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**THE AMERICAN MARITIME  
INDUSTRIES AND PUBLIC  
POLICY, 1789-1914**

**AN ECONOMIC HISTORY**

**JOHN G. B. HUTCHINS**



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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

This book does for the merchant marine what Admiral Mahan did for the navy. It carefully traces the economic position of the American shipping and ship-building industries and explains the causes of their periods of expansion and stagnation and of changes in organization. The first Part deals with the principles governing the relationships between the maritime industries and modern states; the second, with wooden ships and small-scale enterprises; the third, with the era of metal ships and large-scale enterprise. In addition it tells for the first time the history of coast-wise navigation and the story of the great wooden schooners of the period from 1870 to 1914. Although other books have presented various aspects of this history, none has adequately analyzed the evolution of these industries in their entirety with the aid of the economist's tools of investigation. The book is therefore not only an economic history but also a treatise on the foundation of sea power and the principles of navigation policy.

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BY

JOHN G. B. HUTCHINS

INSTRUCTOR IN ECONOMICS IN CORNELL UNIVERSITY



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*To*

**MY WIFE**

**WHOSE CONSTANT HELP AND ENCOURAGEMENT  
MADE POSSIBLE THE COMPLETION OF THIS WORK**



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J. G. B. H.

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A.S.P., C.N.	<i>American State Papers, Commerce and Navigation.</i>
A.S.P., F.R.	<i>American State Papers, Foreign Relations.</i>
A.S.P., N.A.	<i>American State Papers, Naval Affairs.</i>
Cal. S.P.A. & W.I.	[British] <i>Calendar of State Papers, America and West Indies.</i>
Dingley Report	<i>Report of the Joint Select Committee on American Shipbuilding (1882), House Doc. 1827, 47 Cong., 2 Sess.</i>
E.I.H.C.	<i>Essex Institute Historical Collections, The Essex Institute, Salem, Mass.</i>
Farquhar Report	<i>Report of the House Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries on the American Merchant Marine in Foreign Trade (1890), House Rep. 1210, 51 Cong., 1 Sess.</i>
Graham Report	<i>Letter from the Secretary of the Navy on Ocean Mail Steamships (1852), House Exec. Doc. 91, 32 Cong., 1 Sess.</i>
Hall Report	Hall, Henry, <i>Report on the Shipbuilding Industry (1882), Census Monograph, Tenth Census, VIII.</i>
Historical Statement on Live Oak	Levi P. Woodbury, Sec. of the Navy, <i>Historical Statement on the Use of Live Oak Timber for the Construction of Vessels of the Navy (1832), House Doc. 23, 22 Cong., 2 Sess.</i>
Huebner Report	<i>Report of the House Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries, on Steamship Agreements and Affiliations in the American Foreign and Domestic Trade (1914), House Doc. 805, 63 Cong., 2 Sess.</i>
Kennedy Report	U. S. Maritime Commission, Joseph P. Kennedy, Chairman, <i>An Economic Survey of the American Merchant Marine (1937), House Doc. 392, 75 Cong., 2 Sess.</i>
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## INTRODUCTION

THE PURPOSE of this book is to trace in considerable detail the kaleidoscopic changes which occurred in the organization and economic position of the American shipping and shipbuilding industries between 1789 and 1914, and to discuss the effects and implications of American navigation policies. During this period a group of important changes occurred, which may perhaps be grouped under the heading of the *Maritime Revolution*, and the fundamental features of the modern position of the American maritime industries slowly emerged. A slight amount of attention is given, therefore, to events since 1914, since they are related to the policy and happenings of the nineteenth century. Some attention is also given to the history and policies during the mercantilistic period, during which there were evolved many of the principles of modern nationalistic shipping policy and some of the techniques employed. The main focus of attention, however, is on the vital changes which occurred during the period between 1789 and 1914.

