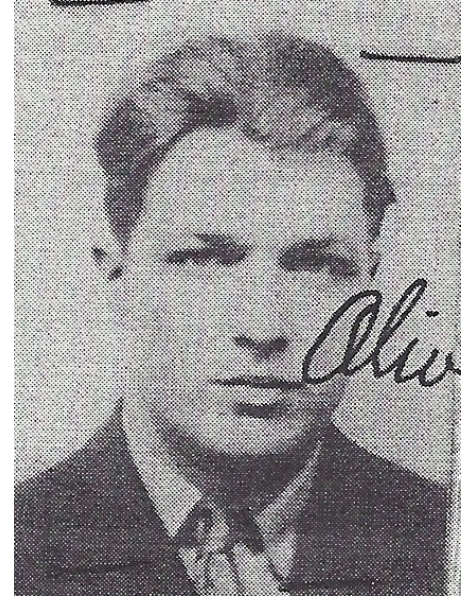


## Oliver Meeker Jones

Born: February 6, 1917  
Hometown: Hartford, CT  
Class: 1939 - USMMCC  
Service: Merchant Marine  
Position / Rank: Second Mate  
Date / Place of death: March 7, 1942 / Off Sable Island, Halifax, NS  
Date / Place of burial: March 7, 1942 / Lost at Sea -- Off Sable Island, Halifax, NS  
Age: 24



According to his U.S. Coast Guard file, Oliver M. Jones began going to sea as an Apprentice Seaman on December 7, 1935 aboard the *SS Scanpenn*. After sailing as "Cadet" aboard the *SS Scanyork* and *SS City of Fairbury* he received his Certificate of Service as Deck Cadet from the U.S. Coast Guard at New York, NY on April 29, 1937. Sometime thereafter Oliver M. Jones became one of the first members of the U.S. Merchant Marine Cadet Corps. After sailing as Deck Cadet for two more years aboard other Moore-McCormack Lines ships, including the *SS Scanstates*, Oliver M. Jones received his U.S. Coast Guard License as Third Mate, Oceans, on June 20, 1939.



**SS Independence Hall**

Oliver Jones continued working for Moore-McCormack, sailing as Fourth Officer aboard the *SS Mormachawk*, and Junior Third Mate aboard the *SS Brazil* and *Mormacswan*. On November 1, 1941 he signed on aboard the *SS Independence Hall*, a World War I "Hog Islander", at Norfolk, VA. Four months later, the *SS Independence Hall*, loaded with general cargo, was in Halifax, Nova Scotia waiting to sail in convoy SC-73. The convoy, bound for Liverpool, sailed on March 6, 1942, but thick fog and heavy seas caused the *Independence Hall* to lose the convoy almost immediately upon departure from Halifax. The rising seas battered the twenty-two year old ship, washing the #4 Life Raft, the ship's deck cargo and one of the ship's Able Seamen overboard.

The Captain, Eugene Currot, turned the ship into the wind and spent two hours in a fruitless search for the missing seaman. By the time he abandoned the search the ship was amidst increasingly heavy seas. Soon after, the ship's crew heard the cry "All men put on life jackets". At that point, according to the ship's Armed Guard Commander,

"We all rushed out into the alleyway and saw through the door that the forward part of the ship had been carried away. It was about 100 yards distant. After the ship broke in two the engineers on watch stayed at their posts for hours working the ship back at slow speed, I believe, into the wind and seas. They stuck to their posts until "abandon ship" had been ordered, and certainly did a wonderful job."

Unfortunately, nearly all of the ship's Deck Officers, including Second Mate Oliver M. Jones were in the forward portion of the ship which had broken off. None of the officers and men in this part of the ship survived.

The senior surviving Deck Officer, Third Mate Walter J. Lee took command of what was left of the *Independence Hall* and prepared the remaining life rafts and life boats for lowering. When he finally ordered the crew to abandon ship, it ran aground. With the heavy seas and surf, the only option for the survivors was to remain aboard the stranded hulk until a rescue could be attempted. By late morning of the next day the wreck had been spotted by a PBY "Catalina" patrol plane which directed several warships to the wreck. After several unsuccessful rescue attempts, men and boats from the *HMS Witch (D 89)* were able to rescue the survivors of the *Independence Hall*. For his heroism and leadership as Third Mate of the *SS Independence Hall*, Walter J. Lee was awarded the Merchant Marine Distinguished Service Medal. Walter J. Lee subsequently commended the *Independence Hall's* two Cadets, William M. Coffey and George C. Small for their "splendid behavior under duress."

Based on his merchant marine service, Oliver Meeker Jones was posthumously awarded the Merchant Marine Defense Bar, Atlantic War Zone Bar, the Victory Medal and Presidential Testimonial Letter.

Oliver M. Jones was the youngest of Richard Pratt Jones and Ruth Meeker Weld Jones' two sons. According to U.S. Census information Richard P. Jones was a farmer living in South Windsor, CT. Oliver's mother and father died in March 1932. He lived with his older brother, Richard, in Jersey City, NJ when he was not at sea. Oliver was a member of the Children of the American Revolution and Sons of the American Revolution as descendant of Richard Abbey, a Connecticut soldier in the American Revolution. A marker for Oliver M. Jones is in the Center Cemetery, South Windsor, CT.



**Oliver Meeker Jones  
South Windsor, CT**