

Roscoe Joseph Prickett, Jr.

Born: December 16, 1924
Hometown: Little Rock, Arkansas
Class: 1944
Service: Merchant Marine
Position / Rank: Deck Cadet
Date / Place of death: August 19, 1943 / 36-37N, 30-55W
Date / Place of burial: September 3, 1943 / Sydney, Nova Scotia
Age: 18



Roscoe J. Prickett, Jr. signed on as Deck Cadet aboard the *SS J. Pinckney Henderson* on July 24, 1943. His classmate, Robert J. Derick, had signed on as Engine Cadet the day before. 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 Roscoe J. Prickett and John R. Derick, 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. However, the name of Roscoe J. Prickett, along those of several other men who died aboard the *SS J. P. Henderson*, was not amongst the 56 names inscribed on the memorial placed there. It can only be assumed that the identity of his remains was determined during the exhumation process and returned to his family for burial.

When the remains of the deceased were removed for re-burial, the monument to the crew of the *J. P. Henderson* erected by the citizens of Sydney, Nova Scotia was moved to Kings Point. The monument 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.

Cadet-Midshipman Roscoe J. Prickett, Jr. was posthumously awarded the Atlantic War Zone Bar, the Victory Medal, and the Presidential Testimonial Letter.

Roscoe J. Prickett, Jr. was the only child of Roscoe J. Prickett and Maude Christen Prickett. According to the 1930 U.S. Census, Roscoe Sr. was employed as a truck driver while Maude worked as a stenographer in a law firm. Roscoe, Sr. died in 1940 leaving Maude to finish raising Roscoe, Jr.