

John Henry Watson, III

Born: August 15, 1921
Hometown: Madison, NJ
Class: 1944
Service: Merchant Marine
Position / Rank: Deck Cadet
Date / Place of death: July 8, 1943 / Bermuda Naval Base
Date / Place of burial: July 9, 1943 / Catholic Cemetery, Prospect, Bermuda
1947 / St. Vincent Cemetery, Madison, NJ
Age: 21

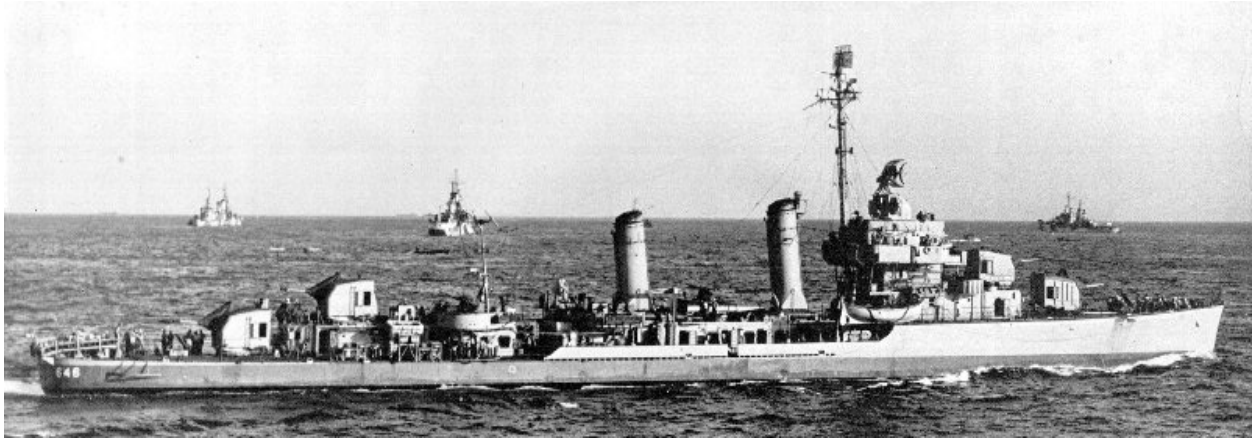


John H. Watson signed on aboard the *SS Peter Minuit* as a Deck Cadet at Baltimore Maryland on May 7, 1943. The ship sailed for New York where it finished loading and then sailed for Casablanca, North Africa on May 14, 1943. The *Peter Minuit* arrived safely in Casablanca, discharged its cargo and sailed for the return voyage to Baltimore, MD on June 23, 1943 as one of the ships in convoy GUS-8A.

At 1000 on July 5th, John Watson was on deck helping the Chief Mate, Jerome V. Cherry, stream a fog buoy from the stern of the vessel. During the evolution, Watson's right leg got caught between the towing wire and the starboard chock, cutting his leg off below the knee. The ship's crew did their best to treat the injury, but the trauma was beyond their skill. An hour later, the doctor from one of the escort vessels, the *USS Stockton (DD 646)*, boarded the vessel by small boat to treat him. After seeing the extent of the wounds, the doctor decided to transfer John Watson to the *USS Stockton*, which had better medical facilities than the *Peter Minuit*. At 1356, Watson arrived on board the *Stockton*. Later that day, the doctor amputated Watson's leg at the thigh. Shortly thereafter the *Stockton* began a high speed run to Bermuda to bring Watson to the medical facilities there.

When the *Stockton* arrived in Bermuda on the morning of July 7, 1943, Watson was transferred to the Naval Air Station Dispensary. He was given several blood transfusions throughout the day. However, at 0810 the following morning, Watson died from shock and loss of blood. At his request, last rites of the Roman Catholic Church were performed, and he was buried the following morning at the Catholic Cemetery in Prospect, Bermuda. A funeral mass was conducted by the Reverend A.G. Burman of

St. Theresa's Roman Catholic Church. The American Consul General of Bermuda, William H. Beck, attended the service, and six enlisted Naval men acted as pallbearers. In a letter to John's mother, Beck noted that a small silk American flag was found in John's wallet. According to John's sister, a Catholic Nun, his body was returned to the United States in 1947 against the wishes of his mother. He was re-interred with full military honors in the Watson family plot at St. Vincent's Cemetery, Madison, NJ.



USS Stockton (DD 646)

Cadet-Midshipman John H. Watson, III was posthumously awarded the Atlantic War Zone Bar, Mediterranean-Middle East War Zone Bar, the Victory Medal, and the Presidential Testimonial Letter.

John H. Watson was the youngest of Frederick G. Watson and Evangeline Shapter Watson's six children. Growing up, John had three older sisters (Evangeline, Margaret and Frances) and two older brothers (Frederick, Jr. and Harold). According to the 1930 U.S. Census, Frederick Watson was working as an attorney while Frederick, Jr. was employed as clerk in a law office, perhaps his father's. John's sister recalled that John wanted to become a banker. She said that after graduating from Madison High School he went to night school where he was taking courses in banking. However, at some point he wanted to join the merchant marine. A friend of the family who was a State Senator helped to expedite John's admission to the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy at the request of his mother.