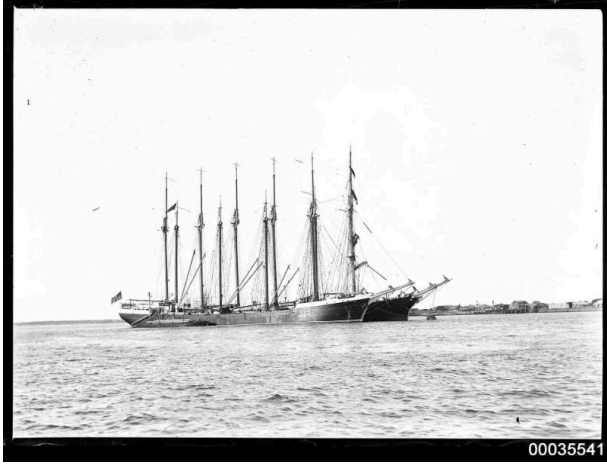


# Basic Detail Report

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**00035541**

**Title**

ER STERLING and HELEN B STERLING anchored in harbour

**Date**

1899-1953

**Primary Maker**

Samuel J Hood Studio

**Medium**

Emulsion on glass

**Name**

Glass plate negative

**History**

The six-masted schooner HELEN B STERLING (formerly OREGON FIR) was built at the Peninsula Shipbuilding Yard at Portland, Oregon, USA in 1920. Originally the ship was intended as a steamer but instead rigged as a six-masted schooner. For six years OREGON FIR and her sister ship OREGON PINE were employed in the offshore lumber trade from Columbia River, Washington state, USA to Australia. In January 1927 the vessel was sold to Captain E R Sterling of the Sterling Shipping Company (SSC) of Seattle, Washington. He renamed HELEN B STERLING, after his wife. The schooner made only one voyage under Sterling's name, carrying more than two million feet of lumber to Australia. The ongoing issues with other ships of the Sterling Line forced E R Sterling to sell the schooner to a Mr W S Payne of the Pacific Export Lumber Company, who then changed its name back to OREGON FIR. By 1930, the vessel was seized in Sydney for outstanding debts. The ship's master, Henry H Oosterhuis, reportedly stayed with the vessel for 15 months. As it lay idle in Rose Bay in Sydney Harbour, Oosterhuis made headlines in the newspapers for opening the vessel at night as a 'floating cabaret' to host wild 'Bohemian parties'. On 5 March 1931, the vessel passed under the Sydney Harbour Bridge with only six feet between the masts and the bridge. It was on its way to its 'final resting place' in Kerosene Bay (now Balls Balls Head Bay near Waverton). In March 1934, after it was dismantled and stripped of anything of value, HELEN B STERLING as it was still affectionately known, was set on fire in 20 places and destroyed.