships made possible the liberating

invasions and the crucial resupply that enabled the allied armies to fight the Free World's global battles.

It was the dangerous voyages of merchant mariner manned freighters, troop transports and tankers, often unaccompanied by naval escort, which kept the gears of war meshing. But in that effort, over 6,700 American seamen lost their lives at sea, most from enemy action.

In the peace which followed, our merchant marine provided much of the overseas transport for Marshall Plan supplies and equipment. Merchant mariners thus helped to rebuild western Europe and saved it from totalitarian takeover.

As was proven so clearly in the following Korean and Vietnam conflicts, or for that matter, during the 1st World War, our merchant fleet has been essential to our national security. If needed, merchant ships and merchant mariners will once again serve as our nation's fourth arm of defense.

From Sea to Shining Sea

In memory of America's merchant mariners who lost their lives in peaceful commerce and in wars against foreign foes, in defense of the freedoms this nation now enjoys.