



Research Vessel RV Explorer
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For Immediate Release

On July 4th 2018 the RV Explorer crew identified a recently discovered wreck. The Wreck of the D/S Octavian has been positively identified and confirmed through the recovery of the Engine & Boiler builders plaque. This was further confirmed by Jorgan Johannassan of the Maritime Museum on Oslo Norway. The wreck lies 70 miles from Cape May in 227' of water. The Octavian was owned by Hjalmar Reksten Rederi of Bergen, Norway and was a 250' Norwegian Freighter carrying Sulfur and Wood Resin.

Octavian left Galveston Texas on January 9, 1942 headed to St. John New Brunswick. The freighter never arrived in St. John and all 17 crewmembers perished without a trace. Due to an error, some history books have the Octavian located off Nova Scotia which is north of New Brunswick but there would be no reason for the ship to be in this location. It's possible that St. John New Brunswick and St. John Newfoundland were confused and the coincidence of U-203 sinking an unknown vessel in the vicinity credited the 203 with the sinking.

Interestingly there are footnotes in multiple locations including, War Sailors.com, U-Boat War against the Americas and Researcher Edward R. Rumpf, that suggest that U-123 commanded by Hardegen sank the Octavian.

U-123 is also credited with sinking the Cyclops, Norness, Coimbra prior to the Octavian. U 123 then headed to Cape Hatteras to sink 4 more ships and damage a 5th.

The deck logs of the U-123 7th war patrol indicate that Hardegen sunk an unidentified freighter in the location of the now identified Octavian on January 17, 1942. The location given by Hardegen in his deck log is less than 700 yards from the ships current location. The ship sank in a plume of black smoke in less than a minute as Hardegen used his last stern torpedo. The U-123 then departed at maximum speed toward cape Hatteras.

This is exciting news and we hope to bring closure to the families of 16 Norwegian Sailors and 1 Canadian sailor.

Credit to this project and research should go to the RV Explorer team Rustin Cassway, Brian Sullivan, Michael Dudas and Tom Packer. Others who helped in this research effort were Gary Gentile, Hildrun Sommer (our assistant in Oslo and former Evie Dudas Employee) The Maritime Museum in Oslo Norway, Richie Kohler for providing the grid chart and explain how to use it, Adam Crouthamel of Adam Bomb Sport Fishing, Bob Cope of Fishing Fever and Sean Manni Jersey Dragon Dive Vessel.

Rustin Cassway & Brian Sullivan - Managing Partners Research Vessel Explorer- Cape May NJ

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