



National Maritime Day, 1989

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

In the pages of our Nation's history, merchant seafarers rightly occupy an honored place. The American merchant marine has not only made important contributions to our economic development, but has also helped our country make effective responses to military challenges.

The value of merchant craft in wartime operations was first demonstrated during the Revolution, when they supplemented the 34 ships of the small Continental Navy. These vessels wrought havoc on enemy shipping, capturing or sinking some 600 British merchant vessels. Those losses intensified the mounting pressure on Parliament to end the war.

In this century, their support has been crucial—and their sacrifices heroic—in many armed conflicts. During World War II alone, despite enemy attacks which sank more than 700 U.S.-flag merchant ships and claimed the lives of more than 6,000 civilian seafarers, they transported the troops and kept open the supply lines that led ultimately to victory.

Clearly we owe our valiant merchant mariners an enormous debt of gratitude. Last year I joined millions of Americans in welcoming the news that these seafarers had finally received the official recognition they deserve as veterans of war.

In recognition of the importance of the U.S. merchant marine, the Congress, by joint resolution approved May 20, 1933, has designated May 22 of each year as "National Maritime Day" and has authorized and requested the President to issue annually a proclamation calling for its appropriate observance. This date was chosen to commemorate the day in 1819 when the SS SAVANNAH left Savannah, Georgia, on the first transatlantic steamship voyage.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GEORGE BUSH, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim May 22, 1989, as National Maritime Day. I urge the people of the United States to observe this day by displaying the flag of the United States at their homes and other suitable places, and I request that all ships sailing under the American flag dress ship on that day.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this second day of May, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-nine, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirteenth.

George Bush