Editor's note: The following content was provided to the Naval History and Heritage Command courtesy of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Office of National Marine Sanctuaries Research. There may be some inconsistencies in certain biographies with regard to dates and spelling of names as different archival sources may provide conflicting information. Those interested in further research may consult sources indicated in the endnotes.

NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries Research

USS CONESTOGA CREW BIOS

- 1. **Wilfred M. Aasgard**, Seaman Second Class, was born in Minnesota. His parents were Ole and Brita Aasgard. He was four-and-a-half months old when he was counted with his parents and six siblings in the Minnesota State Census taken in June of 1905. The 1920 US Census lists Wilfred living with his parents and five siblings in Fargo, North Dakota. Wilfred was working as a clerk in a grocery store. Both parents were born in Norway and came to the US as children. Wilfred enlisted in the Navy in Minneapolis on November 6, 1920. He transferred from the USS *Charleston* to the USS *Conestoga* on January 17, 1921. Brita was listed as her son's next-of-kin. Her address was 622 10th Ave, Fargo, North Dakota. On February 15, 1922, Ole Aasgard wrote to the Navy to ask if there were any developments in the search and about death benefits. The house the family lived in was built 1907 and is standing. Brita died in 1939 and Ole died in 1942. They were buried at Zion Cemetery in Norman County, Minnesota.
- 2. Lee Joseph Alleman, Seaman, was born about 1905.⁷ He was the second son of Seraphime Emanuel Alleman and his wife Josephine Trosclair. Lee was listed in the 1920 US Census as Joseph L. Alleman. The family lived in the city of Brooks, Pointe Coupee Parish, Louisiana.⁸ In 1913, Seraphime was named director of agricultural operations at a property owned by Wilbert Company.⁹ Lee enlisted in the Navy on in New Orleans on October 10, 1920.¹⁰ He transferred to the *Conestoga* on January 17, 1921.¹¹ Josephine died in 1941. Her obituary noted her surviving children as well as Lee. At the time she had one grandchild. She was buried at St. Mary's Cemetery.¹² Seraphime Alleman died on July 7, 1952. His obituary listed his three surviving children, grandchildren, and deceased sons Lucien and Lee Joseph. He was buried at Cypress Grove Cemetery in New Orleans.¹³
- 3. **Joseph Harold Allen**, Seaman, was born on September 1, 1900. He enlisted for the draft on September 16, 1918. At the time, he was working for a farmer in Williamsburg County, South Carolina. He was described as medium height and build, with gray eyes and brown hair. ¹⁴ Joseph was the son of Dr. Albert M. Allen of Spartanburg, South Carolina, who was Joseph's next-of-kin. ¹⁵ Joseph's mother was likely Emily Josephine

Allen, who died in 1906.¹⁶ Albert remarried to Mary the next year.¹⁷ Joseph enlisted in the Navy on July 5, 1918.¹⁸ He was enumerated aboard the USS *Houston* in the 1920 US Census.¹⁹ He transferred to the *Conestoga* on January 17, 1921.²⁰

On October 12, 1923, Dr. Allen asked for a review of Joseph's payroll settlement. The Comptroller of the Treasury's accounting officers set the payment with the pay period ending April 30, 1921. Secretary of the Navy Edwin Denby declared June 30, 1921 as the date of loss. Albert Allen believed that the payment should have been based on the later date. It was argued that only Secretary Denby had the legal authority to set the presumed date of loss. The Court of Claims sustained the settlement established by the Treasury. Under the law, the next-of-kin also received a "death gratuity" of six-month's pay. Albert Allen died in 1936. 22

- 4. **Charles Joseph Balint**, Seaman, was born in September of 1903.²³ He was the son of John and Elizabeth Balint who lived at 180 Third St. Passaic, New Jersey.²⁴ Charles' parents were from Hungary. They emigrated in 1880. Elizabeth had given birth to 13 children, but only seven of her children lived to the year 1910. ²⁵ ²⁶ Charles enlisted in the Navy in New York City on March 25, 1920 and transferred to the *Conestoga* on December 12, 1920.²⁷ A family member posted a portrait of Charles on an online family tree.²⁸
- 5. Alias Steven Benard, Coxwain, was born in Michigan, about 1903 to French Canadians Napoleon and Exzelia Benard. His given name is the French variant of Elias. The family lived at 726 Stevenson Ave., Escanaba, Michigan.²⁹ Alias enlisted on April 9, 1919 in Milwaukee.³⁰ On January 22, 1920, he was enumerated in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba serving on the USS *Prometheus*.³¹ Census takers would work from military muster rolls counting men who may have transferred months before. Alias and other members of the crew of the *Conestoga* were also counted in the 1920 US Census at the Norfolk Naval Base in Norfolk, Virginia.³² Alias' rank rose from Seaman Second Class to Coxwain on January 4, 1921.³³ On July 20, 1922, Edna Keys wrote to the Navy. She was Alias' sweetheart and wanted to know if there was any news on the search for the lost ship.³⁴ Napoleon Benard died in 1925.³⁵ Exzelia died in 1933. According to her death record, she was born in Ontario, Canada, and her father's surname was Maisonnuire.³⁶
- 6. **Sylvester Craig Blalock**, Machinist Mate, was the son of Richmond T. Blalock and his second wife Hattie Kendall Blalock³⁷ of Stanly County, North Carolina. Sylvester was born about 1895, and was called Vester. He had sisters Lena, Undine, May³⁸ and a half-brother Lawrence from his father's first marriage.³⁹ In 1920, Sylvester was stationed at

the Naval Radio Station in San Juan, Puerto Rico.⁴⁰ He was a passenger on the *Conestoga*, and thus had no duty assignment.⁴¹ It is likely that he had orders to report to Pearl Harbor. Richmond Blalock died in 1927, and Hattie Kendall Blalock died 1937. They were interred at Mount Zion Methodist Church Cemetery in Stanly County, North Carolina.⁴²

7. Joseph Bodie, Seaman, was the son of Michael Bodie and his wife Anna. In 1915, the family was living in Erie, New York. According to this record, Mike was a laborer who emigrated from Hungary in 1910, and his family followed two years later. It was not unusual for such separations to happen so that men could save up for the cost of their family's voyage. Mike and Anna had three daughters and their son Joseph. Their eldest daughter Anna, born about 1898, worked in a chain factory. According to this record, Joseph was born about 1905. 43 By 1920, most of the family had moved to Summit County, Ohio. Mike and Anna had divorced and Anna had not legally changed her name, but went by her maiden name, Peto. She was working as a midwife in a booming factory town and was rearing her three minor children. Joseph was recorded as being born about 1903, and was a rubber worker. Tire plants were the main industry in the Akron area. General Tires, Goodrich, Goodyear, and Firestone were all located there. Both new immigrants and Americans from areas with limited opportunities came for the plentiful jobs. The census taker's spelling and penmanship was poor. Joseph's sister Emily was mistakenly listed as a son born in 1907; youngest daughter Elizabeth was born in 1909. Anna's last name was misspelled "Pato." Just as the New York State Census recorded, it was reported that the family came to America in1912.44 In the same census, eldest daughter Anna was living in Akron with her husband Steve Nagy and their two sons. Steve Nagy was also a rubber worker. 45 Mike Bodie was recorded in Erie, New York, and was also listed as divorced. He worked in a steel mill and lived in a boarding house.46

Joseph may have decided that toiling in the plants did not agree with him temperamentally or physically. It is possible that he went back to New York to stay with his father, but he may have worked on a commercial boat that embarked on Lake Erie. Joseph enlisted in the Navy in Albany, New York on June 18, 1920. He transferred to the *Conestoga* at the Naval Training Station at Hampton Roads, Virginia on November 29, 1920.⁴⁷ He was rated as a Seaman Second Class, and his rank rose to Seaman on January 4, 1921.⁴⁸

Joseph's mother Anna had married Joe Antal in September of 1920. ⁴⁹ It appears that Anna and Joe Antal briefly relocated to a nearby town, but would later return to Akron.

Anna Antal was listed as her son's next-of-kin, and her address was a post office box in Herrick, Ohio. 50

Emily married Frank Leibmann in 1925. According to her marriage record, she was born in Egyek, Hungary. Her father was Mike Bodie and her mother's name was Anna Petho. In 1927, Elizabeth Bodie was married Emrick Brovey. Her marriage certificate lists her father as Mike Bodie and mother as Anna Peto. Anna died in Akron on March 6, 1929. She was buried at Akron's Glendale Cemetery.

