

## Leading Cook William Frederick Pook V-48425



- **Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve**
- **Born: Selkirk MB, 18 May 1911**
- **Enlisted: HMCS *Discovery*, 22 September 1942**
- **Civilian Occupation: Engine Fitter Helper, West Coast Shipbuilding Company**
- **Died: Lost at sea when HMCS *St. Croix* was torpedoed and sunk on 20 September 1943**
- **Commemorated: Halifax Memorial, Panel 10; and the Honour Roll Plaque at HMCS *Discovery***

William Frederick Pook was born in Selkirk, MB on 18 May 1911 to William Thomas Pook and Hattie Bell West. His father had immigrated to Canada from England and his mother was born in Welland, ON. He had two older married sisters Ella Francis Ashbury (age 36) living in Vancouver, BC and Doris Mae Dobbs (age 33) living in Seattle, Washington, USA. William spent the first seven years of his life in Selkirk before moving with his family to Melford, SK where they remained for two years. His father's occupation was a hardware merchant and the family moved to wherever he could find work. From Saskatchewan, they moved to New Westminster, BC where they lived for seven years and then across the border to Seattle, Washington, where William lived for sixteen years and completed his education, leaving school after finishing grade 8.

William Pook's Occupational History Form stated that after leaving public school he had two years of technical training in engineering. His current employer was listed as the West Coast Shipbuilding Company, where he worked as an engine fitter helper, but this was a Vancouver company and William had only lived in Vancouver for two years. His record also showed that he had been employed as a baker and that the longest he had been with any employer was nine years. His father indicated that his son had been employed as a bakery salesman. On the Occupational History Form, William Pook's stated ambition was to operate his own bakery shop.

On 31 December 1933, William Pook married Jeanne Virginia Heacock at St Clement's Church in King County, Washington. The couple had two children: William Frederick Pook born in 1934, and James Allen Pook born in 1936. The marriage did not last, and Jeanne Pook divorced William on 8 August 1942, taking possession of the family home and custody of both children. William Pook did not contest the divorce, did not appear in court, nor was he represented by legal counsel. The breakdown of the marriage no doubt motivated his move to Vancouver. He had, however, been naturalized as a US citizen on 6 September 1936.

On 22 September 1942, William Pook enlisted at HMCS *Discovery*, the Naval Division in Vancouver, BC. His attestation record showed that he was 5' 6½" tall with fair hair and blue eyes. Despite the divorce, he indicated his marital status as married. His religion was listed as the Church of England. His father was designated as his next-of-kin as his mother had died on 2 June 1942. His father's address was 311 Alamo Place, Seattle, Washington.

William was enrolled as an Assistant Cook (S) and remained in *Discovery* in this capacity until 22 October 1942 when he was drafted to HMCS *York* in Toronto, ON where he remained until 2 January 1943. He was then drafted from *York* to HMCS *Naden* in Esquimalt, BC for training. On 15 February 1943, he passed the Technical Course and was immediately drafted to HMCS *Prince David*, where he was described as an "Average Cook" who "Needs Supervision".

HMCS *Prince David* (F89) was one of three Canadian National Steamships passenger liners that were converted for military use by the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN). For three years, they were the largest ships in the RCN.



Things did not go well for Assistant Cook William Pook in *Prince David*. On 11 April 1943, he was charged by the RCMP with theft of government stores when he was found to be in possession of seven 1-pound tins of "Fort York Coffee" while attempting to leave HMC Dockyard at 1:30 AM. He pleaded with the authorities to be allowed to return to his ship with the tins of coffee, but the coffee was confiscated, and the matter was reported to the Captain of *Prince David*.

Pook appeared before Captain Valentine Stuart Godfrey on the morning of 14 April 1943, where he was charged under the Naval Discipline Act with theft of government stores. He attempted to deny any knowledge of the coffee and the constable on duty at the main gate was called as a witness. He identified Assistant Cook William Pook, bringing the matter swiftly to a conclusion. Pook was remanded for sentencing and appeared again before Captain Godfrey on the afternoon of 14 April 1943 when he was sentenced to 30 days of detention. It was hoped that the severity of the sentence would discourage further theft of government stores.

It was not clear where William Pook served his sentence or if he served the entire month in detention. His Record of Naval Training and Active Service showed that he was drafted back to HMCS *Naden* on 1 May 1943, where he remained until 29 June. During this time ashore he was



HMCS St. Croix [http://www.forposterityssake.ca/Navy/HMCS\\_ST\\_CROIX\\_181.htm](http://www.forposterityssake.ca/Navy/HMCS_ST_CROIX_181.htm)

described as “A good worker - experienced baker - Requires Supervision - Not capable of taking charge”. It must have been decided at the end of June that a change of environment would give him a chance to prove that he was capable of advancement. He was drafted to HMCS *Stadacona* in Halifax, NS on 30 June 1943 and his Employment Record indicated for “time only”.

On 5 July 1943, he was sent to HMCS *Avalon* in St. John's, Newfoundland for HMCS *St. Croix*, which he joined on the following day. HMCS *St. Croix* was a Town-class Destroyer and former USN ship, the USS *McCook*, a Clemson-class destroyer. The *McCook* was traded to the United Kingdom as part of the “Destroyers for Bases” deal and the ship was then transferred to the RCN and commissioned as HMCS *St. Croix*.

William Pook's time in *St. Croix* was brief, amounting to only 77 days. While onboard *St. Croix*, he had turned his life around. He was rated Cook on 19 July 1943 and Leading Cook on 1 September 1943. In August 1943, *St. Croix* was sent to support Escort Group 9 by intercepting U-boats crossing the Bay of Biscay, but the group was diverted to the assistance of a series of convoys under attack in the Atlantic. While *St. Croix* was attached to convoy ON.202, which had left Liverpool on 5 September 1943, she was torpedoed and sunk by *U-305*, south of Iceland, on 20 September 1943. Five officers and 76 men were rescued by HMS *Itchen*, but only one of these survived the subsequent loss of *Itchen* when she was torpedoed and sunk by *U-666* on 23 September 1943. Leading Cook William Frederick Pook was 32 years old when he died.

The records communicating the death of William Pook to his father are largely missing from his file. The one official letter that was available was dated 20 March 1944. Another letter from an unknown source mentioned seeing in a newspaper article that among the names of those lost in HMCS *St. Croix* was Pook's name and raised the issue of support for his children. The Director of Naval Pay and Accounting in a letter dated 29 July 1948 stated that a pension for William Pook's two children in the amount of \$27.00 was in effect from 20 September 1943. There was one pay allotment in force directed to the Imperial Bank of Commerce for \$20.00 and this was stopped on 30 September 1943. William Pook had no Will but the Distribution of Estate Services awarded \$88.69 to Mrs. Virginia J. Pook for the “benefit of two minors”. The War Service Gratuity in the amount of \$121.90 was sent to his father, William F. Pook on 17 of November 1948.

For his service, Leading Cook William Frederick Pook was awarded: the 1939-45 Star, the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal & Clasp, and the War Medal. His father thanked the Naval Secretary for the offer of the Canadian Memorial Cross for his wife but indicated that she had died on 2 June 1942. He asked if his daughter, Doris Mae, might be given the Cross in memory of her brother.

Leading Cook William Frederick Pook is commemorated on Panel 10 of the Halifax Memorial at Point Pleasant Park, Halifax, NS; the Honour Roll plaque at HMCS *Discovery*, and the Second World War Book of Remembrance, Page 204, at the Centre Block Houses of Parliament, Ottawa.

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