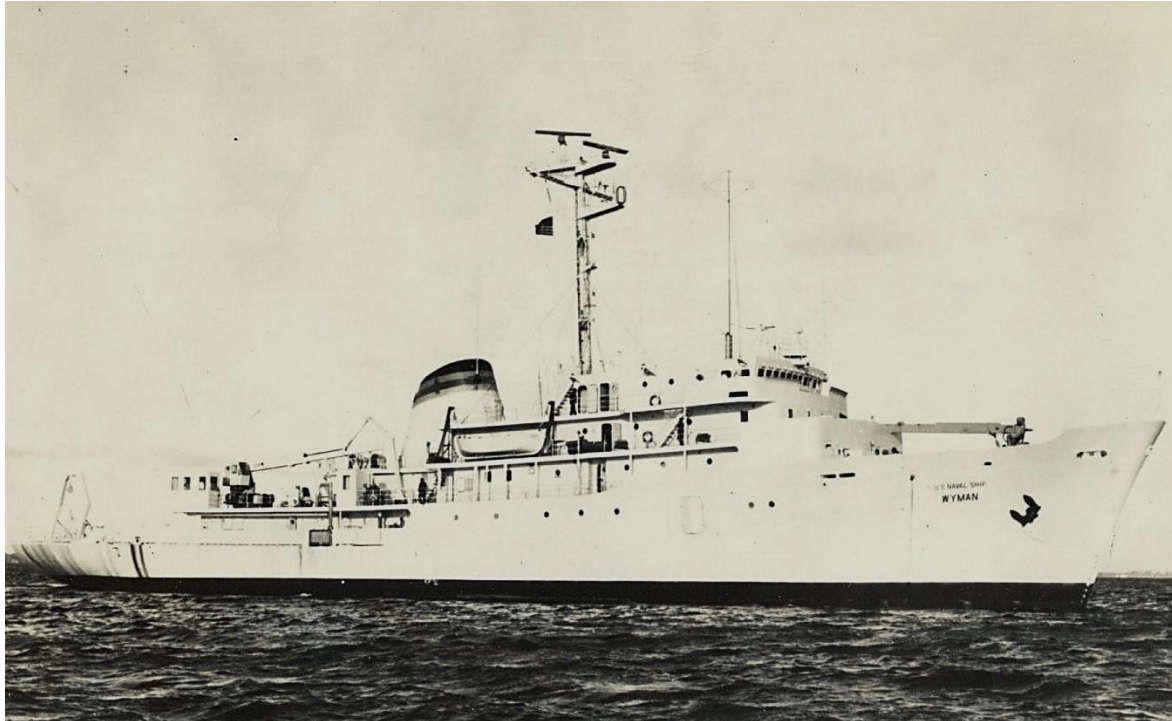


## NATIONAL REGISTER ELIGIBILITY ASSESSMENT VESSEL: ex-USNS *WYMAN* (T-AGS-34)



USNS *Wyman* (T-AGS-34) rests at anchor, date and location are unknown. Carl R. Friberg Jr., Master, USNS *Wyman*. <http://www.navsourc.org/archives/09/10/1034.htm>.

### Vessel History

The oceanographic survey vessel USNS *Wyman* (T-AGS-34) was launched on October 30, 1969 at the Defoe Shipbuilding Company in Bay City, Michigan and placed in service at the Boston Naval Shipyard on November 3, 1971. It is the second naval vessel to bear the name. The first was a WWII-era destroyer escort named for U.S. Navy Ensign Eldon Wyman, a casualty of the sinking of the USS *Oklahoma* (BB-37) at Pearl Harbor in 1941. USNS *Wyman* honors U.S. Navy Rear Admiral Robert H. *Wyman*, who commanded the Navy's Hydrographic Office from 1870 until his death in 1882. Under *Wyman's* eight-year leadership, the office began a systematic and sustained program of world-wide charting and surveying, the precursor of the U.S. Navy's contemporary global oceanographic research effort.

*Wyman* was designed and built to conduct hydrographic and oceanographic studies under the technical direction of the Oceanographer of the Navy, but was operated by a civilian crew. *Wyman* was one of four sister ships of the *Silas Bent* class, which included USNS *Silas Bent* (T-AGS-26), USNS *Kane* (T-AGS-27) and USNS *Wilkes* (T-AGS-33). All vessels of this class were initially assigned to the Military Sea Transportation Service,<sup>1</sup> which later became the Navy's

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<sup>1</sup> MSTs was a post-World War II combination of four predecessor government agencies that handled similar sealift functions. These included the Navy's Naval Transportation Service and Fleet Support Service, the Army Transport Service, and the War Shipping Administration of the United States Maritime Commission. In 1970, MSTs was renamed the Military Sealift Command.