- 8. **Marvin Henry Bower**, Fireman First Class, was born on January 4, 1900 and lived in Oswego, Illinois. Before joining the Navy, Marvin was a factory worker. His parents were Frederick and Mary Anna Bower. The family lived on a farm. Marvin was the youngest for four children. Records of Marvin's sister Clara list their mother's maiden name as Wolf. Marvin enlisted in Chicago on January 21, 1919. The 1920 US Census recorded Marvin aboard the USS *Jason*. He transferred to the *Conestoga* at Hampton Roads on October 29, 1920. A monument for Marvin was placed for at Riverside Cemetery in Kane County, Illinois. Mary Wolf Bower died in 1932. Frederick Bower died in 1951. They were interred at Riverside Cemetery.
- 9. **Arthur Brignac**, Seaman Second Class, was born about 1902. He was the son of Lawrence and Remalia Brignac, who were natives of Louisiana. The family farmed in the French Settlement, Livingston Parish, Louisiana. By 1910, 12 children were born into the family and nine were living. 63 64 Remalia Brown Brignac died in 1918. 65 Arthur enlisted in New Orleans on October 26, 1920. 66 He transferred to the *Conestoga* on January 17, 1921. 67 Lawrence died in 1940 and was buried with Remilia in the French Settlement Community Cemetery. 68
- 10. **Nelson Eugene Burkhart**, Quartermaster Third Class, was born about 1902. He was the son of Albert M. Burkhart and Mary E. Wills of Altoona, Pennsylvania. By 1910, the couple had seven children. Nelson enlisted in the Navy in Pittsburgh on January 18, 1919. On June 12, 1919, the Altoona Tribune reported that Nelson was serving on the destroyer *McLanahan* as an Electrician Second Class. He transferred from the USS *Nahant to the Conestoga*. The 1920 US Census lists Nelson in at the Norfolk Naval Station in Virginia. Ernest Larkin Jones was listed as head of household, and each sailor under his command was listed as son. A letter Nelson wrote to his parents in October of 1920 was shared with an Altoona newspaper. According to the article, Nelson had previously sailed to France and Bermuda. When the letter was written, Nelson was aboard the *Conestoga* in Norfolk. It was to set sail for San Francisco via the Panama

Canal, on to Honolulu, and finally Tuituila, Samoa.⁷⁴ This was of course, naming the ports of call for his fateful mission. Nelson advanced in rating from Seaman to Quartermaster Third Class on January 4, 1921.⁷⁵

After reading a newspaper article about his son's missing ship, A. M. Burkhart wrote to the Navy Department on May 5, 1921. He asked that they contact him with any information.⁷⁶ A photo of Nelson appeared in an article about the missing craft on June 21, 1921.⁷⁷

Mary Burkhart died in 1935 after being hit by a car. Albert died in 1944. Both Mary Wills Burkhart's death certificate and Albert M. Burkhart's death certificate report Albert's legal name as "Alferd Marion Burkhart." Their monument at Calvary cemetery recorded his name as "Albert W. Burkhart," which he also appeared as in some documents.

- 11. **Henry Grady Butler**, Fireman Second Class, who went by the nickname Harry, was born in Charleston, South Carolina in 1901. His parents, Elijah and Dolly Butler were natives of Charleston. They are listed in the 1910 US Census as residents of Tampa, Florida. Their nine-year-old son was listed as Grady. ⁸¹ Henry enlisted in the Navy in Columbia, South Carolina on May 15, 1919. ⁸² On January 28, 1920 he was enumerated for the US Census while stationed at League Island Naval Base in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. ⁸³ Elijah Butler was in Dallas, Texas working as a carpenter when he died on February 3, 1920. ⁸⁴ On April 7, 1920, Harry transferred to the *Conestoga* at the Receiving Station in Philadelphia. ⁸⁵ He advanced in rating from Fireman Third Class to Fireman Second Class on January 4, 1921. ⁸⁶ In 1930, Dolly was lived with her daughter Lelah Butler Terry and her family. ⁸⁷ By 1935, Dolly was a boarder living with a family. ⁸⁸
- 12. **Russell Rainer Crabtree**, Fireman Third Class, was the son of Ovia Crabtree and Halia West.⁸⁹ In 1900, the family was living in Blount County, Alabama. Halia reported to the census taker that she had given birth to six children and five were living.⁹⁰ Russell was born in 1901, and his mother may have died in childbirth. In 1904, Ovia married Annie Reeves.⁹¹ By 1910, the family lived in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. In addition to her stepchildren, Annie had three children from this marriage, and two were living.⁹²

Russell enlisted in the Navy on March 6, 1920 in Birmingham, Alabama. He transferred at Hampton Roads, Virginia. 93 On June 24, 1921, Ovia Crabtree wrote a letter on his lumber company's stationary to Secretary Denby to ask if there was any trace of the tug boat. In Navy documents, Russell's middle name is "Raynor," but in this letter signed by

- his father, it is spelled "Rainer". Russell had designated his father was his next-of-kin. So Ovia died in 1950. He was buried at Tuscaloosa Memorial Park. So Ovia died in 1950.
- 13. **Joe Earle Davis**, Engineman Second Class, was born in January of 1890. He was the son of Joe Allen Davis and Martha Ann Pickens of Texas. ⁹⁷ In 1892, Martha remarried to Robert V. Oar in Cumby, Texas. ⁹⁸ Joe had at four siblings and two half siblings. ⁹⁹ He enlisted at the Recruiting Station at Mare Island, California on June 1, 1920 and was received by the *Conestoga* on March 11, 1921. ¹⁰⁰ On September 1, 1923, Joe's mother Martha died from Pellagra, an extremely debilitating disease, at age 62. She was buried at Friendship Cemetery in Cumby, Texas. ¹⁰¹
- 14. **Charles Depiante**, Electrician Third Class, was born in December of 1899 and lived in Houghton County, Michigan¹⁰² and Lake County, Colorado with his father Antoine and mother Stella Katanach. Antoine was a miner from Italy. His wife was born in Michigan to German parents.¹⁰³ Antoine and Stella divorced in El Paso County, Colorado on August 11, 1911. Charles was ten-years-old and his sister Elizabeth was 11-years-old.¹⁰⁴ Elizabeth went on to marry William Weinrick.¹⁰⁵ In January of 1920, Charles was enumerated on board the USS *Georgia* at Mare Island, California.¹⁰⁶ He transferred from the USS *Charleston* to the *Conestoga* on January 17, 1921.¹⁰⁷ By the time of Charles' death, Stella had remarried to Henry Brasch. On March 15, 1926, Stella was awarded an additional \$125 in pay for her son's service.¹⁰⁸ Stella died in 1945.¹⁰⁹
- 15. **William Jesse Dill**, Engineman First Class, was born in Henrietta, North Carolina on February 22, 1890. He registered for the draft on June 5, 1917. At the time he worked for Arcade Cotton Mill in Rock Hill, South Carolina. He was tall and slender, with light hair and blue eyes, and was married with one child. William reported that he had served eight years in the "militia" and had been a corporal. His first enlistment in the Navy was in Charleston, South Carolina on March 26, 1918. His wife was Beatrice Huggins. Beauford Maine Dill, was their first child who was alluded to in the draft form. Alma Dill, and Revelee Dill were born later. The family was listed in Spartanburg, South Carolina in the 1920 US Census. Although William was in the service by the day the census was taken, he was counted as a mill worker. William has reenlisted on December 3, 1920. He served on the USS Buffalo. On March 1, 1921, he was transferred to the Conestoga, replacing First Class Engineman Arthur E. Johnson. Beatrice never remarried and died on September 4, 1961.
- 16. **William Joseph Donovan**, Shipfitter Second Class, was born about 1899. He was the son of architect Michael J. and Hortense Mary Donovan of Vicksburg, Mississippi. He had

several siblings.¹¹⁷ William enlisted in Meridian, Mississippi on June 17, 1918 and was discharged on August 30, 1919.¹¹⁸ He began a second term on May 25, 1920. He served on the USS *Prairie* and transferred to the *Conestoga* on February 10, 1921.¹¹⁹

On July 13, 1921, Michael J. Donovan wrote to the Bureau of Navigation. He was distressed to learn that the search had ended. He asked about debris that may have been found. He proposed scenarios in which the crew may have survived. 120 Lieutenant Commander E.D. Capehart responded to the letter and told the grieving father that a lifeboat with the letter "C" was pulled by the commercial ship SS Senator. The letter was sent to the Bureau of Navigation, but the boat was destroyed by the Senator's crew, so examination of the lifeboat was not possible. He told Donovan that the Navy did not think it possible that the crew survived and thus decided to declare the deaths on June 30. 1921. 121 Years after these events. Works Project Administration (WPA) Veterans' Graves Registration Project staff members sent letters to families of lost service members from Mississippi. They were compiling records of where the veterans had been buried or memorialized. William's sister Hortense replied to the inquiry in a letter dated May 14, 1941. She told the project manager that she was young when she lost her brother, and both of her parents had since died. Her father never gave up hope that William would return. He did not hold a memorial service for his son and did not place a monument for him in the family plot. 122

17. James Flynn, Water Tender, was enumerated in the 1910 US Census while aboard the USS North Dakota at the Boston Navy Yard. He was serving as a First Class Fireman. The job of steamship Fireman required endlessly shoveling coal to keep fires burning in order to heat boilers that powered ships' steam engines. It took a great physical toll on the men who performed these duties. Middle aged and older Firemen would sometimes become ship Water Tenders. In that position, they were seasoned experts who tended the steam boilers and fires.

