



Titanic: The Grandest Ship

On April 10, 1912 the story began.

The *Titanic* eased out of her dock at Southampton on her maiden voyage. The crowd gathered for the occasion was in awe at the incredible sight - *Titanic* was the largest moving object ever built at that time. Three football fields long – longer than the tallest building in the world - just over 882', it took three years and 15,000 people to build her.

Never before had the technology existed which created the luxury, stability and strength of the vessel. Due to the quiet engines and lack of vibrations, passengers could easily believe they were staying in a five star hotel which included amenities like the gymnasium, pool and fine restaurants. The first class staterooms had handsome beds and furniture in decor that they might have in their own bedrooms at home: oak paneling, cut glass lighting fixtures, thick carpeting, a well-stocked library, and inviting writing room. Exotic woods inlaid with mother of pearl in the smoking room invited the gentleman to relax there after dinner.

The Voyage

Titanic set out on Thursday, April 10 to smooth sailing. *Titanic* first left Southampton and sailed to Ireland and then its last stop was Cherbourg where it picked up Margaret Brown. The route to New York across the Atlantic was to take five days. The nearly 2,400 passengers looked forward to relaxing on deck, eating gourmet meals, or preparing for their new lives in America.

Iceberg!

On Saturday, April 14, several ice messages were received throughout the day. At 5:30 pm the temperature began to drop rapidly. Captain Smith and Officers took some precautions regarding ice in the area. At 10:30 pm the eastbound freighter *Rappahannock* emerged from an extensive ice field where she had

sustained rudder damage. A message was sent to the nearby *Titanic* which was acknowledged, "Message received, thank you. Good night." At 10:55 pm an officer on the *California* asked their radio man to inform ships that they were stopped and surrounded by ice. *Titanic* ignored the warnings. The lone *California* wireless operator ceased transmission and went to bed at 11:30 pm – just ten minutes prior to *Titanic* striking the iceberg.

At 11:30 pm two Lookouts on duty in *Titanic's* crow's nest rang three short rings (meaning: Object Directly Ahead), and then both men braced for the hit. Feeling nothing, Fleet turned to Lookout Lee, "That was a narrow shave." Thirty seconds had elapsed between the sighting and collision. The quick response of Officer Hichens prevented a head-on collision as he turned hard to avoid the hulk. But a massive projection scraped along the *Titanic* for about 300' under waterline and sea water immediately began to gush into the ship - #1 hold, #2 hold, #3 hold, the #6 boiler room, and the #5 boiler room. Within ten minutes the water rose 14' above the keel. Very quickly, Captain Smith knew the ship was doomed. At 12:45 am the first lifeboat was lowered with 28 people, capacity 65. Many passengers refused to believe there was any serious danger. Others gathered together and quietly prayed. Margaret Brown was grabbed and dropped 4' into lifeboat #6 with 27 others. Margaret looked into the face of Captain Smith as the boat was lowered, "We looked up and saw the benign, resigned countenance, the venerable white hair, and the Chestemeldian bearing of our beloved Captain... as he peered down upon us like a solicitous father, directing us to row to the light in the distance and all boats keep together." Captain Smith returned to the bridge and was alone when the bridge was swept away. Scores are crushed in the water when funnel #1 collapses. The stern lifted out of the water with a sound like thunder as loose objects rush forward and as the 29 massive boilers broke through the bow. At 2:20 am, on April 15, 1912, the *Titanic* sinks to the bottom of the Atlantic. It took just three hours. 1,523 persons perished with the ship, 705 survived.

Rescue

The *Titanic* had sent multiple distress signals but many ships in the area did not have wireless or had just one operator who turned off their stations to go to bed.

The *Carpathia* heard the distress calls at 12:25 pm and immediately turned toward the distressed ship and made preparations on the way to receive the survivors. Captain Rostron carefully planned for the rescue and the care of those they would assist. The last lifeboat pulled alongside *Carpathia* at just a few minutes after 8:00 am on April 15.

Aftermath

The first news reports that reached America had wrong information. Once the stories of the accident were known, people were numbed by the enormity of the accident. Immediately relief funds were raised in the US and England. The Senate investigation into the accident began in the US on April 19, 1912 and in England on May 2, 1912. The English report required updated and standardized safety measures and recommended an International Conference on the Safety of Life at Sea.

At 12:50 am, September 1, 1985, the *Titanic* was discovered in its watery grave 12,600' below the surface still looking eerily elegant. The bow and hull are separated by 1,800'.

In 1994, RMS Titanic, Inc. was declared salvor-in-possession of the wreck and wreck site of the RMS *Titanic*. The company has conducted seven research and recovery expeditions to the *Titanic*'s wreck site between 1987 and 2004. To date, RMS Titanic, Inc. has recovered more than 5,500 objects from the wreck site including a 17-ton section of the hull. The company sells exhibitions to museums around the world.