



American Merchant Ships, 1850-1900 (Dover Maritime)

Frederick C. Matthews

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This classic two-volume study by a famous marine historian is one of the most revealing documents of the great age of sail, recounting in a rich, finely detailed narrative the histories of 322 late-19th century merchant vessels. A select group of 131 of these magnificently designed and built ships are depicted in a stirring series of photographs and works of art, and 64 merchant ship captains peer forth from an imposing gallery of photographic portraits.

American Merchant Ships 1850–1900 was written and compiled early in the twentieth century, when the halcyon days of merchant sailing were still easily within recall. Meticulously researched, with many verbatim accounts taken from contemporary sources, the text was reviewed wherever possible by the ships' builders, owners, and captains.

Unlike the older and faster clippers, these wind-driven leviathans, most of them built in Maine, were constructed to carry heavy cargoes, yet were amazingly swift, the later-built ships closely approaching records set by their famous predecessors. Here are enthralling accounts of life and death aboard ship as these fabled craft fought fierce winds and turbulent waters, penetrated ice floes, sat out long ocean calms, dodged icebergs, and rounded the treacherous Horn. Here, too, are details to warm the hearts of naval historians and sailing-ship enthusiasts alike: ships' dimensions, tonnage, launching dates, speed and length of voyages, cargoes, commanding officers, and much more.

American Merchant Ships 1850–1900 is both a work of great scholarship and enormous popular appeal — replete with a wealth of authentic information and factual data about the ships, yet a wonderful browsing book, with firsthand accounts of human drama aboard the vessels that wrote an unforgettable chapter in the annals of merchant sailing.

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