Flynn enlisted at Mare Island, California, on August 26, 1920.¹²⁴ On October 22, 1920, he was counted in the US Census while serving as a Water Tender aboard the USS *Brooklyn* in San Diego, California. He reported to the enumerator that he was 41-years-old, born in Ireland, was single and his first language was Irish. He came to America in 1901 and he became a naturalized citizen in 1904. His home residence was 150 Church Street, Whitinsville, Massachusetts.¹²⁵ Although the date was not revealed in the records we have, Flynn was later transferred to the USS *Babbit*. The *Conestoga*'s Water tender, Andy G. Davis enlisted in June of 1918. Davis' Naval term was probably nearing its end as the journey to Hawaii was drawing closer. It is likely that Lieutenant Ernest

Larkin Jones requested a replacement so that Davis could finish his term close to land. On March 14, 1921, James Flynn left the *Babbitt* and became the Water Tender of the *Conestoga*, and Andy Davis took Flynn's position on the *Babbit*. 126

James Flynn's next-of-kin was his sister Mary Donohue who lived at 20 Brooks St. Whitinsville, Massachusetts. ¹²⁷ Mary Donohue had recently moved to the town of Taunton, Massachusetts. This caused confusion in finding James' sister in order to inform her of her brother's loss, and for reporters attempting to accurately report James' in death newspapers. The June 22, 1921 issue of the Taunton Daily Gazette reported that despite the news release from the Navy, records of a sailor named James Flynn from Taunton were not found. ¹²⁸ It was his sister Mary and not James who lived there.

Mistaken reports also reached former members of the *Conestoga*'s crew causing confusion and distress. William P. Burbage reached out to the publication *Our Navy* and set the record straight in their January 31, 1922 edition. He wrote that he and other former crew members of the *Conestoga* who transferred off before the doomed launch were dealing with rumors that they had died. Burbage wanted to let those who were concerned know that he was not on the tug at the time and neither were Edward Frost, Vern Bennett, Andy Davis nor Arthur E. Johnson. This situation may have been even more difficult for Navy Water Tender Andy Davis, and Engineman Arthur E. Johnson who had the same last names deceased crew members Joe Earle Davis and William Walter Johnson.

(Special Thanks to Taunton Public Library.)

18. **William Rudolph France**, Fireman First Class, was born in February of 1897. He was the son of William Orville France and Julia Cochoit who married on February 27, 1889. ¹³¹ By 1900, Julia had given birth to four children; daughters Myrtle, Isabelle and their son William were living at the time. ¹³² Lillian was born in 1904. She would go on to marry Virgil Beck. ¹³³ William's sisters Myrtle and Isabel died months apart in 1914. ¹³⁴ ¹³⁵ Julia wrote a will soon after the loss of her daughters. In it, she bequeathed a donation to Church of the Immaculate Conception on North Park Ave., Chicago. She asked that in the event of her death that a funeral mass be performed there. ¹³⁶ Another son, James W. France, was born in 1915. ¹³⁷ William's mother Julia died in Chicago on May 28, 1917. ¹³⁸ William Orville France married his second wife Gezina Nyboer in Allen County, Indiana on November 17 of the same year. ¹³⁹ The couple's infant son John Orville France died in February of 1919. ¹⁴⁰ Their son Elmer was born on November 22, 1920. ¹⁴¹

William Rudolph France enlisted in the Navy in Indianapolis on December 15, 1920. He transferred from the Receiving Ship at Mare Island to the *Conestoga* on March 9, 1921. At the time of William Rudolph's death, his father and stepmother lived at 237 Menominee St., in Chicago. On June 5, 1921, William O. France wrote to the Secretary of the Navy to inquire about progress in the search for his son's ship. On July 9, he was sent a reply telling him that the Navy conducted an exhaustive search and the ship and crew was declared lost on June 21, 1921.

The France family moved back to Fort Wayne. William Orville and Gezina's son William H. France was born in 1923. Their daughter Elizabeth was born in 1926. The 1940 Census shows the family living together along with their son James' wife Bernice and baby daughter Shirley. William Orville France died in 1946. He and Gezina were buried at Catholic Cemetery in Ft. Wayne, Indiana. Gezina died in 1979. 148

19. **Edward Bernard Anthony Goodin**, Second Machinist Mate, was born on October 18, 1899. He registered for the draft on September 12, 1918. He was working as a machinist's apprentice at Bethlehem Steel Company. He was described as being medium height with dark brown hair and brown eyes. ¹⁴⁹ Edward was the son of Bernard and Martina Goodin of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. ¹⁵⁰ ¹⁵¹ He enlisted in Scranton, Pennsylvania on September 21, 1920, and transferred to the *Conestoga* at Hampton Roads on October 29, 1920. ¹⁵²

Edward's father, who went by the name Barney, died in April of 1923.¹⁵³ In 1930, Martina, her surviving sons James and Joseph and their wives were living in the same household.¹⁵⁴ In 1940, Martina was living with her son James, daughter-in-law Mary Fischer, and two grandchildren.¹⁵⁵ Martina Schrumpf Goodin died at age 91 on February 28, 1960.¹⁵⁶

20. **Roy Evart Hoffses**, Boatswain, was the son of Albion K.P. Hoffses and his second wife Ellen. Albion had infant children with his first wife Una who did not survive and were buried in the family plot with their mother. ¹⁵⁷ ¹⁵⁸ ¹⁵⁹ On November 12, 1884, Albion married Ellen Russell in Danvers, Massachusetts. ¹⁶⁰ They moved to Providence, Rhode Island. Their daughter Minnie was born in 1889. Roy was their second child, born on August 20, 1890. ¹⁶¹ His middle name was apparently after Albion's younger brother Evart, who was born in 1870. ¹⁶² Ellen died in 1894. ¹⁶³ In 1900 Albion, his wife Annie L., who he married reportedly in 1895, and children Minnie, age 11, and "Leroy" age 9, were still in Providence. ¹⁶⁴ The 1905 Rhode Island Census counted Albion, once again a

widower. No record of Annie's death was found. By then, Roy had joined the US Navy. The father and son reported that they were members of the Congregationalist faith. Roy's sister Minnie married Harold Arey in 1907. The 1910 US Census shows Albion, a widower, working as a "motorman" for streetcars still in Providence. Roy was counted in the census as a Seaman aboard the USS South Carolina. On February 15, 1911, Albion married Etta Burdick Lewis in Salem, Massachusetts. Etta had divorced Alexander Waller Lewis and owned a boarding house. Etta and Albion may have divorced or annulled their marriage. Etta died in Providence, Rhode Island in January of 1913. She was buried as Emmaette Burdick Lewis, wife of Waller Lewis. In 1915, Albion was staying in Hillsborough County, Florida and married Alverda Pindall. The couple would live in Alverda's home town of Elkhart, Indiana. Alverda died there in 1917. According to her obituary, she had suffered paralysis and died from a stroke.

In 1918, Roy was commended for bravery while serving on the Destroyer *Parker*. He and fellow crew members rescued nine people who were aboard the British Hospital Ship *Genart Castle*, after it was struck by a German torpedo. According to a news article regarding the rescue operation, Roy first enlisted in 1904. Albion was the care taker of the Atherton Club in Elkhart, Indiana. He received a letter from his hero son with photos of the rescue taken by a crew member. The photos with detailed description of the rescue efforts were undoubtedly treasured by the father. One of the photos was of Roy guiding the lifeboat to a person in distress. Another photo showed a patient in the lifeboat. The

In October 0f 1918, Albion married again to Nannie Brower, who was born in Ohio. ¹⁷⁷ He sued Nannie for divorce in February of 1920. ¹⁷⁸

On June 14, 1921, Lydia Conley of Apponaug, Rhode Island wrote to the Department of the Navy about the status of the search for the ship. She wrote that Roy Hoffses was, "na kin, but a boy I brought up and was always with me until he went into the navy 16 or 17 years ago and always made his home with me when ever he had a few days leave." She received her last letter from him on March 14, 1921. She closed the letter "a mother and friend." It seems that despite his father's eccentricities, Roy had a constant in his life with a very loving surrogate mother.

