

The Disappearance and Possible Reemergence of Thomas Wesley Perry.

Compiled by Tara D. Fields

125 Deal's Circle South

Woodbine, GA USA 31569

tutcher@gmail.com

<http://www.camdencounty.org>

Thomas Wesley Perry (June 30, 1897 – February 02, 1971). Buried St. Marys Oak Grove Cemetery, St. Marys, Camden County, Georgia USA. Born in Seale, Alabama; died in Milledgeville, Georgia. Son of James Clayton Perry, Sr. (May 23, 1872 – September 08, 1944) and Lula Camp Perry (June 14, 1873 – July 27, 1954).

The family of Thomas Perry is divided over whether or not the man found was really Thomas or another man. Thomas' father was not convinced nor were many of the cousins. To her death, Thomas' mother was convinced that the man she found was her son.

The Southeast Georgian Newspaper (Camden County, Georgia, USA)

January 24, 1919

The friends of Mr. Thomas Wesley Perry (for some time a resident of St. Marys, but now a Marine in the service of his country) will be glad to know that a letter to his mother from the Red Cross at Washington D. C., states that he is on the British ship Arco¹, in London. Mr. Perry did not know on what ship he would sail at the time of his last writing, Sept. 12 and it is supposed that his letters are among the many undelivered ones that some how have not been forwarded to their destination.

1 U.S.S. Arca per Ancestry.com

U.S. Naval Deaths, World War I

Given Name: Thomas
Surname: Perry
MI: Wesley
Place of Death: U.S.S. Arca
Death Date: 2 Oct 1918
Cause of Death: lost life when vessel was sunk
Next of Kin: Mrs. J.C.Perry
Relationship: mother
Address: Kingsland, Ga.
Appointed: Atlanta, Ga.
Rank: seaman, second class
Branch: U.S. Navy

Source Information: McHenry, Kathy. U.S. Naval Deaths, World War I. Provo, UT, USA: The Generations Network, Inc., 1999.

The Southeast Georgian Newspaper (Camden County, Georgia, USA)

February 7, 1919

Mr. and Mrs. J. C. Perry², of Kingsland, after several months of anxious inquiry about their son, unheard from since Sept. 12th, and receiving only vague information, received the following telegram Monday:

Washington, D. C.

February 3rd 1919.

Mrs. Lula Perry,

St. Marys, Ga.

Bureau deeply regrets to advise you that your son, Thomas Wesley Perry, seaman second class U. S. N. was placed as seaman signal man on board the S. S. "Arco" boat, belonging to the British, and undoubtedly lost his life at the time that vessel was sunk by enemy submarine on Oct. 20th, 1918. The records do not show this man on board, but an American seaman on another boat in the convoy, and who knew your son, and he exchanged signals with him on the trip prior to the sinking of the boat. Bureau extends to you, its sympathy in your great loss, and regrets not having been able to notify you at an early date. Address all inquiries to: Bureau of Navigation (sic), Navy Dept Washington D. C.

Since then a letter from Senator Hoke Smith, repeated the same information, but with another report that no Americans were on the British ship that went down. And so there is still hope that this brave boy who gave up a good salary in the office of the Brandon Lumber Co. in St. Marys to answer his country's call may yet be found alive and well.

² James Clayton and Lula Camp Perry, Sr.

The Southeast Georgian Newspaper (Camden County, Georgia, USA)

March 18, 1926

THOMAS PERRY RETURNS

On the 16th inst, Thomas W. Perry second son of Mr. And Mrs. J. C. Perry of Kingsland returned to his home after an absence of nearly eight years. His disappearance and return is a s strange as fiction.

Young Mr. Perry early in 1918 during the war enlisted in the service of the United States and was assigned to the navy. He embarked for overseas at New Port News Va. On October 2nd 1918 the vessel upon which he shipped was torpedoed off the Irish Coast and all on board were reported lost. After several months of anxious inquiry upon the part of his family, they received official notice from the government of his death and this was accepted by almost every one a the ending of the final chapter in the life of this brave young man. But his mother contended from the beginning that he was not dead but that he was somewhere in condition and circumstance that prevented his return.

