

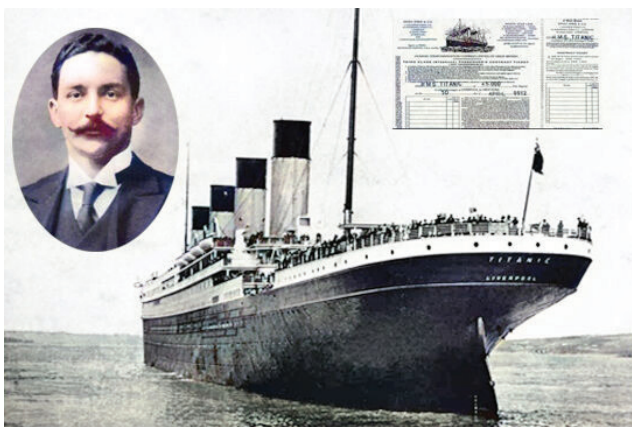
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IN ONE EAR • ELLEDA WILSON

SINKABLE



Today marks the 109th anniversary of the sinking of the RMS Titanic on April 15, 1912, after she hit an iceberg in the North Atlantic Ocean on her maiden voyage from Southampton, England, to New York City.

The ship was built at the Harland & Wolff Shipyard (harland-wolff.com) in Belfast, Ireland, established in 1861, which is still in business. She was 883 feet long, 170 feet high, and had nine decks and four funnels. She was the largest ship in the world at the time.

Of the 2,208 people aboard, 1,496 were lost. There were 14 30-foot lifeboats, each designed to carry 65 passengers, two 25-foot emergency lifeboats which could carry 40 each and four 27-foot collapsible lifeboats that could carry 47 each, for a total of 1,178 passengers.

Consequently, there was only room for a little more than half of those aboard in an emergency, yet most of the lifeboats went into the water filled nowhere near capacity.

After his “unsinkable” ship sank to the ocean floor, owner Joseph Bruce Ismay (pictured inset) — a first class passenger who boarded the last lifeboat — lived another 25 years to think about it. (encyclopedia-titanica.org)

A GRINDING NOISE



The Titanic catastrophe hit close to home here as well. Frank Manley Warren (no relation to the Warrenton Warrens) and his wife, Anna Sofia, were aboard the ill-fated ship as Oregon’s only first class passengers, returning home to Portland after a three-month holiday celebrating their 40th anniversary.

The couple were well known in Clatsop County, as he was president of the Warren Packing Co. Among the company’s holdings were a cold storage in Astoria and a cannery across the river in Cathlamet, Washington.

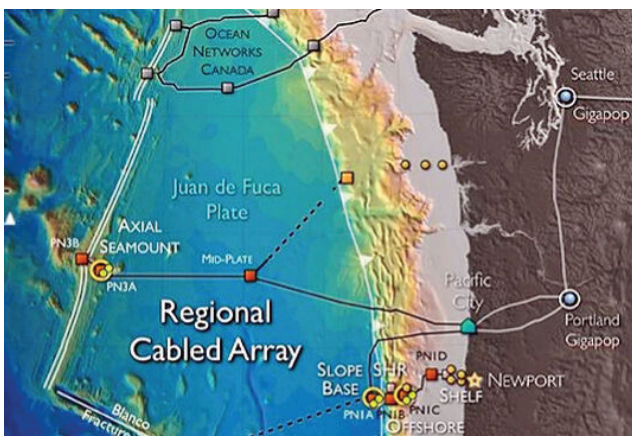
Mrs. Warren later recalled that they went to bed on April 14, but were awakened by a “grinding noise and the stoppage of the vessel.” Their stateroom was about 30 feet above the waterline and near the point of impact. She was immediately alarmed; he was not, but got dressed and went out to investigate anyway. He returned in a few minutes with a piece of ice as a souvenir.

Mrs. Warren wisely took out the life belts, but Mr. Warren was still not concerned, telling her not to worry, the “vessel could not possibly sink.” After going out into the corridor and talking with others, they all still felt there was no danger, with the exception of one man, who warned them that water was coming into the ship up forward.

The couple waited for another 45 minutes in the corridor, when a steward came by and told them to put on their life belts and go topside. They complied and waited on deck with a group that included John Jacob Astor’s family, until the Astor’s went back inside.

Mrs. Warren was urged to step into a lifeboat, and she did, expecting her husband to follow ... but he didn’t. When she turned around to look for him, she saw him helping other ladies into the boat. That was the last time she saw him. His body was never found. (bit.ly/titanicaFW, bit.ly/titanicaAW, bit.ly/CumtuxWarrens)

EYES ON AXIAL



The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s Pacific Marine Environmental Laboratory website says the Axial Seamount, about 300 miles off the coast, is “the most active submarine volcano in the northeast Pacific.” It is the site of the New Millennium Observatory, the first underwater volcano observatory.

The seamount erupted in 1998, 2011 and 2015. The National Science Foundation’s Ocean Observatory Initiative’s Regional Cable Array (one of their images is shown) provides real-time data of what’s going on there; scientists hope the information can predict future eruptions.

Want to know more? There are several blog posts at bit.ly/OOIblog about the remote-operated vehicle exploration of the seamount in 2020.

DEATH BY MIDLIFE CRISIS



Fun rerun: “One hundred years ago the Titanic was on its first and last voyage,” lecturer and historian Rex Ziak (rexziak.com) of Naselle, Washington, told the Ear.

