

Josiah Harris (Born 1865)



Josiah Harris was a son of Joseph Henry (1835/1884) & Thamazine Harris (1836/1877). Born 1865 in New Zealand. Nothing is known of Josiah in New Zealand. Based on family story and 1922 newspaper accounts, it is known he went to sea and in the early 1920s was First Mate of the auxiliary schooner, "Helen B. Stirling" which was dismasted and sank off 120 miles N. of North Cape with the crew being rescued by HMAS "Melbourne." (January 22, 1922). Crew of 15, including the wives of Captain G. H. Harris and Josiah Harris, and the captain's son, Leslie. It was carrying a cargo of 2500 tons coal from Newcastle, NSW, to Papeete. Uninsured, loss estimated at 53,000 Pounds.* Whilst in NZ he visited his siblings and returned to his home in *New Brunswick, Canada. At this date he would have been 57 years old.

The curator, New Brunswick Museum, states: "I think I may have found Josiah Harris living in Saint John, NB in 1928. The 1928 city directory lists a 'Josiah Harris' as a seaman, living on Alma Street, Saint John. Further investigation shows that this same Josiah retires in 1929 and lives at the same address as 1928 until 1936. After 1936, Josiah is longer listed in the directories. By 1936, Josiah would have been 71 and if he didn't pass away in 1936, he may have been infirm and resided in a local nursing home. Unfortunately, nursing home residents are not listed in our documents or directories. He more than likely did not die in New Brunswick as records for the 1900's to present date for our province are very comprehensive and Josiah is not listed." [Nothing further known.] *Vera Gilmour; see newspapers of this date for graphic descriptions of storm conditions and rescue.

The Helen B Sterling was built as a 4-mast wooden auxiliary screw schooner of 1608 tons, and formerly known as the "Tacoma", built by the Washington Shipping Corporation in Seattle in 1917. The dimensions of this vessel were: Length: 220 ft. Breadth: 43 ft. Depth: 21 ft. There were no details recorded about the owners, the port of registration, or the name of the master in the 1921-22 edition of Lloyd's Register of Shipping.

Some years later the ship was Purchased by Captain Stirling who renamed it "Helen B Stirling" and had the Propeller removed, thus was then used as a Sailing Ship.

The "Helen B. Sterling" left Newcastle on January 4, 1922 for Papeete, with a cargo of coal, and was abandoned (off the Three Kings, N. Z.) on January 22, 1922, when the crew of the vessel were rescued by HMAS "Melbourne" I.

The story of the Melbourne 1 can be found here

<http://www.navy.gov.au/spc/history/ships/melbourne1.html>

The survivors were taken to Auckland arriving January 24/25/26 (date not certain). The captain's wife and child were on board as was the wife of the first mate. There is information about this published in The Daily Commercial News and Shipping List, dated January 5, 23, 24, and 25, 1922. An image of this vessel is held by the State Library of Victoria, which can be viewed online: Title: Helen B. Sterling; Image Number: b40166. [Provided by Australian Maritime Museum.]

(Sources and references in text.)

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