Roy designated his sister Minnie Z. Arey who lived at 490 Pine St. Providence, Rhode Island as his next-of-kin. This suggests that Roy remained a bachelor or was not married at the time of his death. Albion died in Lutz, Florida on April 16, 1935. He was buried in Rhode Island. According to his death certificate, his wife's name was Ina; she

was a native of Maine.¹⁸¹ Nannie Hern Brower put her two-year marriage behind her. She went back to Dayton, Ohio and resumed calling herself by her first husband Joseph Brower's surname. On her death certificate, she was called a widow and Joseph Brower was written in as her late husband. She lived to age 86 and passed away on February 19, 1943.¹⁸² In 1951, Albion's seventh-known and final wife Ina Hoffses died in Hillsborough County, Florida.¹⁸³ Roy's sister Minnie Hoffses Arey died in Vernon, Connecticut on March 30, 1978.¹⁸⁴

- 21. Hans Jensen, Fireman Second Class, was born in Nebraska. He was the son of Chris Jensen, who emigrated from Denmark, and his wife Consan who was from Michigan. The 1900 US Census lists brothers Thorval, James, and Hans. ¹⁸⁵ In September of 1918, Hans was working as a long shoreman in Washington State and enlisted for the draft. He reported that he was born on June 8, 1899, and that Constan was his closet relative. He was described as tall with a medium build, blue eyes, and light hair. ¹⁸⁶ Hans was counted at home with Constan in the 1920 US Census. His parents had adopted a three-year-old girl named Marie. ¹⁸⁷ Hans enlisted in the Navy in Kansas City, Missouri on December 16, 1920. ¹⁸⁸ He served on the USS *Charleston* and transferred to the *Conestoga* on January 17, 1921. ¹⁸⁹ Hans' brother Thorval Johnson was born on December 26, 1896. ¹⁹⁰ In 1942, he enlisted for the Draft and listed his mother as the family contact, suggesting that he was single. ¹⁹¹ Thorval died in Los Angeles, California in April of 1966. ¹⁹²
- 22. **William Walter Johnson**, Fireman First Class, was born on June 12, 1891 in Missouri. He was the son of William Robert Johnson and Cornelia Estelee Johnson. The 1910 US census lists him as age 18 and working outside of the home. His mother Cornelia had given birth to 12 children and nine were living at the time. William married Edna Jewel Stroud in Boonville, Missouri on August 30, 1915. It appears that Johnson went by his middle name. The marriage license was issued under the name Walter W. Johnson. William registered for the draft on June 5, 1917 and told the registrar that he was a barber. The young Johnson family was recorded together on January 2, 1920 for the US Census. Again, he was listed as Walter William Johnson. Their daughter Harriet Estelee, age four, was listed by her middle name. William W. Johnson, Jr. was age 2. William Walter Johnson was one of the men who transferred to the *Conestoga* after the last Muster Roll was turned in on March 24, 1921.

Edna Johnson wrote to the Navy on June 25, 1921. On July 11, 1921, Rear Admiral Thomas Washington replied to the widow's letter. He informed Edna that her husband transferred to the *Conestoga* on March 25, 1921, which was the same day the ship left

Mare Island. He wrote, "The Bureau regrets exceedingly" that Mrs. Johnson had not been informed earlier. On October 30, 1921, William's father wrote to the Department of Justice Bureau of Investigation's Director William J. Burns asking for assistance. Burns was a famous detective and Johnson was understandably desperate for answers after the *Conestoga* disappeared. Burns forwarded the letter to the Department of Navigation. A representative from the Bureau of Navigation responded to Burns' letter on November 29, 1921. He wrote that the Johnson family was informed that the search for the vessel failed and the crew was declared dead on June 30, 1921. According to a family member, their youngest son George was born in December of 1920. Edna died in Tulsa, Oklahoma in 1971. The family member posted several photos of Edna Stroud Johnson on their online family tree.

- 23. Ernest Larkin Jones, Lieutenant; was born in 1880 to Joshua and Roseanna Jones of Walnut Grove, Kansas. ²⁰² In 1910, he was the Chief Boilermaker of the USS *Minnesota*. ²⁰³ In August of 1916, Earnest was treated for nerve pain at Chelsea Naval Hospital in Chelsea, Massachusetts. According to the hospital registry, he had been in the Navy for twelve years, and last enlisted on January 14, 1913. ²⁰⁴ The 1920 US Census listed him as commander of the USS *Conestoga*. ²⁰⁵ His wife Loretta P. Forgarty Jones and daughter Pauline, a toddler, were living in Newport, Rhode Island with Loretta's three sisters, brother, and their father, Edward Fogarty. ²⁰⁶ The 1930 Census recorded Edward Fogarty, and Loretta and Pauline Jones, who was by then, age 12, living together. ²⁰⁷ The 1940 Rhode Island State Census recorded Loretta as widowed, living in the same home she had shared with her family and working as a hair dresser. ²⁰⁸
- 24. **George Franklin Kaler,** Chief Machinist's Mate, was born on November 1, 1888. He was the only child of stone cutter William Kaler and Anna Marie Cook of Ohio. The couple married on July 3, 1886. ²⁰⁹ ²¹⁰ George Enlisted in the Navy in New Orleans on August 5, 1917. He transferred to the *Conestoga* from the USS *Hannibal*. ²¹¹ George's mother wrote to the Secretary of the Navy on May 25, 1921. She told him that she had no word from her son in two months. She was reading conflicting reports and understandably wanted "authentic information" from the Navy. ²¹² Lieutenant Commander E.D. Capehart adapted a form letter he was sending to the families during that period of the search telling Mrs. Kaler that a search had been conducted, but there was still hope of finding the lost vessel. ²¹³

In 1930, George's parents lived in Oak Harbor, Ohio. William was working as an elevator operator. A white marble marker in honor of George was placed by the family at Oak Harbor Cemetery in Ottawa County, Ohio. The beautiful monument is the same style

his parents selected for themselves. Anna died in 1942²¹⁶ and William died in 1947.²¹⁷ A family member inherited the photos of the Kaler family and posted a very well-researched tribute to George and his parents on their online tree. The tree includes attached documents, several portraits of the family members at various stages in their lives, as well as their former homes.²¹⁸ Although this branch of the family has no direct descendants, it is clear that they are remembered with admiration and love.

25. **Edwin Peter Kortis**, Seaman, was born in 1903. He was the son of Frank and Regina Lotz Kortis of Wheeling, West Virginia. Edward's siblings were: Frank Joseph, born in 1895; Mary, born in 1903; and Clarence, born in 1907; Harold, born in 1910; and Madelyn, born in 1913.

Edward enlisted in the Navy in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania on May 29, 1919. He transferred to the *Conestoga* at Hampton Roads, Virginia on October 14, 1920.²²³ Regina Kortis was interviewed for an article in The Wheeling Register. The June 23, 1921 report included a grainy snapshot of Edwin. Regina Kortis told the reporter that she was hopeful her son would be found. He was a graduate of Cathedral High School, and served in the Panama Canal Zone.²²⁴

Edwin's father Frank Sr. died in 1925. ²²⁵ Harold married Virginia Beck in 1936. ²²⁶ Frank Jr. married Mary Garner in 1938. ²²⁷ In 1940, Regina was living with her daughter Madelyn. ²²⁸ Regina died in December of 1942. ²²⁹ Frank Jr. died on June 9, 1959. ²³⁰

26. **Joseph Matthew Krueger**, Yeoman First Class, was born in Holyoake, Massachusetts on February 10, 1898. His parents were Jacob and Elizabeth Callahan Kreuter. Joseph was the eldest child in the family. Elizabeth was from Ireland and her husband was from Germany. Joseph enlisted in the Navy on August 28, 1920. He was received by the *Conestoga* in Philadelphia on November 13, 1920. In the 1920 US Census, Joseph was listed at the Philadelphia Navy Yard. He was also listed in his family's home in1920. His siblings were: George, born in 1901; Charles, born in 1904; Harold, born in 1907; Clare, born in 1909; Mary, born in 1913; and William born in 1916. A death notice ran in a Springfield, Massachusetts newspaper on July 19, 1921. Jacob Kreuter, building inspector, today received official word from the navy department of the death of his son, Joseph M. Kreuter, a first-class yeoman, who was first reported missing tug "Conestoga." State of the same state of the death of his son, Joseph M. Kreuter, a first-class yeoman, who was first reported missing tug "Conestoga." State of the same state of the death of his son, Joseph M. Kreuter, a first-class yeoman, who was first reported missing tug "Conestoga."

In 1930, Joseph's sister Clare was single and a patient at the Holyoke City Sanatorium, which treated tubercular patients. ²³⁶ In the 1940 US Census, Harold was listed as a

single lodger in San Diego, California. It was noted that he was unable to work. ²³⁷ Charles was single and worked in New York State as a pipe fitter. ²³⁸ Harold died in San Diego, on August 31, 1946. ²³⁹ A Mary Kreuter, born about 1913 was a patient at the Belchertown State School for the Feeble-Minded. ²⁴⁰ William married Eva Schmelling, and they had two children before divorcing in 1976. ²⁴¹ William died in San Diego on September 11, 1983. ²⁴² His son Scott William Kreuter was born in 1947, ²⁴³ and daughter his Susan Regina Kreuter was born in 1950. ²⁴⁴

