In March 2017 the continuing internet search for information pertaining to South Park High School students who lost their life in service located additional information regarding Charles L. Wheatley from several websites and sources.

In searching the Internet for Wheatley substantial information was found in the general search engine for Ancestry.com, and particularly in Ship logs and Crew lists that he served on. Of significance was his application for Seaman’s Certificate of American...
Citizenship\(^1\), which bears his picture. This is important as DIAL yearbooks did not yield any photographs of him.

The certificates were used to verify the identity and nationality of American seamen traveling abroad by documenting such pertinent information as the seaman’s name, age, place of birth, and a detailed physical description. Seamen could voluntarily obtain a protection certificate at any customs house by paying a fee of 25 cents and submitting proof of citizenship, such as a birth certificate, passport, naturalization papers, an old protection certificate acquired at another port, or, most typically, a sworn statement taken and witnessed before a notary public, alderman, or other official. Customs agents were required to issue the protection certificates, maintain registers of certificate applications, keep accompanying proofs of citizenship on file, and forward quarterly lists of registered seamen to the Secretary of State. Seamen’s protection certificates continued to be issued as a convenient means of identification until the late 19th century. Protection certificates were reintroduced during World War I and continued to be issued until 1940, when they were replaced by merchant marine licenses.\(^2\)

November 13 - December 8, 1942: SS James McKay

On November 13, 1942 Charles Wheatley signed onboard the SS James McKay. The James McKay sailed from New York with Convoy HX-216 bound for Belfast, Northern Ireland and Cardiff, Wales on November 19. On November 25 the convoy encountered a Northwest gale and reduced visibility that caused the convoy to partly scatter. The weather was sufficiently rough to cause the James McKay’s general cargo to shift, endangering its stability. As a result, the ship left the convoy and sailed into St. Johns, Newfoundland on November 29 to re-stow its cargo.

After re-stowing its cargo, the James McKay sailed from Newfoundland to join up with the next eastbound convoy, HX-217. However, there is no indication that the James McKay ever actually joined up with HX-217, possibly due to the convoy being scattered in a Southwesterly gale from December 2-4.

According to German Navy records, the James McKay was located and attacked by U-600 on the night of December 7/8, 1943 when the ship was about 400 miles south of Iceland. Three of U-600’s torpedoes hit the James McKay, one amidships and the other two in the after portion of the ship. The ship stopped, sent out distress signals and the crew abandoned ship in two lifeboats although the ship was still afloat. It

\(^1\) www.ancestry.com/Charles L. Wheatley/45764-3421-606189_0015-00114
required two more torpedoes from U-600 to sink the James McKay. Neither the two lifeboats, nor any of the people aboard the James McKay, were ever seen again.³

Another account reads, “At 01.37 hours on 8 Dec 1942 the James McKay (Master Herman N. Olsen) was torpedoed by U-600 about 425 miles south of Iceland. The ship had met the convoy HX-217 east of Newfoundland, but she fell out of the convoy on 6 December for some unknown reason. The vessel was hit by three torpedoes, the first amidships under the stack and the others behind. Distress signals were sent as the freighter immediately stopped and the crew abandoned ship in two lifeboats. At 0202 hours, a coup de grâce was fired from the opposite side. The explosion threw smoke and water 300 feet high, but the ship remained afloat. Another coup de grâce fired seven minutes later missed, but at 029 hours, two heavy explosions occurred on the ship and she sank. None of the ten officers, 38 crewmen and 14 armed guards (the ship was armed with one 4in, four 20mm and one .30cal guns) was ever found.”⁴

The U Boat that sank the SS James McKay was commanded by Kptlt. Bernhard Zurmühlen.⁵ At the time, U600 was part of the Draufgänger (Daredevil) Wolfpack (29 Nov 1942 - 11 Dec 1942).

³ http://kingspointww2.org/ehrich-leonard-laurence
⁵ http://www.uboat.net:8080/boats/u600.htm
U600 was sunk on 25 November 1943 in the North Atlantic north-east of the Azores, in position 40.31N, 22.07W, by depth charges from the British frigates HMS Bazely and HMS Blackwood. 54 dead (all hands lost).\(^6\)

Charles Wheatley, At Sea

He was a merchant marine. A sailor. From available information:

Additional information determined the following about Wheatley and his career up to and then a merchant seaman.

According to the New York State census of 1925, he was 19 years old and working as a hardwood floor layer helper and living at 269 Cumberland Ave, lower. In this census, his mother Cecelia, 57 years, is listed as head of the household. In nearly all of the crew lists, he lists his mother as next of kin.

His first year at Sea was onboard the SS George Washington in deck operations. A crew list reports he arrived in New York City (NYC) from Bremen and way ports on November 5, 1925.

Wheatley then signed on as part of deck operations aboard the SS Leviathan, owned by the United States Lines. Crew lists report that he arrived in NYC several times from Southampton, England via Cherbourg, France from November 1925 through November 1927.

In 1928 he signed on with the SS Independence Hall through November and made numerous trips to LeHavre and Dunkirk, Bordeaux and St. Nazaire. He sailed onboard the SS American Merchant to London in November, and then to Southampton later in November and December, 1928 onboard the SS Leviathan.

In March 1929 he sailed to Brisbane, via the Canal Zone returning to NYC in May onboard the SS Oakpark. Onboard the SS Carrillo he sailed to Santiago, Cuba.

Wheatley is listed in the Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930, Crews of Vessels. This census was conducted by the Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census and similar to the regular census, except by ship.

