

Robert John Derick

Born: April 2, 1923
Hometown: East Hartford, CT
Class: 1944
Service: Merchant Marine
Position / Rank: Engine Cadet

Date / Place of death: August 19, 1943 /
36-37N, 30-55W

Date / Place of burial: September 3, 1943 /
Sydney, Nova Scotia;
1949 / Jefferson
Barracks National
Cemetery, St. Louis, MO, Section 82 Site 7-10

Age: 20

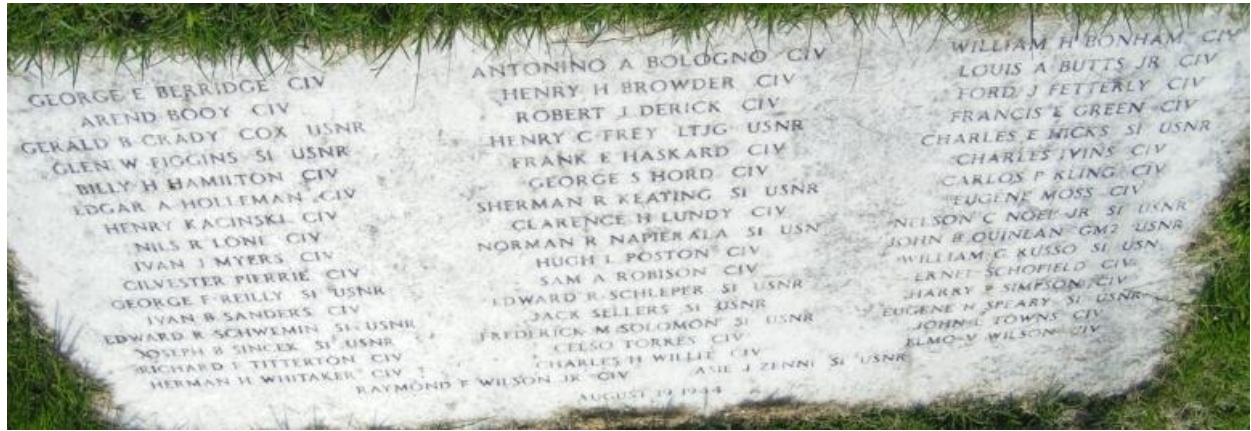


Robert J. Derick signed on as Engine Cadet aboard the Liberty Ship SS J. Pinckney Henderson on July 23, 1943. He was joined one day later by his classmate, Roscoe J. Prickett, Jr. who signed on as Deck Cadet. By August 14, 1943 the J. Pinckney Henderson had been loaded with a cargo of magnesium, glycerine, resin, oil, and wax and sailed for Liverpool as part of convoy HX-252.

The weather from August 14 onward was bad, with both high seas and fog. On the evening of August 19 the Henderson collided with the Panamanian flag tanker J. H. Senior. The J. H. Senior was carrying aviation gasoline which exploded, showering both ships with burning high octane gasoline. Within moments, both ships were transformed into infernos. Three crew members on the Henderson and six others on the J. H. Senior were able to leap into the sea and save themselves. The remaining crew members of both ships, including Cadet-Midshipmen John R. Derick and Roscoe J. Prickett, were killed in the fire.

The J. Pinckney Henderson was initially thought to be salvageable, and was towed to Sydney, Nova Scotia, while still in flames. However, she continued to burn for another month and was eventually declared a total loss. The hulk was later towed to Philadelphia and scrapped. On September 3, 1943 the charred remains of 34 unidentifiable bodies were buried with naval honors in a mass grave at Sydney. A monument was also erected there in their honor. Sometime around 1949 the remains were exhumed and re-interred in a mass grave at the Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery. At the same time the monument to the crew of the J. P. Henderson was

moved to Kings Point. The monument to the men of the J.P. Henderson languished in relative anonymity until 2004 when it was installed in a place of honor at the entrance of the American Merchant Marine Museum adjacent to the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy.



**Headstone for the Mass Grave of the deceased of the SS J. Pinckney Henderson
Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery, St. Louis, Missouri**

Cadet-Midshipman Robert J. Derick was posthumously awarded the Mariners Medal, Atlantic War Zone Bar, the Victory Medal, and the Presidential Testimonial Letter.

Robert J. Derick was the son of Sarah M. Derick of East Hartford, CT. No other information on his background could be located.