- 27. **Eryle Bond Laverick**, Fireman Third Class, was born about 1901. He was the son of William E. Laverick, who died in 1915, and Lois Bond Laverick who died in September of 1919.²⁴⁵ Eryle is listed in the 1920 US Census living with his grandparents James and Elizabeth Bond of Franklin, Illinois.²⁴⁶ Eyrle enlisted in the Navy in Norfolk, Virginia on October 14, 1920. He was received by the *Conestoga* at Hampton Roads on October 29, 1920.²⁴⁷ His grandfather James Bond was his next-of-kin.²⁴⁸ William and Lois Laverick were buried at Diamond Grove Cemetery in Jacksonville, Illinois. James Bond died in 1927 and Elizabeth Hook Bond died in 1929. Their daughters Alice Bond Challans, and Nellie, and Blanche, who apparently did not marry, were buried in the family plot at Diamond Grove.²⁴⁹
- 28. Theodore Marius Liisberg, Machinist's Mate Second Class, was born about 1904. He was the son of John M. and Olise Liisberg of in Tillamook, Oregon. By 1920, the couple had divorced and Theodore lived with his mother²⁵⁰ He enlisted in the Navy on June 10, 1920. He served on the USS Eagle and transferred to the Conestoga on January 17, 1921.²⁵¹ John was a commercial mariner and had visited his son above the *Conestoga*. On May 15, 1921, he wrote to the Secretary of the Navy expressing disgust and frustration that the ship was overdue at Pearl Harbor for 30 days before the search began. Based on his visits to the ship, Liisberg alleged that the ship sailed without radio equipment. ²⁵² On May 28, 1921 Admiral R.E. Coontz replied to Liisberg that the Conestoga was indeed equipped with a radio and wireless telephone. He told Theodore's father that the delay in search was due to an erroneous report from April 5, 1921 that the tug had arrived at Pearl Harbor. 253 Coontz' assertion regarding the radio is backed up by an inspection report dated December 30, 1919 and received by the Office of Chief of Naval Operations on January 16, 1920. "Radio set has recently been thoroughly overhauled at Norfolk, Navy Yard and is in very good condition." ²⁵⁴ On June 7, 1921, John wrote to Coontz from the Standard Oil ship SS Sylvan Arrow with questions regarding the search and theories as to what happened. He asserted that he knew and liked E.L. Jones, but based on professional background, he questioned Jones' ability to command a ship, "It is a matter of record the Lieutenant E.L. Jones was an

electricians, took a course in navigation and received his commission as Lieutenant during the war; hence he was not an experienced <u>navigator</u> or <u>seaman</u>." He went on to say that the *Conestoga* was purchased from Standard Oil. He asked for the reason that the ship embarked despite the heavy gales. To Liisberg, it was "evident that the ship was lost in the gales." Coontz replied with particulars about the search, citing memoranda. He told Liisberg that the loss was due to an accident. He was not aware of any issues with E.L. Jones' command of the vessel on the previous voyage from Norfolk to California. Theodore's mother Olise continued to live in Oregon on a dairy farm. On March 15, 1926, the US Court of Claims awarded Olise an additional \$200 for her son's final pay. After a long career at sea, John died in San Francisco on June 8, 1925.

- 29. **Louis Arthur Liscomb**, Machinist, was born in Kansas about 1883. His parents were L.W. and Sarah Liscomb, originally from West Virginia. The family was counted in Nickerson, Kansas the 1885 Kansas State Census. Louis had siblings Edward, Irene, and Mamie, which is a nickname for Mary. He was enumerated on Mare Island, California in the 1910 US Census while serving on the USS *West Virginia*. According to the New York Times, his next-of-kin was his brother, Edward Tindle Liscomb, who lived in Colorado. While Louis had no children of his own, he had a namesake. His brother Edward had a son named Louis who was born in 1904. On May 17, 1921, Edward wrote to the Department of the Navy. He asked for any information of the loss and that should Louis' remains be recovered, that he be brought to Salida, Colorado for burial. On March 15, 1926, Edward was awarded an additional \$535 for his late brother's pay by the US Court of Claims.
- 30. **William Thomas Manchester**, Quartermaster Third Class, was born about 1901. He was the son of William B. Manchester and his wife Jennie of Bergen, New Jersey and Denver, Colorado. In addition to William T., the couple had sons Louis C., born in 1900, Bernard, born in 1903, and daughter Gladys, born in 1910. William B. Manchester remarried to Florence Proctor in June of 1919. William T. Manchester enlisted in the Navy on January 24, 1919. He served on the USS *South Carolina* and transferred to the *Conestoga* on February 15, 1921. An article in the Denver Post dated June 1, 1921 reported that the family lived at 207 S. Lincoln St., and William was the nephew of Mrs. William Mayfield of 815 S Pearl St., Denver. On March 15, 1926, The US Court of Claims awarded William's father an additional \$155 for his son's final pay. The 1940 US Census lists William Manchester as divorced and living alone in San Diego, California. He died on October 29, 1948.

31. **Louis Anthony Marchione**, Fireman Third Class, was born on September 7, 1899. He registered for the draft on September 12, 1918. He was employed as a shipbuilder at the Port of Newark. Louis was described as having a stout build and was short. He had brown eyes and black hair. Louis was the youngest child of Salvatore and Maria Marchione who emigrated from Italy and made their new home in Brooklyn, New York. On January 7, 1920 the family was enumerated in the 1920 US Census. Louis was living with his parents, his sister, Concetta Aloisio and her husband Frank. He also had a brother, Joseph and sisters Josie and Ann. Louis enlisted in the Navy in Brooklyn on March 27, 1920. He was received by the *Conestoga* at Submarine Base Coco Solo in the Panama Canal Zone on December 12, 1920.

The June 23, 1921 issue of The Brooklyn Standard reported that Louis' mother was "near collapse." His sister Mary told the reporter that Louis was a devoted son who gave his pay to his parents to help the family. They received Louis' last letter on March 28, 1921. Frank and Concetta Aloisio named a son born soon after the loss of the *Conestoga* Louis. ²⁷⁷

32. **Clarence Leroy McIlwain**, Seaman, born in 1900, was the son of Richard and Maggie Pickett McIlwain. ²⁷⁸ The family lived in Pratt, Alabama. In 1910 Clarence had six siblings living in the home. ²⁷⁹ By January of 1920, there were ten children in the home and Clarence was working at a chemical plant. ²⁸⁰ Clarence enlisted in the Navy in Birmingham on June 14, 1920. ²⁸¹ The log of the *Conestoga* recorded that Clarence was Court Martialed. The log does not reveal any allegations, but reported that Clarence was acquitted of the charges against him on February 7, 1921. ²⁸²

Clarence's mother Margaret died in 1932 and Richard died in 1938. They were buried at Fraternal Cemetery in Jefferson County, Alabama. ²⁸³

33. **Martin Phillip McKeigh**, Quartermaster First Class, was born on November 5, 1894. He was the son of James and Rose McKeigh of Calhoun County, Iowa, who had a large family. All Martin enlisted in the Navy on August 30, 1919. He was on leave when he married 19-year-old Enola M. Anderson on February 7, 1920. She was the daughter of William Anderson and Alice Speer. Enola lived at 1621 Pleasant St., Des Moines, Iowa. Martin was received by the *Conestoga* at the US Naval Recruiting Station in San Francisco on March 8, 1921. No evidence of Martin and Enola having children was found. A marker in Marvin's honor was placed at St. Jospeph's Cemetery in Calhoun County, Iowa. Enola moved to California and married Ralph Smith in July of 1923. The 1930 US Census counted the Smiths in Los Angeles, California with no children in

the home. Ralph was a pharmacist, and Enola was a homemaker.²⁹⁰ Martin's father James McKeigh died in 1941, and his mother Rose died in 1967. They were buried in St. Joseph's Cemetery, where Martin's marker was placed.²⁹¹ Enola Smith died in Los Angeles on December 8, 1972.²⁹²

- 34. **Perry Lee McNett**, Machinists' Mate First Class, was born in Burnett County, Texas on April 15, 1897. He was medium height, had blue eyes, and light brown hair. His parents were Eugene August McNett and Martha McNett. In 1910, Martha was 32-years-old and the mother of eight children. Eugene was a farmer. Perry enlisted in the Navy on August 28, 1920 and served on a Navy oil barge. He transferred to the *Conestoga* on January 20, 1921. Martha L. Perry McNett was known as Mattie. She died in San Antonio, Texas on May 19, 1934. Eugene McNett died on September 7, 1947.
- 35. **Willie Oblige Murray,** Ships's Cook Third Class, is listed on the Radio Gram which was glued onto a page in the *Conestoga*'s Muster Roll and the list of the men lost with the ship.²⁹⁸ The articles and other documents regarding the lost tug do not list Murray's last home town or the name of his next-of-kin. He was a passenger aboard the *Conestoga*.²⁹⁹ It is likely that he was headed to a duty assignment in Pearl Harbor or Samoa.
- 36. **Wallace Pearl**, Mess Attendant Third Class, was born in 1902, and was the son of Albert Pearl and Naomi "Nimmie" Jackson, daughter of William Jackson, who married in Elmore County, Alabama in 1898. Wallace Pearl had a sister nicknamed "Malla" who was born in 1899. Before Wallace's birth, the Pearl family was recorded in the 1900 US Census living in Autauga County, Alabama. Albert was born in January of 1870; Nimmie in May of 1882; and Malla's given name was Matilda. She was born in December of 1899. Solven in December of 1899.