Military Sealift Command (MSC). MSC's Special Missions branch operated *Wyman*. The Navy created this division under the Oceanographer of the Navy in 1958 under the MSTs' Special Projects Branch using the civilian-manned converted Victory ships USNS *Dutton* (T-AGS-22), USNS *Bowditch* (T-AGS-21) and USNS *Michelson* (T-AGS-23).

MSTs began operating survey vessels to promote scientific research as well as for strategic purposes. During the Cold War, the U.S. and the former Soviet Union began constructing nuclear-powered submarines capable of launching long-range nuclear-armed ballistic missiles that could operate underwater for long periods. In order to track enemy submarines, the two countries embarked on programs to chart the ocean bottom and record water temperature and other information in order to detect sound underwater over great distances.

*Wyman* first served with MSC Atlantic. In November 1974 MSC transferred the ship to MSC Pacific for shipyard modifications and replacement of its survey equipment. When all modifications were complete, *Wyman* could perform similar data mapping functions as that of the *H.H. Hess*, another oceanographic research vessel, to support the Trident Fleet Ballistic Missile Submarine Force. *Wyman* returned to MSC Atlantic at Port Canaveral, Florida in mid-1975. It was operating in the Pacific again in the 1980s. In 1996 it assisted in the mapping, depth recording and core sampling in the Mediterranean Sea. During this period it also participated in Operation MARCO POLO, an effort sponsored by MSC and the National Geographic Society, in which *Wyman* hosted high school science students and teachers aboard the ship.

On May 3, 1999, after more than a quarter century of service, the Navy retired *Wyman* and struck it from the Naval Vessel Register. It was initially laid up in the Naval Inactive Ship Maintenance Facility at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. In March 2001 it moved to the Maritime Administration's (MARAD) Suisun Bay Reserve Fleet (SBRF) in Benicia, California. The Navy transferred ownership to MARAD on July 28, 2001. It has been at the SBRF since that date.

## Description/Characteristics of Vessel Type

**Type:** Oceanic Survey Vessel

**Hull Number:** T-AGS-34

**Sister ships:** USNS *Silas Bent*, USNS *Kane* and USNS *Wilkes*

**Builder:** Defoe Shipbuilding Company, Bay City, Michigan

**Year:** 1969

**Length:** 285'

**Beam:** 48'

**Draft:** 17'

**Displacement:**

**Speed:** 14 knots

*Wyman* was intended to replace the USNS *Serrano* (T-AGS-24), a converted World War II-built seagoing tug. It is 285-feet in length overall with a beam of 48 feet. Its draft is 17 feet including a sonar dome. The ship has a single controllable pitch screw powered by two diesel-electric

engines manufactured by Westinghouse. The engines produce 3600 bhp for a speed of 14 knots. *Wyman* was fitted with a bow propulsion unit for maneuvering and station keeping at sea with an 8,000-mile cruising range. A 42-man civilian crew operated *Wyman* including accommodations for 28 scientists. It was not fitted for helicopter operations and carried no armament.

The ship was fully equipped to collect biological and geological samples and acoustic and bathymetric data. It includes a winch system for deep sea anchoring, and “vertical capstans” for retrieving underwater gear with capacities of 2,500 and 30,000 pounds. It also carries cranes for launching and retrieval. Additional equipment was installed during the ship’s active career as it became available, including the following: the Sperry SQN-17 Bottom Topography Survey System (BOTOSS) for underwater mapping up to a depth of 7,300 meters; the MARISAT satellite communications system; the Sea Floor Sound Surveillance System (SOSUS); and the Hydrographic Data Acquisition System (HYDAS) for computerized real time data collection, analysis and storage.

### **Statement of Significance**

USNS *Wyman* is the last of four sister ships of the *Silas Bent* class of oceanographic survey vessels. The vessel carries an association with the Cold War. For more than a quarter century *Wyman* conducted hydrographic and oceanographic studies under the technical direction of the Oceanographer of the Navy. *Wyman* honors U.S. Navy Rear Admiral Robert H. *Wyman*, who commanded the Navy’s Hydrographic Office from 1870 until his death in 1882.

### **Historical Integrity**

The vessel was originally constructed in 1969 and did not undergo any substantial modifications during its service life. During its service life some equipment was replaced with updated technology, which was discussed in the Description/Characteristics section above. Otherwise, the vessel retains its historical integrity, being substantially unchanged from original construction. The vessel is in fair condition and has been in the fleet for 12 years.

### **National Register Eligibility Statement**

USNS *Wyman* is not yet 50-years-old and does not possess the exceptional importance as a property that has achieved significance within the past 50 years under the National Register’s Criteria Consideration G. The vessel does not possess the significant historical or technological characteristics, or integrity of design and materials necessary for listing, nor is the vessel associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

**Date:** 06 April 2012

**Determination:** Not eligible

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