

What's Happening

I N T H E W O R L D ?

BY LAWRENCE GABLE

VOL 12, NO 8 APRIL 2012

The *Titanic* is Gone, but not Forgotten

A hundred years ago passenger ships made regular trips across the ocean. The greatest of those ships was supposed to be the *Titanic*. People thought it was unsinkable, but it sank in the icy North Atlantic on its maiden voyage in 1912. April 15 is the 100th anniversary of that unforgettable disaster.

At the turn of the 20th century a change took place on the oceans. Until then sailing ships had connected the continents by carrying goods, mail and passengers. However, steamships replaced them. A shipyard in Belfast, Ireland was the finest builder of large ships in the world. In 1908 it began building twin ships for a company called White Star Line.

The two ships, *Olympic* and *Titanic*, were the largest and most luxurious ships in the world. The *Titanic* was 882 feet long, 92 feet wide and 175 feet high. It cost \$7,500,000 to build her, which would be the equivalent of \$400 million today.

The *Olympic* and *Titanic* were also beautiful ships, both inside and out. Glossy black paint and white trim covered their exteriors. Passengers in first class enjoyed elegant cabins and dining rooms. The ships were also the first ever with swimming pools. Cabins and services for passengers in second class were as nice as first class on other ships.

The *Titanic*'s design was supposed to make her unsinkable. It divided the hull into 16 watertight compartments. Even if water had gotten into four of them, she would have remained buoyant. However, when she grazed an iceberg just before midnight, it caused metal plates on the hull's side to buckle. The plates pulled away from each other and water flowed into six of the compartments. Within three hours the ship tore apart and sank.

Of the ship's 2,223 passengers and crew, 1,517 died. That number could have been lower. The *Titanic* carried sixteen wooden lifeboats and four collapsible boats, but they had only enough room for a total of 1,178 people. In addition to that, people were in a panic

to get into lifeboats and away from the ship as quickly as possible. As a result, crews lowered some of the first lifeboats to the water before they were full.

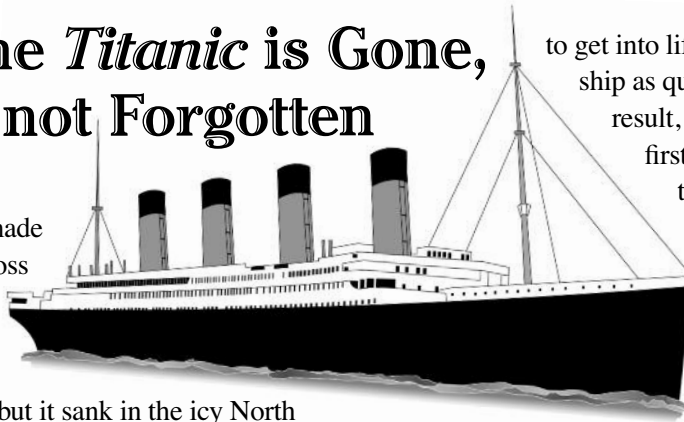
Communication problems surely also cost lives. Another ocean liner, the *Californian*, was crossing the Atlantic that night too, and all night

she was less than twenty miles away. The *Titanic*'s telegraph operators constantly sent messages for help, but the *Californian*'s telegraph operator already had turned his unit off and gone to bed. Another ocean liner did get the messages, though, and arrived on the scene eighty minutes after the *Titanic* had sunk. Although it saved many lives, it arrived after many others had drowned.

The problems with the rescue operation resulted in some safety changes. In 1913 the first International Convention for Safety of Life at Sea took place in London. The convention required that every ship must have enough space on lifeboats for everyone on board. It also required that crews conduct lifeboat drills, and that ships maintain radio operations 24 hours a day. Also, the International Ice Patrol formed in 1913 to warn ships of icebergs in the North Atlantic.

For decades the *Titanic*'s location remained a complete mystery. People searched unsuccessfully for the wreckage, but finally an international expedition located it in 1985. She was lying upright in two pieces 13,000 feet below the surface. That expedition returned with thousands of pictures, and further expeditions have salvaged things like menus, jewelry, lifejackets and suitcases. Many things from the ship are now on display in museums around the world.

Commemorations of the 100th anniversary are taking many forms. England and Canada have minted beautiful silver coins. The 1997 film "Titanic" will come out in a 3D version on April 6. One cruise line is even doing a memorial cruise that will follow the *Titanic*'s planned route from England to New York. After all of this time the *Titanic* remains the most famous ship in history. A hundred years later the ship that could not sink remains the ship that the world cannot forget.



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A hundred years ago passenger ships made regular trips across the ocean. The greatest of those ships was supposed to be the *Titanic*.

People thought it was unsinkable, but it sank in the North Atlantic on its first voyage. April 15 is the 100th anniversary of that unforgettable disaster.

At that time a change took place on the oceans. Sailing ships used to carry goods, mail and passengers. However, steamships replaced them. A shipyard in Ireland was the world's best builder of large ships. In 1908 it began building twin ships for a company called White Star Line.

The two ships, *Olympic* and *Titanic*, were the largest ships ever. The *Titanic* was 882 feet long, 92 feet wide and 175 feet high. Today it would cost \$400 million to build her.

The *Olympic* and *Titanic* were also beautiful inside and out. Glossy black paint and white trim covered their exteriors. Passengers in first class enjoyed elegant cabins and dining rooms. The ships were also the first with swimming pools. Cabins and services for passengers in second class were as nice as first class on other ships.