Wallace enlisted on May 8, 1919.³⁰³ He was included in the 1920 US Census as a mess attendant on a Navy receiving ship in Brooklyn, New York.³⁰⁴ He transferred from the USS *Charleston* to the *Conestoga* on February 7, 1921.³⁰⁵

At the time of Wallace's death, his mother lived at 2906 Melpomene St., New Orleans. Her name was misspelled "Minnie" by the Navy and appeared misspelled in the New York Times article that listed the lost men and their relatives. Nimmie Pearl does not appear under that name in the 1920 US Census or in the 1920 or 1921 New Orleans city directory because she has changed her name when she married Milton Williams on April 21, 1919. The 1920 US Census lists an African American couple, Milton, a carpenter

age 50, and Nimmie Williams, age 40, living at 2906 Melpomene St. There were no children in the home. 308 The 1930 US Census shows Milton, a 60 year-old carpenter, living in Jefferson County, Louisiana with his wife Naomi, who was born in Alabama, in about 1885. Living with them was a woman named Minnie Pearl, who was born in 1879 and listed as never married. Both women were from Alabama. Minnie was listed as a boarder. 309 She was probably a relative of Albert Pearl who came to live with her former in-law Nimmie. By 1940, Milton had remarried to Sara, who was born in Mississippi. Minnie Pearl was listed as a lodger, who was widowed, and age 60.310 After the loss of the Conestoga, Wallace Pearl Lucas was born to David and Matilda Pearl Lucas of Deatsville, Alabama. He married Louise White in April of 1944. The 1940 US Census shows that in addition to the son she named after her brother Wallace, Matilda and her husband had at least eight other children and a grandson. 312 A Google Street View search shows that an old wooden frame house stands close to what was 2908 Melpomene St., New Orleans. Nimmie's neighbor's house gives us a clue to how Nimmie's home, knocked down long ago, may have looked. Part of the street was widened and rededicated as Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd. The site where Nimmie's home stood is now a parking lot and fast food restaurant. 313

- 37. Wendell Plummer, Seaman Second Class, was the son of Ira and Clara Newberry Plummer of Morgan County, Ohio. 314 Wendell had a total of four siblings, but one had died by 1900. 315 316 Ira Plummer died on September 8, 1909. 317 He and Clara were either in the process of divorce or had divorced and were in a legal dispute over alimony when Ira died by suicide. 318 Wendell registered for the draft while living in Boston, Massachusetts in September of 1918. He reported that he was born on August 21, 1899. At the time he was working as a mariner for the United States Shipping Board. He is described as having a medium height and build with blue eyes and brown hair. 319 Wendell enlisted in the Navy at Norfolk, Virginia on July 15, 1920. 320 On May 27, 1921, Wendell's brother Wibur, who was living in New York City, wrote to the Secretary of the Navy asking for official word on the search.³²¹ The family placed a monument for Wendell at the McConnelsville Cemetery in Morgan County, Ohio. Clara died on March 22, 1925 and was buried at McConnelsville Cemetery. 322 Her death notice reported that she was a respected member of the Zanesville, Ohio Community. Her surviving sons were Grover, Raymond, and Herbert. "There are two sons deceased. Wendell, who died at sea while in government service, and George who passed away quite small."323 A family member posed two photos of Wendell on their online family tree. 324
- 38. **John Wesley Powell**, Chief Carpenter's Mate, was the son of John Wesley Powell, Sr. and Cora H. Powell of Warren County, North Carolina. The 1910 US Census recorded

that Cora had a total of eight children all of whom were living at the time. 326 John registered for the draft in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on January 18, 1918. He reported that he was born in Warrenton, North Carolina on February 11, 1893. He had served a total of seven years in the Army and Navy and was ranked as a First-Class Carpenter's mate in both branches. He was unemployed and living at the Eagle Hotel. He was described as being 5' 10" tall with gray eyes and brown hair. 327 John reenlisted in the Navy in Norfolk, Virginia on March 23, 1920 and transferred to the *Conestoga* on April 27, 1920. ³²⁸ 329 On May 27, 1921, John's sister Bessie wrote to the Navy Department after reading a newspaper article about the ship, "Please let me know at once if its safe or what happened to it." 330 Bessie wrote again on June 7th based on a rumor that her brother's ship was sighted on May 27th. Lieutenant Commander E.D. Capehart responded on June 14 that there was no sighting of the ship. He wrote to Bessie again on June 24 that an exhaustive search had been conducted but the ship had not been declared lost. ³³¹ John Powell died from cancer on April 2, 1921. ³³² The estate of John Wesley Powell, Sr. was administrated months after the loss of the Conestoga. The list of heirs notes that the 28 year-old son J.W. Powell was "lost on a ship." 333 Cora Davis Powell died from complications of diabetes on April 4, 1932. 334

- 39. **Tony Powers**, Fireman First Class, enlisted in the Navy in Nashville, Tennessee on June 27, 1919. He was received by the *Conestoga* at Honolulu on November 27, 1920. He was listed in the 1920 US Census under the Command of E.L. Jones. He was born in Tennessee in about 1900. Tony was African American, and according to the census notes, his parents were natives of Tennessee. Tony was initially a Third Class Mess Attendant, but obviously had the physical strength and technical aptitude needed to be a fireman and wanted the advancement. After mastering the skills of Fireman Second Class, he rated Fireman First Class on January 4, 1921. His next-of-kin was his half-brother, Joe Banks, of Essex, Mississippi.
- 40. **Thomas Cleary Quinn**, Pharmacist's Mate First Class, was born in Bridgeport, Connecticut on June 2, 1879. He was the son of Patrick and Mary Cleary Quinn. Patrick worked as a hat finisher, and lived in a time when hats were as required as shoes for a man to look like a gentleman. Thomas had an older brother, Harry. By 1900, Patrick and Mary had divorced. The census shows that Mary was the mother of four boys: Thomas, Harry, born in 1876, Frank, born in 1884, William, born in 1886, and adopted daughter Elizabeth Cleary, who was born in 1880. Thomas was working as a shipping clerk. He enlisted in the Navy Auxiliary Reserves on November 14, 1917, and served on the USS *Zeelandia*. He reported to the *Conestoga* at the Navy Fuel Station, Bayonne, New Jersey on April 17, 1920.

- 41. **John Leo Reilly**, Electrician, was born in June of 1898. His last residence was 233 W. 66th St. New York, New York. His next-of-kin was his father Michael Reilly who was married to Annie. The 1920 US Census shows a large age gap between John and his siblings suggesting that Annie may have been a second wife. John was working as an electrician. He entered the US Navy in August of 1917, and attended Radio School in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Reilly served on the USS *Kersarge*. He enlisted for another term on September 15, 1920, in New York City. On November 8, 1920, he transferred to the *Conestoga* from Radio Headquarters, Third Naval District. His last residence was 233 W. 66th St. New York City. On November 8, 1920, he transferred to
- 42. Harvey Herbert Reinbold, Boatswain, was born on July 10, 1887. His parents were George and Isabella Reinbold of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. Harvey had at least six siblings. 346 The date of his original enlistment is unknown. In the 1910 Census, Harvey was listed on board The USS *Georgia* at the Philadelphia Navy Yard. 347 He reenrolled on February 19, 1914 ranked as a Boatswain Mate Second-Class. Another term followed on April 6, 1917. He had been promoted to Boatswain Mate First-Class and served on the SS Santa Rita. On September 21, 1917, he was serving as Chief Boatswain Mate at Norfolk Naval Station.³⁴⁸ In 1920, he was living with a George Reinbold in Philadelphia. According to the census record George was Harvey's uncle, but George was actually his brother. 349 George Reinbold wrote to the Navy from the office of his car dealership on May 17, 1921 asking for updates in the search.³⁵⁰ On September 30, 1921, a letter from attorneys representing Harvey's wife, Anne Justice Reinbold of Norfolk, Virginia was sent to the Navy. The attorneys were seeking to have Harvey declared dead so that the life insurance could be collected. Anne did not remarry. In 1940, she worked at a dental office and lived with her sister Bessie Temple, who was also a widow. Two men lodged in the home. 351 Anne died in Norfolk on November 5, 1966 and was buried at Forest Lawn Cemetery in Norfolk. 352

A portrait of the young sailor was posted on a family member's online tree. Another family member shared a photo of George and Isabelle's monument at Union Cemetery, Northampton County, Pennsylvania. Harvey's father George died on January 4, 1932 and his mother Isabella died on February 23, 1952.

43. **Bernhardt W. Schoenfeld**, Seaman Second Class, was known as Barney. He was born about 1905. He was the son of Alfred C. and Minnie Schoenfeld of Tonawanda, Erie, New York. Bernhardt had brothers Alfred, born in 1891, Charles, born in 1894, Harry, born in 1896, and Walter, born in 1898.³⁵⁵ Barney's brother Charles died on March 5,

- 1912. He was buried at the Salem Church Cemetery, Tonawanda.³⁵⁶ By 1920, Minnie had died and Alfred remarried to a widow named Bertha Waterstrat.³⁵⁷ Barney enlisted in the Navy on November 4, 1920. He transferred from the USS *Charleston* to the *Conestoga* on January 17, 1920.³⁵⁸ Alfred died in 1935 and was buried at Salem Church Cemetery.³⁵⁹
- 44. **Joseph Lawrence Shetzline**, Fireman Second Class, was the son of Thomas Shetzline, a native of Pennsylvania, and Elizabeth Lynch, who had emigrated from Ireland. Joseph was the youngest of five children. ³⁶⁰ In August of 1902, Joseph was a month shy of his twelfth birthday when his father Thomas died of cirrhosis of the liver. ³⁶² The 1910 US Census shows Elizabeth, age 60, living with four of her five children. Her son Thomas was a riveter at a boiler shop, James was a coal wagon driver. Joseph's sister Mary worked in a metal shop, and Joseph drove an electric wagon. ³⁶³

Joseph registered for the draft on June 5, 1917. He reported that he was born on September 8, 1890. He was described as tall and slender with blue eyes and brown hair. It was noted that his mother was solely dependent on him. He enlisted in the US Army in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania on July 24, 1917. He served in Co. C of the 58th Infantry; initially ranked as Private First Class, and advanced to Wagoner the next month. He served overseas from May 7, 1918 through July 29, 1919, and was honorably discharged on August 2, 1919. Seeph may have enjoyed aspects his sea voyage while being transported and perhaps envied the sailors. He enlisted in the Navy in Philadelphia on May 4, 1920. He started as Fireman Third Class, a position also known as Coal Heaver, and advanced in rank to Fireman Second Class on January 4, 1921.

