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Below Above: The Perrin family on Charles (seated left) and Sophia's (seated right) Golden Wedding in 1907.

Above Below: Members of the Perrin family, who gathered in Petone last month to celebrate the 110th anniversary of the family's arrival in New Zealand.

Perrins thrive after lucky break 110 yrs ago

Members of the Perrin family assembled at Petone Beach last month to celebrate 110 years in New Zealand. But for several strokes of good fortune, the Perrin family might never have reached New Zealand over a century ago.

Charles and Sophia Perrin, with seven children, booked passage to New Zealand aboard the Cospatrick in late 1874 and even their luggage and personal possessions had been loaded when an accident prevented them from sailing. That accident almost certainly saved their lives because the Cospatrick went down in flames off the Cape of Good Hope on November 17, 1874. There were only three survivors from the 473 aboard.

The Perrins booked passage on the Berar and on that voyage passed the burning wreckage of the Cospatrick although the identity of the burnt ship was not known to them at the time.



An outbreak of scarlet fever aboard the Berar resulted in many deaths and later there was a Royal Commission into the incident. The Perrins survived the journey to arrive off Petone on January 22, 1875. Upon arrival they were quarantined on Somes Island because of the disease aboard the ship and also received news of the fate of the Cospatrick and the loss of their possessions.

The Perrins later settled in Nelson for some years where Charles was a grocer and cheese merchant. The Perrins later returned to Wellington and branches of the family can now be found in various parts of New Zealand and Australia. The Perrins had nine children and 35 grandchildren.



The Perrin family trunk which survived the sinking of the Cospatrick – still owned by the family
(image supplied by Grenville Christie)