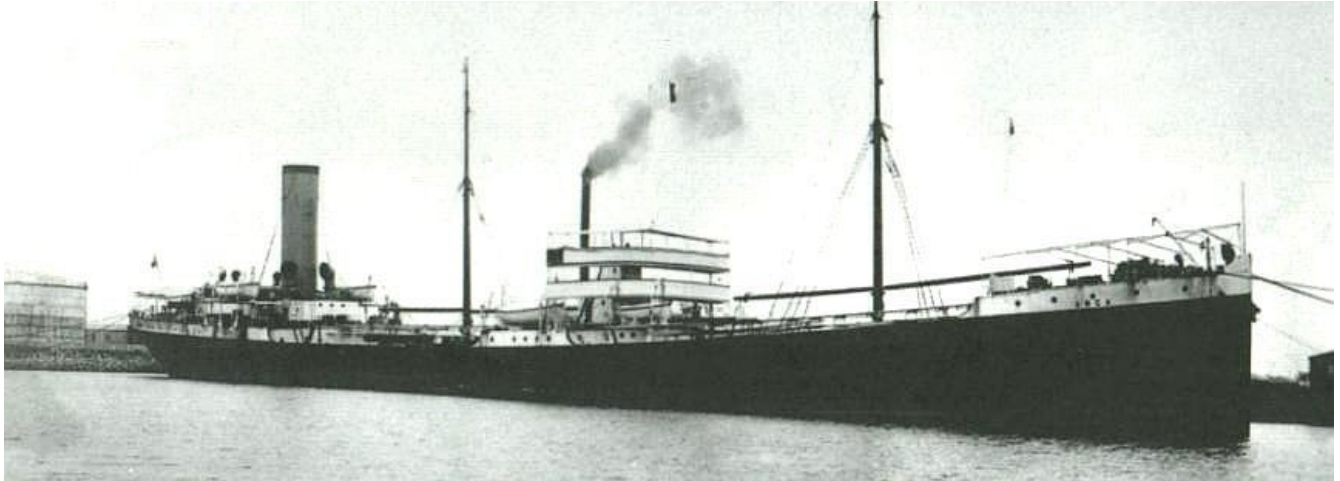
Mrs. Perry then began a search for her son. She followed every conceivable clue, many times being disappointed, but never giving up until at last about two years ago she saw a picture in a newspaper of a boy that had been found wandering on the streets of Danville Ill, and who was on account of his weak mental condition taken in charge by authorities and confined in a local sanatorium (sic). Later he was taken to the State institution at Kanakee, Ill. As soon as Mrs. Perry saw this picture she believed it was her son and she began to communicate with parties connected with the institution. More than a year ago Mrs. Perry visited Kanakee and identified the young man whose picture she had seen as her long lost son.

Officials of the Sanatorium (sic) where he was confined doubted Mrs. Perrys (sic) identification of the young man and then began a fight upon the part of Mrs. Perry to secure him. In her efforts to secure her son from the institution of his confinement Mrs. Perry was aided and and (sic) assisted by a Mrs Giles of Kanakee Ill. A noble christain (sic) woman. The Elks of Kanakee also gave her great assistance, as also did the **Ku Klux Klan** of Camden County.

Young Mr. Perry is now at the Perry home in Kingsland and is showing improvement. All of the neighbors and friends of the Perry family are rejoicing with them in this glad hour of the triumph of faith and prayer.³

³ Thomas Wesley Perry, St. Marys Oak Grove Cemetery, St. Marys, Georgia. Born June 30, 1897 in Seale, Alabama. The man buried in his grave died February 2, 1971 in Milledgeville, GA (site of the State Hospital).

<http://www.merchant-navy.net/Pictures/arca.html>



Arca was built at Jarrow 1912 for Anglo Saxon.

Jan 1918 Torpedoed in English Channel by U75.

Towed into Devonport safely.

Oct 1918 torpedoed and sunk by U118, of south coast of Ireland w.o.p Philadelphia to Bristol Channel.

My thanks to Charlie Stobbart for this picture and the accompanying data.