

From the Mike Walsh Album of Sealing Photographs, PF-118.001.



Captain Abram Kean was born July 8, 1855 at Flowers Island, Newfoundland. He joined the seal fishery in 1872 and by 1882 he accepted the captaincy of the "Hannie & Bennie". He captained numerous Newfoundland sealing vessels during his career, including the "Esquimaux", "Wolf", "Hope", "Aurora", "Stephano", "Prospero", "Beothic" and "Nascopie". It was during his time on the "Stephano" in 1914 when the "Newfoundland Sealing Disaster" struck. The crew of

the SS "Newfoundland", captained by Abram's son Westbury, had visited the "Stephano", staying for a meal, but were ordered back onto the ice into unfavourable weather by Abram Kean, thinking the "Newfoundland" was closer than it actually was. The crew was sent two miles back in the direction from which they had come and the "Stephano" left to pick up their own crew. A blizzard formed but Captain Westbury Kean on the "Newfoundland" assumed his crew were staying on the "Stephano" overnight and were therefore safe. They were not, but in the end it was ruled that the deaths of 78 "Newfoundland" crew members were an act of God and inevitable, therefore Captain Abram Kean was not guilty and not held responsible. Kean participated in his final sealing season in 1935 and the age of 80. By the time he retired, his crews captured a combined total of 1,052,737 seals. Captain Abram Kean died May 18th, 1945.