

# THE SINKING OF THE TITANIC: APRIL 1912

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The history of the Titanic can be traced back as far as 1907 when J. Bruce Ismay and Lord James Pirrie, a partner in the firm Harland and Wolff met at a dinner party. Plans were made to build two ships, the Olympic and the Titanic. Each costing one and a half million pounds.

Between 1908 and 1909, construction of both ships began in Belfast at Harland and Wolff shipyards. By May 1911 the hull of the Titanic was successfully launched. Then ten months of fitting was to follow. The boat was completed by March 31 and was due to set for her maiden voyage on April 10 1912.

The Titanic was one of the largest and most luxurious ships in the world. It had a weight of 46,329 tons, and the Titanic was 882.5 feet long and 92.5 feet wide at its widest point. It had a double-bottomed hull divided into 16 compartments. It was considered unsinkable.

According to the official report the weather on the departure day was good. There was a "smooth sea and moderate south-westerly winds" perfect for the crossing. It was a day of excitement for all, especially those who had incredible opportunity to walk on promenade decks of the ship seventy feet above the water.

The newspaper reports of the time state that "mass hysteria filled Liverpool harbour as the British luxury passenger liner embarked on its long awaited journey to New York". The captain on board for the maiden voyage was Smith. His career was long and before this voyage he had sailed over two million miles for the White Star Line and they had complete confidence in him, trusting him with the command of the best and newest ships. This was to be his last voyage before his retirement and he seems to have "taken special steps to ensure that it would be both safe and pleasurable".

On that day at 10:00a.m. the first passengers began to come on board. Most of these passengers were British. The real rush of people came when the train boat arrived. People were scattered everywhere, trying to find their gangway. The first class passengers were escorted to their cabins. After that, the second and third class passengers boarded the ship.

After an hour delay, the Titanic headed for Cherbourg, France, arrived at 5:30 p.m. then, at 8:10, the ship on her way to Queenstown, arriving there the next morning at 11:30a.m. more passengers board, and seven disembarked. 1385 bags of mail were also thrown aboard. And the last time, the Titanic lifts her anchor and sails out for New York.

During the first day of the Atlantic crossing" the Titanic sailed 386 miles, the second day 519 and the third day over 546 miles". All passengers were eager to get to New York as early as possible and the captain increased the speed even more on the fourth day, which was 14 April 1912. Ice report had been received by the Titanic from

as early on in the voyage as Friday 12 and by Sunday evening the liner had received seven additional warnings including some from the Noordam Caronia , Baltic, Amerika, California and the Mesaba.

At 10 , the ship's second officer turned over the ships to Mr. Murdoch, the first officer telling him that “ the ship was within the region of reported ice”. At this point the temperature was 32 degrees f, the sky cloudless and the air clear that meant spotting an iceberg would be extremely difficult . In addition, "the necessary vigilance was not helped by the lack of a pair of binoculars in the crow's nest”. At 10:50 p.m. the Californian sent a wireless directly to the Titanic telling them that they were surrounded by ice. Jack Phillips the wireless operator on the Titanic irritated by the interruption in his work replied” shut up, shut up, I am busy”.

At 11:39 the ship was moving at a speed of 20.5knots when lookouts, Fredrick Fleet and Reginald Lee, spotted an iceberg dead ahead about 500 yards away towering some 55-60 feet above the sea. They immediately sounded the warning bell with 3 sharp rings and telephoned the bridge “ iceberg right ahead”. Sixth officer moody on the bridge acknowledged the warning and replayed the message to Murdoch who instinctively called “ hard-a-starboard” to the helmsman and ordered the engine room to stop engines and then ordered full astern. Murdoch then activated the lever to close all watertight doors below the waterline. The helmsman spun the wheel as far as it would go. After several seconds, the Titanic begins to veer to port, but the iceberg struck the starboard bow side and brushed along the side of the ship and passed by into the night. The impact, although jarring to the crew down in the forward area, was not noticed by the passengers.”Thirty-seven seconds had passed from sighting to collision”.

