



Shipyard Santa Claus

Few remember whose idea it was to work the regular shipyard shift on Christmas Day, let alone the idea to donate their overtime checks to the U.S. Treasury for the war effort. But that is exactly what happened on Christmas Day 1944 in Brunswick at the J.A. Jones Shipyard.

Brunswick's shipyard had gained a reputation as being one of the most productive in the nation, earning several commendation awards from the Maritime Commission and surpassing the annual production of the Southeastern Shipbuilding Yard in Savannah. The Jones Shipyard fulfilled the national quota of providing six Liberty Ships in the month of December 1944 by delivering the sixth ship early, on December 23.

The Battle of the Bulge, which was to be one of the last major German offensives of World War II, raged on through December of 1944. Against that backdrop of war, the workers of the Jones Shipyard decided to celebrate Christmas in a more patriotic way than usual. They worked a 16-hour

shift that day, surrounded by hand-made decorations and caroling with each other on their breaks. At the end of the night, all of the overtime checks from that day's work were donated to the war effort. The workers of the Jones Shipyard gave one of the most generous gifts of the holiday season – \$16,080.

In addition, a seventh ship was launched on December 30, 1944, with one day to spare. Vice Admiral Emory S. Land of the Maritime Commission wired a telegram to Brunswick on January 2, 1945. He wrote: "This is a performance unequalled by any of the six-way yards. By exceeding the deliveries expected of it, your yard has made an extra contribution toward hastening the day of victory."



Santa Claus visited the Jones Shipyard that Christmas, spreading holiday cheer and pitching in to help. This month's images from the Coastal Georgia Historical Society's archives show Santa serving Christmas dinner to the workers and trying his hand at shipbuilding.

Our monthly images on this page are from the vast archives of the Coastal Georgia Historical Society. The Society's mission includes the "administration, restoration and maintenance of historic facilities and resources ... preserved as a living part of the historical and cultural foundations of our coastal community." Society facilities include the St. Simons Lighthouse and Museum, the A.W. Jones Heritage Center, and the Maritime Center (formerly the U.S. Coast Guard Station). To learn more about the Society, its diverse programs, and the benefits of Society membership, please call (912) 638.4666, or visit www.saintsimonslighthouse.org.