

DEATH ENDS PICTURESQUE CAREER OF MRS. J.J. BROWN

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Life Story One of Accomplishment Adventure

'TITANIC' HEROINE IS VICTIM OF PARALYSIS

(BY JACK CARBERRY)

Mrs. Margaret Tobin Brown--Denver, and all the world knew her as "The Unsinkable Mrs. J.J. Brown"--is dead. Mrs. Brown died unexpectedly of apoplexy in New York Tuesday. But it was not until last night that the "Margaret Brown" of the quiet little side-street Barbizon Club--a woman's hotel in New York's fashionable E. 63rd St.--was recognized by The Rocky Mountain News as the widow of "Leadville Johnny" Brown--old "J.J." who took from the hills of Leadville and Creede \$20,000,000 in gold and silver. Mrs. Brown, who had survived the rigors of a mining camp, withstood the terrors of China Sea monsoons, survived the sinking of the Titanic, and lived to tell a thrilling story of her fight for life--illiterate "pot rustler" who, shamed by her ignorance, mastered music, literature and the arts to storm the portals and pass the barriers of society, passed away a tired, life-weary old lady of 59. But what a 59 years they were! Into them Mrs. J.J. Brown crowded not the events of a lifetime, but an epoch of history. She loved life--and she lived it. At her death her Denver attorneys, Albert Craig and Charles Brannon, were without information as to what portion of her once vast fortune she still possessed. And Hugh McLean, assistant trust officer of the Colorado National Bank, director of a fund of \$100,000, provided for her by her children, Mrs. Helen Benzinger of Hempstead, L.I. and Capt. Lawrence Brown of La Jolla, Calif., was equally uncertain as to the extent of her estate. But it was not for money Mrs. Brown lived--rather it was for thrill, for adventure and for accomplishment. She was born Margaret Tobin in Hannibal, Mo., 59 years ago. Many a tale was told of her birth. She said she was the daughter of an Irish peer. But whether or not old Shaemus Tobin was of the nobility he was poor--pitifully poor. His home, along the Missouri's banks, was but a shanty. And it was there, during a cyclone, which hastened her birth by two months, that "Molly" Tobin was born. Her first months were spent in a home-made incubator. The remainder of her life was spent in mining camps of the West, the capitals of the world and the ballrooms of society. Molly Brown was a tomboy. With her flaming red pigtailed hanging down her back she was found, not with the other girls of her humble neighborhood, but in and on the Missouri, the companion of two wild sort of lads--her brothers. With them she hunted and fished. And with them she shared every adventure of boyhood. Often, on these trips, the trio of Tobins, was accompanied by Mark Twain. Older than she was, Twain and there never existed the "school day love affair" which, by some, had been linked with their names. But it was Twain who, on a fishing trip up the Missouri, pulled Molly Brown from certain death when, diving head-first into a mud bank, she found herself caught and about to suffocate. But Hannibal, and the Missouri, did not offer the adventure which this girl sought. And so, at the age of 15, packing her carpet bag and catching a stage, she came to Leadville. Her brothers had encamped there before her. And it was to their tent, pitched at the end of State St., with its honky tonks, and its saloons, with their unbelievably long bars, and its gambling halls, that she came. There she was their "pot rustler"--unable to

cook she busied herself not only in her own "home," but in the homes of other miners. Among them was "Leadville Johnny." And--none would be quicker to admit it than he--"Leadville Johnny" wasn't a handsome man. He was 37. His hair was as red as Molly Tobin's. And "Leadville Johnny" himself often spoke of the difficulties of bathing in a mining camp--difficulties which he did not mind in particular. But there was something about old J.J. Brown--folk said it was that "he had a way with women." And so he and the 15-year-old Molly were married three weeks after her arrival in camp. "And them," Mrs. J.J. Brown, the cosmopolite who went from Leadville to Iorgnets, was in the custom of saying, "were the happy days." "Leadville Johnny" wasn't rich on the day of his marriage altho he "set 'em up"--and in the best in the house, too--at the famed Saddle Rock on Harrison St. for all who accepted his offer to "belly up to the bar." But riches came. A few months following the wedding Brown sold one of his claims for \$300,000. This he gave to his bride. She, not knowing where to put it, hid it in a fireplace. And, two days later--well, the inevitable happened. She burned it up. Old J.J. Brown didn't care. Never a word did he say to his bride--just killed her, and went out that afternoon and found the Little Jonny Mine, which in later years, proved one of the greatest producers in the history of Colorado. Of course, after that Leadville wasn't quite big enough for the Browns--even tho they had moved up on the hill and had silver dollars embedded in the cement floor of every room in the house. In Denver, the Browns cut a wide path in society. They built the house at 1340 Pennsylvania St.--the house where the lions stand guard. It was a showplace then. Today--and Mrs. Brown still owned it at her death--it is a rooming house. But it knew its day of glory. For there Molly Brown entertained not only the leaders of Denver society, but visiting great and near great. She was always cosmopolitan in her choice of friends. Denver was only a step to New York. But how that step was taken is one of the most colorful episodes of Mrs. Brown's vigorous life. Polly Fry--she is Mrs. L. Ross O'Brien--was editing a society magazine then. She asked Mrs. Brown to write her a letter. Always obliging, Mrs. Brown complied. Now who could expect Molly Tobin, who left home at 15, and who stepped from a hovel on the banks of the Missouri into overnight riches to know the niceties of language. She wrote as she spoke. And when the town read that letter it snickered--not that the leading snickerers could do better. But those snickers hurt--hurt deep.