An article in the July 19, 1921 edition of the Philadelphia Inquirer reported that his bereaved mother was told that her son had died, but she refused to believe it was so. A family member told the reporter that Joseph wrote his last letter to his mother before the launch to Pearl Harbor. The family lived at 1351 E. Berks St., Philadelphia. 368

45. **Fred Shook**, Seaman Second Class, was born in Buckley, Michigan on July 7, 1901.³⁶⁹ He was the son of Leander and Grace Telford Shook of Shelbyville, Michigan ³⁷⁰ By 1910, Grace had given birth to nine children, all of whom were living at the time. Fred was the fifth-born, and the second son.³⁷¹ The family would continue to grow. Fred enlisted in the Navy on September 2, 1919. He was sent for duty on the Receiving Ship at Mare Island. He was transferred to the Naval Hospital at Mare Island on November 20, 1919. He went back to the Receiving Ship on December 26, 1919. He was soon transferred to

the USS *Wyoming* and served there for a year. He was sent back to the Naval Hospital on December 27, 1920. It is not clear if he was transferred to the hospital to assist with cleaning and other essential duties or as a patient. The Mare Island area was hard hit with what was called Spanish Influenza. After being sent back to the Receiving Ship once again, Fred was transferred to the *Conestoga* on January 14, 1921.³⁷² His mother Grace was the administrator of Fred's estate and she prevailed in the US Court of Claims when she challenged the settlement for Fred's final payroll.³⁷³ Leander died on January 28, 1950.³⁷⁴ Grace died on July 2, 1959. They were laid to rest at East Martin Cemetery in Allegan County, Michigan.³⁷⁵ In 1996, Fred's brother, Randy died. His obituary listed one surviving brother, Edwin, and the names of his 11 deceased siblings.³⁷⁶

46. **Harry Benjamin Shue**, Ship's Cook Third Class, was born on November 11, 1896, in Mount Joy, Pennsylvania. He enlisted for the Draft on August 24, 1918. Mrs. Martha R. Shue of 233 Hamilton St., Lancaster, Pennsylvania was noted as being the closest relative. Another name was written in first on the form, and then blotted out.³⁷⁷ Harry, the son of Benjamin and Elizabeth Wilker Shue, married 15-year-old Martha Overly on April 8, 1916.³⁷⁸ Martha was the daughter of Adam Overly and Elizabeth Gilgore.³⁷⁹ Harry and Martha's daughter Lillian was born in the fall of that year. In 1920, Harry was away and Martha Shue was living in her brother, Adam Sherman Overly's home. (The enumerator mistakenly listed the home as the Sherman residence.) Martha and Lillian were listed, and Martha's baby son was recorded as Robert.³⁸⁰ The census taker probably made a mistake with the baby's name. Harry was counted at the Naval Hospital at Chelsea, Massachusetts in the 1920 US Census taken on January 14, 1920.³⁸¹ On March 17, 1921, Harry was received by the *Conestoga* at the Naval Training Station, San Francisco.³⁸²

In 1930, Lillian Shue was living with Ephraim and Edna Strausser Coover, and Edna's parents. Lillian's brother, age 10, was listed as Harry B. Shue.³⁸³ It was not unusual at the time for widows and divorced women to have children from their first marriage live with relatives. The 1930 US Census reveals that Martha had remarried to Lloyd A. Gregg, and they had a daughter, Virginia, born about 1926.³⁸⁴ Lloyd Greg died in 1958. By the time of his death, he and Martha A. Overly had divorced.³⁸⁵

In July of 1937, Harry Shue's daughter Lillian registered for Social Security. Her name was Lillian Wike. In March of 1964, her last name was changed to Flory. Lillian died in August of 1990. According to her obituary, she was the widow of Harry Flory. She had worked in the picture tube section of the RCA factory, and in hospital food service. Lillian was survived by her children George and Eunice Wike from her first marriage, and

her sons Charles, Harry, and Robert Flory from her second marriage. At the time of her death, she had 30 grandchildren and 23 great-grandchildren. Her brother was not mentioned in the obituary, suggesting he had already died. Her half-sister Virginia married William Higgins. She died in 1997. Her half-sister Virginia married William Higgins.

(Special thanks to Lancaster, Pennsylvania Public Library and Pennsylvania State Archives.)

- 47. **Wilbur Standley**, Ship's Cook Third Class, was born on December 21, 1890. Wilbur registered for the draft on June 5, 1917 while living in Kimball, South Dakota, where he worked on a farm. He was described as tall and slender with gray eyes and dark brown hair. The 1920 US Census recorded Wilbur as a lodger in a boarding house. At the time, he was working as a cook for a restaurant. He was the son of John Standley and Mary Baker of Carrollton, Missouri. He was the eldest of six children. His brothers were Roy, Guthrie, McKinley, and Charles. The boys had a sister, Mary. Wilbur enlisted on February 28, 1920 and was transferred from the USS *Charleston* to the *Conestoga* on January 24, 1921. John Standley died on December 23, 1928. Mary Jane Standley died on May 7, 1955. They were buried at Oak Hill Cemetery in Carrolton, Missouri.
- 48. **Bledsoe Sherman Toms**, Fireman First Class, was born in Colesville, Virginia on February 28, 1896. He had reddish hair, and blue eyes. In 1917, when he enlisted for the draft, he was working as a Western Union telegraph lineman in Prince William County, Virginia. ³⁹⁵ Bledsoe was the son of Stephen Toms of Albemarle County, Virginia. The census records suggested that Stephen had been a widower who remarried to his wife Eva in 1899. ³⁹⁶

Bledsoe enlisted in the Navy in Washington, D.C. on June 19, 1919. He also served on the USS *Ninnette*. ³⁹⁸ On January 8, 1920, he was recorded in the US Census serving at the US Naval Operating Base in Norfolk, Virginia. ³⁹⁹ He joined the crew of the *Conestoga* as a Fireman Second Class and advanced in rating to Fireman First Class on January 4, 1921. ⁴⁰⁰

Stephen Toms died on September 11, 1933. His obituary revealed that his first wife (Bledsoe's mother) was Henrietta Davis. After Henrietta's death, Stephen married his late wife's sister Eva Davis. At the time of his death, Stephen had 12 surviving children from the two marriages. 401

- 49. **Arber Bryan Towery**, Ship's Cook Fourth Class, was born on September 24, 1897. He registered for the draft on September 12, 1918. At the time, he was working as a carpenter. He was described as having a medium build and height, had blue eyes and brown hair. Aber was the son of Adam Towery and Angeline Proctor of Madison County, Kentucky. Aber was the had four siblings. In January of 1920, Arber was listed in the US Census as a paper inspector. He was a boarder in Dayton, Ohio. He enlisted in the Navy on March 2, 1920, and served of the USS *Crane*. He gave his mother's name as the next-of-kin which suggests it was unexpected when she died that year. On February 12, 1921, Arber was a Fourth Class Ship's Cook. He transferred to the *Conestoga*, and replaced Fourth Class Ship's Cook Esidore D'Angelo. The Towery family placed a monument in Arber's honor at Berea Cemetery in Madison County, Kentucky where his mother was buried. Adam died in 1932 and was buried next to his wife.
- 50. **William Raymond Wallace,** Gunner's Mate First Class, was the son of engineer William Wallace and his wife Ada. The family was recorded in the 1892 New York State Census. He and his brother John were raised by their mother Addie and stepfather William Bruce. William was born in Syracuse, New York in June of 1893. In July of 1915, William enlisted in the US Navy. He served as a Seaman on the USS *Colorado*, and sailed to Guaymas Sonora, Mexico. While serving on the USS *Pittsburgh*, from April of 1917 through November of 1918, he worked his way up to the rank of First Class Gunner's Mate. He and his wife Mary Ester Wallace lived at 2013 Chester Ave. Bakersfield, CA. He and his wife Mary Ester Wallace lived at 2013 Chester Ave. Bakersfield, CA. He and brother-in-law Ira Glenn were living in the same home. William was received by the *Conestoga* in San Francisco on February 6, 1921. After the loss of the *Conestoga*, Wallace's former supervisor Chief Gunner's Mate Harry Morris was interviewed by a local newspaper. He said that Wallace had many friends in the Bakersfield area. Morris told the reporter that Wallace went back to active duty when the Bakersfield Navy Recruiting Office closed.
- 51. **Charles Ingerson Westover**, Chief Water Tender, had a long career with the US Navy. The 1880 US Census lists plasterer A.E. Westover, his wife May Josephine, daughter Ida, age seven, and Charles, age two, living in Oakland, California. The 1900 US Military and Naval Population Schedule counted Charles among the Fireman on the USS *Philadelphia*, stationed at Bremerton, Washington. Charles' sister Ida Laughlin had married and had a family. She died on May 30, 1910. In September of 1918, while living in Manhattan, Charles registered for the draft. He reported that though unemployed at the moment, he had spent 15 years in the Navy. He was born on February 22, 1877, had hazel eyes