“On board was a famous American who did not survive the tragedy. His name was John Jacob Astor IV.” He was the great-grandson of Astoria founder John Jacob Astor.

“There is more to this story than what has ever been revealed,” Rex disclosed. “By researching newspapers from 1909, 1910 and 1911, I stumbled upon a back-story that has not been told.

“Many women tell their husbands how dangerous a mid-life crisis can be; John Jacob Astor IV’s death aboard the Titanic is a perfect example of what they are talking about.

“It is such a compelling story, I created a ... two part YouTube documentary,” he continued. “It is jam-packed with historic photographs, maps and great stories about his life, from start to finish.”

It is indeed all of that. And let’s not forget Rex’s dynamic and entertaining speaking style, which really brings the characters and situation to life. Watch the videos here: tinyurl.com/rexastor1 and tinyurl.com/rexastor2

“Because of the sensitive nature of the subject (a mid-life crisis is never pretty), viewer discretion is advised,” he added. “This is a great history and should serve as a lesson to all men as they approach middle life.” (In One Ear, 4/20/2012)

FATA MORGANA

Ideas abound as to why the Titanic crew didn’t see the iceberg in time to avoid it. One of the more insightful ones has been proposed by historian, author and Titanic expert Tim Maltin (tim-maltin.com): He told The Sun that the collision might have been caused by a rare “Fata Morgana” mirage, which creates an optical illusion.

While the Titanic cruised through the freezing waters of the North Atlantic, she was surrounded by icebergs. “... Above the level of the top of those icebergs, much warmer air drifted across from the nearby warmer waters of the Gulf Stream, trapping cold air underneath it,” Maltin explained.

“This created the same thermal inversion conditions at Titanic’s crash site as seen along the coast of Britain recently (photo shown, courtesy of Apex News), creating a band of light haze above which ships appeared to float in the sky.” In the case of the Titanic, a “mirage strip” on the surface of the ocean made the iceberg invisible against the white haze.

“In fact several ships which passed through the area in which Titanic sank,” Maltin noted, “both before and after the Titanic tragedy, recorded abnormal refraction and mirages at the horizon.” As further evidence supporting his theory, during the official inquiry, the ship’s lookouts stated that the iceberg seemed to just suddenly appear out of the haze.

So, did a mirage contribute to the Titanic’s demise? Maltin is quite convincing.

TITANIC BABY



An often forgotten survivor of the Titanic was John Jacob Astor VI, the “Titanic Baby,” who was in his mother’s womb when the ship sank.

The son of honeymooners Madeleine and John Jacob Astor IV, he was born four months later in New York. He may have had a chip on his shoulder since another Astor, born shortly before him, got the V designation.

During Jakey’s lifetime he was widely known for his legal battles with his older half-brother Vincent Astor over their father’s estate, which was probably around \$100 million (\$2.7 billion now).

When their father died, his will did not treat his new family fairly. Madeleine received an annual income from a \$5 million trust, and other perks, as long as she didn’t marry. Jakey received a \$3 million bequest, held in trust until he turned 21.

Vincent loathed both his stepmother and Jakey with equal measure, even refusing to believe Jakey was an Astor. When Vincent died, childless, he left his half-brother nothing of their father’s vast estate; everything went to Vincent’s widow, Brooke.

Jakey, feeling cheated, sued Brooke for what he felt was his rightful inheritance, contending that she plied Victor with liquor to influence him to favor her in his will. Which wasn’t entirely unlikely, since Vincent was an alcoholic. Jakey won, all right, but only \$250,000; the Astor millions stayed with Brooke and Vincent’s foundation.

Jakey was also known for being engaged several times and marrying four times. He died in 1992, leaving a daughter and three heirs to carry on the family name: a son, William Backhouse Astor III, and two grandsons, William Backhouse Astor IV and Gregory Todd Astor. (bit.ly/JJAstorVI)

OBVIATING DELAY



From The Daily Morning Astorian, April 15, 1890: In accordance with a promise made to The Morning Astorian some time ago ... the Western Union Telegraph Co. has sent to the telegraph office here a quadruplex instrument, as fine a one of the kind as money can buy ...

This will require the employment of an additional operator here; while one is receiving Associated Press dispatches for The Morning Astorian, another can be receiving different messages over the same wire, thus obviating the delay and annoyance that have been so vexatious.

Note: Thomas Edison (pictured) invented the quadruplex telegraph in 1874. He sold his invention to Western Union for \$10,000 (\$232,000 now).

This instrument changed the telegraph market, and provided better access to news. The quadruplex could handle four messages simultaneously over one wire — two outgoing signals and two coming in — which saved Western Union the considerable expense of adding more wires to meet the increasing demand. (bit.ly/TEquadru)

TO THE MOON, ALICE



Now, from the bottom of the ocean to space: LifeShip (lifeship.com) is a “mission-driven space and genomics startup” in San Francisco that wants to make space accessible to people. For the last 15 years, founder Ben Haldeman has created telescopes to explore space, worked on satellite networks and has been involved in several rocket launches.

LifeShip’s latest venture invites people to send their names to the moon via a rocket and moon lander shared with NASA. Sending your name is free at bit.ly/Lifeship; once the lander is on the moon, it’s there to stay.

If you really want to get cosmic, you can send your DNA, or your pet’s DNA, for \$99, or even a loved one’s ashes for \$399. DNA is privacy-protected, preserved in a synthetic amber polymer (“Jurassic Park,” anyone?), and expected to last for about 10,000 years.

As the website says: “Be a part of humanity’s grand endeavor to expand outwards to the stars.”

