

## SS CRIPPLE CREEK



The SS *Cripple Creek* was a 6,378 ton freighter built in 1919 at Skinner & Eddy Corp, Seattle, WA. She was owned and operated by Lykes Bros Steamship Co. Inc., New Orleans, LA. and home ported from New Orleans as well.



Cripple Creek departed New York to a Persian Gulf port by the way of Trinidad with a

cargo of war supplies that consisted of ammunition, tanks, airplanes, etc. Her Captain was Master: Herman N. Olsen (*whom actually lost his life on the SS James McKay sunk with all hands on Dec. 8th, 1942*) a crew of 40 Merchant Marines, and twelve U.S. Navy Armed Guards.

The *Crippled Creek* reached Trinidad without incident.....no problem at all....she departed Trinidad....[time and exact date unknown].....and in the early morning of August 13th, 1942 she was about 400 miles off the coast of Sierra Leone....when she was sighted by the German Submarine U-752 Captained by Karl-Ernst Schroeter.



The SS *Crippled Creek* was torpedoed by U-752 at [04.55N; 18.30W] en route to a port in the Persian Gulf.

The U-752 fired off the first torpedo which struck the *Crippled Creek* on the starboard side at the #3 hatch, venting upward through the deck, which ruptured the deck plates in the forward decking. The damage to the decking prevented anyone going forward. Also there was extensive damage to the main ships main radio....so a quick transmission of a distress message had to be sent on the emergency transmitter.

With the *Crippled Creek* experiencing serious damage the master ordered the



engines stopped and all hands to abandon ship.

Less than twenty minutes later the U-752 surfaced and quickly fired a second torpedo that struck the port side at the #4 hatch, and this explosion caused the *Cripple Creek* to start her downward plunge into her final resting place.

Actually this sinking happened so fast that the Armed Guard never had an opportunity to use any of the guns, and many of the crew jumped over the side and then was gathered up by the lifeboats and rafts.

All but one of the men on board was able to depart the ship in three lifeboats....this one man went down with the ship. These three lifeboats at first stayed pretty much together right at first....but the longer the it took for them to be spotted by any other vessels they had become separated.

One of the boats with the Chief Mate and nineteen survivors was picked up on August 16th. The boat with the Captain and 10 survivors as well as the other boat that was in charge of the Second Mate with 22 survivors were picked up on August 17th. All boats was picked up by a British armed trawler HMS *St. Wistan* (4-105) and landed all survivors at Freetown.

### **The Lost Merchant Marine**

**William J. Cowden (Oiler)**

The *U-752* was commissioned on May 24th, 1941, and she met her fate on May 23rd, 1943, by rockets from a Swordfish aircraft (FAA-Sqdn. 819) of the British escort carrier HMS *Archer*. Loss of 29 with 17 survivors.

In the *U-752's* sub life she sunk six ships as well as two auxiliary warships and damaged one.

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Sources:

Uboat.net <http://www.uboaat.net>

A Careless Word.....A Needless Sinking

By: Captain Arthur R. Moore

U.S. Merchant Vessel War Casualties of WW II

By: Robert M. Browning

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