The forces which determined the development of the maritime industries were more complicated than is commonly supposed. Simple statements and analyses are, therefore, likely to be far from the truth. Institutional forms, such as types of organization and commercial relationships; basic cost conditions, such as diminishing timber supplies and economies of large-scale line operations; and technical considerations — all have been important in determining the course of maritime development. The mobility of capital and labor was less than has commonly been supposed, and hence, to some extent, non-competing groups appeared. Often mobility was found to be greater within the maritime industries between countries than from the maritime to the non-maritime industries within the country. The interaction of the navigation policies of the rival maritime nations has also vitally affected the development of the maritime industries. It has, therefore, been necessary to treat foreign policies and the changing economic position of foreign industries, especially the British, at considerable length. This study aims to bring together all of the elements of the problem into an integrated whole.

For the economist there are many important and interesting problems involved in such a study as this. The simple analysis sometimes applied by economists of the Ricardian school is, in general, unsatisfactory. In seeking to find an answer to the questions of why certain changes occurred and what the appropriate policy should have been it is necessary to probe deeper. No complete answer has been given in the following pages, but an attempt to discuss the principal considerations involved has been made. In this connection the work of the new school of theorists dealing with international and interregional trade by means of localization theory, notably Alfred Weber, Ohlin, Hoover, and Dean, has been suggestive. It may well be asked, for instance, what the results of the pursuit of policies designed to improve ocean transportation between a country and other parts of the world are on that country's economic structure. Shipping services, like railroads, are obviously more than economic "commodities"; they have strong localizing and directive effects. Hence, they are matters of considerable public concern. There is evidence that the Ricardian school of theorists, who have had little contact with maritime affairs, have considerably underestimated the influence of transport relations and the geography of the transportation system on the development of national economic strength. Institutional factors have also seriously disturbed the operation of those natural economic forces which determine which industries of a country have a comparative advantage over others, and the extent of that advantage. The problems created by monopoly, rate leadership, conferences, tying freight contracts, unfair competition, the trading advantage of private traders and carriers, the dumping of shipbuilding materials, railroad competition, barriers in the labor market, and many others are all tantalizing and difficult to analyze. Any appraisal of either past or present policy must, however, consider such problems.

The problems created by the rise of large-scale organization in the maritime industries were particularly complex. From a highly-decentralized, small-scale, individualistic type of organization, which provided vast opportunities for the navigating, building, and trading talents of the maritime portion of the population prior to the Civil War, these industries slowly developed a highly organized, rationalized, and concentrated type of organization. The economies of large-scale organization, indeed, became of

major importance, and influenced both the localization and the operation of these industries. Complicated problems regarding the control of these industries consequently arose, but were not solved prior to the World War. Hence much attention has been given to the development of such large-scale organizations, and especially to those supported, more or less permanently, by state subsidy contracts. The transition from the unorganized, competitive system to the administratively-controlled, monopolistic, and organized system thus appears as a major economic change in this work.

The book is organized into three parts. The first contains a general discussion of the interest of the national state in the maritime industries, and the techniques employed in their protection and control. The second part is primarily concerned with the free, competitive maritime economy associated with the wooden sailing ship. The third is centered around the growth of large-scale enterprise, the rise of steam navigation, and the development of new types of government control and protection. The dividing date is taken to be 1862, because in the following year the proportion of American foreign trade carried in American ships for the first time fell below 50 per cent. No great significance need be attached to this particular year, but it is certain that it was during the early 'sixties that the new forces began to influence maritime development significantly. Since in the United States wooden sailing ships played a much larger role than steamships, considerably more than half of the space is devoted to the development of shipping of this type. It is not believed that this emphasis is out of line with the facts. Throughout, an effort has been made to provide a balanced treatment of developments.

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  - C. Other Congressional documents
  - D. Hearings
  - E. General
  - F. Special reports by government agencies
  - G. Customs House records
  - H. State documents
- II. Official documents of Great Britain and Canada
  - A. Parliamentary papers on shipping and navigation policy generally
  - B. Parliamentary papers on subsidies and mail contracts
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- V. Works on particular phases of economic history related to shipping and shipbuilding
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  - B. The building of steamships
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  - B. Steamships
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- XI. The Navy and naval policy
- XII. Economic theory
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