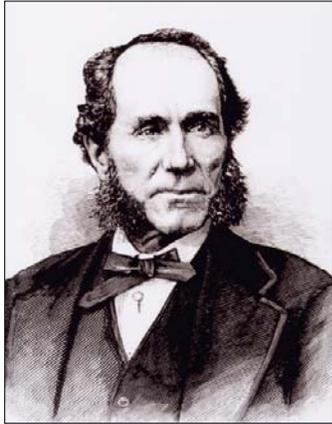


Jesse Carll (1832-1902) *Northport's Master Shipbuilder*

The mid to late 19th century in Northport was pre-eminently the heyday of shipbuilding, with a number of shipyard "bosses" whose companies drove the local economy, providing employment for skilled workers and a product which helped fuel such ancillary enterprises as oystering and shipping.



When it comes to the number one figure in shipbuilding in Northport, one need look no further than to Jesse Carll.

There was a brisk trade in the building of wooden ships during the mid-1800s – some sixty shipyards were counted around Suffolk County during the era. But it was master builder Jesse Carll who led the way in Northport, first with his brother David and then on his own. It seems Jesse and David were the sons of a retail businessman on Main Street in Northport who died prematurely – leaving his sons the task of finding their way in the world. Jesse and his brother took employment at a shipyard in Port Jefferson for a time until they figured out the business, and then opened up a yard of their own at home with \$400 in their pockets and a dream.

It was not long before Jesse and David were making waves in the world of regional shipbuilding, starting with their third contract – a double decked bark named *Storm Bird*, which took only 87 days to build. That feat of industry, mechanical skill and determined efficiency soon became the mark of the Carll shipyard, and the operation became known far and wide for large, highly successful vessels, models of beauty, speed and staunchness.

Over the years Jesse's ships entered worldwide service, and performed admirably. The schooner *Storm Cloud* was sent to California; the *Joseph E Nickerson*, a keel boat, went to the fishing trades in Cape Cod and eventually into the West African trade. *Lucetta*, designed expressly for the fruit trade, was one of the first of her kind. Brig *Moses Rogers* was in the Malaga whale trade. And the *Osseo*, a brig of about 700 tons burden weight, went off to the Mediterranean.

Of all his ships, however, perhaps Jesse's most heralded vessel, in terms of performance, was named after him. The *Jesse Carll* was to be declared the handsomest craft of her class sailing out of New York – a 99 foot schooner built of oak and chestnut. Not only was she beautiful – but she was fast. The *Jesse Carll* once made the trip from Gibraltar to Baltimore in 20 days, beating the previously held record by a full five days.

Carll's enterprise was a mainstay of the local economy for nearly forty years, until old age and changing technologies caught up with the enterprising man from Northport. On his death in 1902, the shipbuilding business was all but over for Northport, and the name of Jesse Carll passed into local legend.