Donald Birchen (John Donald Donatus Birchen)

Donald Birchen was born on June 26 1897 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. His parents were Peter Birchen, who was born in Luxembourg, and Anna Maria Ficker. Prior to his military service, Donald worked as a machinist for the State of MN.

Donald enlisted on May 25, 1917. He served on the S.S. Solace as a part of the U.S. Navy from July 1, 1917 to August 1, 1919. His rank was initially MM2c and was eventually promoted to MM1c (Machinist's Mate 1st Class). He was mustered out of the service on August 4, 1919.

After the war, Donald married Leah Jolly of Escanaba, Michigan. She was a registered nurse at St. Francis Hospital starting in 1913. They had no children. According to his obituary, Birchen had been an "invalid" since World War I. He was sentenced for thefts and robbery several times in the 1920s. In 1930, he was an inmate at Stillwater State Prison. By 1940, Birchen was probably a patient at the St. Cloud Veterans' Hospital. He died from a "long illness" on February 27, 1948 in Hastings, MN. He was only 50. Birchen was buried at Fort Snelling Cemetery.