The *Titanic* was supposed to be unsinkable. Her hull had 16 watertight compartments. However, when she grazed an iceberg just before midnight, it damaged metal plates on the hull's side. The plates pulled away from each other, so water flowed into six of the compartments. Within three hours the ship tore apart and sank.

Of the ship's 2,223 passengers and crew, 1,517 died. That number could have been lower. The *Titanic* carried twenty lifeboats, but they had only enough room for 1,178 people. People were

in a panic to get into lifeboats and away from the ship quickly. As a result, some of the first lifeboats left before they were full.

Communication problems surely also cost lives. Another ocean liner was not far away when the *Titanic*

sent messages for help. However, its telegraph operator already had gone to bed. Another ocean liner did get the messages, but it arrived eighty minutes after the *Titanic* had sunk. It saved many lives, but it arrived after many others had drowned.

The *Titanic*'s sinking caused some safety changes. In 1913 the first International Convention for Safety of Life at Sea took place. It required every ship to have enough space on lifeboats for everyone on board. It also required crews to perform lifeboat drills, and to keep radio operations 24 hours a day. Also, an international patrol formed in 1913 to warn ships of icebergs.

For years the *Titanic*'s location remained a mystery. Finally an international expedition located her in 1985. She was lying upright in two pieces 13,000 feet down. That expedition returned with thousands of pictures, and further expeditions have recovered things like menus, jewelry and suitcases. Many things from the ship are now in museums around the world.

Commemorations of the *Titanic* are taking many forms. England is making beautiful silver coins. The 1997 film "Titanic" will come out in 3D on April 6. One cruise line is even doing a cruise that will follow the *Titanic*'s route from England to New York. After 100 years the *Titanic* remains the most famous ship in history. The ship that could not sink remains the ship that the world cannot forget.



Background Information

The *Titanic* departed Southampton, England and made port calls in France and Ireland before sailing for New York.

At about 2 a.m. the ship began to tear apart. Survivors reported that the *Titanic's* stern rose high out of the water and became almost vertical before sinking completely at about 2:45 a.m.

Harland and Wolff was the shipyard in Ireland that built the *Olympic* and the *Titanic*. *Olympic's* maiden voyage was in June 1911. A sister ship to those two, *Britannic*, launched in 1914, but World War I began. Before she began passenger service, the British government converted her into a hospital ship. In 1916 she struck a mine and sank.

The American millionaire J.P. Morgan had bought the White Star Line in 1902.

The ship that arrived to rescue some people was the *Carpathia*. She sailed to New York.

Although the *Titanic* had too little room on lifeboats for everyone aboard, those lifeboats actually exceeded the lifeboat requirements at the time.

The *Titanic* is located 1,000 miles directly east of Boston, Massachusetts. The 1985 expedition located the *Titanic* about 13 miles southeast of the spot where she had sent her last call for help.

Until the 1985 expedition proved otherwise, people always had assumed that the iceberg had torn a long hole in the *Titanic's* hull.

Approximately 6,000 artifacts have been removed from the wreckage.

The Titanic Memorial Cruise will set sail from Southampton on April 8, 2012, just as the *Titanic* did. The ship has booked 1,309 passengers, exactly the *Titanic's* number. It will stop and hold a memorial service at 2:20 a.m. at the spot where the *Titanic* struck the iceberg. Historians will lecture and make presentations en route to New York.

Since 1913 the U.S. Coast Guard has run the International Ice Patrol. No vessel that has followed its warnings ever has collided with an iceberg.

More than 60 percent of the *Titanic's* passengers in first class survived, including 97 percent of the women. Only 25 percent of the third-class passengers survived.

The *Titanic's* captain, E.J. Smith, was going to retire after the voyage.

Topics for Discussion and Writing

Pre-reading:

- If you have seen the 1997 film “Titanic,” recount what you remember of the story.

Comprehension:

- How might more people on the *Titanic* have survived?

Beyond the Text:

- Trace how communications have changed since the telegraph.
- How do mail, goods and passengers travel these days?
- What responsibilities do crews on ships have to passengers during emergencies?

Vocabulary (*advanced article only)

Article-specific: maiden voyage*; shipyard; glossy; hull; buoyant*; iceberg; to buckle*; telegraph; convention; patrol; wreckage*; expedition; to salvage*; commemoration; to mint*

High-use: anniversary; century*; luxurious*; equivalent*; exterior; compartment; to graze; collapsible*; communication; to require; to conduct*; to maintain*

Sources

The Independent (London) March 2, 2012

New York Times February 26, 2012

Times of London February 17, 2012

International Ice Patrol www.navcen.uscg.gov

Titanic and Nautical Resource center

www.titanic-nautical.com

Titanic: An Illustrated History by Don Lynch (Hyperion 1992)

The Birth of the Titanic by M. McCaughan (McGill-Queens Univ. Press 1998)

CA Curricular Standards (4–12)

English-Language Arts

Reading 1.0 Vocabulary Development

2.0 Comprehension (Informational Materials)

Writing 1.0 Writing Strategies

2.0 Writing Applications

ELD—Intermediate and Advanced

Reading Vocabulary Development/Comprehension

Writing Strategies and Applications

Listening and Speaking

History-Social Science

5.8; 7.11; 12.6