Specifically, the American Merchant Line of 45 Broadway, New York NY, SS American Trader home port New York, NY was subject to census on March 28, 1930, Sheet 48A, 3372 by Enumerator M.L. Bullock. Wheatley was found on line 17, as 23 years old, single, can read and write english, born in New York State, occupation as able seaman, not a veteran, with a home address of 269 Cumberland Ave. Buffalo NY.

\(^6\) Ibid.
He sailed on the SS Winon County in February and returned from Manchester and Cork. Signing on with the SS American Trader he made several trips to London from April through August. In September he traveled to Havana on the SS Pastorre. Wheatley signed on with the SS California and made several trips from New York City to San Francisco via Havana, the Canal Zone, San Diego and Los Angeles.

1931 saw Wheatley onboard the SS City of Elwood sailing at least three times from New York City to (unlisted) Far East ports and returning in January 1932. In crew list from July 24, 1931 Wheatley listed his next of kin as Ann, of 57 Cobden St., Melbourne Australia.

Additional search found a record reporting the marriage of Charles L. Wheatley and Amy H. Wyborn in 1932 in New South Wales, Australia. The marriage, registration number 11668, was registered in Kurri Kurri, New South Wales.

June through August 1932 Crew lists show Wheatley as an able bodied seaman onboard the SS Virginia and sailing several times from New York City to San Francisco via Havana, the Canal Zone, San Diego and Los Angeles. In November and December 1932, while onboard the SS Manhattan, he sailed to Hamburg from New York via channel ports.

In 1933, Wheatley was at sea extensively onboard the SS Manhattan in numerous voyages from New York City to Hamburg via channel ports. Crew lists show 21 departures and arrivals, monthly, that year.

February 1935 saw him onboard the SS City of Rayville returning to New York City from Calcutta. He returned to the SS Manhattan in February through July 1935 and made 8 trips to Hamburg via the channel ports, and one trip to Hamilton, Bermuda. In September he sailed on the SS City of Dalhart from New York to Brisbane. He returned to New York at the end of October having sailed Adelaide, Whyalla, Melbourne, Sidney and the Canal Zone.

In the crew lists for voyages in February, April, May and June 1935 Wheatley listed his next of kin as his wife, Helen who resides at 46 Tape St., Melbourne Australia.

He returned immediately to Australia and is listed as a “workaway” in Sydney on November 15, departing Brisbane on November 22, 1935, returning to New York on the SS New Orleans on December 30, 1935.

In July 1936 he signed on with the SS Southern Cross and returned to New York City from Rio de Janeiro, Santos, Montevideo, Buenos Aires and Trinidad. In 1937 he is listed as returning to New York onboard the SS Virginia, but no additional information is available.

7 www.ancestry.com/Australia Marriage Index, 1788-1955
1938 reports Wheatley returning from Palermo onboard the SS Express during the first week of January. About two weeks later the SS Express, with Wheatley, departed New York City for Algiers.

While in Algiers, he was hospitalized on March 16th. He was paid by the SS Express who left him there and returned to the U.S.

He returned to New York City onboard the SS Executive, arriving May 9, 1938. (See memo’s, infra.)

In November and December 1938, Wheatley returns to New York City from the East Coast of South America, onboard the SS Brazil.

He continued service onboard the SS Brazil from February through August 1939 with five voyages from New York to the East Coast of South America, including Barbados, Rio de Janeiro, Santos, Montevideo, Buenos Aires and Trinidad. He concluded 1939 with trips to Copenhagen via Bergen in October, and then the East Coast of South America, returning to New York City on December 30, 1939.

The 1940 Census in the Borough of Richmond NY, at the U.S. Maritime Training Station, S.D. No. 11, E.D. No. 43-144, Enumerated on 16APR40, Sheet 6A, lists the following for Charles L. Wheatley on line 9.

Male, White, 33 years, married, no schooling in 1940, highest grade of school completed was 8, born in New York, in 1935 lived in New York, NY, his occupation is Seaman 2nd Class in the U.S. Maritime Service for the Government. In 1939 he worked 52 weeks and earned $960.

No travel for Charles Wheatley was located for 1940.

In 1941 he sailed on the MV Yomachichi from New York City to Australian ports. He is also reported as returning from South Africa in late July 1941.

Preceding his death in December 1942, records indicate that he sailed onboard the SS Oldham from New York to the west coast of South America in late April. He is listed as arriving in New Orleans from Ecuador aboard the SS Comol Cuba having signed on the Oldham.

Quartermaster Charles L. Wheatley remains Missing in Action since December 8, 1942. He and the crew of the SS James McKay are remembered at the living memorial onboard the SS Lane Victory8, 3600 Miner St. San Pedro, California. He was 37 years old.

8 www.lanevictory.org
American Consular Service
Algiers, Algeria, April 21, 1936.

Captain G. Evanson,
Master S. S. EXECUTIVE,
O/O V. Prasse,
Bjijjelli, Algeria.

Sir:

The American seaman, Charles L. Wheatley, discharged from the S. S. EXPRESS at Algiers March 16th and since then, until a day or two has been in hospital here. The agents here of American Export Line, Merigot and Co., have sent him to Bjijjelli to be repatriated to the United States on your vessel. It is my understanding that you will sign him on yourself, there being no Consular Office at that small port.

Sincerely yours,

F. Cole
American Consul General

(The above is a copy of letter sent to F. Evanson, Master of the S. S. EXECUTIVE American Consul General at Algiers, asking for signing on above seaman.)

9 www.ancestry.com/Charles L. Wheatley/NYT715_6151-0245