

Antoinette Flegenheim(er) – First-class Passenger on the Titanic

by Gerhard Schmidt-Grillmeier
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Since 2000, I have tried to find out more about Antoinette Flegenheimer, the only passenger from Berlin aboard *Titanic*. So far, I have not reached a satisfactory conclusion as to where she came from and where she went. Maybe this article will be read by someone who can assist me in my research.

She was born Antoinette Liche, probably in May 1871 (per the 1900 census of New York City). After being rescued by *Carpathia* she told the purser she was 48 years old, which would have meant she was born in 1864. Encyclopedia Titanica lists her place of birth as Berlin, so I searched the archives in Berlin-Schöneberg/Tempelhof, the archives of Charlottenburg/Wilmersdorf and the state archives of Berlin. There were several Liches in Berlin at that time. The search was not easy because several formerly independent towns and villages united with Berlin in 1921, so today, the city's boundary is very different from that of earlier years and the heavy bombing during World War II caused the destruction of many archives.

Some of the Liches were tradesmen. It is certain that Antoinette was Jewish, but this does not mean that she or her family were members of a synagogue.

In Berlin I enquired at the Jewish Community Oranienburger Straße. Their list of graves survived the Holocaust and the bombings, but there was no trace of the Liches.

I also enquired at the archives of the Lutheran church because her family could have become Christian. No trace was found of her or her later husband.

Antoinette Liche married Alfred Flegenheimer about 1891. The name Flegenheimer is quite frequently found amongst Jewish families around Frankfurt-on-Main. The city of Frankfurt wrote me that the family name Liche is not to be found in this area.

Alfred Flegenheimer was born in 1869 – his parents were Heinrich and Bertha nee Flesch. They are mentioned in the Frankfurt street directory from 1905 (Feuerbachstraße 31). Their son Alfred became very rich as a broker and emigrated to the U.S. in 1890. He died in 1907 in Manhattan, New York and was buried first at the Jewish Salem Fields Cemetery. His body was then shipped by his wife to Germany to be buried on February 2, 1908 at the cemetery of the Israelitic Community Frankfurt.

The Ellis Island homepage (www.ellisland.org) shows that, in 1906, Antoinette Flegenheimer traveled from France to New York aboard "La Savoie". In 1909 the street directory of Manhattan shows she lived at 3458 Broadway.

Alfred Flegenheimer's brother Hermann was mentioned at an exhibition of the Centrum Judaicum in Berlin („Pioneers in Celluloid“). He had changed his name into Flegheim. His brother probably had changed his into Flegenheim.

Hermann Flegenheimer was born in Frankfurt, went to Berlin and again changed his name to Fellner (probably because it did not sound Jewish). He was one of the lesser-known film pioneers in Germany and founded a company which later was integrated into the famous UFA. When the National Socialists started their terror regime, he emigrated to London where he committed suicide in 1936. I contacted several Jewish communities without result. Again, he must not have been a member of a religious community.

In a 1912 Berlin street directory I found that Hermann Flegenheimer was listed as director of a theatre and lived in Regentenstraße 2 (now Hitzigallee - the house does not exist any more due to heavy bombings and

at the site is now the "Kulturforum") and, in 1917 Bertha Flegenheimer, his mother was living there. The family must have taken up residence in Berlin. She died and was buried on November 13, 1939 in the grave of her husband in Frankfurt-on- Main.

Antoinette Flegenheim lived in Charlottenburg (today a district of Berlin) at Windscheidstraße 41 II. The house was built in 1911 and survived the war. In a 1912 Charlottenburg street directory she appears as Antoinette Flegenheim living at Windscheidstr.

When she was saved from the "Titanic" disaster in lifeboat 7, some passengers said she was from Philadelphia, yet others said she was a society lady from Manhattan. Encyclopedia Titanica writes she boarded "Titanic" in Southampton, but another source states Cherbourg. Her first-class ticket was numbered 17598, the cost of which was 31 British pound sterling, 13 shilling and 13 dimes.

On April 19, 1912, the "New York Herald" reported that she had refused to comment because a written notice had gone around in her lifeboat asking those on board not to give any information about the disaster. She said she felt obliged to comply with this request.

Antoinette Flegenheim married again to a Mr P. W. White-Hurst (or Whitehurst), probably a British subject. In the Charlottenburg phone book for 1913, I found at the former Flegenheim address the name White-Hurst (but with the initials P.E.). In 1914, this name was missing. But since the German and British Empires were now at war with each other, the foreign nationals of the respective countries had to leave. By marrying Mr White-Hurst Antoinette Flegenheim had become a foreigner.

Attempts to get information about her or her husband at several Jewish communities in London did not bring any result.

I hope there is someone in Britain or the U.S. who is able to find some trace of Antoinette Flegenheim/White-Hurst and would be glad to have the feedback to me at sgberlin@online.de .

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