

Siah Cater: Set Free Through Sailing

Josiah Carter was reportedly born in 1838. He spent the early years of his life on the Shirley plantation in Virginia. He worked hours in the heat. During the enlistment of the Navy,



Josiah's plantation owner, Hill Carter, told enslaved people horrid tales of fugitive slaves being thrown overboard with iron around their necks if they enlisted in the Union. Ignoring these tales, Josiah ran away in the middle of the night and paddled to the USS Monitor.

The USS Monitor was a 171-foot ship, the first ever commissioned by the Navy. This warship was used during major battles, including the Battle On Hampton Roads. The construction of this ship was during the Civil War, all the way up to early 1862. Josiah's first job on this ship was as a "first

class boy" a part of a group called The Contraband.

On December 29, 1862, the USS Monitor was caught in a terrible storm off the coast of Cape Hatteras. The boat wasn't designed for the open ocean, and it sank on the 31st. A total of 16 crewmembers were lost. Josiah survived the shipwreck, luckily.

Carter later worked on 3 other ships, and was discharged from the Navy in 1865. He felt a sense of freedom being on the boats and away from slavery. Today, you can find the USS Monitor at the Mariners Museum and Park in Virginia. Siah is honored at the National Veterans Memorial.



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