At 11:50 p.m. Captain Smith asked designer Thomas Andrews to conduct a visual inspection of the damage. Water at this time had poured in and risen fourteen feet in the front of the ship and Andrews warned that the ship could only stay afloat for “an hour or an hour and a half “ Smith ordered radio operators, Harold Bride and Jack Smith to send out a distress call..by 12:05am orders were given to uncover the lifeboats and get passengers and crew ready on deck. But there was only room in the lifeboats for half of the estimated 2,228 people on board. Twenty minutes later crew began loading the lifeboats with women and children . By 12:45 the first of the lifeboats was lowered away safely. It could have carried 65 people but pulled away from the titanic holding only 28.

By 1:15 a.m. water began to reach the titanic's name on the bow and the tilt of the deck crew increasingly steeper. Lifeboats now started to leave more fully loaded. Within half an hour most of the forward lifeboats had been lowered. Passengers now moved towards the stern of the ship. At 2:05am the last lifeboat departed. There was now over 1,500 people left on board the sinking ship with the tilt of the decks growing steeper by the minute. At this stage Phillips sent the last radio message and Capt. Smith told crewmembers ”it's every man for himself”. He returned to the bridge to await the end. Thomas Andrews, the ship's builder, was seen alone in the first-class room staring into space.

As the Titanic's bow plunged under, Father Thomas Byles head confession and gave absolution to over 100 second and third class passengers gathered at the aft end of the boat deck. The ships stopped playing and many crew and passengers jumped overboard. However the titanic's broken off stern section settled back into the water, becoming level for a few moments. Slowly it filled with water, tilting its end high into the air, before sinking vertically into the sea. Those struggling in the icy water slowly froze to death with over 1,500 people perishing

By 3:30 a.m. the rescue ship rockets were sighted by the survivors in the lifeboats and within 40 minutes the first lifeboat was picked up .by 8:05 a.m. the Carpathia left the bound for New York ,carrying 705 survivors. J .Bruce Ismay wired the White Star New York offices with the following message "deeply regret to advise you Titanic sank this morning after collision with iceberg, resulting in serious loss-of-life. full particulars later".

Inquires held in the united states and great Britain alleged that the Leyland liner Californian, which was less than 20 miles away all night, could have aided the stricken vessel had its radio operator been on duty and thereby received the Titanic's distress signals. Only the arrival of the Cunard liner Carpathia 1 hour and 20 minutes after the Titanic went down prevented further loss of life in the icy waters.

Many of these who perished on the ship came from prominent American, British, and European families. Among the dead were the noted British journalist William Thomas Stead and heirs to the Straus and Astor fortunes. The glamour associated with the ship, it's maiden voyage, and its notable passengers magnified the tragedy of its sinking in the popular mind. Legends arose almost immediately around the night's events, those who had died, and those who had survived, heroes and heroines such as American Molly Brown, were identified and celebrated by the press. The disaster and the mythology that has surround it have continued to fascinate million.

As a result of the disaster, the first international convention for safety of life at sea was called in London in 1913. The convention drew up rules requiring that every ship have lifeboat space for each person embarked; that lifeboat drills be held during the voyage and because the Californian had not heard the distress signals of the Titanic ,that ship maintain a 24 hour radio watch. The international ice patrol also was established to warn ships of icebergs in the north Atlantic shipping lanes.

On sept. 1, 1985, the wreck of the Titanic was found lying upright in two pieces on the ocean floor at a depth of about 13,000 feet. The ship, located at about 41 degrees 46 N 50 degrees 14 W, was subsequently explored several times by manned and unmanned submersible under the direction of American and French scientists. The expeditions found no sign of the long gash previously thought to have been ripped in the ship's hull by the iceberg. The scientists suggested instead that the collisions impact had produced a series of thin gashes as well as brittle fracturing and separation of seams in the adjacent hull plates, thug allowing water to flood in and sink the ship. In subsequent years marine salvagers raised small artefact from the wreckage and even attempted to life a large piece of the hull.