HEADS FOR NEW YORK

And so it was that Mrs. Brown packed up and went to New York. When she returned she spoke French; she knew and appreciated art; she had cultivated a natural voice and in later years she sang in ship concerts and in charity operas. In fact, at one time, she aspired to Bernhardt's famed role in Rostrand's L'Aiglon. That was Mrs. J.J. Brown's answer to snickers. She was eccentric--of that there is no doubt. But Mrs. Brown's heart--she used the expression herself, in referring to others--"was as big as a ham." Many a family in Colorado knows that today. And it was during the many Colorado mine strikes, both in the coal and in the gold and silver fields, that she bestowed her greatest bounty. At Ludlow she became the fairy godmother to the needy women and children, during that frightful winter of 1914. And during the war the orphan children of countless soldiers prayed for her each night. And for her work for these orphans Mrs. Brown was decorated with the highest honors in the gift of the allied nations. Best know, perhaps, of all her adventures, was her experience on the ill-fated Titanic on April 15, 1912. She had set out from Liverpool for America. A believer in comfort, she had clothed herself in many woollens. And then on that fateful night upon which 1,310 men and women went to a watery grave, she proved the heroine of the disaster. Remaining oin deck until literally thrown into the last lifeboat, she had lent aid and encouragement to others. During the long night she commanded her boat. Bit by bit she had removed her warm woolen garments--her sables, too. She had wrapped less hardy passengers in them. And she had forced the men to keep rowing all night long. It was told then how one man, exhausted, fell beside his oars. "Row--row or I'll toss you overboard," Mrs. Brown had said. And the man, knowing she meant it, rowed the night thru. Back in New York she was hailed by reporters as "Lady Margaret of the Titanic." "It was Brown luck," she said. "I'm the unsinkable Mrs. J.J. Brown." And so the name remained--even to this, the story of her death. After the Titanic disaster Mrs. Brown was ever in the public eye. In 1922 Brown died. He and his wife had been apart for about five years. He had lived with his daughter. His wife had lived alone, visiting the capitals of the world, and making frequent trips back to Denver. Brown left no

will. There were court fights. In the end the \$100,000 fund, entrusted to the Denver bank was created. Mrs. Brown lived comfortably from its proceeds. In this period after her husband's death Mrs. Brown engaged in a romance--if romance it can be called--worthy of the pen of DeMaupassant. She announced she was engaged to the 76 year old Duke Charto of France. And then, 48 hours later she said: "Me marry that old geezer--never. Give me every time the rugged men of the West. The men of Europe--why, in France there are only perfumed and unbathed Continental gallants--in England only brandy-soaked British gents."

MAKES WORLD TOUR

Following the episode with the duke, Mrs. Brown made a tour of the world. "I learned to play the uke in Honolulu, at Palm Beach I mastered the newest dances and in Switzerland I mastered yodeling," she said upon her return. That was Mrs. J.J. Brown--the Mrs. Brown who had for intimates the Vincent Astors, whom she entertained at her 76-room New York home, and the women she had known in Leadville. Another incident in her career was set in a flaming Florida hotel; she rescued many from the blaze. Returning to Colorado from Paris, where she was named a Knight of the Legion of Honor, largely because of her work in perpetuating the tradition of Sarah Bernhardt, whose gowns she bought and whose stage roles she studied, she bought the former home of Eugene Field, the poet, and made a museum for school children here in Denver. In Missouri she helped create the Mark Twain memorial. Funeral services for this most lovable and picturesque of characters will be Sunday, at the home of her daughter in Hempstead--a spot she loved second only to the Colorado hills. Her son, who served as a captain overseas during the World War, was on his way, by plane, to New York last night. And thus, in the quiet of a side street hotel--and on the hillside overlooking Long Island Sound, where she will be buried, ends the career of Mrs. J.J. Brown--a life which, by its force and vigor, will be ever a part of the story of Colorado.

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