and brown hair. His closest relative was Bert Laughlin of Fresno, California. Bert Laughlin was Ida and her husband Charles Laughlin's eldest son. Charles married Bertha Robinson, a 35-year-old English woman who moved to San Francisco. The wedding took place on July 10, 1920. Evidence of the couple having children has not been found. Charles and Bertha lived at 471 13th St., Richmond, California. Charles' final enlistment was on December 20, 1918. He was received on the *Conestoga* on March 24, 1921. He replaced Chief Water Tender Charles W. Krauch, who transferred to Mare Island on March 22, 1921.

In 1924, Bertha Westover filed a suit in the Court of Claims. By then, she had remarried and her name was Bertha J. Westover–Cook. On March 15, 1926, she revived an additional \$200 for her late husband's pay. 424

- 52. **Hugh William White**, Coxwain, was born about 1901. He was the son of George and Ellen White of East Liverpool, Ohio. In the 1920 US Census, Hugh is listed in the US Navy under the command of E.L. Jones. Hugh had enlisted in Pittsburgh on April 30, 1918. And transferred to the *Conestoga* in Philadelphia on April 7, 1920. In May of 1921, George White told a reporter from his local newspaper that he received a telegram from Lt. Commander C.B. Hatch, Jr. that there was not much hope to be had in the search, but they would contact them if any new information was found. On June 24, 1921, the same newspaper reported White's death. A photo of the 21-year-old sailor was printed with the article. George, a potter, died on September 6, 1922. His death certificate reveals that his father's name was Hugh. He was buried at St. Aloysius Cemetery. Hugh's mother, whose full maiden name was Nancy Ellen Jones, died on September 14, 1939. She was also buried at St. Aloysius Cemetery, Columbiana County, Ohio.
- 53. **Benson Charles Williams**, Gunner's Mate Third Class, was born in 1903. He was the son of Roland Williams and Angeline Crook. The family was originally from Franklin County, Ohio⁴³³ and moved to Chicago, Illinois. Benson had younger a sister named Estelle. Roland was a railroad conductor. Benson was serving in the Navy and transferred from the US *South Carolina* to the *Conestoga* on January 31, 1921.

Benson's father was interviewed for an article about the disappearance in June of 1921. He said that Navy official told him they thought that the ship was on a coral island. The article featured a photo of Benson. ⁴³⁶ On August 31, 1921, Roland wrote to Jackson Evans, a clerk with the city of Chicago. ⁴³⁷ Roland was asking Evans for help in getting any information on the investigation. Roland claimed that his son Benson said to his cousin,

"Helen, you may never see me again, for that bunch on the boat is going to pull something, and I am going to see what it is." If this was said, we will probably never know what Benson meant. At the time, prohibition was the law of the land. It is possible that members of the crew were illegally transporting liquor aboard the tug. Roland told Evans of a rumor circulating in the Mare Island area that the ship was hijacked by a group of Communist sailors and sailed for the gold fields of Siberia. He also thought that the ship may have been towing another vessel and went down in a storm. 438 Evans forwarded the letter to Congressman Elliot Sproul, who wrote to the Secretary of the Navy in September of 1921. He sent Roland Williams' letter to the Secretary of the Navy and asked for a response to the questions raised. 439 On September 27, 1921, Assistant Secretary of the Navy Theodore Roosevelt, son of the late President, answered Sproul's letters. He described the search for the missing boat. He wrote that he did not know what to make of some of Mr. Williams' theories and assured Sproul that the investigation did not point to mutiny as an answer for the fate of the ship and crew. The ship was not towing another boat when it left Mare Island. 440 In 1940, Roland and Angie were counted in the US Census. Roland was working as a door man at a furniture factory. 441 Estelle Williams Wahlstrand died June 7, 1947. 442

- 54. **Edward Wilson**, Mess Attendant First Class, enlisted in Pensacola on April 4, 1919. Before transferring to the *Conestoga*, he served on USS *Redwing*. He rose in rank from Mess Attendant Second Class to Mess Attendant First Class aboard the *Conestoga* on January 4, 1921. He dward was born in 1902. His parents were William and Margarita Hernandez Wilson of Escambia, Florida. In census records, the couple was alternately recorded as Black or Mulatto, depending on the enumerator. Census records of Maggie Wilson's father Rudolph Hernandez list him as white, and Mulatto. Edward was one of at least 16 children. Maggie Wilson died in 1933 and was buried in St. Joseph's Cemetery in Escambia, Florida. A member of the Wilson family provided a copy of a photo of Edward Wilson in his Navy uniform to NOAA's Office of the Maritime Heritage Program.
- 55. James Monroe Wooten, Jr., Hospital Apprentice First Class, was born on July 5, 1900. He was the son of James M. Wooten, Sr. and Bertha Wooten. The family lived in Randolph County, Georgia. In his draft registration, he was described as medium height with medium build with dark hair. He was a student at a military school in Baldwin, Georgia. He was likely enrolled at Georgia Military College. James listed his sister Julia as his closest relative. 448 James enlisted in the Navy on May 13, 1919. On January 31, 1921, he transferred from the USS *Charleston* to the *Conestoga*. 449

On June 17, 1921, James Wooten responded to a letter had received from Senator William J. Harris. He thanked the Senator for information on the status of the search. He expressed his feeling that the Navy had not done enough to inform the families of what was happening. Senator Harris wrote a letters to Secretary Denby on his office stationary. This may have held even more pressure for Denby because Harris was a member of the Appropriations Committee. Wooten's letter to Harris was enclosed. James' family placed a monument to James at the Morgan Methodist Church Cemetery in Calhoun County, Georgia. 451

56. Elias Melvin Zimmerman, Chief Boatswain's Mate, was the son of Elias Melvin Zimmerman and Bertha Myer. Elias was born about 1895 in South Dakota. The 1900 US Census lists Elias by his middle name. 452 In 1911, the family was enumerated in the Canadian Census living in New Westminster, British Columbia. The younger Elias was listed as Melvin once again, suggesting that he went by his middle name. The other children in the family were sisters Sylvia, Daisy, and Frances, and the younger son, Lee. 453 Melvin and Lee were profiled in an Oregonian newspaper article published on July 18, 1918. Both Zimmerman brothers were serving in the Navy. Lee, age 17, was aboard the USS Pueblo, and Melvin, 23, who was serving on the SS Santa Barbara. They were both assisting in moving troops to Europe. Melvin's ship also transported rail cars and train equipment to France. A photo of the brothers in uniform that was featured in the piece has a Norman Rockwell quality to it. Lee is wearing his hat, and sat straight and stiff showing eagerness and attempting to portray bravery and maturity while Melvin sat at ease looking slightly world weary. He had already seen the life his brother was dashing off to. By the time the article was published, Bertha had divorced and remarried to Bert Smith. 454

The influenza pandemic that took so many lives from 1918 through 1920 struck the Zimmerman family. Melvin's sister Sylvia died from influenza on January 10, 1919. 455 Adding to Bertha's grief was the loss of her son Melvin two years later. It seems that she could not cope with the loss of her children and gave in to magical thinking. In 1921, Bertha made national news when she told reporters that she was a spiritualist and received a message from beyond that her son survived and was living on a Pacific island. 456 Melvin's father Elias M. Zimmerman died on March 4, 1924. His death notice mentioned only three children. 457

Eventually Bertha came to terms with the situation, and she took on the government. On March 15, 1926, The US Court of Claims awarded Bertha \$200 in additional pay for Melvin's service. 458

Melvin took out a \$10,000 life insurance policy when he began his first tour in 1914, and Bertha surmised that it should have been honored. Her attorney's arguments obviously had some merit, and the dispute stretched on for more than a decade. In 1934, the case was heard by the US Supreme Court. In the case of Bertha Meyer Smith, Petitioner, v. United States of America, The Court ruled that the policy had not been reinstated when Melvin enlisted in the Navy for the second and third time. Therefore, the policy was no longer in effect at the time of Melvin's death. The Court decided that the death benefit was not owed to the mother. Bertha died in Los Angeles, California on September 6, 1940. Lee Zimmerman survived his war experience. His obituary published on August 20, 1958, list his wife Elsie, son Lloyd, and sisters Daisy Downes and Frances Herron as his survivors.

(Special thanks to Multnomah County Library, Oregon.)

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